Mendelssohn’s Oratorio

Elijah

Maroondah Singers
Musical Director: Lyn Henshall

Yarra Valley Singers
Musical Director: Belinda Gillam Derry

Diamond Valley Singers
Musical Director: Lucas Wilson-Richter

Singularity
Musical Director: Cecily Woodberry

Soloists (in order of appearance)
Michael Lampard baritone: Elijah
Peter Mander tenor: Obadiah, Master of the King’s Palace and Ahab the Israelite King
Shakira Dugan contralto: Angel and Queen Jezebel, wife of Ahab
Joanna Cole soprano: Widow and Angel

Sunday 26 November 2017
2:30pm
George Wood Performing Arts Centre
Yarra Valley Grammar
Kalinda Road, Ringwood

Elijah Op. 70 (1846)
Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Felix Mendelssohn was the grandson of a philosopher and son of a well-to-do banker. Although from a Jewish background, at age 7 Felix was baptised as a Christian with the surname “Bartholdy”. Despite his father’s wishes, he never used it. Though raised as a Lutheran, he was never fully accepted as one, nor did he totally recant his Judaic heritage. Like Mozart, he became a famous child prodigy, but matured earlier, composing numerous symphonies and perhaps his best work, the Octet for Strings, by his late teens. He had a prodigious memory, being able to play by heart all 9 of Beethoven’s symphonies while still a teenager.

At 20 Felix revived Bach’s St Matthew Passion in Berlin, reawakening interest in Bach’s sacred works, and launching his own parallel careers as eminent conductor and successful musical administrator. This was one of the first performances where the conductor became the authoritative director and interpreter of the music, and used a baton. Previously, this role had been performed by the various section leaders, or the keyboard player. Over the next few years Mendelssohn founded the Leipzig Conservatory and transformed the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra into the first “modern” professional orchestra.

Highly respected and popular during his lifetime, and not having to worry about money, Mendelssohn travelled widely. He performed all over Europe, and after his first visit at age 23, England became his second home. His first oratorio, Saint Paul, was performed at the Birmingham Festival in 1837.

About the same time, Mendelssohn sketched some ideas for Elijah. However, due to lack of a librettist, this project lapsed until, following the success of Saint Paul, Mendelssohn was approached to both organise the 1846 Birmingham Festival, and to compose and conduct a new oratorio for it. He persuaded a friend, Pastor Julius Schubring, to write the libretto. However, Schubring brought a moralistic theological view to the text that conflicted with Mendelssohn’s dramatic vision. In the end Mendelssohn prevailed, but wrote much of the libretto himself, initially in German to which the music was set. His friend William Bartholomew made the English translation subsequently used.

Although built on the structural foundations of Bach and Handel, Elijah’s dramatisation is almost operatic. Although Felix wrote the soprano role for the popular Jenny Lind, particularly the high F# in the aria Hear Ye Israel, she did not sing at the 1846 Birmingham premiere. The orchestra of 125 and 271-voice choir elicited a tumultuous response from the audience of 2000, eight pieces being encored.

The following year, Felix’s beloved sister Fanny died. Felix was devastated, and died 5 months later. Meanwhile, Elijah became hugely popular in England, and, after falling out of favour during the mid 20th century, today is second in popularity only to Handel’s Messiah.
INTERVAL (20 minutes)

SYNOPSIS

Part I opens in dramatic fashion, not with the customary overture but with Elijah proclaiming a curse “There shall not be dew or rain” much as the prophet himself abruptly appeared to Ahab.

Mendelssohn was persuaded by Bartholomew to add the exciting overture that follows. Then the people plead for rain (“Help, Lord” and “Lord, bow Thine ear”) while Obadiah urges them to repent. An angel sends Elijah to the widow of Zarephath (“Elijah, get thee hence”). Elijah’s duel with the widow (“What have I to do with thee”) provides the first great dramatic moment, when Elijah prays to the Lord three times that her son might be restored to life. The magnificent chorus “Blessed are the men who fear Him” is one of Schubring’s interpolations into the story, but provides Mendelssohn with an opportunity for some wonderfully evocative writing. Elijah returns to face Ahab (“As God the Lord of Sabaoth”) and places his challenge to the priests of Baal. The priests invoke Baal (“Baal, we cry to thee”) while Elijah mocks them (“Call him louder”). This is the dramatic high point of the oratorio, with Elijah’s calm contrasting with the increasingly frenetic music of the chorus. Their invocation ends with a fortissimo “Hear and answer!”, which is followed by dead silence, surely one of the most dramatic and effective moments in oratorio. By contrast, Elijah then invokes the Lord with music of great nobility and simplicity (“Draw near, all ye people”). There is a brief interpolation by a quartet (“Cast thy burden upon the Lord”) before the fire comes down from heaven (“O Thou, who makest thine angels spirits”). Obadiah pleads with Elijah to send rain (“O man of God, help thy people”). Three times Elijah prays to the Lord for rain (“Thou hast overthrown thine enemies”) and sends a young boy to the top of a hill to look out over the sea for rain. At the third time the rain comes, and the people join in an exuberant hymn of praise (“Thanks be to God.”)

Part II begins with hymns of reassurance (“Hear ye, Israel!” and “Be not afraid”), but Elijah is soon embroiled in controversy again. He confronts Ahab, taking him to task for his idolatry (“The Lord hath exalted thee”) while Jezebel stirs up the people against Elijah (“Woe to him.”) Obadiah advises him to flee (“Man of God”) and Elijah, alone in the desert, is in despair (“It is enough.”) Angels come and comfort him (“Lift thine eyes” and “He, watching over Israel”) and Elijah makes his way to Mount Horeb to await the Lord. Here Mendelssohn again uses some vividly descriptive music depicting the fury of the wind, the earthquake and the fire, contrasting that with the simplicity to which he sets the text “and in that still voice, onward came the Lord.” There follows another hymn of praise (“Holy is God the Lord”) and a choral recitative (“Go, return upon thy way”) as Elijah is sent back to Israel refreshed in spirit (“For the mountains shall depart”). Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (“Then did Elijah”) followed by Schubring’s final interpolation, an invitation to come to the Lord (“O come, everyone that thirsteth”) and the final choral hymn of praise (“And then shall your light break forth”), ending the oratorio with a majestic fugue.

Robert Weiss (Synopsis: Michael More, Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia)

Diamond Valley Singers
Musical Director: Lucas Wilson-Richter

Diamond Valley Singers was formed in 1985 to provide local singers with opportunities to be heard in public and to raise money for charity. Since then DVS has donated over $150,000 to various charities and has continued to provide a musical and/or creative outlet to the community. DVS produces one fully staged musical in July with the Eltham Community Orchestra, and performs one major choral work annually towards the end of the year, fitting small projects and performances in when we can. If you have been inspired today to join us on stage, or would love to assist behind the scenes, or would simply like to have a sing, please feel free to come along. We rehearse most Wednesday evenings in Diamond Creek with our Musical Director, Lucas Wilson-Richter and accompanist, Gerard Banner. Our chorus and choir is not auditioned, and all are made welcome. Please contact us via our web site www.dvsingers.org or find us on Facebook

Singularity
Musical Director: Cecily Woodberry

Singularity is a SATB choir of around 40 singers of all ages, associated with Coonara Community House. Over the past 15 years the choir has taken on many different challenges, some more traditional and others involving working with new compositions and composers such as Calvin Bowman and Sarah Hopkins. The choir is equally at home with unaccompanied music or accompanied by instruments and has enjoyed performances with the Melbourne Opera Orchestra, the Maroondah Symphony Orchestra and the Nicholas Chamber Orchestra. With over 20 performances per year all over the state, the choir has developed a lively and eclectic approach to their music under the musical directorship of Cecily Woodberry with accompanists, Lyn Bromage and Ivor Buxton. They frequently perform for charity and have raised around $100,000 for different charities. More information on the choir’s activities can be found on its website www.SingularityChoir.org.au
Maroondah Singers
Musical Director: Lyn Henshall

Maroondah Singers is a mixed voice community choir of around 50 members based in the eastern suburbs. Established in 1968, the choir has given pleasure to members and audiences in the presentation of a wide variety of musical genres and styles; classical, jazz, pop, sacred, musical theatre, opera and more. We have three regular concerts each year as well as performing in different venues around Melbourne and in country Victoria. A Maroondah Singers Memorial Scholarship is awarded each year to a promising young singer who sings at our concerts. The choir is directed by Lyn Henshall and accompanied by John Atwell.

Yarra Valley Singers
Musical Director: Belinda Gillam Derry

Yarra Valley Singers is a non-auditioned community choir formed in 1988. It meets weekly in Lilydale and now has over seventy members. The choir’s Musical Director is Belinda Gillam Derry, the accompanists are Raymond Shon and Rita van Ooi.

The choir performs several concerts each year, joining with other choirs for at least one of these. The 2017 program has included the Choral@Monsalvat festival, Yarra Ranges Council Citizen Ceremony, Seniors Festival and the Mayor’s Big Day Out in addition to today’s performance. The 2018 program will also include a CD recording to celebrate the choir’s 30th anniversary.

Yarra Valley Singers’ musical repertoire is wide: musical comedy, folk songs, spirituals, opera, classical and contemporary sacred music, ensuring that the choir and its audiences enjoy each performance.

Further information can be found at: www.yarravalleysingers.org.au

Michael Lampard
Baritone

Tasmanian-born baritone, Michael Lampard, studied at the University of Tasmania, graduating with a Master of Music degree in 2010. Michael has performed in Australia, Asia, the United States, the United Kingdom and across Europe.

Operatic highlights include roles in Bizet’s The Pearl Fishers and Carmen, Puccini’s Tosca, La Bohème and Madame Butterfly, Verdi’s La Traviata, Un Ballo in Maschera, Rigoletto and Il Trovatore, Mozart’s Cosi Fan Tutte, Le Nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni and Die Zauberflöte, and Wagner’s Tannhäuser, with companies including Victoria Opera, Melbourne Opera, CitiOpera, Gertrude Opera, IHOS Opera and has sung as a chorister for Opera Australia. Future engagements include roles in Puccini’s La Bohème and Il Tabarro, and Gounod’s Romeo and Juliette as well as recitals in Melbourne, Sydney and the United Kingdom.

www.michaellampard.com

Joanna Cole
Soprano

Whether in concert, recital or on the operatic stage the luminous beauty of sound of soprano Joanna Cole is unmistakable. She has a prolific number of well-known opera roles to her credit, most of which she has sung for Opera Australia. She sang the title role of Lindy in the world premiere performance of the opera based on the story of Lindy Chamberlain.

As a guest artist, Joanna’s performances have included performing at Victoria Opera’s inaugural concert gala concerts and morning melodies; Dame Joan Sutherland’s 70th birthday in London and, Richard Bonynge, AC, CBE and Dame Joan Sutherland’s 50th Wedding Anniversary in Sydney. She has been a recipient of many awards including a Winston Churchill Fellowship enabling her to pursue further vocal excellence in the art of Bel Canto in Italy.

Joanna completed a Master’s Degree in Music Performance (research) at the VCA/University of Melbourne and as well as a private singing studio in Melbourne, teaches singing at Firbank Anglican School Brighton. She is a passionate advocate of connecting music to the community through extensive charity work.
Shakira Dugan
Contralto

Shakira is a mezzo soprano from Stratford. She completed her bachelor of Music at the Melbourne Conservatorium in 2015 and is currently under the tutelage of Roger Howell. She has been involved in companies such as Gippsland Opera, Melbourne Opera, Opera Bootcamp Australia, Australian Welsh Male Choir, Opera Scholars Australia, Victorian Youth Opera and the Victorian Opera Touring Company. Shakira was a grand finalist of OSA's Scholar of the Year 2017 and current grand finalist for the 2018 season. She is a recipient of the Sylvia Fisher Scholarship awarded by the late Richard Divall.

Shakira understudied the role of Smeton in Melbourne Opera’s Anna Bolena and played the role of Saint Teresa 11 in the Victorian Youth Opera’s production of Four Saints in Three Acts. She is currently a 2017 Developing Artist for Victorian Opera starring as Hansel in the touring production of Hansel and Gretel as well as various roles in the premier production of the Snow Queen.

Peter Mander
Tenor

Peter commenced his musical career as a chorister at St Paul’s Cathedral in Melbourne. After graduating from the University of Melbourne (B. Mus. Ed. and A. Mus. A), he performed with the Victorian State Opera and various commercial Musical Theatre productions before leaving for Germany in 1982, where he performed as a character and lyric tenor in over 50 roles in opera, operetta and musicals, as well as regularly appearing as tenor soloist in concert and Lieder recitals, including all the major religious works of Bach, Haydn and Mozart, returning to Australia in 1994.

Peter is sessional voice and German Language and Diction teacher at Melbourne and Monash Universities, where he teaches voice and is Senior Voice teacher at Scotch College, while maintaining a busy concert performance schedule. He returns regularly to Germany to perform as a concert artist.

He is in demand as an adjudicator and is an AMEB examiner. His students can be found in many professional productions, in both opera and music theatre in Australia, and in Germany and England.
Willem van der Vis
Musical Director

New Zealand born Willem van der Vis gained a Bachelor of Science (Hons) in physics before going on to play principal cello with the New Zealand Symphony Training Orchestra and Southern Sinfonia (Dunedin). In 1979 he moved to Australia, joining the Western Australian Symphony Orchestra. He also played with Orchestra Victoria, the New Zealand, Tasmanian and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras.

After completing his Bachelor of Music (conducting) at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts and the Victorian College of the Arts (Robert Rosen), he enjoyed further conducting studies in Moscow, England and the Czech Republic and with Professor John Hopkins in Melbourne.

He has conducted the Stonnington, Heidelberg, Preston, New Monash, Ballarat, Derwent (Hobart) and U38 Symphony Orchestras and was Musical Director of the Murray Conservatorium Chamber Orchestra (Albury NSW).

He conducts at orchestral workshops and music camps around Australia. Willem is also in demand as an adjudicator and holds workshops in orchestral conducting.

Nicholas Chamber Orchestra
Presents
G.F. Handel’s
Christmas Messiah
With
Singularity Choir & Guests
Soloists including Cecily Woodberry, Nick Seidenman & Maria-Cristina Keightley
Conducted by
Robert Dora

10th December 2017 at 2pm
St Thomas More, Belgrave
$10, children free
Sing along - scores for hire
Proceeds to The Tin Shed & Refugee relief

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Repairs & Sales of Bowed Instruments
7 Glenwood Ave Glen Waverley 3150
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03 8802 7905
The Maroondah Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1964 and prides itself on providing local access to quality classical music. It presents four to six concerts each year featuring works from both the classical and lighter music repertoires. Concert performances are given at local venues and additional concerts can be arranged for charity and other organisations.

The Orchestra has flourished under the guidance and expertise of conductor, Willem van der Vis and attracts quality musicians. The Orchestra is based in Ringwood, although membership is not restricted to residents of the City of Maroondah and is open to musicians from senior secondary students through to mature age. Rehearsals are held each Tuesday at Maroondah Federation Estate, Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood from 8pm to 10:15pm.

For information about the Orchestra or membership enquiries:
www.maroondahsymphony.org.au
Phone: Lyn 9849 0987 or Rob 0419 230 344
info@maroondahsymphony.org.au

The Maroondah Symphony Orchestra gratefully acknowledges the support of Arts Nunawading Inc and Maroondah City Council.

The Orchestra also acknowledges the financial support of the Maroondah City Council. The Orchestra was a successful in the recent Community Grants Program which assisted in the purchase of a new gong.

Maroondah Symphony Orchestra
Next Concert
Sunday 18 March
Cimarosa - Overture to *The Secret Marriage*
Mozart - Piano Concerto No. 27 KV 595
Soloist - Hannah Shinn
Beethoven - Symphony No. 7 Op. 92

2018 Concert Dates
Sunday 17 June
Sunday 16 September
Sunday 25 November

All concerts will be at George Wood Performing Arts Centre
Yarra Valley Grammar, Kalinda Road, Ringwood at 2.30pm

Bookings: www.trybooking.com
Enquiries: Elaine: 9720 8575 or 0418 620 479
info@maroondahsymphony.org.au

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