

## Age no barrier to singing **Elijah** by JIM FAGAN

Joan Murray will be 91 next month and, just as she has done for the last 30 years, she will be on stage with Noosa Chorale in May for its first concert of the year.

And standing with her in the sopranos will be the Chorale's newest recruit, Sunshine Beach State High School student, 14-year-old Vivienne Thomson.

Tune In met with Joan, Vivienne and her mum Jane Tallon, who sings with the altos, at The J Theatre just before the choir started its Monday night practice for Mendelssohn's world famed oratorio, *Elijah*.

The Chorale is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and Joan recalled how in April 1994 she was one of the first to answer the call for singers from founder, former local barrister Joe McMahon.

"We met in a hall in Duke Road in Doonan. There were six of us. Joe had found a conductor who played the clarinet. So there we were, all holding music, listening to him playing notes on the instrument and trying our best to follow him.

"Most of us had fairly extensive experience in choral singing and we wondered what we had got into.

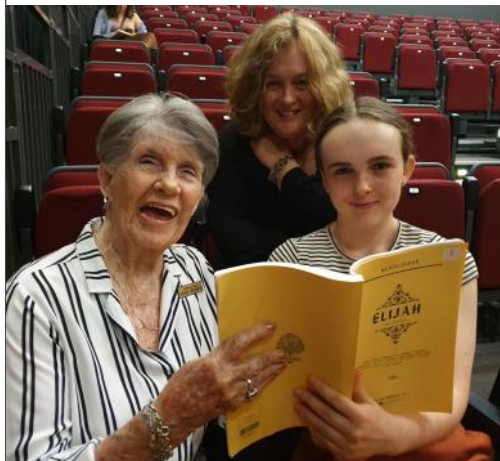
"We were lucky to get our first conductor, Leonard Spira, who was well known as a Melbourne musician and founder and director of the Victorian Opera Company.

"He led us brilliantly until 2007 and then came Adrian King who gold plated us and made us the great choir we are today."

Joan was Vivienne's age when she started singing. She sang in choirs in her native Ireland, Papua New Guinea,

Sydney, and even with an opera company in Nigeria. She came to Noosa two years before the choir was formed and now lives in Noosaville.

She has missed only one concert in her 30 years with the choir. "Would you believe it was *Elijah* which the choir performed in 2007? I attended the rehearsals but just before the concert I had to take my husband to hospital in Brisbane."



(from left) Joan Murray, Jane Tallon, and Vivienne Thomson

She shared her thoughts on singing with teenager Vivienne who was sitting in on the interview.

"I was about your age when I started to sing. I really enjoyed it and still do. Choral singing becomes part of your life. When you leave the stage after a performance you almost cry with the wonder at the beautiful music and the appreciation of the audience."

Vivienne is a multi-instrumentalist. She plays the piano, violin and guitar. "Violin is my main instrument." She also loves acting and is a member of the Little Seed Theatre at Noosaville.

"I like to sing and when mum suggested we join the choir, I thought I would give it a go. I'm just loving the classical music and doing it with the Chorale."

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Vivienne comes from a musical family. Her parents are both professional musicians. Dad Owen Thomson is a classical guitarist and mum Jane plays the cello. Her Year 12 brother, Donald, also plays cello.

Jane taught and lectured at the College of the Arts in Melbourne and played as a soloist in ensembles across Australia before the family moved to Tasmania where she played with the state symphony orchestra, also co-founding the Huon String Quartet.

The family came to Noosa five years ago and live in Tinbeerwah. "We both thought this year it would be fun to join a choir and it's great to have organisations like this where we both can go," Jane said.

"Being a cellist, I have never had the experience of singing music like this. It is incredibly complex and passionate.

"We've been blown away by the choir's sound... right from the first warm up and how welcoming everyone is."

"*Elijah*," Noosa Chorale, Friday May 24 at 7pm and Saturday May 25 at 2pm at The J, Noosa Junction. Tickets \$45. Bookings [www.thej.com.au](http://www.thej.com.au)



## Noosa Chorale celebrates 30 years with a dazzling oratorio

Droughts and floods are pretty much par for the course for Australians.

As immortalised in the words of poet Judith Wright, we love this “sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains, of ragged mountain ranges, of droughts and flooding rains”, and we are constantly reminded of “her beauty and her terror”.

No doubt Felix Mendelssohn experienced the beauty and terror of nature in his lifetime through the first half of the 1800s in his native Germany and when travelling throughout Europe and Britain.

But it was the biblical story of the disastrous 42-month drought and resultant famine told in the Kings chapters of the Old Testament that fired up Mendelssohn to write his dramatic oratorio *Elijah*.

Elijah is a complex character – a prophet who is full of doubts, a kind and compassionate man but also an angry zealot. His story is of the drive and determination to show his nation that there is one God who must be obeyed.

The riveting tale transformed into this oratorio’s composition brims with images of fire, storm, and earthquake, but there are also moments of consolation and a miraculous ascent into heaven.

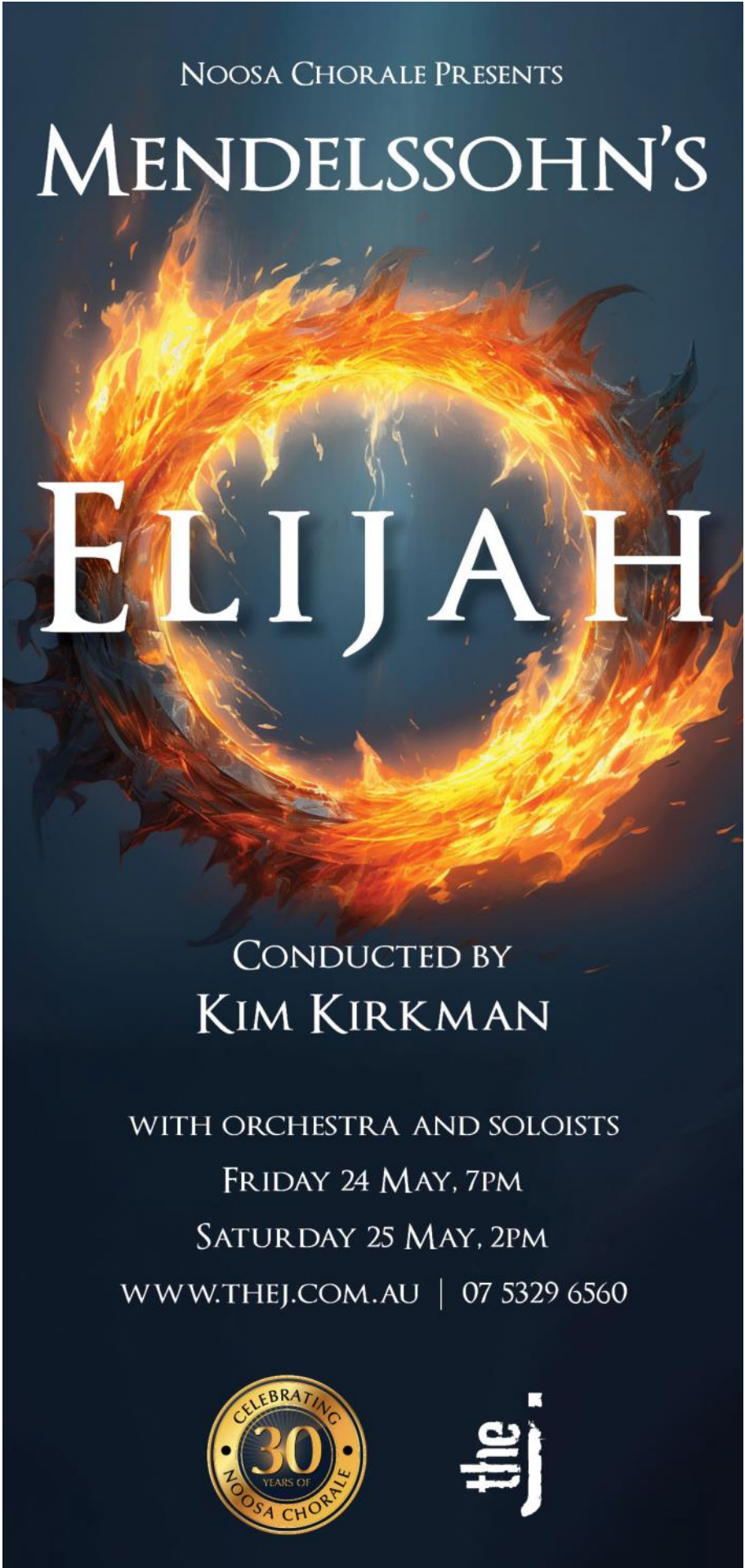
For its sheer drama, the oratorio rivalled Handel’s *Messiah* for popularity in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Mendelssohn himself said that he’d never known such a triumph as his first performance of *Elijah*, in English, at the Birmingham Music Festival in 1846.

Noosa Chorale is thrilled to be presenting *Elijah* this May under the firm baton of Kim Kirkman, having last performed the oratorio some seventeen years ago in 2007.

Maestro Kim brings out the very best in all the performers—more than sixty choir singers, four fabulous soloists, and the members of the full orchestra accompanying the performances.

The music is dynamic, dramatic, complex, and an energetic sing for all parts of the choir, with its stirring four-part choruses and beautiful solos.

*Elijah* is a masterpiece that is as thrilling to sing as it is to listen to. Its abiding theme warning against a belief in false gods is as relevant now as it was in Old Testament times.



NOOSA CHORALE PRESENTS

# MENDELSSOHN'S



# ELIJAH

CONDUCTED BY  
**KIM KIRKMAN**

WITH ORCHESTRA AND SOLOISTS

FRIDAY 24 MAY, 7PM  
SATURDAY 25 MAY, 2PM

WWW.THEJ.COM.AU | 07 5329 6560

**7pm Friday 24 May & 2pm Saturday 25 May**  
**[CLICK HERE TO BOOK TICKETS](#)**





## Looking back over 30 years of singing

Thirty years ago, Noosa Chorale was but a twinkle in the eye for local lawyer Joe McMahon who really really wanted to sing Handel's *Messiah*.

So determined was he that he went about recruiting singers, some of whom had already been gathering to sing together and were keen to form a choir.

He also enticed fellow Noosa newcomer Leonard Spira to take up the role of music director, he sought an accompanist, and he managed to secure a rehearsal space at Carramar aged care home.

Thus Noosa Chorale was born and the first performance at the end of 2004, of *Messiah* of course, was an absolute hit.

We've come a long way since then. The Chorale is now a cherished part of the cultural scene in the Noosa region, having attracted hundreds and hundreds of singers to its musical embrace, and thousands of locals and visitors to its concerts over its three decades of musical creativity.

In this first issue of Tune In for 2024, some of our singers, many of whom have been loyal members of the choir for a long time, reflect on their experience with the Chorale.

We've been asking our singers to tell us their own stories of special times that really stood out for them. Here's two of these recollections on this page, and we hope to bring you more in coming issues.



Noosa Chorale's social event at the January start of rehearsals for *Elijah*.

### Margaret Haffenden, soprano

I'll never forget the first time that the Shimmy Sisters appeared on stage, because I was one of them. The others were Hayley Yappa, Linda Bishop, and Debbie Boyles.



(l to r) Margaret Haffenden, Hayley Yappa, Linda Bishop, Debbie Boyles

It was August 2016 and we were accompanying the gorgeous Juliarna Clark in a jazz number as part of "The Roaring Twenties" concert, which we performed in collaboration with the Noosa Heads Jazz Club as part of the Noosa Jazz Party that year.

We must have done something right because we were invited back again dressed up in our feathered finery for each of the following four jazz concerts through to 2019.

It was terrific fun for all of us. Three of us (Linda, Debbie, and I) are still singing with the choir.

### Jim Fagan, member for 23 years.

It was May 2022 and the choir was singing two classical works at the J. We had completed the first half with Gabriel Faure's *Requiem* and after the interval we walked on to the stage for the second half which was Karl Jenkins' *Stabat Mater*—one hour of highly dramatic music.



Noosa Chorale "In Paradisum" May 2022

I sat down with the rest of the choir and opened my folder... only to have the heart stopping experience of realising I had not brought my music with me.

What to do? Obviously, I needed the music so I stood up and, with 400 pairs of eyes watching me, I clambered past my row of singers and left the stage.

Our conductor Adrian King was waiting in the wings to go on with the soloists and I breathlessly informed him I had left the music in the dressing room.

To his eternal credit, and my relief, he said go and get it. I rushed up the stairs of the J, darted along the corridor to the room, retrieved the music, thanked the conductor as I darted past and went back on stage.

As I was stepping past the singers back to my seat, the audience burst into applause. I thought to myself "cheeky buggers" and I nearly turned round to bow and wave. Thankfully, I didn't. The applause was for the conductor and soloists who were also coming on!

# For the love of music

by IAN JOBLING

David Vos loved music. After being a member of The Sydney Congress Hall Salvation Army Junior Band, he joined the Senior Band just before he turned eighteen.

A euphonium player, he travelled overseas with that band and performed in many countries. He loved his euphonium and his love of brass bands was obvious.

And David loved classical music in equal measure. In later life, David purchased many scores of classical music, especially operas.

His wife Robyn explained, “He would follow the scores and listen with his headphones on, and have them extremely loud, and lose himself for hours.”

Upon David’s death in late December, it was thought that the Noosa Chorale may benefit from having some of the many scores in their archives.

However, when they were collected, we realised they were indeed special: full scores of operas and other classical musical pieces in book form in beautiful condition.



Ian Jobling (left) with Shaun Brown

When some of the long standing members of Noosa Chorale became aware of the collection, their thoughts turned to the benefit over many years that the choir had enjoyed from having young singers from the University of Queensland School of Music as soloists at their concerts.

They proposed that the vast collection (more than 40 in number) would be better housed in the University of Queensland’s Music School collection.

When hearing of this, Robyn sent a thank you note, saying, “David would be thrilled that his much-loved, and

much used, scores are going to where people share the great love of music he had.”

The collection of scores of classical and operatic music have now been handed over to Dr Shaun Brown, Director of Performance at the University of Queensland School of Music.

Shaun recalled that he sang many years ago with our current guest conductor Kim Kirkman. Shaun had also performed with Noosa Chorale and “sister” choir the Sunshine Coast Choral Society, in their Verdi Requiem concert of 2013.

Shaun was delighted to include an inscription inside each score acknowledging how the School of Music came to have such a large collection in the library from David’s bequest via Noosa Chorale.



Some of the more than 40 beautiful scores in the David Voss collection given to the University of Queensland’s School of Music.