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Eric Bogle heads 35th Illawarra Folk Festival

Perennial favourite Eric Bogle will join Shellie Morris, Nicky Bomba, Marcia Howard, the Toe Sucking Cowgirls and around 150 other acts when the Illawarra Folk Festival celebrates its 35th anniversary in January.

The annual four-day event – the State’s largest folk festival – will be held at Bulli Showground on January 16-19.

Artistic Director David De Santi said the lineup was particularly strong, with top international, national and local acts and one of the largest contingents of young performers in the event’s history.

“This will be Eric Bogle’s fifth appearance in our 35 years, and he always attracts large audiences,” Mr De Santi said. “It’s great to have him back.”

The Scottish-born singer-songwriter, whose anti-war song *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* is an international classic, first played at the festival in 1988, and returned in 2012, 2014 and 2018.

Shellie Morris is a multi-award-winning singer-songwriter who sings in 17 Australian Indigenous languages. She is a member of the Black Arm Band and was part of the internationally acclaimed Prison Songs documentary.

“Shellie is a captivating artist and we are delighted that she is coming to Bulli in January,” Mr De Santi said. “We are also thrilled to have the Toe Sucking Cowgirls include us in their 20th anniversary reunion tour,” Mr De Santi said.

The Cowgirls made a big name for themselves across Australia from 1999-2006 with an eclectic fusion of Celtic, Country and Bluegrass influences, and Mr De Santi said their reunion tour was shaping as a national celebration of their music.

Nicholas Caruana, aka Nicky Bomba, is an Australian musician and singer-songwriter whose many credits include leading the ARIA Award-winning Melbourne Ska Orchestra and being the frontman of his band, Bomba, as well as being the former drummer and percussionist of John Butler Trio.

Marcia Louise Howard is multi-instrumentalist, singer-songwriter who was a long-term member of the 1980s folk rock group, Goanna with her older brother Shane Howard. She has also released three solo albums.

UK singer Christine Collister will also return to the folk festival, continuing her partnership with Wollongong-raised guitar maestro Michael Fix that has taken them all over the world,

“We also have many fabulous youth acts from Australia and overseas, including Brighde Chaimbeul from Scotland – a young Gaelic-speaking performer from the Isle of Skye who has made a huge impact in the UK with her debut album *The Reeling*. She plays the small pipes and her music is very traditional Celtic. It is very exciting to have an emerging international star at our festival,” Mr De Santi said.

Also part of the strong youth contingent are Elephant Sessions from Scotland, leading national youth acts Cigany Weaver, Chaika, Finn, Greann Dove, Honeymoon Bridge, Kahl Wallace, Great Aunt and Sue Ray, and a large local youth presence headed by the very popular trio Dear Violet.

“We’re really thrilled with the program for our 35th festival – 20 at Jamberoo and the last 14 at Bulli Showground,” Mr De Santi said. “And we’re very proud of the fact that from very humble beginnings our festival has grown to now be recognised on the international folk music calendar, with strong interest each year from overseas acts who want to come here to perform.

“We always have a great mix of international, national and local artists, and that helps give the festival its special appeal,” Mr De Santi said. “Since we started more than 3000 acts and 15,000 performers had been part of the festival, and we have always supported local acts by giving them the chance to perform.

“For our 35th festival our featured instrument will be the violin, which is certainly the most played instrument at folk festivals!”

Regular festival features including the Folk School in the week leading up to the festival, the Thursday Charity Night, Green Music Trains from Sydney and environmental sustainability initiatives will all be part of the 35th Illawarra Folk Festival. The festival is run entirely by volunteers.

Issued by Honorary Publicity Officer Nick Hartgerink 0418 424085. For further information, contact David De Santi 0409 571788

Full list of performers on next page:

INTERNATIONAL (21)

Brighde Chaimbeul, Elephant Sessions, Siobhan Miller – SCOT; Autoharp Unanimous, The Brother Brothers, Dirty Stay Out Skiffers, GrayScale ContraBand, Ken Field's Hoot Band, SONiA disappear fear – USA; Carlo Aonzo Trio – ITALY; Collister & Fix, Faustus, Rory McLeod – UK; David Shanhan – NZ; Genticorum, Mo Kenney, The Tequila Mockingbird Orchestra – CANADA; Gordon Koang – SOUTH SUDAN,; Hanne Kah – GERMANY; Teatro Matita - SLOVENIA; The Barleyshakes Trio – IRELAND

NATIONAL (55)

Andsome Friends, Anita George, Anna Smyrk, Black Joak Morris, Brian Morley, Bromham, Burnt Roast Band, Bush Music Club - Concert Party, Chaika, Chloe & Jason Roweth, Cigany Weaver, Cyclo Timik, Daniel Champagne, David Spry, Derek Dowding, English Dance Workshops, Eric Bogle, Firinn, Fly Little Sparrow, Fred Smith, Good Tunes, Graeme Fletcher, Greann Dove, Honeymoon Bridge, Hui Tocker and Peter Hicks, Jack Carty, Jaga Band, Jan Preston's Boogie Circus, Kahl Wallace, Koo Wee Kapers, Marcia Howard, Mark "Looch" Lewis & The Press Gangsters, Maurie Mulheron & Pat Craigie, Mi Hermano y Yo Vallenato y Folclore, Nick Rheinberger, Nicky Bomba, Rusty & The Saint, Santa Taranta, Shanty Club, Shelley's Murder Boys, Shellie Morris, Stu Tyrrell, Sue Ray, Sydney English Country Dancers, Terry Fielding, The Good Girl Song Project, The Pie Eaters, The Stragglers, The String Family, This Machine Sings Woody, Toe Sucking Cowgirls, Troy Brady, Velour, VGmates, Zumpa

LOCAL (55)

Anvil, Carefree Road Band, Chord-eaux, Cinnamon Twist Belly Dance, Combined Union Choirs, Curious Rendition Orchestra, Denis McKay, Dirt Road Days, Dru Yoga, Food Fighters, Gobsmacked!, Heart to Heart Storytelling, Illawarra Breakfast Poets, Illawarra Nature Story Songs, Irish Session Workshop, Jessica Grainger, Jocean, Joe Gander Handpan and Sounds, Kay Proudlove, King and Queen of Green, Lizzie Bennet, Love In The Jungle, Macabre Sisters, Madd Molly, Mally Moo's Music for Minis, Me & Pete, Mem Davis, Money Killed Jonny, Murmur, Northern Illawarra Combined Churches, Rani's Fire, Retro Radio Show, Roger Gordon Fyfe, rUKEas, Sally Forth, Silver Lotus Tribal Bellydance, Singongo, Soul Flamenco Illawarra, Steampunk Vagabonds, Storybeats, Super Kenny/Kenny Bartley and the Midnight Feast, Swing Booty, The Beatmeisters, The Con Artists, The Femmes Fatales, The Groove, The Guilty Three, The High Country, The Honey Sippers, The Humphreys, The Nikriann Consort, The Swingaleles, Tia Juana, Wally Byrne, Zlatkos Balkan Cabaret

SPOKEN WORD (5)

Brian Bell, Jason Roweth, Peter Mace, Robyn Sykes, Russell Hannah

YOUTH (15)

Abigail Wighton, Adam Warren, Aurora Li, Claire Doherty, Conor Smith, Dear Violet, Erin Hand, The Fallen Robins, Folkaphonic Youth Orchestra, Hello Harry, Isobel Knight, Kieran Knapman, Mother Banshee, Paddy & The Wonderband, Saplings Sessions Bush Music Club, Shalani