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Festival stars to shine multiple times

Illawarra Folk festival patrons will have multiple opportunities to see the headline acts over the festival's four days in January.

With over 150 acts from overseas and around Australia, as well as from the Illawarra, , music lovers will have a bewildering choice at the annual four-day event - the State's largest folk festival – at Bulli Showground on January 16-19.

But when Artistic Director David De Santi released the final program this week, it was clear that the headline acts will be appearing on multiple occasions and on different stages.

Perennial favourite Eric Bogle will perform four times, as will the Toe-Sucking Cowgirls – who will be on a reunion tour – and multi-award-winning Indigenous singer-songwriter Shellie Morris.

Award-winning Canadian songstress and guitar shredder Mo Kenney is scheduled to appear two times, while emerging international star, Scottish teenager Brighde Chaimbeul – 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* – will play four times over the weekend. Brighde will form part of the Year of Scotland Australia 2020 program at the festival.

Wollongong-born international guitar maestro Michael Fix, who is teaming up with regular collaborator, English singer Christine Collister, will also perform four times, as will popular gypsy-jazz exponents Cigany Weaver.

Acclaimed singer-songwriter Fred Smith will play three shows, as will the “Balkan Elvis” – Mikelangelo (Michael Simic), who is a late replacement for Nicky Bomba in the program.

“We love the fact that most of our acts are in Bulli for the whole festival, and so are available to play multiple times,” Mr De Santi said. “Not only does that mean people can make sure they see all the ‘must-see’ acts, but they can also choose to see them on one of the big stages, or in a more intimate venue like The Chapel or the Global Green, where you really can get up close and personal with the performers.”

After the festival-opening Folk School on the Wednesday and Thursday, the 35th Illawarra Folk Festival will kick off in earnest on Thursday night (January 16) with six of the 11 stages operating, as well as the traditional Tripe Dinner and Concert.

Thursday night's acts include Brighde Chaimbeul, the Toe Sucking Cowgirls, Shellie Morris, Cigany Weaver, Fly Little Sparrow, English folk legend Rory McLeod and Canada's Tequila Mockingbird Orchestra.

"Thursday night is traditionally our charity night, and this year the proceeds will go to Hidden Harvest," Mr De santi said. "And whereas in the past it used to be a fairly quiet start to the festival, in recent years it has become much bigger. This time the Thursday night program is a real feature of the festival, so we are hoping that it will really attract a crowd and set the tone for the rest of the weekend.

"The single entry price for Thursday night has been slashed to just \$15 – unless you have a four-day pass – because we want to encourage people to come in and get a taste of the 400 concerts that will be presented over the festival."

Mr De Santi said organisers were particularly happy with the strong line-up of young performers in the 2020 festival program, including Elephant Sessions from Scotland, Australian acts Cigany Weaver, Chaika, Finn, Greann Dove, Honeymoon Bridge, Great Aunt and Sue Ray, and a large local youth presence headed by the very popular trio Dear Violet.

Another important element is the Indigenous artist representation, headed by Shellie Morris and accompanied by Brian Morley, Kahl Wallis, Troy Brady and David Spry.

"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. "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 a wide range of food stalls, 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.

The program can now be viewed online on the festival website www.illawarrafolkfestival.com.au

Early Bird four-day passes at \$150 (a saving of \$70) are also available until December 23.

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

Full list of performers:

INTERNATIONAL

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; Mo Kenney, The Tequila Mockingbird Orchestra – CANADA; Hanne Kah – GERMANY; Teatro Matita - SLOVENIA; The Barleyshakes Trio – IRELAND.

NATIONAL

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, Dave Ellison, 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, Michael Simic (Mikelangelo), Mi Hermano y Yo Vallenato y Folclore, Nick Rheinberger, , 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

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, Mem Davis, Money Killed Jonny, Murmur, Northern Illawarra Combined Churches, Peter Willey, 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

Brian Bell, Jason Roweth, Peter Mace, Robyn Sykes, Stoney Broke

YOUTH

Abigail Wighton, Adam Warren, Aurora Li, Claire Doherty, 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, Sian Fuller, Stephanie Swords