



Wesfarmers Arts

# SYNOPSIS & CASTLIST

The **Bendat Family Foundation** presents

## ELIJAH

West Australian Opera in association with  
The University of Western Australia Conservatorium  
of Music.

**Winthrop Hall | 14, 15, 16 May 2021**

### CAST CHANGE

**Mr Lachlann Lawton will sing the role of Elijah in this evening's performance.**

Composer **Felix Mendelssohn**

Librettist **Julius Schubring**

Conductor **Christopher van Tuinen**

Director **Margrete Helgeby Chaney**

Based on a concept by **Patrick Nolan**

Lighting Designer **Mark Howett**

Soprano **Lisa Harper-Brown**

Mezzo soprano **Chelsea Kluga**

Tenor **Paul O'Neill**

Elijah **Lachlann Lawton**

Featuring **UWA Symphonic Chorus** and **WAO Chorus**

Featuring **UWA Symphony Orchestra**

Repetiteur **Adrian Soares**

### PART ONE – 1 Kings 17, 18

*Elijah* tells of key incidents in the life of the 9th century BCE prophet. The action starts as Elijah announces a curse, vividly painted by a series of descending tritones. A turbulent orchestral overture depicts this tragedy. In the ensuing chorus people beg for God's help. The soprano and alto soloists sing a plaintive melody in alternation with the chorus's plea "Lord, bow Thine ear to our prayer." After a recitative, an aria "If with all your hearts" is sung by Elijah's friend.

The next scene begins with a restatement of the introductory music. Elijah is accused of causing Israel's troubles. He responds that the people have brought this upon themselves by worshipping false gods. Elijah challenges the priests of the god Baal to a duel of the Gods, in which each is to prepare a sacrifice and pray to their respective deities to ignite the fire beneath it. The Baalists go first. Baal's failure to respond is depicted by dramatic silences. Elijah mockingly demands that the priests pray louder. The chorus implores their god, but still there is no answer. When Baal fails to light the fire, Elijah exhorts the people of Israel to turn their prayers to the one true God. In response, God sends fire to consume the sacrifice, and Elijah orders the priests of Baal slain.

Those who have forsaken God are reproached. Elijah turns joins the people in praying to God to end the drought. Three times he sends a youth to see if rain clouds have appeared. Three times there are none. Finally, the child sees a little cloud in the distance – the rains have come at last.

Executive Director Carolyn Chard AM  
Artistic Director Christopher van Tuinen

### PART TWO – 1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 1, 2

Elijah appears before King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Elijah accuses the King of angering God by worshipping Baal. The Queen in turn accuses Elijah of treachery and of trying to usurp King Ahab's power. With mounting fury Queen Jezebel tells the people that Elijah must perish because he destroyed the priests of Baal. The mob goes after Elijah.

The prophet's friend tells him to flee for his life. Elijah goes into the wilderness, where he longs for death. The aria "It is enough," a direct reference to "Es ist vollbracht" from Bach's *St. John Passion*. The prophet's anger at the people of Israel flares up, but his despair returns. An unaccompanied chorus of women portrays angels comforting the prophet.

An angel summons Elijah to arise and journey 40 days to Mount Horeb, where the Lord will reveal himself. In the emotional climax, Elijah cries out that his efforts have been in vain. He has failed to make the people of Israel accept God. Elijah's faith falters, as he asks God why He created His own adversaries and hardened their hearts against Him. The angel returns to comfort Elijah, telling him to wait for God and not be concerned with evildoers. The angel lingers on the word "wait," indicating Elijah's one remaining task is to be patient. The chorus sings a chorale stating the lesson Elijah must learn: "He that shall endure to the end shall be saved."

The appearance of the Lord is heralded with music that vividly depicts a tempest, an earthquake, and fire – in none of which can God be found. Rather, He is in a "still, small voice" accompanied by string arpeggios. A chorus of angels sings of the holiness of God and directs Elijah to "Go, return upon thy way." Elijah accepts God and receives his peace. The chorus then sings of Elijah's ascent into heaven.

Here ends the story of Elijah. Mendelssohn intended to bring the oratorio to a close here as well, but Schubring convinced him to add an aria, "Then shall the righteous shine forth," a recitative, and three choruses. The last of these is a brilliant fugue that forms a powerful conclusion to this massive work.

*Duration 2hrs and 20 minutes with one 20-minute interval*  
*Sung in English*  
*Casting correct at time of publication but may be subject to amendment.*

### GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



West Australian Opera is supported by the State Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.