



Annual General Meeting, March 15, 2018

Chair's Annual Report 2017

The SweetWater Music Festival will be 15 years old in 2018 – a milestone to celebrate!

In 2017 SweetWater focused on strengthening the foundation and structures that will carry SweetWater forward as a mature, exciting, respected and financially secure organization in 2018 and beyond. And we were very busy with the production of an amazing Festival weekend in September and an increase in community outreach and engagement activities as well! 2017 was a very successful year in all aspects.

There are many to thank for our successes in 2017!

- Our wonderful audiences, donors, sponsors, funders, and volunteers who make SweetWater possible every year.
- Mark Fewer, our Artistic Director who played an essential role in the development of the new SweetWater Strategic plan, as well producing an entirely successful SweetWater with a Splash of Maple festival in September. Mark also delighted jazz and SweetWater fans with the first SweetWater Jazz concert at the Heartwood Hall and played an amazing 'Up Close and Personal' concert with his friend and collaborator Daniel Janke from their award-winning CD.
- Our Festival Manager, Paul Eichhorn who supports the board, board committees and the Artistic Director so capably all through the year with his excellent organizational, administrative, marketing and social media skills. This is year two for Paul with SweetWater and we appreciate his hard work and commitment.
- The musicians and luthiers who bring their talent, enthusiasm, and passion for music and string instruments to our region for the festival and to SweetWater outreach programs.
- The many community organizations and individuals who participated in the Access Music workshops, and who provided input for the development of the new strategic plan.
- The members of the SweetWater Board of Directors: Colleen Purdon, Chair, Shawna Macivor, Board Secretary and Fundraising and Marketing Committee, Bob Scheifele, Board Treasurer, Jackie Mersich, Chair Education Committee and Legacy Fund Committee, Lynda Montgomery, Fundraising and Marketing Committee, Sydney Misener, Chair Hospitality Committee, Bruce Hutchinson, Legacy Fund Committee and Strategic Plan Committee, and Jill Willington, Strategic Plan Committee. We are

fortunate to have a dedicated and highly skilled board of directors at SweetWater. Most will continue on over the coming year. This is Bob Scheifele's last year and we thank him for his fine work as Treasurer. Our thanks also go out to Collins Barrow for their longtime support of SweetWater by providing financial and accounting expertise. Finally, thanks to Marion MacDougall, who left our Board in late September after several years and was a key force behind our outreach and education activities as Chair Education Outreach Committee.

Highlights from 2017

The 14th SweetWater with a Splash of Maple Festival: The September festival was extremely successful with powerful music, audiences cheering, and a great way to mark the 150 anniversary of Canadian confederation. It included highlights like the world premier of Richard Mascal's Kanata composition and the first visit to SweetWater from singer Russell Braun and his wife Carolyn Maule. Local pianist Kati Gleiser was part of a stellar line up that included James Campbell, Guy Few, Aiyung Huang, Edwin Huizinga, John Novacek, Joe Phillips, Drew Jureka, Rory McLeod, and Duane Andrews. It also featured a super late night Jazz concert at the Heartwood Hall. Thank you to Mark and all the musicians and to Jan and Chanie Henning for hosting the Friday night reception at their beautiful home.

A New Strategic Plan: The development of a three-year strategic plan (2018 – 2020) for SweetWater was a major initiative for the organization. It included an online survey of stakeholders, two workshops and a series of board meetings to finalize the plan. We confirmed a new **governance model** for the organization that puts the vision of the artist director at the centre and a new **mission** statement that better describes what we do:

A showcase for the world's best performers, providing audiences with unique, intimate, and cutting-edge musical experiences that engage the mind, the spirit and the community

We created our first ever **vision** statement to focus the organization on the future:

SweetWater – Music that inspires, challenges and connects

We developed value statements to guide the way we work together as a governance body, and organizational values to support all work at SweetWater.

Finally, we developed **five strategic directions** and key action items for the next 3 years:

Succession Planning, Audience Development, Music for the Future, Partnerships and Collaboration, and Financial Sustainability.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Strategic Plan, to Marilyn Struthers for her excellent facilitation and advice, and to board members Jill Willington, Bruce Hutchinson and Colleen Purdon for their input, writing and information gathering.

A new logo and brand: The Fundraising and Marketing Committee initiated a process that resulted in a new logo and brand for SweetWater that can be used in-house to produce marketing materials. Festival Manager Paul Eichhorn worked with Innisfree design to create the new logo and brand. A big thank you to Innisfree design for sponsoring SweetWater and their generous in-kind donation of time and expertise.

New Education and Outreach: The final year of the Access Music project and the work of the Education Committee allowed SweetWater to engage the community and support young musicians throughout 2017. The 2017 Festival included many free events for young children (Mozart for Munchkins, the Musical Petting Zoo) and community (Luthier Exhibit, Classical Jam, the Luthier's Performance with James Campbell playing the Mozart Quintet for clarinet with SweetWater string players playing luthier's instruments). In addition, we subsidized a record number of tickets to people of all ages and backgrounds to make the festival inclusive and accessible. The Access Music project has identified needs and strategies that can help us develop audiences and musicians as well as increase opportunities for collaboration with other organizations. We will be applying to the Community Foundation for a follow up Access Music 2 grant to operationalize these ideas.

Increased Donations, Sponsorships and Attendance: 2017 has been a very successful year financially for SweetWater because of increases in donations, sponsorships and ticket revenues. We saw an overall increase in our audience numbers at the 2017 festival, and new faces at the festival and concerts during the year. Thank you to all of our individual donors, sponsors and funders. A special thank you to Michael and Elizabeth Warren for hosting SweetWater at their home in support of our fundraising efforts.

Looking forward to 2018

- **Access Music 2** – the next phase in the Access Music project to increase collaboration and support audience and musician development in the region
- Roll out of **Year One of the Strategic Plan** and year one plans under each of the five strategic directions
- New outreach to schools and support for young musicians
- The **Next Wave Showcase** – June 3 at Georgian Shores
- **Jazz 2** at the Heartwood Hall on April 28th
- **BALL** lecture by Mark Fewer on April 30th
- **SweetWater Festival 2018!** September 21-23 with a new mentoring initiative to give young music professions an experience of what it takes to be a festival organizer and artistic director.
- Development of a **Legacy Fund** for SweetWater's financial sustainability as a way to mark our 15th birthday in perpetuity
- Recruitment of **new board members and volunteers** to bring new perspectives and energy to the organization.
- New **marketing and sponsorship strategies** that will increase the financial sustainability of the organization and engage sponsors
- New and bigger audiences to **celebrate SweetWater's 15th birthday** and beyond.

Thank you to everyone who makes SweetWater happen, and for being part of this terrific organization. We are committed to bringing exciting, ground breaking and music of the highest quality to our region and extend an invitation to anyone who wants to be part of that project.

Respectfully submitted by

Colleen Purdon, Board Chair