



## **Annual General Meeting, March 15, 2019**

### **Chair's Annual Report 2018-2019**

SweetWater Music Festival turned 15 years old in September 2018 – we are no longer a young festival but are striding into maturity with confidence and verve!

Let's start with the big 15<sup>th</sup> birthday bash, complete with cake and candles at the 2018 AGM and an even bigger cake and celebration at the Hennings beautiful home after the Friday concert at Leith. Thanks to Mary Hutchinson for baking both of these amazing cakes. You can see some great pictures of SweetWater founders Keith Medley and Mark Fewer cutting the cake on our website!

After 15 years there was a great deal for us to celebrate: the growth and stability of SweetWater, its reputation for outstanding and innovative performances, the vision and leadership of Artistic Director Mark Fewer, the dedication and hard work of our board and volunteers, and the ongoing support of sponsors, donors and funders.

The 15<sup>th</sup> SweetWater Music Festival was musical birthday celebration - an amazing three-day extravaganza that delighted our audience, profiled new and emerging musicians, welcomed back musical 'friends' of SweetWater, and offered a rich and deep musical experience for everyone involved. It was an epic birthday celebration of music and community.

Over the past year SweetWater has been hard at work to make sure that the next 15 years are just as successful. We have made impressive progress on each of the five strategic directions outlined in our Strategic Plan:

**1. Succession Planning:** The board has increased remuneration for the Artist Director position over the past two years to move it closer to the market rate. This is helping with the recruitment of a new AD for 2020 following the announcement of founding Artistic Director Mark Fewer departure following the 2019 SweetWater Festival. SweetWater and Mark Fewer have always gone together for most of us who have been part of the festival's development over the past 15 years. We are full of gratitude for Mark's deep commitment to SweetWater and it is hard to say goodbye. He has promised that he will be back, and that he will always be connected in some way with SweetWater. We are excited for him with his new job as the Artistic Director of the Stratford Summer Music Festival, and wish him the very best!

In the fall of 2018 we began our search for a new AD for SweetWater. Mark Fewer and James Campbell generously volunteered their time and expertise to help the AD Succession Committee determine what we want and need in an Artistic Director to realize our vision: Music the Inspires, Challenges, and Connects. The Succession Committee is now interviewing 5 excellent

candidates. The board will make a final decision in April 2019. We look forward to introducing our new Artistic Director for the 2020 festival to the SweetWater community this spring.

We carried out a performance and fee review with our Festival Manager Paul Eichhorn and renewed our two-year contract with him. Paul continues to provide excellent services in all aspects of his work with SweetWater, and is a great support for the Board and AD.

**2. Financial Sustainability:** A major initiative is the establishment of an Endowment or 'Legacy' fund for SweetWater. A small committee researched potential approaches and the Board has decided to work with the Ontario Arts Foundation. The Legacy Fund will provide us with a vehicle to support the financial sustainability and future of SweetWater. We are moving forward on goals to balance our revenue sources through increase revenues from ticket sales, and sponsorships. Our 2019 budget includes a contingency fund for the first time, and we will invest this fund with the Ontario Arts Foundation to build a fund to provide for unforeseen financial pressures. Over the past year we hired a new bookkeeper and board member Jill Willington took over as Treasurer. Jill and our Festival Manager Paul Eichhorn have worked together to create new budget and financial systems and reporting tools for SweetWater that have improved oversight, financial planning and accountability for the board.

**3. Audience Development:** The 2018 festival saw increased attendance and we were able to engage new and diverse audience members and some younger audience members through partnerships with local school music programs and social service agencies. Our Education Outreach Committee has done outstanding work educating and engaging young people during the festival and through the Access Music project. We organized the first 'SweetWater Weekend Package' in partnership with the Best Western Inn on the Bay to provide audience members from outside the region with a great place to stay for the Festival weekend. This initiative will continue in 2019.

**4. Music for the Future:** We expanded SweetWater's mentorship role for the career development of young musicians at the 2018 festival with the engagement of the French Canadian Quatuor Despax string quartet, and throughout the year through sponsorships and support of the Owen Sound Youth Orchestra and Orchestra North, with a scholarship for a young musician from the Grey County Kiwanis Music Festival, and by bringing professional musicians to classrooms in Owen Sound and Meaford and the Youth Orchestra.

**5. Partnerships and Collaboration:** We worked with partners and collaborators through the Access Music project and our Education Committee, and attended a board meeting of the Georgian Bay Symphony to present our strategic plan and support collaboration. We've worked closely with many community organizations, and with schools to promote and support the development of classical, jazz and contemporary music in Grey Bruce.

**There are many to thank for our successes over the past year!**

- Our wonderful audiences, and generous donors, sponsors, funders, and volunteers.
- Mark Fewer, our Artistic Director, who planned and carried out an amazing 15<sup>th</sup> Birthday Festival and who is supporting the board and SweetWater with the recruitment, mentoring and the transition to a new Artistic Director.

- Our Festival Manager, Paul Eichhorn with his excellent organizational, administrative, marketing and social media skills. We appreciate his hard work and commitment.
- The musicians and luthiers who bring their talent, enthusiasm, and passion for music and string instruments to the festival and to SweetWater outreach programs.
- The many community organizations and individuals who are participating in the Access Music 2 project.
- The members of the SweetWater Board of Directors: Colleen Purdon, Board Chair and chair of Succession Planning Committee and Legacy Fund Committee; Shawna Macivor, Board Secretary and member Fundraising and Marketing Committee; Jill Willington, Treasurer and member of the Legacy Fund Committee; Jackie Mersich, Chair Education Committee and member of the Legacy Fund Committee and Succession Planning Committee; Lynda Montgomery, Chair Fundraising and Marketing Committee and member of the Succession Planning Committee; Sydney Misener, Chair Hospitality Committee. We are fortunate to have a dedicated and highly skilled board of directors at SweetWater.
- Thank you to Bruce Hutchinson and Keith Medley for their advice and guidance for the Legacy Fund Committee, and to James Campbell and Mark Fewer for their advice for the Succession Planning Committee. Special thanks to Maureen Sutherland for her volunteer work with Succession Planning and with Hospitality at the festival. Thank you to Jan and Chanie Henning for hosting the Gala reception.

### **Looking Forward in 2019-2020**

As SweetWater moves forward we will need the ongoing support and assistance of our 'SweetWater Family'. We will say goodbye (for awhile) to Mark and welcome a new Artistic Director. We will continue to work with donors, sponsors and funders to make SweetWater possible. We will continue to realize our strategic plan and grow SweetWater.

We are in need of committee volunteers, and additional Board members to support our new Artistic Director and to carry out our first capital campaign for the Endowment Fund. It is important for SweetWater to be financially secure, especially in these uncertain financial times.

SweetWater is a terrific organization made up of friendly, fun and hard-working staff and volunteers. We are committed to bringing exciting, ground breaking and music of the highest quality to our region and we extend an invitation to anyone who wants to get involved in whatever way that works for you. This year we are 'Sweet Sixteen' - full of promise, and with new horizons to explore.

Respectfully submitted by

Colleen Purdon

Board Chair.