



Annual General Meeting

June 18, 2020

Chair's Annual Report 2019-2020

When I look back over the time since our last Annual Meeting in March 2019 it is hard to know where to begin. It has been a packed, challenging, and inspiring 15 months. There have been so many changes and unexpected developments while SweetWater's core strengths have stayed solidly in place. We are managing the changes because we have the deep support of our funders, sponsors, patrons, donors and volunteers. We are so fortunate that our Board of Directors is experienced and completely committed to SweetWater.

2019 was a year of change, with the departure of Mark Fewer and the recruitment and hiring of our new Artistic Director Edwin Huizinga. In January of 2020 the board celebrated 'getting through' 2019 in such a successful way and we were all looking forward to smooth sailing for 2020. That was a short-lived! The reality of the Covid 19 pandemic settled in over our community and everywhere in the world in February. Since that time, SweetWater, and every sector of society, has been faced with unknowns, limitations, new challenges and changes by the week. No one could have predicted the extent of the pandemic and its impact on every aspect of day-to-day life. We are grateful that SweetWater entered the pandemic in a stable and financially sound place. We are overwhelmed by the support, encouragement and assistance that SweetWater has received from our core donors and supporters, our key funders, the volunteers, and our staff - keeping this wonderful organization moving forward. Our Strategic Plan continues to provide direction along the way. Here is a short report on highlights from the past 15 months - where we have been and where we hope to go:

SweetWater Music Festival 2019 was the last SweetWater weekend with our founding Artistic Director Mark Fewer. It was a bittersweet farewell to Mark, who founded SweetWater, in company with Keith and Jean Medley, as a 'one off' concert to showcase local luthiers at the beautiful Leith Church. That 'one off' concert was so successful that Mark, the Medleys, and a core of volunteers and donors (many who are still part of the SweetWater family) grew the SweetWater Festival we have today. Of course Mark, with his music, humour, energy, and friends was always at the centre. He brought our community, patrons, musicians, and luthiers together for 16 years of amazing artistry and deeply shared musical experiences. At his final festival, the String Makers presented him with a beautiful baroque violin made for him collaboratively. We all thank Mark for his leadership and passion, and for promising to come back our way in the future.

The 2019 Festival was an enormous success. We enjoyed fantastic performances from some of SweetWater's favourite musicians, bigger audiences and higher ticket sales, and more support from sponsors and donors. We were treated to the introduction of SweetWater's incoming Artistic Director Edwin Huizinga. And no one will forget the epic and virtuosic violin 'play-off' between the outgoing and incoming ADs at the Roxy! Once again the Hennings offered their

home and hospitality for the Friday post concert gala and celebration of Mark's 16 years at the helm of SweetWater. There was amazing food organized by Sydney Misener, Hospitality volunteer and provided by SweetWater board and community volunteers. Thank you Mary Hutchinson for the wonderful cake!

Succession Planning: We successfully recruited our new Artistic Director, Edwin Huizinga in April 2019 after a thorough and thoughtful AD search supported by the entire board, with the assistance of Mark Fewer, James Campbell and SweetWater manager Paul Eichhorn. Edwin Huizinga brings a deep commitment to building community, enormous musical talent and enthusiasm, and strong connections with some of the world's best musicians. He has planned an amazing festival for 2020. Edwin has worked tirelessly with the board and SweetWater Manager to adapt to pandemic realities that emerged in February. He is endlessly creative and flexible, keeping the well being of musicians, patrons and SweetWater at the centre of his thinking and planning. We are so fortunate to have Edwin as our AD during these changing and challenging times.

Paul Eichhorn SweetWater Manager continues to provide invaluable services in all aspects of his work with SweetWater. We appreciate his unflappable approach and very hard work with the board on behalf of SweetWater. Paul's talent with marketing, communication (website, social media, E-Blasts) and fundraising support is appreciated. He has also played a critical role supporting our new AD learning all the details that make up SweetWater. Paul and Edwin have worked together closely as a team to provide the board with options and possibilities for the upcoming 2020 SweetWater Festival, as well as community and outreach events. Succession Planning for SweetWater includes overcoming the limitations posed by the Covid pandemic, while staying true to our vision: **SweetWater – Music that inspires, challenges and connects.**

In 2020 we welcomed new Board member, Adrian Hussey, who is chairing the Endowment Committee, and new volunteers to the Education, Hospitality, and Endowment committees. The recruitment of new, and more diverse board members is an ongoing challenge for SweetWater, as for almost all not for profit organizations in our region. We need to work harder to recruit and bring diverse people and perspectives into the organization, and will begin a formal recruitment strategy in 2021.

Music for the Future: The Education Committee, under the leadership of chair Jackie Mersich, expanded its community outreach and musician development activities and held the successful first Next Wave Concert at the Leith Church in May 2019. Nine emerging musicians played to an appreciative audience. SweetWater provided school outreach sessions, and supported Orchestra North, the Owen Sound Youth Orchestra and the Kiwanis Music Festival participants and provided complimentary tickets to festival concerts to ensure access for all. For 2020 and beyond, Artistic Director Edwin Huizinga is planning a new mentorship program for emerging musicians who participant in the annual Next Wave Concerts.

Audience Development: In May 2019 we had a sold out Jazz concert with Drew Jurecka and friends at the Heartwood Hall. Our audience numbers for the 16th festival were the best in the history of SweetWater. There is still 'room' for many more people at most SweetWater events though! We will be expanding our audience development efforts to attract more patrons from the wider Grey Bruce region, and from the urban areas to the south and west. Edwin Huizinga is particularly interested in attracting more young patrons and supporters to SweetWater. His eclectic musical background and strong connections with younger musicians will help to draw new and younger audience members to the festival. The 2019 Festival free programming for children (Music for Munchkins), community music making (Classical Jam) and the String Makers presentation, were all enjoyed by more people. The Education committee is currently

carrying out Access Music 3 with funding from the Community Foundation Grey Bruce. The 2020 Next Wave Virtual Showcase is now underway and accommodates restrictions posed by the pandemic. The Access Music 3 project also includes building a new connection with the local Indigenous community through the Giche Namewikwedong Reconciliation Garden to share music and friendship. A Gathering will take place when current covid 19 restrictions are lifted. Finally, we engaged Jaron Freeman Fox, a talented jazz player and composer, who was not able to come for the scheduled Jazz Concert and school outreach because of covid restrictions. Jaron had created a virtual school outreach experience. SweetWater is learning how to adapt and use technology to bring music and musicians to our community. We are offering online concerts of past concerts through the SweetWater Redux programming on the SweetWater website. Our Artistic Director, SweetWater Manager and the board are working together to find new ways to bring SweetWater to diverse audiences and keep the music happening!

Financial Sustainability: SweetWater has made major steps towards Financial Sustainability through the hard work and expertise of our Treasurer Jill Willington, the Fundraising Committee chaired by Lynda Montgomery, and the new Endowment Sub Committee chaired by Adrian Hussey. The SweetWater Manager and Treasurer have developed new and more efficient financial procedures, as well new approaches and tools for fundraising and donor development. We have new policies, procedures and tools in place to guide board short and long term financial decision making. Heritage Canada has confirmed 3 years of funding, and we are in the final year of a 3-year funding cycle with the Ontario Arts Council. We have financial structures and policies in place to deal with financial changes, and build for the future. Good policies and planning have made SweetWater more efficient, but the need for annual donations and sponsorships from our supporters remains. Ticket sales, donations, and annual grants make the music happen. Our new Endowment Funds are in a ‘building phase’ and are not yet contributing to the annual operating costs. We are working to expand revenue generation through applications for one-time grants (2019-2020 applications include: the Bickel Foundation, TD Bank, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Community Foundation Grey Bruce), and this will continue in the future. Thank you to everyone who generously supports SweetWater each and every year, especially during these Covid 19 times. SweetWater’s annual Festival, education, outreach and musician development work happens because our supporters make it happen!

Partnerships and Collaboration: We are building new community partnerships and collaborations through the Access Music 3 project, our Education Committee, the work of the Fundraising Committee, and more recently as part of our Covid 19 response. Local and provincial arts/music organizations have generously shared their time and expertise as we strive to mitigate and manage pandemic realities. We are all in this together! SweetWater and its partners are learning together as we look for ways to support musicians and bring music and musicians to our region in new and different ways.

Strategic Planning – A new three-year plan 2021- 2023: Our current strategic plan ends in 2020. A preliminary evaluation of the current plan has taken place, and there are many successes and accomplishments. Board member Charlotte MacFarlane is heading up the building of our next three-year plan. We will be consulting with board members, donors, supporters and key music and arts stakeholders over the summer. The new strategic plan will be in place in January 2021. We look forward to your participation and input into the new plan.

Thank You!

This is my last Chair report, after 4 years in this office. I have truly loved being part of SweetWater and the role of Chair. Having said that, I am delighted to hand the Chair responsibilities over to Lynda Montgomery, the incoming Chair, and hope I can be of some

assistance over the next year in the role of Past Chair. The past 4 years have been a learning experience for me, and a wonderful opportunity to work with amazing board members, staff, volunteers and supporters. Thank you to everyone who has offered counsel, encouragement, wise words, good ideas and friendship to me over the past 4 years.

I would like to thank Mark Fewer and Keith Medley for their stories, SweetWater history lessons, and friendship – it was an overwhelming job at the beginning and their support was so important.

Thank you to Ewan Porter, who in his role as chair of the board took the time to teach me about SweetWater, before I became Chair.

Thank you to Paul Eichhorn, SweetWater Manager for learning with me over the past years as SweetWater changed and grew, for being open to ideas, and for being grounded and realistic with things that were better left at that stage!

Thank you to Edwin Huizinga for coming to SweetWater as our new Artistic Director and for all of your creativity, flexibility and warmth. The way forward the last few months has been so very unusual, and you have kept us all focused on what really matters with SweetWater.

Thank you to all of the donors, sponsors and supporters of SweetWater. A very special thank you to Bruce and Mary Hutchinson, Sydney Misener and Ron DeBoer, and Maureen and Ken Sutherland for your time, your support, and your commitment to SweetWater.

Thank you to all of the wonderful musicians and luthiers that have come to SweetWater, stayed at the house, hung out on the deck and rehearsed in the living room. One of the greatest privileges of being part of SweetWater is having world famous musicians rehearsing in your house!

Thank you to this year's Board of Directors who have stick handled everything that has come our way: Jill Willington, Treasurer; Lynda Montgomery, Fund Raising Chair, Jackie Mersich, Education Committee chair; Adrian Hussey, Endowment Committee Chair, and Charlotte MacFarlane, Strategic Planning. A very special thank you to Shawna Macivor who resigned recently, for her many years as Secretary of the Board, member of the Fundraising Committee, and writer of so many letters on behalf of the organization. We miss you already Shawna!

A final thank you to my family, all huge supporters of SweetWater, who have helped out in so many ways, and made it possible for me to focus on SweetWater.

Respectfully submitted by

Colleen Purdon, Board Chair