



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

APRIL 21, 2022

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021 -2022

As I reflect over the last year one word stands out...COMMITMENT! On all fronts the SweetWater family has demonstrated commitment. Our Patrons and supporters have again demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the stable longevity of SweetWater with their generous donations and support. Our volunteer base has increased as we made our way through the last two years of COVID challenges. Our Board, General Manager and Artistic Director have shown courage and dedication to provide live music to an audience that was also committed to attend and appreciate these experiences.

Thank you all. We are looking forward to next year...2023 as we will be celebrating our 20th anniversary! Who could believe that the vision of Keith and Jean Medley (and a number of other "kitchen table" friends) and Mark Fewer would be celebrated 20 years later!!!

These have been two challenging years for our Artistic Director, EDWIN HUIZINGA. His willingness to think creatively about how to continue to bring live SweetWater performances is a reflection of his passion to build community, both locally and through his extensive connections to musicians worldwide. We are grateful for his leadership.

As COVID restrictions reduced, we ventured into indoor live Concerts again. To accommodate everyone's comfort level, we created a blended programme of OUTDOOR CONCERTS (Thursday evening at the Alder Gallant home in Annan and Sunday afternoon at the Zufelt Gabriel riverside home) and INDOOR CONCERTS (Friday and Saturday evenings at Harmony Centre and Saturday late night at Heartwood Hall).

Edwin's programming was so exciting. We enjoyed the extraordinary Classical performances of the ROSEBUD STRING QUARTET (Aaron Schwebel, Keith Hamm, Sheila Jaffe and Leana Rutt) accompanied at times by amazing (and entertaining) pianist Philip Chiu and exceptional cellist, Julie Hereish. New to SweetWater and thrilling to watch was Tamar Ilana and Ventanas with their flamenco interpretations. We were privileged to experience the well-known group of Tom Allen, Lori Gemmell, Pete Gemmell, Jeff Reilly, and Patricia O'Callaghan.

We continued with the successful noon-hour COMMUNITY CONCERTS at various locations around Owen Sound and a concert at Meaford Harbour front. These Concerts promote "user-friendly" opportunities for audiences that may not have experienced SweetWater previously. They will likely continue permanently in our programming. As well, the Sunday Community Concert at Owen Sound Farmers Market showcased some of our local LUTHIERS and their instruments. Thank you to Sybille Ruppert, Greg Walke, Mark Schnurr and David Prentice.

During these times of reduced programming for all Festivals, a new project surfaced! Jim Campbell (Festival of the Sound) and Mark Fewer (Stratford Summer Music Festival) created a digital concert event called "JULY IN JANUARY". Eleven Festivals around Ontario contributed

hour long digital concerts. Our contribution was filmed at Leith Church during the Festival week featuring the Rosebud String Quartet, Philip Chiu and Julie Hereish. It was a privilege to be involved with this project and it has resulted in the creation of Classical Music Festivals Canada. SweetWater is one of the founding members and we believe this organization will be key to promoting classical music to wider audiences throughout Canada.

Edwin and Philip Chiu recorded for release last May a Concert, "UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL". They have now recorded "UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL: THE SEQUEL" which will be offered on April 22nd free for all to enjoy (thanks for support from a sponsor and Canadian Heritage). Their music together is magical and we are so appreciative.

You can see how our programming has expanded! None of this would have been possible without the dedication of our General Manager, PAUL EICHHORN. Unfortunately for us, Paul has tendered his resignation, securing full time work near his home in Midland. He will be missed greatly as his energy, common sense, attention to detail and collaborative skills with musicians, volunteers and Board Members were all qualities that facilitated our growth as an organization. Although we wish he wasn't leaving, we are all tremendously grateful and wish him the best. Hopefully Paul can come to SweetWater next year and just relax and enjoy it!!

SUCCESSION PLANNING: The Executive has struck a Search Team (including former Chair, Colleen Purdon) for a new General Manager. It is our hope that we will have someone in place later this spring to allow for a period of transition with Paul prior to this departure.

Currently we have a full Board. The recent addition of Gwynne Potter, with her accounting and not-for profit background, will be an excellent person to take over for the Treasurer position. As well, very recently, we were fortunate to have Cynthia Lemon join us. Cynthia has recently retired from a career in education, including teaching and serving on the provincial elementary teachers union and the Bluewater Board. We know she will be a great addition to our Board.

Thank you to both for joining the Board team.

Sadly, JACKIE MERSICH, after 5 years on the Board will be resigning. She has Chaired Education Outreach Committee (which thankfully she will return to as a committee member now) and has dedicatedly served on the Resource Development Committee for the last 3 years. We are grateful that she had taken the Secretary position for the last 2 years. Her longstanding history with SweetWater and music in general in our community has benefited SweetWater greatly. Thank you Jackie.

Unfortunately MARY GRAY will not be running again. She has been a great support on the Endowment/Legacy Committee. Mary will remain on the RD Committee and continue being our liaison in Toronto.

There will be a further change as shortly both JILL WILLINGTON and MYSELF will be stepping down from our Executive responsibilities. Jill has been an amazing Co-Chair with me for the last two years and has served as Treasurer since she came on five years ago. She has skillfully stick handled many new efficiencies in our accounting procedures and as well always presented a "user friendly" budget for the Board to understand!! Her accounting background, musical interest and not-for-profit experience has made her an ideal Board member.

Both of us will remain on the Board for a short period to help out with the transition to a new General Manager and a new Executive. I will stay on as Chair of Resource Development.

A successful Blue Skies Day #2 was held again in July. BSD was found to be a very productive event for the Board Members to ask questions, give opinions and strategize as to where they saw SweetWater's future. As well, during these times of regular ZOOM meetings, it gave an opportunity to enjoy each other during an actual face-to-face sessions. Later in the year, it was determined by the Board that recruitment of new members was becoming a significant challenge. Another "mini Blue Skies Day" was held in November to create a strategy to inform and recruit new Board/Committee members.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: Again, SweetWater was moving ahead into uncertain waters regarding funding. However, with diligent efforts on behalf of the Board and Resource Development Committee we ended up in a surplus position. Our "Reach-outs" (Phone call Campaign and Spring and Fall mailout letters) provided opportunities for our membership to hear directly from us...and we from them. The overall donations/contributions/Sponsorships again demonstrate how very loyal and supportive our SweetWater Family is and how they appreciate what we provide. We couldn't host any of this wonderful Festival without your support. THANK YOU.

Our General Manager submitted grant applications early on and they have been very successful this year. Part of our fortunate surplus position has been due to maintained and in fact increased overall funding. We received a large one-time grant from Canadian Heritage and increases in other grants. We remain grateful for continuing support from PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS (Jean Medley Memorial SweetWater Endowed Fund, Betty and Joe Gray Family Foundation, and Eva Leflar Foundations).

EDUCATION/OUTREACH: This committee has experienced significant programming expansion due to Edwin's commitment to not only bring our music to a wider audience but to provide mentorship to young people. Chaired by Community member Christine MacLean, many programs that had been initiated due to COVID restrictions were seen as successful and were therefore continued or enhanced. The "NEXT WAVE SHOWCASE" continued as a virtual event last June. We had an increased number of submitted applications. As well as the mentoring opportunities for the finalists, two of them contributed (both performing and helping out) during the Festival week gaining valuable experience and two others performed as well at Community Concerts.

"FRONT ROW" and "INTO THE MUSIC" digital forums continue to offer access to meet SweetWater performers and hear a short performance by them.

School initiatives were changed from live opportunities to a new recording by Keith Hamm and Julie Hereish where they are talking and appealing to junior/senior elementary school students. It is very well done and will be a good tool going forward.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: The Strategic Plan that Colleen Purdon and Charlotte MacFarlane authored last year has been referred to throughout our year in all decisions. It is proving to be an essential tool providing guidance and insight into solving all challenges that come up at all levels of the organization. We, as well, are maintaining and keeping updated the Work Plan that was created. It is being modified and edited as situations change. Again, a great tool for Boards that follow.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT: This committee was initiated last year in a response to SweetWater's commitment to expanding our audience, attracting a varied demographic of people who will appreciate the quality of music offered. Our live outdoor programming last year exposed us to several new audience members. Mike Vair Haley secured 3 different coffee/

pastries vendors who set up at 3 of our Community Concerts. The feedback from both audience participants and the vendors was very positive. The festive nature of serving food and drink at venues was appreciated by all. Edwin's diverse interests and talent in many genres connects him with audiences of all ages and we are grateful for his commitment to expanding our presence.

THANK YOU: It has been another amazing year for SweetWater! Challenges unlike any other time in the history of SweetWater has brought to the forefront the tenacity of our Board and our Supporters. We believe in what SweetWater brings to our lives!

This will be my final year as Board Chair. I am so proud of what this Board has accomplished and particularly grateful to have had Edwin and Paul working hand in hand with us. They creatively and persistently worked to achieve the level of excellence that SweetWater personifies.

At the core of my experience with SweetWater is gratitude. I know I have said it before, but without you...our Board, Volunteers, generous Patrons, Edwin's visions, and Paul's determination...SweetWater would not be on the brink of a 20th Anniversary!

Congratulations, Thank you and Best Wishes to all!

Lynda Montgomery