

Welcome to the 80th year of the Sault Ste. Marie Music Festival. For eight decades now, the goal of this organization is to encourage young performers *not gain a prize, nor defeat a rival, but to pace one another on the road to excellence*. It serves as a great motivator to challenge them to strive for a higher level of performance.

This annual event has been showcasing the incredible musical talents of our community's most cherished resource, our young people. The valuable experience they have gained has also been a catalyst for many to pursue careers in music. Having one's hard work recognized with an adjudicator's award is a great accomplishment. The highest honour however is to step on stage at the finals of the Ontario Music Festival Association, to be recognized as one of the young elite musicians in the province. From there some have gone on to represent our city at the National Festival. It has been instrumental in introducing the exceptional talent from Sault Ste. Marie to a wider audience.

But, a healthy organization needs to grow and evolve to ensure that it is meeting the present needs of our young performers. We are challenged to motivate each new generation to discover the joy of music with new exciting material and instructional methods. As a member of the Ontario Music Festival Association we regularly communicate with other organizations to share ideas and best practises. In addition, they recommend excellent adjudicators with expertise, and who know how to encourage and motivate children and teens.

The following enhancements have been made to the 2017 Festival which will result in a better musical experience for our students:

- Lower entry fees for all classes.
- Junior, Intermediate, and Senior categories in each division. This will result in more awards that will particularly benefit younger performers.
- New ensemble awards (duets, trios etc.) for each category within a division.
- A new Rising Star Competition, similar to the Shield, for participants 14 years and under.
- Revamped piano and voice syllabi
- Updated Rules and Regulations to ensure that they reflect Provincial and National Festival standards.
- A major fundraising campaign to support lower entry fees and increased scholarships.

The Algoma Conservatory of Music has coordinated this annual event for the past 12 years. It perfectly fits within the Conservatory's mission statement; to promote excellence in music education and performance in our community.

The festival also gives testimony to the incredible level of musical instruction taking place in our community by a dedicated group of teachers. I am excited to work with them to continue this tradition of musical excellence. Looking forward to celebrating another great year of incredible music!

Ed Dickey, Director
Sault Ste. Marie Music Festival