

THE GREATER VICTORIA PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

2019-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

2019 STRATEGIC ACTION ITEMS

The Greater Victoria Performing Arts Festival Association (Festival) last completed a strategic review in 2013-2014. The resulting strategic plan was adopted by the Festival board of directors in September 2014. The 2014 strategic plan identified five major goals, each with multiple underlying strategic action items. The 2014 plan has provided a clear roadmap to guide the Festival board and Festival administration for the past four highly successful Festival seasons.

Recognizing the need to update the Festival's strategic plan, in late 2017 the board created a strategic planning committee to lead the 2018 strategic review and to produce a new Festival strategic plan. The strategic planning committee consulted with all Festival stakeholder groups, produced an interim strategic agenda outline, and conducted a strategic planning workshop with the board in the process of preparing the 2019-2021 Festival strategic plan.

Festival has an ambitious strategic agenda for the next three years. At the strategic planning workshop, the board worked to prioritize specific areas of focus within the strategic plan. Below are nine areas of strategic focus for Festival, each having action items, with success measures identified, that will be undertaken and completed prior to and during Festival 2019. The successful completion of these action items will allow Festival to move on to another set of strategic action items in 2020 and again in 2021.

1. **Ensuring a vibrant Festival that is rewarding for participants, audiences, volunteers, and all stakeholders:** Throughout the 2018 strategic planning process, underlying every planning conversation was the foundational principle that Festival must continue to be a vibrant experience for participants, audiences, volunteers, and other contributors. The board recognizes that the Festival environment has significantly evolved in the past decade, from new performing arts programs entering the market to the penetration of social media platforms that have to a significant degree displaced conventional print and broadcast media. Festival's 2019-2021 strategic agenda has been formulated in large part to respond to the changing world in which Festival operates, with a particular focus on ensuring Festival is a fun, rewarding, and memorable event for everyone Festival touches.

Success in delivering a vibrant Festival every year will continue to be measured by the number of participant registrations, the funding support of donors and patrons, the "buzz" that Festival generates in the local market, and the enthusiastic audience response at every Festival event during the season.

2. **Reworking the Festival concert and adjudication sessions calendar:** Through 2018 and again in 2019, Festival has been and will be a six week event, from the first performance adjudication sessions to the showcase Roberto and Mary Wood Scholarship Concert that closes Festival each year. The 2018 strategic review concluded that Festival needs to be

reworked to become a four week event with the concert series including the Highlight Concerts and Wood Concert moving to a two week schedule and with the entire Festival being moved to an earlier time frame, most likely during February-March instead of the current April-May time frame. In this process, consideration will be given to other conflicting events in the Greater Victoria region and also to school and university calendars. Any changes to the Festival calendar will be undertaken for Festival 2020 and beyond.

Success for this strategic action item will be measured by the degree of enthusiastic acceptance of the reworked Festival calendar by all Festival stakeholders, including, in particular, participants, participant families, Section Heads, Adjudicators, and Festival partners.

- 3. Growing the number of participant registrations:** Festival has registered approximately the same number of participants each year for the past number of years. Reinforcing the fact that Festival has a dedicated cohort of followers. However, during this period, the Capital Regional District has seen a population increase of greater than 10%. To ensure its place as an integral part of the Victoria performing arts community, Festival wants to grow its participant registrations in line with the Region's growth in population.

Success for this strategic action item will be measured by both the numeric and percentage increase in participant registrations, with the goal of an aggregate 10% increase in registrations from 2019 to 2021.

- 4. Connecting more directly to the West Shore and the Saanich Peninsula:** The population clusters in and around Victoria have changed dramatically over the 92 years Victoria has enjoyed Festival. The 2018 strategic review identified that Festival has remained closely connected to its City of Victoria roots while the majority of the population growth in the region since 2000 has been in the West Shore communities and on the Saanich Peninsula, where now one-third of the Region's population calls home. Beginning in 2019, Festival will seek opportunities to deliver a representative number of performance adjudication sessions and one or more Festival Highlight Concerts in communities neighbouring Victoria.

Success for this strategic action item will be measured firstly by the number of adjudication sessions, concerts, and other Festival sponsored events that occur in West Shore and Saanich Peninsula communities each year, and secondly by the number of ticket sales for Festival events held in these neighbouring communities.

- 5. Introducing the new Festival online registration management system:** Festival is pleased to announce that a new online registration management system is being implemented for the 2019 Festival. The new system will provide an easier, more intuitive registration experience for all participants. The new system will better serve Section Heads in organizing performance adjudication sessions. The new system will provide more complete reporting on participant engagement with Festival and on other Festival success factors, with reporting on an anonymized basis where needed. The collection of consistent and reliable data will produce metrics to inform Festival decision making and future strategic direction. Festival administration will take the lead in the strategic action item of fully training Section Heads and other assigned volunteers on the use of the new Festival online registration management system. Registrants should

find the new system to be easy to use and should have no difficulty in completing their registrations.

Success for this strategic action item will be measured firstly in the ability of all users of the new registration management system to use the system to its full potential with minimal difficulty, and secondly in the success of Festival administration in efficiently problem-solving any issues that may arise.

- 6. Expanding and enhancing operational support for Section Heads:** Festival is very fortunate in having an enthusiastic and hard-working volunteer group of Section Heads. The 2018 strategic review identified a number of ways in which Festival can expand and enhance operational support for Festival Section Heads, to relieve some of the workload that burden Section Heads each year. The new Festival online registration management system will be an important part of this enhanced support. Other initiatives include assembling a Section Head handbook, providing for shared Section Head positions, and providing for additional operational support in the weeks leading up to the start of Festival.

Success for this strategic action item will be measured by positive feedback in the annual post-Festival Section Head survey and from Festival's success in retaining and growing its group of Section Head volunteers.

- 7. Fund-raising strategic renewal:** With each passing year, fund-raising in the not-for-profit sector occurs within an increasingly competitive arena. The challenges, and the opportunities, in securing sufficient funds to operate Festival, from fund-raising activities in addition to session and concert ticket sales, was the most discussed topic at the August strategic planning workshop. Out of these discussions, the board has made the strategic renewal of Festival fund-raising a high priority action item. The first step in this action item will be the creation of a board-level fund-raising committee, which will be tasked with reorganizing Festival fund-raising activities as necessary to maximize donor, patron, and grant funding proceeds for Festival 2019 and beyond.

Success for this strategic action item will firstly be measured in achieving and exceeding the funding budget for Festival 2019, secondly by the numeric and percentage increase in the amount of undesignated donations, thirdly by the number and value of multi-year donation commitments that are gathered, and fourthly from the positive feedback of Festival donors and patrons.

- 8. Continued prudent financial management:** While it is not a new strategic item, the 2018 strategic review acknowledged the continued excellent financial management of Festival by the board treasurer, Festival administration, and a volunteer board advisor. Festival operates each year within the parameters of a detailed budget approved by the board in advance of the start of Festival's fiscal year on August 1. Financial operating performance is reviewed at each board meeting and any required course corrections are acted upon as soon as they are identified. It is and will remain a strategic action item each year for Festival to operate with firm discipline, in line with that year's approved operating budget.

Success for this strategic action item will be measured by Festival's ability to maximize revenues, to operate within the annual expense budget, and to produce a modest net operating surplus each year.

9. **Festival board in a period of transition:** By design, the Festival board of directors is a working board. Each board member carries one or more operating responsibilities - working on committees, working alongside Festival administration, and working with Festival volunteers. Festival has benefited from many years of service to Festival by a number of board members who are considering or in the process of retiring from the board. Thus in 2019, Festival has the responsibility and the opportunity to recruit between four and six new directors. Work is already underway to fill these board positions.
Success for this strategic action item will be measured by the seating of as many as six new directors in advance of the 2019 Festival Annual General Meeting.