SMFA Fall Conference

Royal Hotel Regina, Regina, SK
October 30-31, 2026

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Performing Arts Competitions

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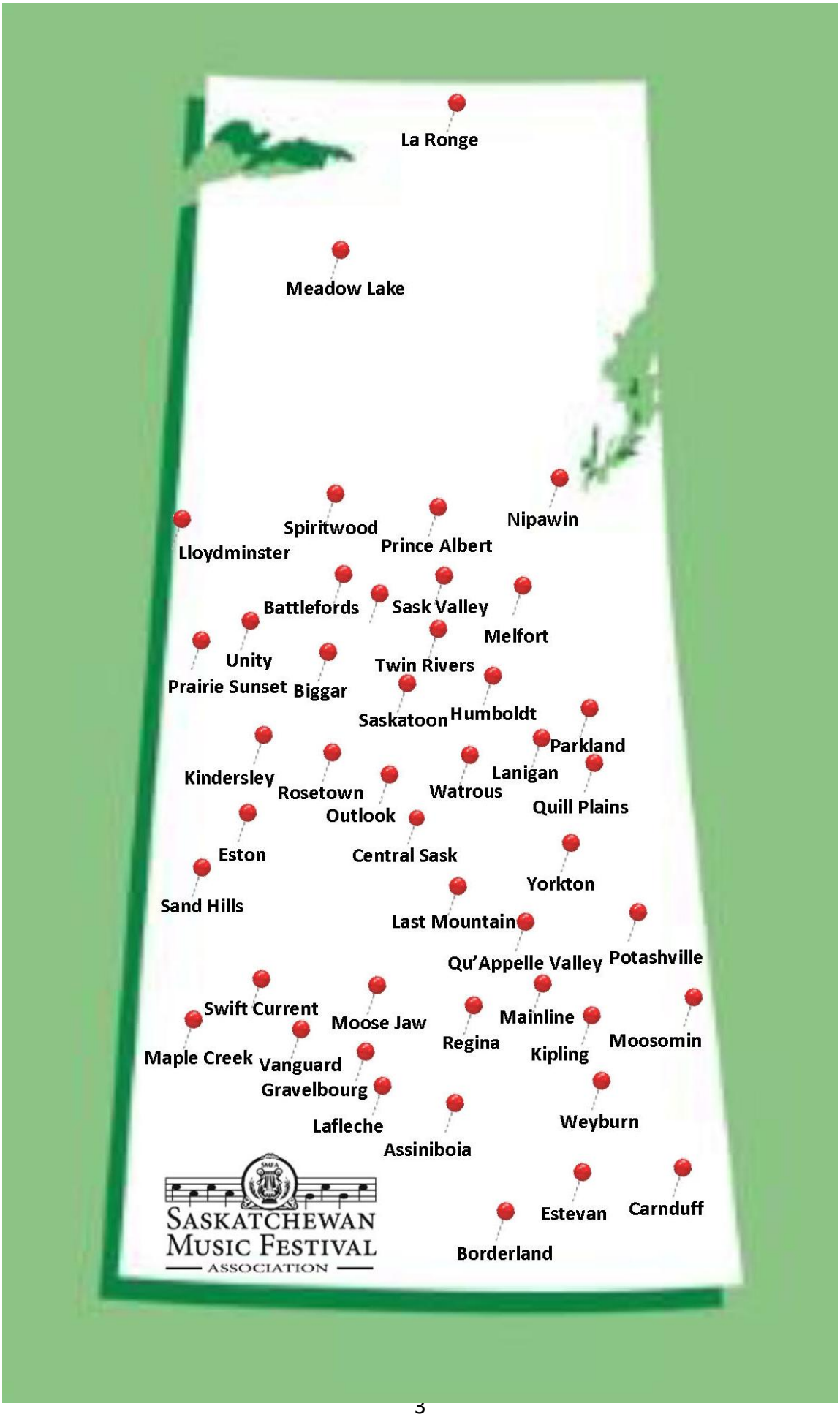
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La Ronge
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Unity
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Saskatoon
Humboldt
Parkland
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Lanigan
Rosetown
Watrous
Quill Plains
Outlook
Central Sask
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Yorkton
Sand Hills
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Potashville
Qu'Appelle Valley
Swift Current
Moose Jaw
Mainline
Regina
Moosomin
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Kipling
Gravelbourg
Lafleche
Weyburn
Assiniboia
Estevan
Carnduff
Borderland
SASKATCHEWAN
MUSIC FESTIVAL
ASSOCIATION

Message from the President



It is my pleasure, on behalf of the SMFA board and staff, to welcome you to our 2026 conference.

This weekend gives us an opportunity to share information and provide inspiration. We hope that our district festival committee members leave here feeling energized and ready to dive into their 2027 events. Even more importantly, the conference is a time to celebrate all of YOU, our volunteers, who make programs run smoothly with countless hours of devoted work and planning. Without you, the festivals that young artists and their teachers count on as part of their journey simply won't exist.

Thank you for believing in the value of music festivals and supporting them with your time and energy. Many thanks to our office staff, Carol, Nancy and Mariel for their work and dedication.

We wish you all the best in 2027.

Dianne Gryba

SMFA President

2026 Festival Anniversaries

Central Sask Music Festival (Davidson) ..... 65 years
Kipling & District Music Festival ..... 70 years
Lafleche & District Music Festival ..... 60 years
Lloydminster & District Kiwanis Music Festival..... 95 years
Last Mountain & District Music Festival (Strasbourg)..... 60 years
Maple Creek & District Music Festival ..... 40 years
Moosomin & District Music Festival ..... 60 years
Nipawin Music Festival..... 85 years
Outlook & District Music Festival ..... 45 years
Regina Music Festival ..... 85 years
Sand Hills Music Festival (Leader) ..... 35 years
Swift Current & District Music Festival ..... 95 years
Twin Rivers Music Festival (Dalmeny/Martensville) ..... 25 years
Unity Music Festival ..... 100 years
Yorkton Music Festival ..... 100 years

SMFA Mission & Vision

The Saskatchewan Music Festival Association (SMFA) is the provincial body representing more than 40 district community music festival organizations across the province. Many communities all over Saskatchewan are involved annually in producing volunteer-run district festivals, workshops, and concerts. These involve more than 70,000 people as participants, volunteers, and audience members.

SMFA programs and services reach lands covered by Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10, the traditional lands of the Cree, Dakota, Dene, Lakota, Nakota and Saulteaux peoples, as well as homeland of the Métis.

Vision

Enhancing lives and community through music and the spoken word.

Mission

Providing performance and educational opportunities in Saskatchewan.

Established in 1908

Incorporated under the Non-profit Corporations Act
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The Honourable Scott Moe, Premier of Saskatchewan

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Drop & Go allows customers to drop off their beverage containers without waiting in line! SARCAN staff will count your beverage containers and you can choose to donate your order to Saskatchewan Music Festival Association (SMFA) using the key phrase ""**FUNDS FOR FESTIVAL"**. Friends and family from across the province can support music festivals by simply entering or stating the key phrase.

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SASKATCHEWAN MUSIC FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

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Presidents of the SMFA (1908 - 2025)

It is with a sense of respect and appreciation that the men and women who have served as Provincial Presidents of the Association since its inception are remembered.

1909 - Mr. A.F. Angus
1910 - Rev. Canon E.B. Smith
1911 - Mr. E.G. Shannon
1912 - Hon. Mr. Justice Ouseley
1913 - Hon. Mr. Justice J.T. Brown
1914 - Dr. W.C. Murray
1915 - 1919 (Activity Suspended)
1920 - Mr. B.C. Crichton
1921 - Mr. G.E. McCraney
1921 - Hon. Mr. Justice D. MacLean
1922 - Hon. Chief Justice J.T. Brown
1923 - Mr. W.G. Tickle
1924 - Hon. Mr. Justice P.E. McKenzie
1925 - Lt. Col. F.J. James
1926 - Lt. Col. N. Gentles
1927 - Mr. A.W. Cameron
1928 - Hon. Mr. Justice G.E. Taylor
1929 - Mr. J.M. Stevenson
1930 - Mr. A.L. Wheatley
1931 - Mr. W.E. Hodge
1932 - Mr. Carl Niderost
1933 - Mr. F.W. Chisholm
1934 - Mr. A.L. Bates
1935 - Mr. L.A. Thornton
1936 - Mr. A. Ross
1937 - Mr. E.J. Hemming
1938 - Mr. C.A. Oulton
1939 - Mr. D.B. MacRae
1940 - Mayor Carl Niderost, K.C.
1941 - Mr. A.H. Mayberry
1942 - Mr. W.C. Mills
1943 - Dr. D.J. Wort
1944 - Dr. D.J. Wort
1945 - Mr. L. Allen
1946 - Mayor A.W. MacPherson
1947 - Mr. W. Reid
1948 - Mr. Harry S. Hay, M.B.C.
1949 - Mr. Lionel Allen
1950 - Mr. Harry S. Hay, M.B.C.
1951 - Mrs. G.C. Bradley
1952 - Mr. R.M. Forrest
1953 - Mr. T. Hatton
1954 - Mrs. Theo Packer
1955 - Mrs. Gerald Hall
1956-1957 - Mr. R.G. Treleaven
1958-1959 - Mr. R. Nickel
1960-1961 - Mrs. R.E. Harvey
1962-1963 - Mr. Matt Sheppard
1964-1965 - Mr. James Culham
1966-1967 - Mr. B.B. Gofine
1968-1969 - Mrs. Manuel Hilderman
1970-1971 - William Shulhan
1972-1973 - Vera Mattson
1974-1975 - Jean Martin
1976-1977 - Frances Hanson
1978-1979 - Mary Ward
1980-1981 - Lillian Reid
1982-1983 - Janet Wendland
1984-1985 - Joan Williamson
1986-1987 - Jean Bews
1988-1989 - Alastair Browne
1990-1991 - Jillian Mennie
1992-1993 - June Sutton
1994-1996 - Shirley Helmerson
1997-1998 - Penny Joynt
1999-2000 - Lois Webb
2001-2002 - Janet McGonigle
2003-2004 - Marlene Cherry
2005-2006 - Joanne Messer
2007-2008 - Gloria Nickell
2009-2010 - Theresa Brost
2011-2012 - Joy McFarlane-Burton
2013-2014 - Karen MacCallum
2015-2016 - Nancy Toppings
2017-2018 - Karen Unger
2019-2021 - Sherry Sproule
2021-2022 - Tammy Villeneuve
2023-2024 - Jeri Ryba
2025-present - Dianne Gryba

Honorary Life Members of the SMFA

*Norman J. Palmer, Saskatoon
*Chief Justice J.T. Brown, Regina
*Lionel Allen, Regina
*Dr. Lyell Gustin, Saskatoon
*Angus Goldie, Regina
*Marguerita Spencer, Saskatoon
*Jean Bradley, Regina
*Phoebe Wesson Cutbush, North Battleford
*Lillian Mitchell, Saskatoon
*Elizabeth Tydeman, Saskatoon
*Doris Covey Lazecki, Regina
*Janet McGonigle, Saskatoon
Marlene Cherry, Calgary
Gloria Nickell, Rosetown
Joy McFarlane-Burton, Saskatoon
Karen McCallum, Swift Current
Sandra Senga, Meadow Lake
*W. Seemer Betts, Saskatoon
*Thomas Hatton, Regina
*Dr. Carlyle King, Saskatoon
*Gordon Hancock, Regina
*Jean Martin, Saskatoon
*Mossie Hancock, Regina
*Florence Hilderman, Yorkton
*Alastair Browne, Swift Current
*Sheila Shinkewski, Saskatoon
Kathleen L. Keple, Cobble Hill, B.C.
Penny Joynt, Saskatoon
*Sharon Penner, Moose Jaw
Joanne Messer, Tisdale
Theresa Brost, Macklin
Nancy Toppings, Regina
Karen Unger, Warman

Sustaining Patrons

Roger & Marie Jolly
Department of Music, University of Regina
Department of Music, University of Saskatchewan
Conservatory of Performing Arts, Regina

Distinguished Service Recipients

Kathleen L. Keple, Duncan, BC
Morris Lazecki, Regina
*Maggie Chartier, Regina
*Larry Johnson, St Albert, AB
*Don Webb, Lumsden
*William Cornish, Regina
*Darren Schwartz, Saskatoon

*deceased

SaskTel

2026 Conference Schedule

Dianne Gryba, MC

Friday, October 30 — *all sessions in Solarium, Royal Hotel Regina*

6:00 pm Registration

7:00 pm **Session #1: Board Governance** — Suzanne Gorman

In this session, Suzanne Gorman of the Saskatchewan Band Association will discuss the role of the district music festival committee in leadership and operations.

8:00 pm **Session #2: Fundraising Tips** — Jonah Toth

In this presentation, Jonah Toth, Manager of Community Partnerships at the Saskatchewan Community Foundation, will share practical fundraising best practices for non-profit and charitable organizations, with a focus on building strong donor relationships, making giving easier, and developing sustainable approaches to fund development. The session will also introduce tools available through the Saskatchewan Community Foundation to help organizations streamline donations and fundraising.

8:30 pm **Entertainment & Reception**

Join us for drinks and refreshments, with entertainment provided by Ignite Chamber Choir, conducted by Dorianna Holowachuk and accompanied by Mark Ancheta.

Saturday, October 31 — *all morning sessions in Solarium*

9:00 am **Session #3: Syllabus Updates** — Dianne Gryba

Check out the updates to this year's syllabus from syllabus chair Dianne Gryba.

9:30 am **Session #4: SMFA/SRMTA Workshops** — Laureen Kells

Workshop funding is available for festivals this coming winter. Laureen Kells of the SRMTA will present on the process for applying for funding and selecting a clinician.

10:00 am **Session #5: Insurance** — Sami Knaus

Sami Knaus is an Account Executive with HK Henderson Navacord Insurance in Regina. After a 16-year career with Air Canada in operations management, she joined the insurance industry earlier this year and works with commercial clients across a variety of sectors. A strong supporter of the arts community, Sami is excited to speak to Saskatchewan Music Festival Association members about event liability insurance and risk management for festivals and special events.

10:45 am **Networking break**

11:15 am **Volunteer Awards & Luncheon** (in Ballroom)

Entertainment provided by Reed Aloud saxophone quartet: Kristian Vogel, soprano sax; September Russell, alto sax; Kristan Kuntz, tenor sax; Jennifer Tenford, baritone sax

1:00 pm **Keynote Address** — Meara Conway

2:00 pm **Session #5: Roundtable Discussion and Q&A**

How do we keep our local festivals strong? How can we create accessibility throughout the festival process? How do we train and retain volunteers? This session will be an opportunity for guided discussion so that committee members can share ideas with one another.

3:30 pm **Wrap-Up and Goodbye**

Saskatchewan Music Educators Association (SMEA) provides professional development opportunities for music teachers and educators in the province.



SASKATCHEWAN MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

Learn from world-class musicians and conductors at SMEA yearly events:

- Saskatchewan Music Conference
- Saskatchewan Honour Groups

www.saskmea.ca

Honorary Life Membership

From time to time, the Saskatchewan Music Festival Association honours members of the music festival community through the presentation of life memberships. This year, we're pleased to recognize a former SMFA president.

Sherry Sproule



Sherry Sproule has enjoyed a successful career of instilling her love of music in many families in the Lafleche area. She began her teaching career in the school system and then transitioned to offering private voice and piano lessons and group Music for Young Children classes. She is an active accompanist and loves collaborating with singers.

Sherry earned a B Ed (Music and Special Education) from the University of Saskatchewan. In 2021 Sherry was recognized for her contribution to music education in Saskatchewan as she was nominated and then shortlisted for a Provincial Saskatchewan Arts Award in the category of Arts and Learning.

Sherry joined the SMFA board in 2013 and soon moved onto the executive, becoming president in 2018.

Now splitting her time between Lafleche and Calgary, she enjoys singing with the Scarboro Choir and plays violin with the Prairie Mountain Fiddlers.

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Adjudicating Excellence Awards

The Saskatchewan Music Festival Association wishes to honour the following two adjudicators with an SMFA Adjudicating Excellence Award. These two adjudicators were chosen based on a lifetime of sharing their knowledge and encouraging students in Saskatchewan and beyond. A provincial scholarship will be presented at the 2027 Provincial Finals Competitions in honour of their outstanding work.



Corinne Groff

Corinne Groff is a Regina-based piano and theory teacher, adjudicator, and choir director with a long-standing commitment to music education and the choral arts.

Corinne began teaching piano in Brandon in 1979. In 1997, she and her family moved to Regina, where she quickly became an active and respected member of the city's music community as an educator, adjudicator, and choral director.

She is a member of the Regina Branch of the Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers and the Saskatchewan Choral Federation, and serves as an adjudicator for the Saskatchewan Music Festival Association. She is also an examiner for Conservatory Canada.

Corinne continues to enjoy a busy and rewarding professional life, balancing her piano teaching, adjudication, and choral directing. She currently serves as Acting Chair of Regina Contemporary Showcase and as a Director of Da Capo Masterclass Inc.

After retiring as Music Director of the choirs at Harmony United Church, Corinne continues her work as Artistic Director of the Amici Singers community choir. In recognition of her contribution to the choral community, she received the Saskatchewan Choral Federation Community Service Award in 2020.

Corinne is also a founding member of the Cecilian Chamber Series, reflecting her ongoing passion for bringing music and musicians together in the Regina community.

Dawn McLean Belyk



Dawn McLean Belyk is currently the Bass Trombonist with the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra, the Saskatoon Jazz Orchestra, the Saskatoon Symphony Low Brass Ensemble, and the Saskatchewan Brass Quintet. She also teaches Low Brass at the University of Saskatchewan, both undergrad and grad students and is a sessional lecturer in Music Education. Active as a Low Brass Specialist, she has a growing studio at home, and teaches clinics throughout the province.

Dawn has adjudicated bands in Alberta and Saskatchewan. She has received the Dwaine Nelson Award for Teaching Excellence at the University of Saskatchewan in 2006, the Saskatoon Preschool Foundation Champion of Children Award in 2009, and the Saskatchewan Band Association Distinguished Band Director Award in 2013. In 2022, Dawn received the Saskatchewan Music Educators Association Outstanding Achievement Award.

Over her decade of adjudication with the SMFA, Dawn has been consistently encouraging and positive towards every participant while providing constructive feedback for improvement. Her joy in music is communicated well to all who have the opportunity to learn from her!



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District Festival Volunteer Awards

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."
— Elizabeth Andrew, American author

Grace Lang – Battlefords Music Festival



Grace Lang was a member of the Battlefords Music Festival committee, in various capacities, for many years. In her own words: *"I've been fortunate to have spent many years watching young musicians grow and develop in their music endeavours. I've enjoyed every minute of it."*

Grace's most recent role was serving as treasurer and, although she has retired from volunteering, she can still be called on when questions need to be answered. Thank you, Grace, for your service!

Karen Ulmer – Battlefords Music Festival



Karen Ulmer grew up in the music festival system - piano, voice, choir and band – so when she returned to North Battleford in 1998, she was happy to join the Battlefords Music Festival Committee. Her primary role over the next 25 years was liaison between the adjudicators and the Scholarship/Awards Committee, including tracking marks, sorting out the awards, recording the winners, and organizing the presentations. She also helped as secretary and door monitor as needed.

With other members of the Awards Committee, Karen condensed and revamped the Battlefords Kiwanis Music Festival awards system, led the initiative to increase the minimum scholarship amount to $100, was proactive in attracting additional local support for larger scholarships, and helped our local festival to excel at rewarding its excellent participants. As an extension of her work Karen also ended up organizing the program for the Gala Awards Concert each year, and, in later years, acting as the emcee for the event.

Karen's mother, Evelyn Ulmer, was posthumously presented with the SMFA Volunteer Award in 1999, and it is to her and her father Joseph Ulmer that Karen attributes her love of all things music and festival-related. Karen is now retired and spends much of her time riding horses.

Cheryl Deren – Estevan & District Music Festival



The music festival has been part of Cheryl's life since her family moved to Estevan when she was 11 years old. Her piano teacher entered her in the festival, and she was involved as a participant for a few years. Later in life, after becoming a mom to two young girls, she wanted the same experience for them, and they participated in both piano and band categories for many years. During that time, Cheryl became involved with the festival again, this time as a volunteer, both during the annual festival as well as serving a short time on the Board.

As a teacher, Cheryl saw the impact that music and speech arts had on students and she encouraged participation in the festival, often helping students select and work on pieces of poetry.

Cheryl believes that volunteering in one's community is necessary and fulfilling, and has often given her time to other things such as Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, church, and Shriners Hospital.

Cheryl would like to thank the committee for nominating her to receive this award and plans to continue to volunteer each spring as festival time rolls around.

Penny Miles – Mainline Music Festival



For more than nine years, Penny has been a dedicated and invaluable volunteer with the Mainline Music Festival, serving as our Corresponding Secretary. While much of her work happens behind the scenes, her contribution is essential to the organization and success of our festival.

Penny brings an exceptional level of attention to detail, organization, and professionalism to everything she does. Her high standards have helped ensure that Mainline Music Festival consistently operates smoothly and meets the standards and requirements expected of a Saskatchewan Music Festival. She is diligent in keeping the Board informed, ensuring important information is communicated, deadlines are met, and policies and festival standards are followed.

One of Penny's most significant contributions is the countless hours she dedicates to creating and perfecting the festival program. This is a tremendous undertaking, requiring careful attention to schedules, entries, categories, names, teachers, venues, and countless other details.

Her care for participants is equally evident in the way she communicates and works to accommodate their needs. Penny understands that behind every entry is a student and family who have invested time, effort, and enthusiasm into participating in the festival. She is thoughtful and responsive in her communication and goes the extra mile to help ensure participants have a positive experience.

Penny's dedication also extends beyond her formal responsibilities. She is a committed music parent, supporting the musical growth and passion of her own children while encouraging and celebrating the accomplishments of young musicians throughout our festival community. She understands firsthand the value that music, performance, and festival participation can bring to a young person's life.

The Mainline Music Festival Board is grateful for Penny's years of dedicated service. Her contribution may not always be visible from the stage, but it is felt throughout every aspect of the festival. We are proud to nominate Penny Miles for the SMFA Volunteer Award!

Valentina May – Mainline Music Festival



For more than 30 years, Valentina has been a dedicated teacher, volunteer, mentor, and leader with the Mainline Music Festival. Her passion for music and performance, combined with her unwavering commitment to young musicians, has made a lasting impact on hundreds of students and on our festival as a whole.

As a teacher, Valentina has inspired generations of students to discover the joy and confidence that comes from learning and performing music. She has encouraged students through their first performances, celebrated their accomplishments, and helped them develop not only their musical abilities, but also their confidence and appreciation for the performing arts.

As President of the Mainline Music Festival, Valentina provides the leadership and dedication that have helped ensure the festival continues to be an incredible experience year after year. After 23 years of dedicated service on the Festival Board, she understands that a successful festival depends on countless details behind the scenes—from coordinating schedules, teachers, participants, adjudicators, and volunteers to ensuring that every performer and family feels welcomed and supported. Valentina's leadership has provided a sense of continuity and stability that has allowed the Festival to remain a valued annual tradition in our communities.

Most importantly, Valentina brings a genuine passion for music and for the students who participate. She understands that the festival is about more than competition. It is an opportunity for young people to perform, grow in confidence, receive encouragement, and celebrate their accomplishments. Her enthusiasm and commitment help create an environment where students feel proud of their achievements and excited to continue pursuing music. The Mainline Music Festival Board is proud to nominate Valentina May for this award and to recognize her remarkable contribution to music education, young performers, and the Mainline Music Festival.

Colleen Bowen – Prince Albert Music Festival



Colleen Bowen, Prince Albert Music Festival, was Piano Coordinator extraordinaire and is currently Piano Scholarship Coordinator, extraordinaire. Colleen has been involved with festivals for years and years as a competitor, mother of competitors and now as a super committee member. Colleen came upon this volunteer job quite by accident, because of an exchange of requests with a previous PAMFA committee member. Colleen honored this request to be a member of the PAMFA committee, and we are all so grateful.

Colleen over the years has been extremely dedicated bringing with her history, wisdom, practicality and positivity to the table. She is willing to assist, without any hesitation, with any of the disciplines as needed. When there's a job needing to be completed or questions to be answered, we all depend on Colleen.

Colleen is also a huge support with kind words and smiles, easing many nerves, of all the young musicians in Prince Albert and area. We are honored to nominate her for this volunteer recognition award. Colleen kept the spirit of the Prince Albert Music Festival Association alive through COVID and continues to do so today. Colleen loves festival!

Adrianne Bank – Saskatoon Music Festival



Adrianne Bank has been an incredible support to the Saskatoon Music Festival and our committee. Her generosity and organization have made such a difference to the success of our festival.

Throughout the General Festival, Adrianne generously fed our committee members on numerous occasions, making sure everyone was well taken care of during the long and busy festival days. She also thoughtfully prepared all of the welcome baskets for our adjudicators, adding a warm and personal touch to their arrival in Saskatoon.

Moreover, Adrianne took on the important task of coordinating our adjudicator assistants, helping ensure that our adjudicators had the support they needed throughout the festival.

We are incredibly grateful for the time, effort, and care Adrianne has given to the Saskatoon Music Festival. We truly appreciate everything she has done for our organization and our participants.

Morag Riddell – Unity Music Festival



In 2013, Morag joined the Unity Music Festival Committee as Vice President and, in 2015, moved to President. She has a significant capability in technology, so she encouraged online registration and started a website for the festival. Morag moved to Past President in 2020 but, in 2023, returned as President.

As with everyone else, COVID became a very significant problem for our festival in 2020. Morag was a big help allowing us to pivot from an in-person festival to online performances. As our Carol Festival could not be live, Morag started our Facebook page so that those participating could post videos of performances online. This was well received, as those watching enjoyed the ability to watch performances multiple times.

Over the years, Morag has become our official photographer, providing a permanent history of our festival for those participating and allows for great publicity in our local newspaper and Facebook. She definitely helps to keep our committee using technology such as WhatsApp – a great assist in communicating with each other. Morag was an integral part in the planning and producing of our 100th Anniversary Celebrations. Thank you, Morag, for all your contributions to the Unity Music Festival.

Sheri Weinmaster – Yorkton Music Festival



In Sheri's own words: *"My involvement with Yorkton Music Festival began at age eight in vocal, then band and choir. In Grade 11, I began teaching a few little ones, and a few years later I had more than forty vocal students. Many of my students have had the opportunity to perform in the Yorkton Music Festival for the past thirty years. Festival helps them gain confidence and skills, receive positive feedback, have fun amongst peers and make great memories. I love supporting the festival and have held the role of vocal entries and scheduling for all of these years. I also assisted, as needed, at the vocal venues. One festival I recall introducing the adjudicator, changing the numbers and supporting my students all in one session. Being involved in the festival has been a rewarding part of my journey as a teacher, and I am grateful for the opportunity to continue supporting and celebrating the musical talents of our community."*

Calla Effa – Yorkton Music Festival



Calla Effa began volunteering with the Yorkton Music Festival when her oldest child began entering piano at festival. She volunteered in various roles which included monitoring the door, taking admissions and selling programs. Over the years, Calla served as recording secretary, corresponding secretary, and adjudicators' secretary. She has chaired band and vocal housing and, most recently, co-chaired the Patrons and Sponsors Committee. Calla served as President twice during her volunteer years with the YMFA and is now looking forward to retirement.



SaskEnergy Champion of Volunteers Award

Since 2000, SaskEnergy has supported over 800,000 volunteers throughout Saskatchewan with the Champion of Volunteers award. We are honoured to present this award to two long-standing volunteers with the SMFA.

Diana Woolrich



Robin Swales & Diana Woolrich

Diana's principal involvement with the Regina Music Festival, dating back to around 1988, has been as a voice teacher, but she has also performed a variety of volunteer functions, mostly in response to direct requests!

She started scrutineering vocal entries back for RMFA when everything was done on paper and continues to do that electronically. For some years now, she has been coordinator of the RMFA scrutineering team which proofreads and approves entries in all disciplines, a task which aims to contribute to the timely production of an accurate program for the Festival. She has also occasionally been called upon to advise SMFA on scrutineering issues.

Scheduling for voice has been another of her tasks in several years, and she now puts together the RMFA team of discipline specialists who undertake the initial stages of the overall schedule for the Festival.

Diana has consulted and advised RMFA on vocal Addenda issues and initiated a variety of new classes which are intended to widen the repertoire field and thus contribute to an increase in entries, and she reviews and advises on the provision of vocal and choral scholarships. She also periodically undertakes proofreading of Festival documents and information. For SMFA, she was for several years one of the vocal test piece selection team, and she undertook a major review of the choral section of the Syllabus some years ago.

Where possible, she has volunteered as a door monitor and adjudicator's secretary. She has been a scholarship donor to SMFA and remains a vocal scholarship donor to RMFA. She is in her second year of a term as a Board member of RFMA. Diana is a true believer in the value of the Music Festival, and it has been her very great pleasure to try to assist where she can. She is very honoured to receive this award.

Robin's Romp

by Robin Swales

In my President's letter to the 1996 Regina Festival, I remarked that I had been associated with the Festival for 25 years, dating from when my sons entered the woodwind classes; 30 years later, not yet out to pasture, I am a non-voting Emeritus board member of the RMFA.

My first festival duties, as a parent, were to assist with stage management, such as lifting the lids of grand pianos and setting out music stands and chairs. Later tasks included ensuring the right music went to the right adjudicator, occasionally acting as MC for Musical Theatre or the larger competitions, and turning pages for collaborative pianists, most memorably in senior saxophone concerto classes. When I graduated to become a board member, behind the scenes I was helping to organise registrations into the appropriate disciplines, prepare the programme, brief adjudicators and process entry fees proffered in cash at the very last minute by panicking parents. I discovered that I had a particular ability to separate people from their money, so I migrated to scholarships, where I obtained dozens of new scholarships in all disciplines and also persuaded friends to give larger sums for sponsorship of individual disciplines. I established the organ competition and found adjudicators from my large network across the country arising from my membership of the National RCCO. There was the Shumiatcher competition to organise and supervise, as well as the scholarship presentation concerts in the week following the conclusion of the festival. The earliest of these showcased the outstanding prizewinners of the festival, but later featured striking or memorable performances regardless of places and marks earned. And then, there was festival promotion through such organisations as Community Radio (to which I would take some of the participants such as violinists and woodwind players who performed live on radio a cappella) and Talk of the Town. I was President of the RMFA from 1995-1998 and held the post of Past President for many years as the subsequent Presidents retired from the Board. At present, my main purpose is to enable continuity via a long perspective, and to advise where needed. Behind the scenes I do what I can to assist Diana with the areas she helps with.

For many years, I was a member of the SMFA Board, where I made many friends and gained a very wide perspective of the Festival movement across the province. I suspect my main contribution was to follow the then-Executive Director Doris Lazecki's instructions to obtain beer and wine for the post-Festival party for the Board and the adjudicators, an uproarious event which afforded an opportunity to enjoy the bar-style playing of the magnificent Sheila Shinkewski!

Romps are supposed to be short. I'm delighted this one has lasted so long.

Keynote Speaker: Meara Conway

Meara is an alumna of the Regina Music Festival and won the Wallis Memorial Opera Competition in 2010.



Meara Conway is a lawyer, community organizer, and musician with deep roots in Saskatchewan. Throughout her career, she has fought for some of Canada's most vulnerable. A public defender with Legal Aid, she was named one of Canadian Lawyer's 25 Most Influential Lawyers of 2019 for her public interest work, including her advocacy for proper Legal Aid funding and her work with Indigenous communities calling for systemic change.

This work took her to politics and in 2020, she was elected MLA for one of Regina's core neighbourhoods in the constituency of Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Meara is also a strong advocate for the arts and obtained a Master of Music from McGill, where she won the National Music Competition in voice. Meara was also the winner of the prestigous Gordon Wallis Opera Competition in 2010. Motivated by her belief that all voices should be heard in places of power, she went on to earn a law degree at McGill, where she studied in both official languages. Before returning to Saskatchewan, she worked on human rights issues at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and in Toronto in the area of constitutional law. She has appeared at all levels of court, including at the Supreme Court of Canada.

Meara was born and raised in Regina's Cathedral neighbourhood, where she now resides with her partner Nick, a teacher, and their three kids Lew, Éamon, and Maeve.

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2027 Calendar of Events

February 20 & June 6

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District Festivals – 42 Locations across Saskatchewan

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July 22 to 24

Canada West Performing Arts Festival – Victoria, BC

SMFA PROVINCIAL OFFICE

PO Box 37005, Regina, SK S4S 7K3

(306) 757-1722

sask.music.festival@sasktel.net

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