



Artistic Director Report 2026

The weekend began on such a high note on Thursday night with the extraordinary Georgian Supra. We were buoyed up by the music and wonderful speeches from Gaumarjos, the wonderful Georgian choir from Melbourne, as well as some fabulous Lithuanian songs from The Lost Clog!

The cherry on top was THE delivery of the most amazing plates and plates of delicious and creative food from the Cygnet CWA, supported by the local Men's Shed -gratitude to you all!

Friday afternoon, we were Welcomed onto country by the melukerde people from the South East Tasmanian Corporation (SETAC) including the most delightful and heartwarming song from some very young performers

Then three magical days passed in a blur of music, dance, poetry, kid's activities and performances. Every venue was full of happy performers and attendees and the feedback from all alike, was that it might just have been the best festival yet!

There were some exceptional moments, some magnificent and unexpected collaborations and so much support, love and welcoming in every corner of the festival.

Our Earth Celebration, started and curated for 10 years by the inimitable and indefatigable Bob Brown, was this year incredibly beautifully mediated and curated by the equally amazing Hannah Moloney. A beautiful start to the final day of the festival

We honoured our two new life members; Marjorie and Steve Gadd who individually and together have given so much to the Tasmanian folk music community over decades.

Our Commitment to our youth programme continues to grow (we may have to move the youth showcase to an even larger venue next year!)

We were very proud to announce the winners of our Youth Blackboard;

Kelvin Scott and Malu Cotter were our winner and runner up and a "rising Star" award went to young Rasa Jangala-congratulations to them all, and we look forward to wonderful things from these young musicians

The Dennis Dubetz award for the distant performer was awarded to the amazing Jennifer Reid from the UK who wowed everyone with her modern take on revolution work songs from the UK (and her wicked sense of humour)



The Dubetz emerging artist award was shared by Nira Barber and Ella Bridges-Thomsen

These awards are a wonderful support to the not insignificant cost of a travelling performer and to encourage to the younger artists to continue their path in musical excellence. Thanks to the Dubetz family for their support in honouring Dennis' love of the festival.

As we have for ten years now, Sunday, we welcomed the St James pilgrims with the festival orchestra and choir. This is a tradition that connects us all and the choir and orchestra are always such wonderful participatory events for festival attendees.

Thanks to Peny Bohan and members of Gusto Gusto for leading the orchestra, and to Therese Virtue, Iyaki Vallejo and Kristoff Derwinski from The Boite World Music Café for teaching our festival choir. A wonderful experience to hear songs in three languages at our final concert after only two short rehearsals and we're very grateful for our continuing partnership with and support from The Boite.

Thanks also to the team at The Rosny Barn who give us the space (and refreshments) for our media launch but more importantly showcase a few of our performers after the festival. Another partnership that not only aids the festival but also supports touring musicians.

Thanks to an Events Tasmania grant, we were in a position to employ Arabella Watson in a part time, media coordinator role putting us loud and clear in people's minds! -her skill is evidenced by a sold out Saturday and a front page spread by The Mercury!

Sunday night came almost too quickly as the music continued with the finale concert in the Carmel Hall, a dance-party concert on the festival Green, and one last called dance in the Town Hall.

In addition to some wonderful musical and sometimes hilarious moments in the Carmel Hall, I was personally so struck by the performers who stayed after their own set to listen to and support all the other acts. I feel that this is something particular and special to the Folk Festival community, and it's one of the things that make us resilient and ready to face any challenge in the future.



It feels almost impossible to begin to thank the enormous number of humans that contributed to making our 2026 festival such a wonderful event and there are way too many people deserving of thanks to even try. There are however, a few that can't not be mentioned;

Thanks to my wonderful work-wife colleague, Bridget Binnie-you're a joy to work with

To all the committee. Thanks for your trust in me and support for bringing the programme to fruition.

Thanks to my co-selection team; Rachel Myers, Michael Bentley and Montz Matsumoto. Its so important to have the opinions of specialist musicians and music lovers with a variety of skills so that I can make balanced and confident decisions

Especial thanks to Anne Foale for steering the team, and for supporting me in so many ways

To Chris Ellis for making the tech work without complaint, in ways that will probably always remain a mystery to me and to Paul Sleigh-creating more magic with producing our great online programme/app

Thanks to Sue Lehtonen who looks after all our performers so, so well making sure they have a place to lay their heads, a green room where the best things seem to happen and so many other things

Finally, thanks to Michael Thomsen who yes, manages the festival website, but also supports me behind the scenes with more tech support, sound boarding ideas and numerous cups of tea and coffee.

Applications have poured on already for 2027 so I can't wait to see how the programme evolves to create another magical weekend.

Erin Collins

April 2026