

# LAURIER



WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2022

Dr. Savvas Chamberlain's speech at the Making Space for Music campaign groundbreaking



*(Left to right: Christine Chamberlain, Maria Harper, Savvas Chamberlain)*

*On April 21, 2022, a small symbolic groundbreaking event preceded the first in-person meeting of the Laurier Board of Governors since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. At this event, Dr. Savvas Chamberlain, lead donor for the Making Space for Music campaign, gave the following remarks.*

Good morning!

Today is a happy event for all of us. In the mist of the persistent COVID-19 pandemic, in the every day of sad news, we gather here to celebrate a happy event: the groundbreaking of the Savvas Chamberlain Music Building.

This project has been in the making for more than 11 years. Many people worked on this project and spent a lot of time in its planning. Keeping the vision for this long-term project was Dr. Glen Carruthers, former dean of the Faculty of Music. I also commend Dr. Max Blouw, Dr. Deborah MacLatchy for her leadership, and the Laurier Advancement team for their fundraising and strategic efforts which led to this success.

I am sure a number of you would be interested to know the history of the inception, evolution and development of this ambitious and large project which took more than 11 years to come to this stage. I shall give you a brief time-line overview.

When Dr. Glen Carruthers started in his role as Dean of Music in July 2010, Christine and I, already donors to the Faculty, were invited to meet with him. He was open and direct with us about the value of the Faculty of Music and he sold me on his vision to build on excellence. He did not mention anything at this time about a new music building.

We were also meeting with former president Dr. Max Blouw about making a gift, and he considered that Glen's vision for a renewal of the Music facilities might interest us, so we met several times to discuss the idea. However, at that time, the funds were not yet in place to make a start on this campaign, and so we agreed to focus on other areas. But Glen persisted with his vision.

With the arrival of the new president, Dr. Deborah MacLatchy, in July 2017, Glen reached out to us again, to introduce us. We discussed the project but yet again, the timing was not right to get started. But a strong and comfortable relationship was forming between Christine and myself and Glen and Deb, and we all agreed to keep working on this.

When I went home I started thinking more about our discussions and this project. I recognized that this project was truly valued by Laurier. But it was a large project and would require a leap of faith, a significant investment to come to life. I then discussed the project with Christine and Maria Harper, the executive director of Savvas Chamberlain Family Foundation. We decided to donate a significant amount of unconditional funds, to be spent at the discretion of the Laurier president on any capital project.

Subsequently we learned from Glen that these funds were assigned by the president to the Faculty of Music and were spent on architects working under the direction of the president and dean of the Faculty of Music to design the music building. Glen continued to promote his vision. The Advancement team started to fundraise. We continued to be involved in discussions related to the design and progress of the project.

On May 14, 2019, there was a dinner reception at Laurier to recognize donors, where we were happy to be seated next to Deb, and had more opportunity to get to know each other, and led Christine and I to be convinced that we should consider becoming a lead donor on the project.

In September 2019, Glen arranged a sandwich lunch meeting, where the three of us met again, Deb, Glen and I. Chris could not make it to this meeting. This meeting was very crucial. It was time

for both sides to decide whether we should continue on this project or drop it. Deb asked me a question that I thought was very significant (I am paraphrasing): “How come this technology guy with physics background is interested in music?” I told her: “I believe that music brings together peoples of all heritages,” and then I told her that I also believe that music should be accessible to everyone in our society.

In December 2019 we reached a final Donor Pledge Agreement for the Savvas Chamberlain Family Foundation as lead donor for the Making Space for Music campaign. We also agreed to assist in bringing others in our network into the campaign. I would like to, at this time, acknowledge the Astley family who came on as major donors soon after.

As the meetings progressed, we weathered some challenging events: Glen’s health challenges, and then the COVID-19 pandemic – but we persisted. Then, in December of 2021, we lost Glen. We and the entire team were devastated at this loss.

In the summer of 2021, we had the opportunity to meet the new Dean of Music, Dr. Cynthia Johnston Turner, and we have enjoyed working with her to make improvements to the architectural designs.

In February 2022, the Making Space for Music campaign reached the threshold level of moneys raised to officially break ground, and the Wilfrid Laurier University Board of Governors gave final approval to start construction of the new building.

And here we are today, celebrating the groundbreaking of a renewal of the Faculty of Music facilities, after so many years in the making.

We are so thrilled to be here, and it has meant a lot to us to be involved over these past many years, and see this project come into being.