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## ARTS & LIFE

MUSIC

### McLachlan's school finds permanent home

Investment by non-profit organization, city ensures a bright future for musical education

BY FRANCOIS MARCHAND  
VANCOUVER SUN

The halls inside Sarah McLachlan's new School of Music building are bright and shiny, filled with the sounds of students rehearsing.

In one corner room, guitars are being plucked. Two or three down, drums are making a racket. Further ahead, anglic voices are practising a choir piece.

But the students here are not privileged child prodigies. They're just ordinary kids who, without the help of the school, would not be able to practise music otherwise.

Established in 2001, Sarah McLachlan's School of Music finally unveiled its new permanent location in Mount Pleasant Thursday evening in the presence of key members of the Wolverton Foundation, which helped fund the new facility, and guests and dignitaries including Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson.

The City of Vancouver provided a \$100,000 infrastructure grant for the school renovation and was instrumental in getting the block of Seventh Avenue near Main Street re-zoned for the school, which offers an after-school musical education to 280 students Grades 4 through 12 in piano, guitar, percussion and voice.

The school also features a junior and senior choir, music labs, songwriting sessions, bands and an outreach program with

Florence Nightingale school.

"It's monumental," executive director Ann de la Hey said when asked about the significance of the event. "The generosity of the Wolvertons means we



Pupils pose with singer-songwriter Sarah McLachlan at ceremonies marking the official opening Thursday of Sarah McLachlan's School of Music, which provides a free after-school musical education to 280 students grades 4 through 12 in piano, guitar, percussion and voice, and features a junior and senior choir.



BY SACHIN/PH

have a permanent home tailored to music-making. It means we're grounded in the Mount Pleasant community and that we can expand our programming and

access to children to come and have music lessons."

McLachlan, whose various awards and platinum records line the hallways, was on hand

to celebrate with the children. "I feel thrilled to be here," she said. "This new space is incredible and it's infused with great energy."

She added the measure of success for the school was not to see the students, who attend the school for free, become superstars but to celebrate the arts and provide access to music education at a time when music programs are being cut in schools across the country.

"It's selfish," McLachlan admitted, saying music had provided so much for her that she could only hope to share that gift.

Eleven-year-old Mateya Burney was busy practising guitar Thursday afternoon with a big

smile on her face. Burney said she had been playing the piano for a little while, but she said she wanted something more to help her write songs.

"I've learned a lot," Burney said. "I barely know any chords when I started here. I just love everything. I love the teachers, and playing guitar is just really fun."

For Burney, studying at a school founded by an acclaimed singer-songwriter means a lot. "I've never met Sarah but she seems like a very nice lady," she said, adding she hoped to become a singer like McLachlan one day.

"Success for us is when we see

students graduating and having blossomed as people, and having a lifelong love of music and the arts," de la Hey said. "It just underlines the importance of music and education and how it can open doors for people."

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