



Don Wright Faculty of Music

Photography by Shawn Simpson



Donation hits the Wright note

A landmark gift of \$3 million from alumnus Don Wright to Western has named the Don Wright Faculty of Music.

At 94, Wright has been making a difference all his life. He's been a teacher, director of music for schools, radio station manager, choral conductor, arranger, composer, performer, producer and philanthropist. He still arranges, composes and plays several instruments, but much of his time is spent working for the causes he and his late wife Lillian supported. Their many beneficiaries include several hospitals, countless choral groups and 13 universities, including Western.

"Don Wright is a true renaissance individual, with a rare combination of leadership, vision and dedication," said Western's president Dr. Paul Davenport when the gift was announced October 2. "His generosity through the years has supported excellence in a great many areas of our University, and this unprecedented donation to the Faculty of Music will make a difference in the lives of students, staff and faculty for years to come."

Born in Strathroy, Ontario, Wright graduated from Western in 1933. While at Western, he was a track & field star, conducted the University orchestra, formed the Western band and arranged Western's school song. He went on to teach at Sir Adam Beck Collegiate in London, Ontario and in 1935 married Lillian Meighen, daughter of the Rt. Honourable Arthur Meighen, former Prime Minister of Canada. In 1940, Wright was appointed Director of Music for City of London schools and later became General Manager at CFPL Radio.

After moving to Toronto in 1955, Wright began composing music for television, movies and CBC documentaries. He became known as the "Jingle King," writing hundreds of jingles for television commercials heard throughout North America for brands such as Tide and Kelvinator.

Wright's many accolades include the Order of Canada, an honorary degree from the University of Victoria, Canada's 125th Anniversary Medal and a Distinguished Service Award from the Ontario Choral Federation. Western has honoured him with the Alumni Award of Merit (1983), an Honorary Doctorate of Music (1986) and in 1990, he was inducted into the 'W' Club Athletic Hall of Fame for Track & Field.

"I have always felt that Western helped me to achieve success in life and that I owe something back in return by helping others," says Wright.

"We are so honoured that Don Wright has chosen our Faculty for this most generous donation," said Robert Wood, Dean of the Faculty of Music. "The funds will be fully endowed at Foundation Western and the annual income will be used to support our highest priority needs, including faculty positions, student awards, building renovations and expansion, library support, performance equipment, and performance series."

"Here I am at my alma mater, surrounded by all these smiling faces, happy that I saved my money, and happy that I'm sharing it with you," alumnus Don Wright asks us great applause during the public announcement of his \$3 million gift to the Faculty of Music. "I'm sharing it with you so that you might pursue your dreams. That's the purpose."

-- DON WRIGHT --

Pioneer, Innovator, Developer and Benefactor
of
MUSIC EDUCATION

Musician, Arranger, Composer, Conductor, Producer
of
Radio, Television and Stage

PHILANTHROPIST

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1. **Born Strathroy 1908 - Dad was founder of Wright Piano Company; Mother, A.T.C.M.**
 2. **Public and High School - Strathroy, Ontario.**
 - (a) Started cello at 7 - Gold medal "Open to Canada" at age 14
 - (b) Trumpet at 10 - then other instruments; plays nearly all
 - (c) Dad and Mother very musical - family had their own Concert Party
 - (d) Wright Brothers' Orchestra (4 brothers) organized -
Continued 15 years - Embassy, Brant Inn, etc. (Did all the arranging)
 - (e) Senior WOSSA Track Champion, 2 years in succession - 1928 and 1929
 3. **University of Western Ontario - Honour Classics '33.**
 - (a) Scholarship winner
 - (b) Awarded Ferguson Trophy in final year - Western's highest award
 - (c) Track and Field Champion (Broad Jump record - 23ft. 8 inches! - lasted 40 years!)
- Individual Champion every meet
 - (d) Led University Orchestra
 - (e) Organized the Western Band - Herald trumpets, girl drum major - dance music
on the field! All were innovations - wrote all the music!
 4. **College of Education, Toronto (1 year) - President of the Student Body.**
 5. **Taught Secondary School, Sir Adam Beck Collegiate, London (1934).**
 - (a) Classics and History
 - (b) Music - Glee Club, Orchestra, Auditorium Singing in 5 parts
- Wrote Collegiate Choir Series
 6. **Married Lillian Meighen, 1935 (Daughter of Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen).**
 - (a) Three children: Timothy, Priscilla and Patrick
 - (b) Six grandchildren, five great grandchildren
 7. **Director of Music for London (1940).**
 - Devised a simple and successful method for handling THE CHANGING VOICE - wrote
"Youthful Voices" series. Books 1, 2, 3. Grades 6 through 13
 8. **Six War Years - gratis - in addition to teaching school.**
 - (a) Troop Shows. Wrote all music and conducted 3 different units three nights a week
(Never missed a performance).
 - (b) Organized and trained all London Air Cadet Bands (Secondary Schools)
 - (c) C.O.T.C., Rank Captain: R.C.A.F., Rank Flying Officer
 9. **Manager Radio Station CFPL (1946).**
 - (a) Terrific drive for local live talent (1,200 auditions)
 - (b) Discovered - Max Ferguson, Tommie Hunter, Ward Cornell, Pat Murray, et al
 - (c) Don Wright Chorus was born
 - (d) Staff orchestra and made it pay! - many network shows originated
 - (e) Chorus on Mutual Network 44 weeks - (1949-1950!)
North American coverage: **Produced by Lillian Wright**

10. Formed Don Wright Productions - January 1, 1950.

11. Chorus sponsored by Canadian Westinghouse - 4 years (Coast to Coast Radio).

12. Educational works published in U.S.A. (1952).

- Youthful Voices, Fun to Read Music, Don Wright Choral Series, Octavos, etc.

13. Chorus back on U.S.A. Networks 1954 - 1956. A total of 10 years on Network Radio!

14. Daughter Priscilla as a child skyrockets to "Ed Sullivan Show" etc. with pop songs.

- All arranged by Don Wright. Recordings worldwide



15. Moved to Toronto, October, 1956. New Chorus - Don Wright Singers for Television.

16. Television

- Many series - Choral - Chrysler Festivals, Denny Vaughan, Wayne & Schuster, etc., etc.

17. Jingles

- Hundreds - distribution in U.S.A. too!

18. Many Big Presentation medleys, etc., arranged for:

- (a) Elementary and Secondary Schools - Orchestra, Chorus, Band
- (b) National Television Networks

19. Films - Composed, Arranged, Conducted music for such international successes as:

- (1) Trail of '98 (Pierre Berton, J. Frank Willis)
- (2) Opening of Seaway (The Queen, President Eisenhower)
- (3) A Day to Remember (Raymond Massey)
- (4) The Unknown Country (Bruce Hutchinson)
- (5) Many C.B.C. Network Documentaries

20. Devised a simple and successful method of Preparing for the Changing Voice before it happens. (Grades 5, 6, 7).

- Wrote "Pre-teen Song Settings" (1960)

21. Revised "Youthful Voices" (1964) - fits every vocal combination - Grade 6 - up.

22. Guest Speaker at many Clinics, Workshops, etc.

- "The Changing Voice - Before and During." Ann Arbor, Chicago, New York, Wichita, Potsdam, Ithaca, Rochester, Waterloo (Iowa), Buffalo, Urbana, etc.,... and many Canadian centres

23. Formed Don Wright Charitable Foundation (1966)

- Scholarships for Music Students U.W.O. and other Canadian Universities

24. Composed "Proudly We Praise" 1966 - Tribute to Canada sea to sea.

- Many performances in every province - standing ovations
- Radio and T.V. Local and Network (colour)
- Conducted Parliament Hill June 30 and July 1, 1967; awarded the Centennial Medal
- Presented to THE QUEEN!

25. 1978-79 - Researched & compiled a thesaurus of excerpts from his life's work in music for:

- EDUCATIONAL purposes
- 20 volumes of explanations, lists of Principles and Devices, Scores, etc.
- 24 hours of Sound on cassettes, illustrating the above
- The work covers both Vocal Development and Instrumental Arranging - from Students' earliest efforts, to performances for top Professionals

26. 1980 - Donated complete sets of "Fifty Years of Music with Don Wright" to MUSIC Departments of Canadian Universities & Teachers' Colleges - to be used as reference material for any purpose at any level.

- 1982 - Sets in 13 Universities, National Library and other Key locations

27. 1982 - Citation from Althouse College for his contribution to Music Education over the years.
28. **The Don Wright Charitable Foundation**
 - Personally funded over many years, in 1982 provided 30 Permanent, Annual Scholarships in 13 Universities coast to coast - from Dalhousie to Victoria
29. 1983 - **Award of Merit - University of Western Ontario (U.W.O.)**
 - Alumni's highest award for his longtime contribution in many fields
30. 1983 - **Western's International Track Meet named "The Don Wright Invitational".**
31. 1983 - **President, Castor Lake Holdings Limited.**
32. 1984 - **Further Endowments**
 - To the Classics Department, The Marching Band and Track and Field (Including Trophies)
33. 1986 - **DOCTOR OF MUSIC, honoris causa - University of Western Ontario (U.W.O.)**
 - Convocation address - standing ovation!
34. 1986-87 - **Endowed each Don Wright Music Scholarship with sufficient funds to make each one perpetual - and matching inflation.**
 - Now 34 annual scholarships
35. 1988 - **Licentiate in Music - honoris causa - Western Ontario Conservatory of Music.**
36. 1989 - **President, Primeminisco Limited - Arthur Meighen Trust.**
37. 1990 - **Inducted into The "W" Club Hall of Fame, University of Western Ontario (U.W.O.)**
38. 1993 - **Awarded Canada's 125th Anniversary Medal.**
39. 1997 - **First recipient of "The Purple & White Award" - University of Western Ontario (U.W.O.) Alumni.**
40. 1997 - **Further increased endowments for ALL Scholarships and Awards.**
41. 1999 - **Inducted into the Track & Field Hall of Fame - University of Western Ontario (U.W.O.)**
42. 2001 - **DOCTOR OF EDUCATION, honoris causa - University of Victoria.**
 - Convocation address - standing ovation!
43. 2001 - **Member - ORDER OF CANADA - Investiture by Her Excellency The Governor General of Canada.**
44. 2002 - **DON WRIGHT FACULTY OF MUSIC - named by U.W.O. in perpetuity.**
45. **During his career he also served on The Boards of Management of:**
 - Canadian General Investments Limited
 - Third Canadian General Investment Trust Limited
 - Telimax Limited
 - Lilmaxed Limited
 - Oracabessa Limited
 - Spiroco Company Limited
 - Geoff Scott Communications Limited
 - E.J. Wright Limited
 - Church of St. John, The Evangelist, London, etc.

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ASSOCIATIONS: A.C.T.R.A. (life member), Toronto Musicians' Association (life member), C.F.I.B. (charter member), C.A.P.A.C., Actor's Equity, Freemason, Delta Upsilon, Kiwanis, P. Conservative, Anglican

QUICK REFERENCE:

1. Encyclopedia of Music in Canada. Kallman, Potvin, Winters
 - Personal - P. 1015
 - Don Wright Chorus - P. 277
 - Text Books - Several Places
2. Who's Who in Canada 1982 - 2002
3. Music Education in Canada - Green, Vogan. P.P. 265, 266 et al

RECREATIONS: Music, Travel and Walking

ADDRESS: 77 Chestnut Park Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4W 1W7

-- A Personal Note --

My wife, Lillian, has been my indispensable partner and inspiring companion in all my endeavours. Her constant help and encouragement have stimulated me through the years.

- *Lillian was in the Control Room for all sessions - making it sound on the air the way it sounded in the Studio*
- *She designed and made all the gowns for the Chorus.*
- *On all Troop Shows she was liaison "Front-stage Back stage" - So, NO HITCHES!*
- *She vetted all my prose... and wrote beautiful lyrics to gems like Clair de Lune, Moonlight Sonata, et al ...*

Don Wright

-- MAJOR PHILANTHROPIC GIFTS --

The beginning was a TEST . . .

**A SCHOLARSHIP IN MUSIC AT ALTHOUSE COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO (U.W.O.), 1966**

Donated each year - AND IT WORKED!

THE DON WRIGHT SCHOLARSHIPS IN MUSIC EDUCATION, 1979

34 annual awards in 13 Universities across Canada!
All endowed with a formula for *perpetual increase* - AND IT WORKS!

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

4 Music Scholarships - 1979 - Endowed
Don Wright Track Meet - Trophy and Replicas - 1983 - Endowed
The Marching Band Fund & Medal - 1984 - Endowed
The Classics Department Fund - 1984 - Endowed
The Don Wright Track (8 lanes) New Stadium - 2000 - Donated
The Don Wright Faculty of Music - 2002 - Donated 3M

ST. CLEMENTS CHURCH, TORONTO

The Grand Piano - 1981 - Donated
The Trompette en Chamade - 1986 - Donated
The "Swell" Organ - 1994 - Donated
The "Great" Organ - 2000 - Donated
The Wright Music Fund - Donated 2000, Endowed 2002
The Lillian & Don Wright Endowment for Senior Choir - Major Gift

THE WESTERN ONTARIO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC - 1986

The Building! Several big projects later - Major donations
CONSERVATORY CANADA - Endowed 2003
The Don & Lillian Wright National Voice Masterclass

HURON COLLEGE, LONDON - 1988

The Mary J. Wright Psychology Centre - Major donation

WELLESLEY HOSPITAL - 1991

The Lillian Meighen Wright Maternity Centre
New concept - all services come to the mother and baby in fully equipped single rooms
THE COMPLETE 6TH FLOOR! - Major donation - 1.5M

THE HOSPITAL FOR SICK CHILDREN - 1993

The Lillian Meighen Wright Scholarship Fund
Supports graduate training of top nurses to Masters Level
Major endowment with "increase" formula

THE ARTHUR MEIGHEN GARDENS

Shakespeare - Stratford
Major donation - 1997

THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, STRATHROY

The Wright Family Memorial Window, Pentecost, 1998
(Shared with my sister, Mary) - Major donations
The Yamaha Upright Piano for inside the church - 1998 - Donated
The Wright Family Memorial Foundation of the Anglican Church of St. John the Evangelist, Strathroy
(Shared with my sister, Mary) - Major endowments
The completion of the rebuild of the organ - 2000 - Major donation

THE TORONTO LADIES' CLUB

Lillian joined 1960
Many significant, loving gifts over the years

THE CHURCH OF ST. SIMON, THE APOSTLE

The Rebuild Project: Access for handicapped (Ramps, elevator, etc.) - Major donation - 2000

THE TORONTO CHILDREN'S CHORUS and CHOIRS ONTARIO

Bravo! Encore! - and with special attention to -
The Boy's Changing Voice - The Future of Mixed Choirs.
Both major endowments 2002-3

UPPER CANADA COLLEGE - A DON WRIGHT SCHOLAR

Full financial aid to an outstanding music student
to attend upper school until graduation - Endowment 1.5M

THE SALVATION ARMY

Scarborough Grace Hospital
The Wright Nurseries - 1985 - Donated
The Wright Birthing Centre - 1993 - Donated
Additional Wellesley-type Birthing rooms - 1995 - Donated
The Circle of Care Campaign - 2002-3 - Major donation - .5M

ST. MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL 1999-2001

The Don & Lillian Meighen Wright Maternity Centre
Same principle as Wellesley, plus more! Much more!
THE COMPLETE 15TH FLOOR - A BLOCK LONG! Major Donation - 2M

THE LILLIAN & DON WRIGHT FOUNDATION 1999

A very large first endowment - more to come . . .
Built for continuous growth

**A POWER FOR GOOD
FOR EVER!!**

