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APRIL 1, 2013 | 049-13

Laurier's Master of Music Therapy program marks 10 years as it unveils first-of-its-kind lab

WATERLOO – Laurier's Faculty of Music will celebrate 10 years of alumni and student excellence in its Music Therapy master's program April 9 as it also unveils a Music Therapy Clinical Improvisational Lab – the first of its kind in Canada.

The improvisation lab will enhance research, as well as teaching and learning in the undergraduate and graduate music therapy programs. Heidi Ahonen, a music professor at Laurier and director of the Manfred and Penny Conrad Institute for Music Therapy Research, received the funding for the lab.

"The lab enhances client and therapist sessions through the use of modern equipment and technology, furthering the research of clinical improvisation as a whole," said Ahonen. "Improvisation provides the opportunity for clients to express themselves through sound."

As the Faculty of Music gets ready to unveil its lab, it will also celebrate the Music Therapy master program's 10th anniversary with student performances, keynote speakers and a reception.

Over the past 10 years, graduates of this program have developed into a community of music therapists practising music-centred psychotherapy. Students gain practical experience working with clients through community practicum placements and in the faculty's on-site clinic.

"Music is at the heart of our work and it is music that breathes life and potential into the therapeutic process," said Colin Lee of Laurier's Music Therapy program. "Through the inspiration of improvising, creation of song, the deep listening of guided imagery and music, and through the experience of low frequency sounds, clients are given the opportunity to develop and reach their full potential."

Laurier is the only university in Canada that offers a Master of Music Therapy program. Students may also take music therapy at the undergraduate level.

An open house for the Music Therapy Clinical Improvisational Lab will be held April 9 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. in Room A210 in the John Aird Building on Laurier's Waterloo campus. A celebration marking the program's 10th anniversary will follow at 7:15 p.m. in the Maureen Forrester Recital Hall.

To attend either event, please contact Debra Martz Melanson at dmartzmelanson@wlu.ca or 519-884-1970 ext. 2658. For more information about Laurier's graduate and undergraduate music therapy programs, visit www.wlu.ca/music.