Mr. Chancellor, I am pleased to introduce Barbara Pentland, whose gift to Canadian culture is a musical legacy of extraordinary depth and artistic wisdom.

Born in Winnipeg in 1912, Ms. Pentland has been composing music since early childhood, though often facing many obstacles along the way. She courageously pursued her art despite family objections, and despite an environment in Canada in the 1920's and 30's not yet awake to its young artists, and unable to provide training in the progressive concepts of contemporary musical thought.

In the late 1930's therefore, Barbara Pentland left for the United States where she studied under a special fellowship at the Juilliard Graduate School of Music, and at the Berkshire Music Centre with composers Frederick Jacobi, Bernard Wagenaar, and Aaron Copland. During the 1940's, she taught at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. And in 1949, at the invitation of Harry Adaskin, she joined the Department of Music at the University of British Columbia, where she remained until 1963.

Meanwhile, her personal artistic growth continued. Visits to Europe brought her into contact with the formal innovations of Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern. But in Canada, the great musical works of the 20th century were just beginning to be performed, and advanced compositional ideas had yet to penetrate the musical establishment. Barbara Pentland, along with other composers, assumed the vanguard. Thanks to their courageous efforts, advanced musical programs and innovative creativity today flourish across the nation.

Barbara Pentland's accomplishments are prodigious. Her large musical opus, characterized by a distinctive blend of lyricism, sensitivity, and economy of expression, encompasses all genres, including chamber works, ballet, opera, and symphonies. Her numerous commissions include works written for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Purcell String Quartet, and the Vancouver New Music Society. An accomplished concert pianist as well, she has performed throughout Europe and North America.

Barbara Pentland’s recent and mature works express a rich and abiding fount of creative renewal. With wit and good humour, high standards and unassailable principles, she remains an active and inspirational presence in the nation's musical community.

The poet Dorothy Livesay, who's writing figures prominently in Pentland's work, speaks of the profound connections between people that music creates:

Within us
strung on invisible wire
music sends messages
inner ear to inner ear

Mr. Chancellor, recognizing the musician in our midst, the artist who has moved the heart and mind of our culture, I am honoured to ask on behalf of the Senate of this University that you confer on Barbara Pentland the Degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.