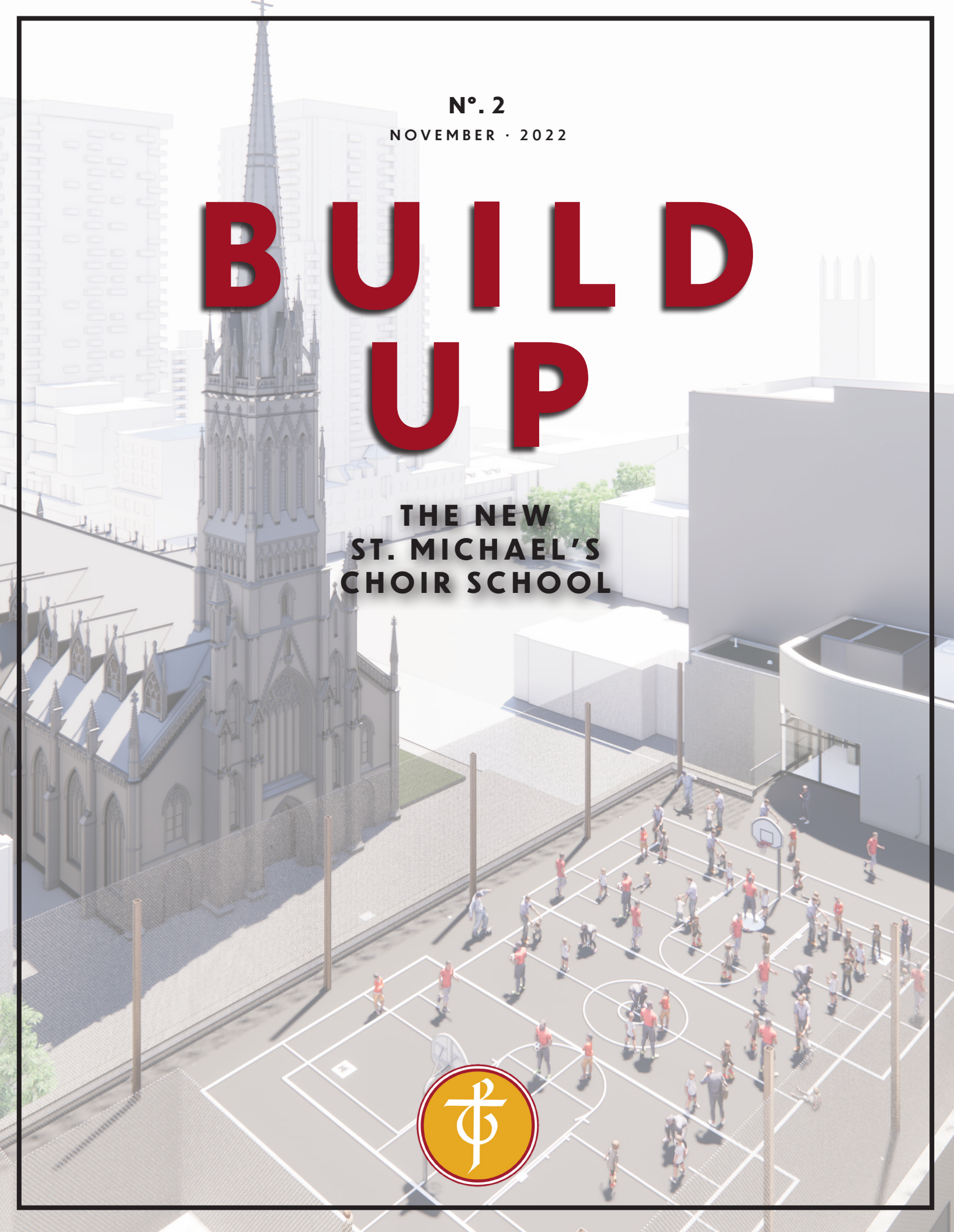


Nº. 2

NOVEMBER · 2022

# BUILD UP

THE NEW  
ST. MICHAEL'S  
CHOIR SCHOOL



# BUILD UP

## NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the second edition of the **Build Up Newsletter**.

**One conversation at a time** - We continue to make great strides in the silent phase of the capital campaign, one conversation at a time.

We thank our generous donors to date and are encouraged by the overwhelming response of those who have given, and continue to give, a second time as we raise funds for the building of the new school.

We are blessed with our donors' incredible generosity and commitment to the choristers and the planning of the 21st-century academic and choral learning spaces.

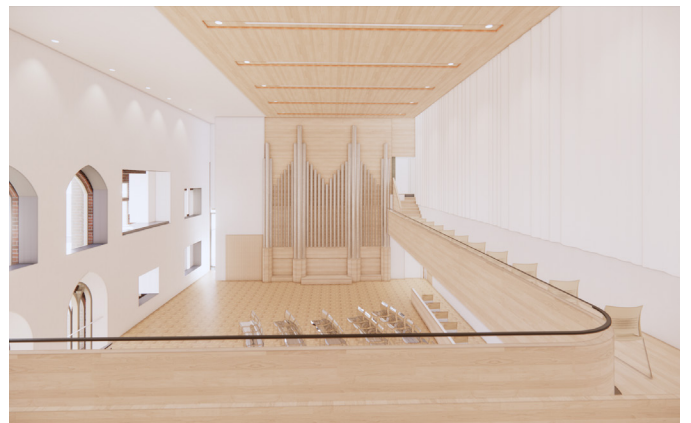
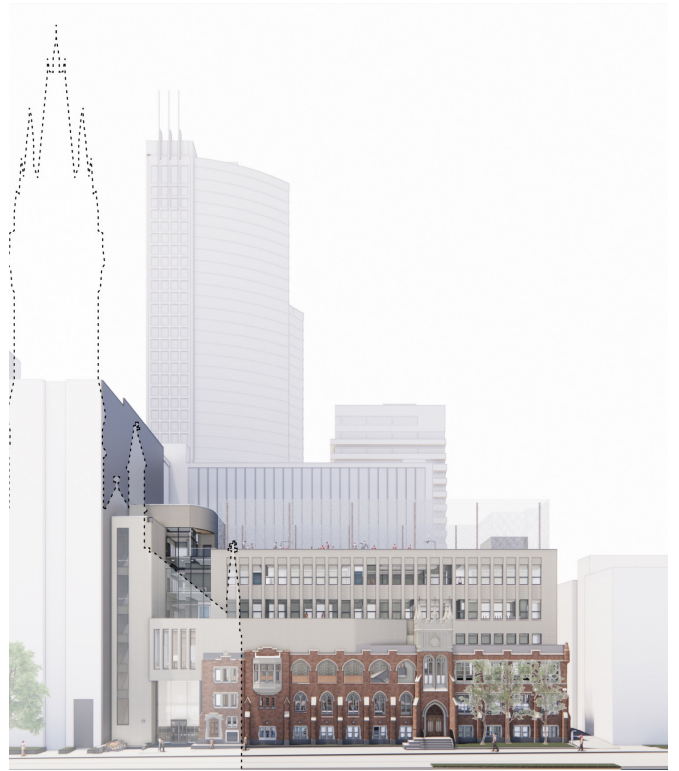
We are excited to share this edition of The St. Michael's Choir School Newsletter to update our students, families, extended families, staff, and friends about the ongoing activities of the building of our new school.

The dream of renewing the physical structure of The St. Michael's Choir School continues to flourish, and donations continue to flow. This new plan will allow for the consolidation of the school on the west side of Bond Street and the accommodation of all the boys and all their academic and choral activities under one roof.

The new facility will provide the choristers with 21st-century learning spaces that support top-notch learning and teaching techniques for both today and the future.

**One brick at a time** – The new St. Michael's Choir School will require many, many bricks. And we are pleased to report that this edition of Build Up highlights “the bricks” of those in our community who have stepped up to help design and lay the financial and physical foundations for The New Choir School.

Today, we share their conversations as the vanguard in making the vision a reality.



Architectural planning and decisions were adapted from 21st-century learning and teaching principles with strategic input from the staff, students, parents and Toronto Catholic District School Board to create the bold and exciting vision of The New St. Michael's Choir School – a school with futuristic purpose-built learning spaces that directly address the needs of the choristers.

### KPMB AND +VG ARCHITECTS

The new building is a joint venture between two architectural firms: KPMB and +VG Architects. To understand their professional dedication and commitment to the visioning of the school, we are pleased to share highlights of their ideas as they continue to work at the detailed design stage in preparation for construction execution. The plans reside with the City of Toronto as the site plan approval process continues.

Robert Sims, Principal Architect, KPMB and Terry White, Principal Architect, +VG Architects, share their inspirational stories while working on the new school. Designing within an architectural team environment, the conversations between the two architects demonstrate the commitment and dedication to creating a state-of-the-art 21st learning environment.



**A CONVERSATION WITH ROBERT SIMS**

KPMB ARCHITECT

In 2014, KPMB designed a Master Plan as the strategic framework for the future of The Cathedral District. The Master Plan established The Cathedral Block with the restored heritage award-winning St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica and The New Choir School and re-imagined Bond Street as an area of undiscovered calm in the busy downtown core.

Marianne McKenna, Terry White, David Ecclestone, and I are the key leaders, and we collaborate with a large team of expert consultants.

We had to consider many critical issues in designing The New St. Michael's Choir School. A key challenge was the need to accommodate large spaces such as a gym and auditorium on a very tight site while not overwhelming the heritage façade of the school and Bond Street.

We were inspired by and sensitive to the heritage while building a contemporary building for The Choir School of today and tomorrow. There are so many complex acoustic issues, such as the need to separate the sound-sensitiveness of the music program to create the best environment for performance and

learning. One of our essential consultants is the world-renowned acoustician Bob Essert from Sound Space Vision. Bob has been our collaborator at KPMB for the sound of the new Massey Hall and Koerner Hall of the Royal Conservatory of Music.

Most importantly, we are retaining and restoring the architecture of the unique heritage façade, the entry, and the clock tower of 66 Bond Street. The Choir School is re-imagined as a vertical campus of three schools (one elementary, one secondary, and a choir school) topped with the most dramatic, a rooftop court with spectacular city views. We opened up the inside plan by creating large interior courtyard spaces outside the walls of the classrooms, reflecting the contemporary pedagogy of gathering and collaboration. It is almost as though the classrooms and seminar rooms are buildings on a mini-Bond Street town square. The interior spaces are flooded with natural light, with interior glass connecting the rooms' views and collaborative learning spaces.



We needed to understand the day-to-day narrative of school operations so we could unite the building. The three schools in one (elementary, secondary and choral) all need their own identifiable spaces for the unique programs they provide. Hence, we had to consider what should go on the various floors to create a stackable school with very site-specific requirements. Site-specific conditions include the auditorium, music practice rooms, gymnasium, and rooftop playground. No two floors are the same. The larger two and

three-storey volumes intersect with the smaller spaces. The new areas, such as the practice rooms and performance hall, will be scaled to the proper size and have better insulation from outside noise, thus enhancing the musical offerings.

This is a building with many special requirements. For example, the auditorium behind the heritage façade is a sound-isolated room of double-wall construction with heavy triple-glazed windows to the outside, reducing most of the distracting city noise. From our work at Koerner Hall, we learned much about the art and science of acoustics and how to create acoustically isolated spaces for musical performances in a noisy city environment.

For The New Choir School, considerations are technical and intuitive, including double-wall construction, isolated ceilings and roofs for the next-door hospital helicopters, and quiet mechanical systems. In acoustics, every detail is relevant. At Koerner Hall, we developed a deep knowledge of how the surfaces and textures of a room can enhance and diffuse a sound,

so every seat is acoustically superb. All lessons learned will be applied to The Choir School. The work we had previously completed at the Royal Conservatory of Music - specifically the TELUS Performance and Learning Centre - gave us a great knowledge base for a music building. Our designs for the Royal Conservatory of Music music rooms were very instructive for scaling and situating the rooms in the new school.

Our goal is that people will enjoy this new building that provides beautiful, functional, and thoughtful spaces to serve the needs of the students.

They will find that we imagined the building aptly in 2022, maintaining the character of the older school while re-enlivening Bond Street, creating it as a unique destination, and making The Choir School the number one school choice for young choristers.

**A CONVERSATION WITH  
TERRY WHITE**

+VG ARCHITECTS



Historically it was Msgr. Ronan's conceptual creation, and he worked with the architect, James Haffa, to bring his dream into reality at 66 Bond Street. The St. Michael's Choir School exists within the heritage Garden District, including St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica, The St. Michael's Choir School, St. Michael's Hospital, and the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute. On an urban scale, St. Michael's Choir School is part of the institutional and commercial context, encompassing St. Michael's Hospital, the Eaton Centre, Massey Hall, and Dundas Square. +VG has been working on St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica since 2002. During that time, we learned a lot about The Choir School. In an intimate way, we became familiar with the relationship between The Choir School and The Cathedral Basilica. The Choir School program needs St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica, and St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica needs The Choir School. It has been a symbiotic relationship since The Choir School's inception.

+VG's experience with 21st-century school design, our two decades of work on St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica combined with our expertise in heritage conservation allows us to sensitively balance the heritage with the vision for The New Choir School. Our skills, combined with those of KPMB, make us a diverse design team. We are excited to be working together on this very challenging project.

While working on St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica restoration, the General Contractor's office was located in the basement of 66 Bond Street. Every day, we would hear the boys'

marvellous voices rehearsing. This beautiful sound was most inspiring. Beauty is found in art, architecture, and music in the Church. Beauty is the threshold or transition to truth, goodness, and love. We want The New Choir School to hold those same virtues in its architecture as the Cathedral Basilica. And we are hopeful of achieving that very vision of the soul.

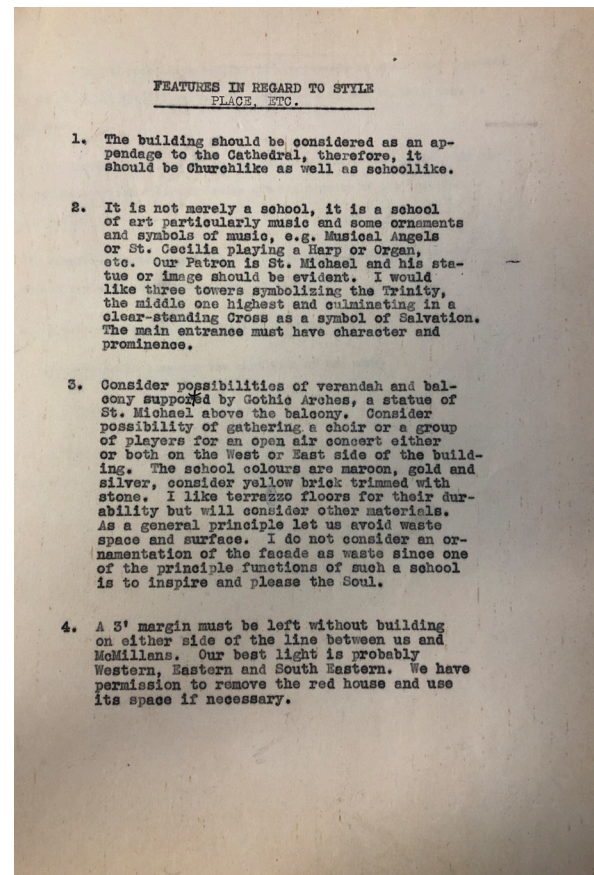
Several unique features showcase the artistic beauty of The St. Michael's Choir School. For example, the heritage led stained glass windows and the Le Corbusier-inspired rooftop courtyard are two such features. Other spiritual, visual, and physical links to The Cathedral Basilica are maintained and emphasized. The Choir School should be part of the city and contribute to and benefit equally from that urban association. The school is a contributing member of the Cathedral District, the St. Michael's Cathedral campus, and Catholicism in the city's centre of The Garden District.

The St. Michael's Choir School is a leader in the educational world. This means their new building has to be designed for the latest, best practices in teaching and learning. Acoustic design is a top priority, from room proportions to geometry and surface treatments, which will contribute to sound quality. Equally important is the acoustic performance of the building's outer skin to prevent the city's urban noise (e.g. the St. Michael's Hospital helicopter flight path) from interfering with the internal quality of building acoustics. The Choir School is a hive of activity, especially on the weekends, preparing for and performing at the Cathedral Basilica weekend mass schedule. It cannot be subjected to outside noise interference at any time of the day.

In looking back from the future, we hope that people of the future will say that The New Choir School performed well and fulfilled the role for which it was intended; that it proved to be adaptable to the challenges and changing needs of the times; that it had an identifiable and positive presence in the city; that it proved to be a safe and suitable vessel for boys to learn and grow in creativity and spirit; and that students, upon reflection, will be proud to have been associated with it. The Choir School is seen as a "vessel" where

all the building members (past, present and future) will cultivate memories (both consciously and subconsciously) that will inspire them for the rest of their lives. If the "vessel" performs well (as a good piece of architecture should), then it will provide shelter and comfort while elevating the daily rituals of school life to the poetic plane, thereby inspiring poetic experience and poetic memories. We aspire to have the future users of The New Choir School say that their memories of places, spaces, moments, achievements, and successes at 66 Bond Street are poetic.

Both education and music have changed since Msgr. Ronan first established The Choir School 85 years ago. The physical structures built then have well served their time. The impetus behind The Choir School's Build Up Campaign is to keep up those high standards in both music and education and to further Msgr. Ronan's goals in both fields. These new spaces will enhance the collaborative and creative nature of The St. Michael's Choir School experience, preparing the graduates to be future-ready.



**A CONVERSATION WITH  
FR. FRANK PORTELLI**

RECTOR, ST. MICHAEL'S CATHEDRAL  
BASILICA AND ST. MICHAEL'S CHOIR  
SCHOOL



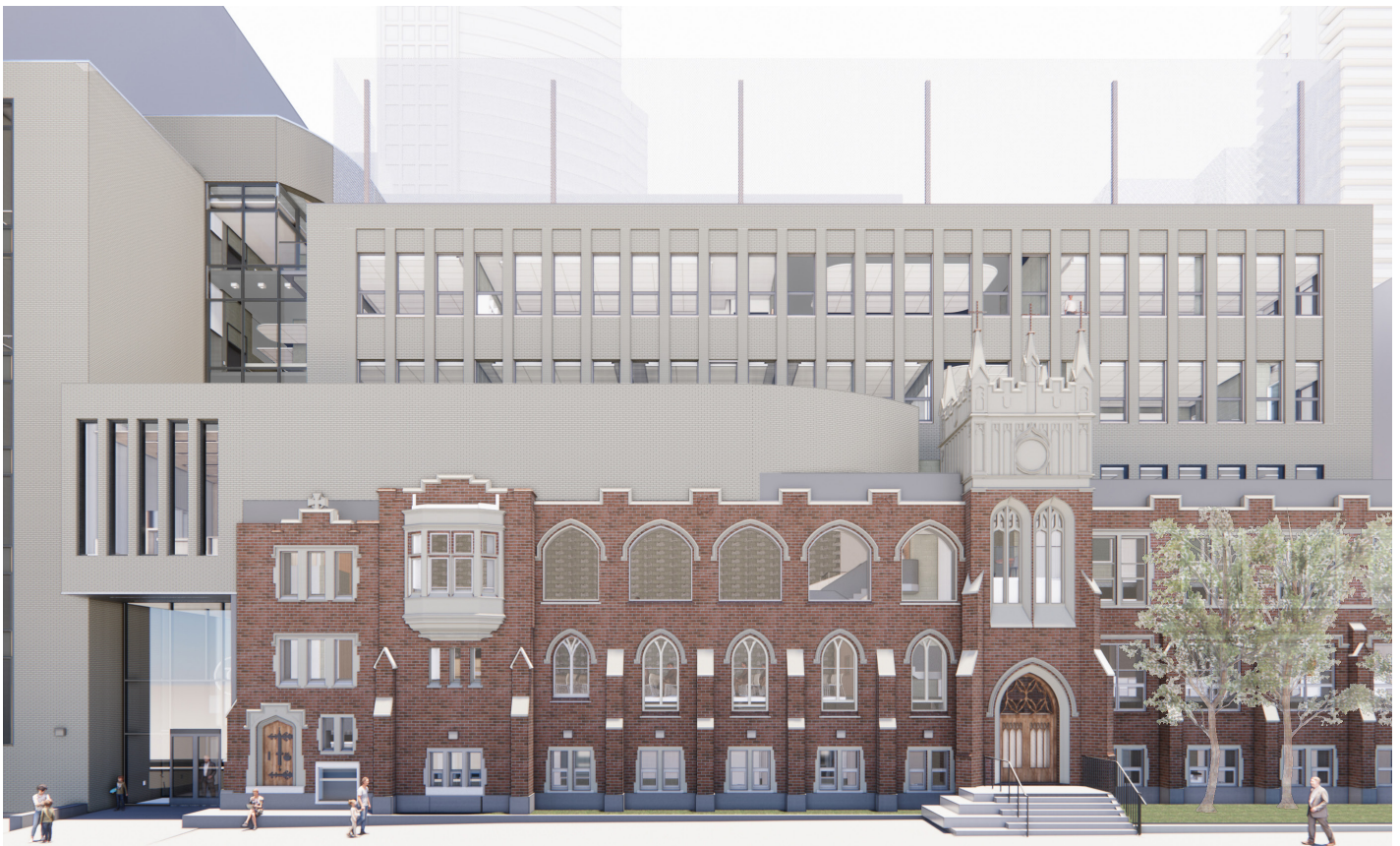
The current building has done its job for almost a century. It is time to shore up this great school's physical and musical foundations and bring it into the new century. The Choir School is a place of great music and virtue, and the architecture should reflect both qualities.

The school's heritage is complementary to the origin of St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica. It evokes a time of the past. The architects are trying to be very faithful to the heritage of the school's building. They are trying to respect the past and incorporate new elements that will integrate the school with the urban downtown destinations surrounding it. There is a symbiotic relationship between The Choir School boys and St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica. The boys are reminded daily by looking across at the Cathedral Basilica of their work's service to enhance the liturgy for Cathedral Basilica parishioners. The concerts and services performed in St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica give beautiful examples of what the music could and should be for the rest of the Archdiocese.

The New Choir School building should be a witness to the timelessness of what is truly beautiful and good. The music is timeless, classic and has worldwide respect. It is that classic timelessness that will be reflected in the new building.

I think about how the new choristers get absorbed into the culture of The Choir School and integrate their voices into the existing choir every year. The new building will do the same thing. It will incorporate all of the old that is good and meld it with the new to communicate to future generations the goodness, truth, and beauty of the school. It will bring forth wonderful music to be continually sung for generations to come.

The New St. Michael's Choir School will be a great centre of learning for the community. It will be a beautiful space where others will be invited to hear the great works performed. This new building will be here for future generations as a testament to Msgr. Ronan's original vision will be improved upon as those future generations of boys continue to travel through the wonderful education and musical training offered at The Choir School. A great deal of flexibility is built into these learning spaces for different types of learners and different ways of thinking. Flexibility is key to the successful future of our students.



## A CONVERSATION WITH ALLGEIER FAMILY

Andreas Allgeier ('95 Alumnus and Chair, Parent Council), his wife, Rebecca (teacher with the Toronto Catholic School Board) and son, James ('29 and Grade 5 Chorister)

Twenty-seven years ago, I graduated from St. Michael's Choir School. I spent all 11 years at The Choir School, starting in grade 3 and going right through to grade 13. They were great years, and I am still friends with many people I met at The Choir School.

The Choir School provides world-class education and stellar musical training, so the facility should be world-class outside of the obvious physical things. We are looking for the school to have the same warmth and character as it did in the past. It should feel like a second home, as that is the feeling that our son has every day. The new building will retain all of the great pieces of the past and mix in new technology in brighter, better spaces.

We think retaining the front façade of the 1960 building is essential. It is a crucial piece of the character of The Choir School. It pays respect to the school's history and Monsignor Ronan's vision for The Choir School that he established in 1937.

This is a world-class school, so a new building is desperately needed for the boys to continue to achieve world-class levels. The current facilities are falling down around us. Current parents who want the best for their children should support this school rebuild. The new building will allow students to work, sing, and play together in one building, which is undoubtedly an improvement. We have benefitted and taken so much from previous generations that it is our turn to step up. And I want to shout out to my fellow alumni, thank you for your continued support in the new build. Keep up the dedicated commitment and generosity towards the latest build. We are paying it forward to the front of the line. Back in high school, we did not think that someday we would have children going to this school, but now we do, and we look forward to the future when parents have their sons and their grandsons learning and singing in the new school.

All families should support The Choir School Capital Campaign to the best of their financial ability. The boys are our future. We, as a family, have committed to supporting this new building at a sacrificial level to the best of our ability and encourage others to do the same. Our children (and future generations) deserve it.

Alumni should continue to support this campaign. It is we who have benefited from those who went before us. We all stand on the shoulders of giants. Families will have children and grandchildren who are potential choristers. We are lucky we do not have to start the school from scratch like Msgr. Ronan did. We, alumni, were fortunate in the education we received, the scholarships obtained, the university placements awarded, and the careers we went on to forge. They were all facilitated by our attendance at The St. Michael's Choir School.

Our good fortune in life has much to do with the training we receive. Not only do we owe this back, but our investment in the new school also raises the value of our diplomas. And so, we should financially support this new building. It is about supporting and appreciating the work done to help me in my time here as a student by those who preceded me. That work went into creating us first as students and then as men.

When we went through The Choir School, our mandate was to make the world a better place for us living in it. So even alumni without sons attending St. Michael's Choir School should be supporting The Choir School Rebuild as our way of saying "thank you" to those of the past who helped us and ensuring that the school carries on and thrives. Think of what would be lost if St. Michael's Choir School was to disappear. I am pleased to report that our family has made its gift to the school. And at this time, my family would like to thank you for your ongoing dedication and commitment to building the new school.

## A CONVERSATION WITH JAMES ALLGEIER '29

(Grade 5 Chorister)

This is my third year at the school, and my time here as a student has just been fantastic! When I come to school, I am really excited and happy. I am definitely glad that I came to The Choir School. It is smaller, has a great community, all the teachers are friendly and caring, and the boys are all very close. I am excited for my brother (who is only in grade two right now) to come and join me when he is in grade 3. He is even learning piano and practising hard to be ready to join this great school.

I would like to see in the new building, a new playground would be nice, more room to move around would be great, and putting us all in one building would be amazing! Not having to dodge traffic a few times a day, crossing back and forth across Bond Street to get to classes on both sides of the street would be excellent.

When I think about the new school, I get the same feeling before performing. I've got a few pre-jitters, but once I start singing, I'm thrilled to be there and sharing with everybody else. I believe it will be the same way with the new school when it's built. I can't wait!

And I want to say thank you to all of the people who are contributing to it, especially my parents.



## **Our Gratitude**

We would like to thank the individuals who agreed to be interviewed and support us in one conversation at a time. The building of the new school is an investment in our choristers, learning and growth. We hope you will join us in investing in the future of The Choir School. We are asking all community members to consider a sacrificial donation to support the next generation of outstanding graduates from The Choir School who will be community leaders and "men for others."

## **Be the Catalyst for the Construction**

We need your gift to help continue to move the school's vision towards reality - a reality that will stand the test of time. Donations are made one conversation at a time, and we want to start the conversation with you.

If you are interested in starting your conversation, please contact:

**Pat Parisi**

e: [advancement@smcs.on.ca](mailto:advancement@smcs.on.ca)

t: (416) 898-1024

Every Choir School story, every donation, and every conversation will build the excitement and enthusiasm needed to reach our campaign goal!

**Consider being part of the team, one brick at a time.**

**Stay tuned for the Build Up Newsletter: Edition Three**



N°. 2

# **BUILD UP**

NOVEMBER · 2022

## **THE NEW ST. MICHAEL'S CHOIR SCHOOL**

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