

Minerva Foundation Reception

February 13, 2002

Dr. Martha C. Piper

President

The University of British Columbia

Thank you. And welcome to UBC at Robson Square.

When we planned this new campus, this was exactly the kind of event that we imagined taking place here. We set up Robson Square as a meeting point – between UBC and the community it serves. And you, as a significant aspect of that community – gather here to enrich us and to enrich each other in so many ways. Many thanks for being here this afternoon.

Minerva was the Roman goddess of wisdom and warfare. Closely identified with her Greek counterpart Athena, she is the symbol of intellectual and physical strength and creativity. Known for her role in commerce, crafts and music, Minerva was the “goddess of a thousand works” underlying her role in all aspects of society.

What we pay tribute to today, however, is her birth and the manner in which she entered the world. The myth is dramatic—she sprang fully-grown and fully dressed from the brain of Jupiter. The message is clear: Minerva was successful, Minerva was a leader, Minerva was secure, Minerva was strong, Minerva was able—but not as a result of struggle or duty or privilege or age—but rather because she was fully-grown and fully dressed when she was born.

Fully grown and fully dressed. Indeed, that is what the Minerva Foundation is all about...ensuring that all women are fully grown and fully dressed, before they enter the world of work, the world of leadership, the world of commerce, the world of public service, the world of creative arts, or the world of family and community.

By identifying their four areas of priority as being education, economic security, safety and leadership, the Minerva Foundation is clearly focused on ensuring that women are fully grown and fully dressed as they enter today's world.

And less you think that this was only relevant in the time of the Romans, I am reminded of a wonderful book I have just read entitled *Nobel Prize Women in Science: Their Lives, Struggles and Momentous Discoveries* by Sharon McGrayne. Ms. McGrayne chronicles the lives of the ten women who have won Nobel Prizes in science. In noting that these ten women comprise only three percent of all Nobel Prize scientists, she underlines some of the major obstacles they had to overcome in their lifetimes: being legally barred from universities, hiring tutors to learn mathematics, science, Latin and Greek, working for years without salaries or positions, and facing ridicule and hostility. While it is easy to dwell on these injustices, Ms. McGrayne prefers to ask the more

compelling question, and that is: In the face of such obstacles, what sustained these women? What prevented them from giving up, as many other women scientists did?

McGrayne clearly concludes, that behind all of these successful women stood key individuals—individuals, who supported their careers—individuals who believed in their work, inspired confidence, and shaped their lives—individuals who provided them with financial support—individuals who were instrumental in fully growing and fully dressing these women.

Indeed, this is what we celebrate today...a foundation—the Minerva Foundation—made up of individuals who believe in and who support, through their gifts and donations, women in their quest for excellence. Your gifts do make a difference—they provide scholarships and support for young women to excel—they provide the resources necessary for women to be educated,

economically secure and safe—and they provide women with the ability to fully participate in today’s world of work, service and leadership.

In Sharon McGrayne’s eyes you are the “key individuals” who are supporting women in their respective journeys; in Minerva’s eyes you are the Jupiters from whence she came. Whether it is a Nobel Laureate or a Roman goddess, the message is the same—we all need individuals who care, individuals who support us in our efforts, individuals who provide the means to allow us to spring forward fully grown and fully dressed.

And so on behalf of the Foundation, and all the women who are benefiting from your donations, I thank you for joining us this afternoon and for your support in giving birth to the future “Minervas”.

It is now my privilege and pleasure to introduce to you one of the Minerva Foundation Bursary recipients, Tristin Wayte. Tristin is a graduate student at SFU, pursuing her Ph.D. degree in psychology and law. She is a single mother, raising a 17-month-old little boy. In addition, Tristin has been active in live theatre in the community—having performed in leading and supporting roles in over 20 musical theatre productions. Please join me in welcoming Tristin Wayte.

It is now my pleasure to re-invite the Silk Road Ensemble back on stage to entertain us once again.