

Local orchestra director honoured with arts award

On Oct. 2, Stuart and I attended the Spirit of Ontario Awards Gala, presented by the National Congress of Italian Canadians.

The Hamilton District held the banquet and awards ceremony at Carmen's Banquet Hall and Convention Centre on Stone Church Road. It was a lavish and splendid affair to honour eight Italian Canadians for their contribution to life in Ontario.

Among a most impressive list of honourees was our Cambridge Community Orchestra's music director Sabatino Vacca, who distinguished himself by being the recipient in the arts category, a much-deserved and well-earned award. The Cambridge Community Orchestra board knew how fortunate they were to have secured him as their director and he has led the orchestra to heights never anticipated in this short time period. But sitting at a table of his guests - with opera singers from a variety of cities, all of whom have worked with him as their opera coach and were filled with praise for his work - we more fully appreciated his skills.

As the evening progressed and Vince Paparo, a guest performer, entertained us with a medley of Italian songs, the singers at our table joined in and we were surrounded with wonderful harmony of baritones and tenors joining. It gave the event an even more festive feeling. It was like being at an Italian wedding.

Sabatino is a humble man whose enthusiasm for the Cambridge Orchestra is appreciated by

the musicians. They know how sought after he is and how busy he is. He currently works at Wilfrid Laurier University's music department, has the opening of Carmen in a couple of weeks at Opera York, and has the first concert of our own orchestra on Nov. 22 when we unite with the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Orchestra.

This will be for an exciting concert at the usual venue for them, the Forward Baptist Church, on Myers Road. As always, the concert will begin at 8 p.m. and is free, with donations appreciated.

A few benevolent sponsors and others, together with many loyal supporters, have given generously to the orchestra. It has enabled the orchestra to continue to offer free concerts so that live classical music can be experienced by anyone able to get to the church, and so that parents can bring their children.

This season, the orchestra board of directors managed to secure an Ontario Trillium grant to pay the music director's salary until January 2010. This will enable the orchestra to put donated funds toward securing their future, paying the insurance and the lead players, and becoming self-sustaining.

The Christmas concert on Dec. 20 will unite the Kiwani's Boys Choir, dance students from Michele Hopkins school and Tippy Toes, combining a variety of arts disciplines. Already the audience is asking about tickets. It is a free concert and everyone will be welcome.

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