



Orchestral evolution

Ray Martin, Times Staff

July 21, 2011

Cambridge Community Orchestra is about to take it to the next level. The orchestra, which was founded in 2007, has been constantly improving. It has made a home for itself at Forward Baptist Church on Myers Road and has grown in popularity to a point where it regularly has 350 people attending each concert.

Given the constant improvements and the orchestra's growing popularity, the decision has been made by the board and players to become the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra next season.

Conductor Sabatino Vacca explains that becoming a symphony orchestra is the logical next step.

"It will provide a new challenge to the existing musicians, while opening the door to attracting higher calibre musicians who wouldn't consider playing in a community orchestra," he explained.

"I think it's important for people to know they won't be losing their community orchestra, but gaining a symphony orchestra," said Jill Summerhayes, orchestra ambassador. "We will be the only symphony in Canada that is pay as you can."

Summerhayes credits a large part of the orchestra's success to Vacca. In 2007, the orchestra board put out a call for a new music director and conductor and received an influx of resumes from around the world.

"There aren't very many opportunities for conductors, so we got a lot of candidates," she said.

The orchestra was looking for a conductor who was more interested in the music and players than



Orchestral evolution. Jill Summerhayes (left) says much of the success of the newly formed Cambridge Symphony Orchestra is due to conductor Sabatino Vacca (right). *Ray Martin, Times Staff*

themselves. They would fit in well with the community.

"We invited six people to come in for rehearsals to be appraised by the board and players, and Sabatino was the hands-down winner," she said.

Along with working to improve each section of the orchestra, Vacca has also worked to educate his audience, many of whom are experiencing the classics for the first time.

Prior to playing a piece, Vacca likes to take time to introduce it to the audience and answer any questions.

Vacca explained that in bringing the orchestra along he has had to be careful in his music selections. He has to strike a balance that will continue to challenge his musicians, but not overwhelm them.

In becoming a symphony orchestra, Vacca hopes to recruit some new players to shore up his string section, which he considers to be weakest part of the orchestra.

Vacca is considering staging a string concerto in 2013 in hopes of attracting some new talent. It's a move that has worked for him in the past.

"Several years ago we staged a cello concerto, which spurred interest in the cello section," he said. "That could work here."

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In the coming season the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra will have five performances.

- **Nov. 4: pieces by Brahms, Mozart and Beethoven and feature soloist Katrina Lisa Lidell.**
- **Dec. 16: Christmas on the Grand; New Years on the Danube as part of Christmas in Cambridge. The event is being hailed as the highlight of the season, blending music and dance as the symphony is joined by dancers from the Michele Hopkins Dance Studio.**
- **March 2: concerto will be a mix of Beethoven and Brahms with soloist Boyd McDonald. The concert will be at Central Presbyterian Church and feature the church's new grand piano.**
- **April 20: the symphony is going Hollywood playing some classic gold from the movies.**
- **June 22: the season will wrap up with Local Splendour and the symphony will present highlights from Verdi's La Traviata along with favourites from the world of opera, operetta and musical theatre.**

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