



CAMBRIDGE
TIMES



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Nearing a decade of live music

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Cambridge Times Jul 31, 2013

Cambridge Symphony Orchestra is heading into its 10th year mindful of its humble beginnings, but looking forward to a prosperous future.

The orchestra has built a following with a pay-as-you-can approach during the past nine years, appealing to all ages and economies.

Though some people still contribute the equivalent price of a ticketed show, many members of the general public have been able to enjoy professional-level performances for mere pocket change.

"It's always been challenging to maintain such a policy," says David Terry, who was recently hired on as the orchestra's fund development co-ordinator, with the help of a Trillium Foundation grant.

"We have been successful thus far and brought music to an extremely broad audience in the community, but it's challenging to the extent that we're still here – it's work."

The orchestra will roll out a new season at the Dunfield Theatre on Oct. 20 with a Tribute to Broadway show featuring singers affiliated with Drayton Entertainment.

Lead conductor Sabatino Vacca said the program is still being finalized, but will likely contain pieces from Les Misérables and Andrew Lloyd Weber classics, as well as a Disney portion and older themes from My Fair Lady and Rodgers and Hammerstein.

Vacca is currently working in collaboration with Drayton's artistic director, Alex Mustakas.

"When we first got together with Alex to talk about the evening, it had just suddenly occurred to me what a great opportunity it would be to perform musical theatre repertoire at the Dunfield musical theatre," said Vacca.

"He got excited about that and thought 'Why don't we make it a joint effort?' We thought, with (Drayton's) fan base and our fan base, let's see if we can pull off two performances in one day."

Terry believes the show with Drayton Entertainment reflects the orchestra's arrival as a major player on the local arts scene.

"These are the areas we're now moving into which reflects not only an importance in the community, but our accomplishments as a musical ensemble," he said. "More people in this community need to know about us and that is something essential, of course, to what I'm doing."

"Ten years is a very short time in the evolution of an orchestra; it's a very long time in an orchestra's ability to survive and prosper," Terry added. "To establish yourself and be around 10 years later is a huge achievement. It's a benchmark in terms of the time in which it takes musically for orchestras to mature. Orchestras are constantly growing and improving, especially orchestras that have been established in relatively small communities like this."

Terry said the orchestra has no plans to scrap the customary pay-as-you-can policy, but people will have to buy tickets for the two-hour performances at the Dunfield Theatre on Oct. 20. "We're going to call it a fundraiser and for that reason – raising funds," he said, adding that proceeds will be split with Drayton Entertainment.

Like any other organization, revenue pays for operating costs - musicians, hall rentals and advertising, Vacca said.

"We want to sell 1,000 tickets and still expect it to be very good value for a high quality, professional orchestra, together with some equally high quality, professional singers from Drayton," Terry added.

By interacting with its audience before and after shows, the orchestra has attempted to break down barriers that put classical music on a pedestal as an elite hobby in the eyes of some people. In his role, Terry is promoting it with scientific research that gleams mental and physical health benefits for all.

Terry is looking for sponsors and tries to sell the symphony as a form of entertainment, with added benefits. He pointed to the general thrust of a study published by Hill Strategies earlier this year – those who go to live performances enjoy better health, get along better with neighbours and are generally less stressed.

"This is what you can feel good about donating towards. This is actually something that's good for people."

The orchestra is also planning to engage younger members of the Cambridge community after recently receiving a grant from Cambridge Community Foundation to establish a new program in schools.

"It's been tough with the government cutbacks in music programs in the schools and that's where I think a local community orchestra can help fill that gap," Vacca said. "Our goal is to go into the schools and the music programs and expose them to the orchestra that's here in town."

A Nov. 15 concert, Russian Masters, will feature 17-year-old pianist Amadeusz Kazubowski-Houston on a new Schimmel grand piano at Central Presbyterian Church.

Approaching its 10th anniversary performance in June 2014, the orchestra has a string of performances scheduled to demonstrate a repertoire that has become much broader since Vacca's arrival in 2007.

"It expands an orchestra's versatility doing straight classical, doing musical theatre, concerts, doing ballet. It's probably one of, if not the busiest community orchestras in Canada."

The Cambridge orchestra's annual Nutcracker performance, featuring dancers from the Michelle Hopkins dance studio, will be held Dec. 20 at the Forward Baptist Church.

This year will be extra special, Vacca explained.

"We've been leading up to this," he said. "It's always been part of a concert and each year we've added with the idea that someday we'll get to the point it can stand on its own. This year is the first time it will be a whole evening of just Nutcracker."

Space Odyssey, on Feb. 28, will feature soloists, with excerpts from The Planets.

That will lead up to the orchestra's annual fundraiser, Una Serata Bella, at city hall in April, another classical performance in May and its 10th anniversary performance in June.

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