

# The Muse

*classical music in*

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## MUSIC, SERENDIPITY, AND DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

The Cambridge Community Orchestra

ALAN DENNEY



The birth of the Cambridge Community Orchestra (CCO) was the result of a happy accident and the work of a tiny group of volunteers.

In the winter of 2002/2003, members of Cambridge's newly-struck Mayor's Celebration of the Arts committee were planning their inaugural gala event for June 2003. A call for entry had elicited responses from many interested musicians, including folk, rock, and blues, but the committee was disappointed to find that no classical musicians had responded.

A search was made for someone with the connections to help to address the problem, and local music school owner, Ann Green, was invited to join the committee and take on the challenge. Ann brought in a variety of classical musicians to perform at the first event, which was such a huge success that the question was raised "Why is there no community orchestra in Cambridge?" Early in 2004, Ann brought together a group of wind and string players who began to rehearse weekly, with her serving as conductor and working with a small number of volunteers to establish the new orchestra.

The orchestra's first public appearance was at the June 2004 Mayor's Celebration of the Arts gala. More than 600 people listened as the orchestra played *The Overture* from Rossini's opera, *Cinderella*, and two movements from Haydn's *Surprise Symphony*. The performance was hailed as the highlight of the evening.



The orchestra became incorporated in August 2004, and a Board of Directors made up of players and local citizens held its first annual general meeting in January 2005. Since then, the CCO has become firmly established as one of more than 100 community orchestras in Canada.

The CCO has performed almost 20 times in the community, including nine full concerts. Each concert has helped to raise the orchestra's artistic profile and attracted larger audiences: this season the CCO has had audiences as large as 450 people. The orchestra currently consists of 30 regular player members and plans to build membership to 45 over the next two years through ongoing open rehearsals.

The Mayor and Council of the City of Cambridge view the orchestra as a significant beneficial addition to the City that will help in attracting and retaining more professionals to Cambridge.

The Mayor's Celebration of the Arts, the City of Cambridge, and the Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Foundation have provided grants to support ongoing operations and develop a music library. In the summer of 2006, the Ontario Trillium Foundation provided funding to develop a business plan and to hire a professional conductor.

Conductor Sabatino Vacca was hired in January 2007 to provide artistic and musical leadership to the CCO. Ann Green, founder of the orchestra, passed the baton to Sabatino Vacca in January 2007 and returned to her first love – playing the viola. Mr. Vacca has taken on this new venture with extraordinary enthusiasm and has led the players to new performance levels.

Conductor Vacca's hiring also led to the CCO's move into a new,

see CCO, p.4

modern performance venue at Forward Baptist Church in Cambridge. This new hall, which accommodates 1,400, will allow the CCO to produce professional recordings of future performances.

The CCO and its Board are committed to strengthening the orchestra's financial and artistic foundation by developing a strategic plan for a fully sustainable orchestra that enhances the cultural and artistic life of Cambridge, with a determined goal of staying "in the black". The CCO is in the process of applying for registered charity status, to issue receipts for tax purposes for private donations.

The orchestra has embarked on a marketing campaign to increase public awareness and concert attendance, and to encourage new players to join. The conductor and the Board also reach out to the community through speaking engagements, educational seminars, and by forming strategic alliances with various groups.

Four full concerts and three smaller public appearances are planned annually for the next few seasons. Chamber ensembles also perform in smaller venues as "ambassadors" for the orchestra.

The CCO repertoire ranges from Baroque to contemporary, and music is selected



by the Music Director, with suggestions from the players and Board. Works include familiar as well as lesser-known pieces.

At this early stage of development the CCO has not yet been able to commission works by prominent Canadian composers, but hopes to establish ties with the Faculty of Music at Wilfrid Laurier University to provide a promising composition major the opportunity to write a piece for the orchestra. We also hope to perform the works of other local composers.

### The Cambridge Community

The City of Cambridge is a fast-growing community within the Region of Waterloo, which is now the 10th largest urban area in Canada, and the 4th largest in Ontario. The most recent Cultural Directory of the Region of Waterloo identifies more than 50



The Music Times, Vol.II, No.2

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musical groups in the region. Cambridge Community Orchestra fills a gap in this cultural mix.

In an effort to promote collaboration with local arts organisations, some concerts will involve the participation of other groups, such as choirs. As the cultural hub of the artistic community, the CCO will assume a leadership role and promote artistic collaborations for the greater benefit of all involved. Plans are also being made to establish a Young Artists Competition, which will be open to young musicians in the region.

To meet its goal of making its music available to as wide an audience as possible, the CCO board made a daring decision in Fall 2007 – to present the entire 2007-2008 season of concerts admission-free, relying solely on donations and grants rather than ticket sales.

Come to one of our 2008 concerts and share in our enjoyment of music.

For information on the CCO and upcoming concerts, please go to:  
<http://www.cambridgeorchestra.ca/>

Afan Denney is a local arts activist and a founding board member of the Cambridge Community Orchestra.

## SUITE MUSIC

**George F. Handel,  
Water Music Suite**

**J.S. Bach,  
Orchestral Suite No.3 in D,  
BWV 1068**

**Mark Turner,  
Lyric Dialogue, Op.6**

**Edvard Grieg,  
Peer Gynt Suite No.1, Op.46**

**Georges Bizet,  
Carmen Suite No.1**

**April 5, 2008**

**8 pm**

**Forward Baptist Church  
455 Myers Rd., Cambridge**

### Cambridge Community Orchestra Mission Statement

The Cambridge Community Orchestra performs orchestral music throughout the community and provides learning opportunities for musicians at various levels in their musical careers. The orchestra creates opportunities for exposure to classical music in the community and cultural enrichment for players and audiences. Orchestra members need to be passionate about their music and aspire to excellence, while maintaining the enjoyment of playing together. As the cultural hub of the musical community, the CCO will assume a leadership role and promote artistic collaborations for the greater benefit of all involved.