

Orchestra gets pro conductor

Aims to boost profile in Cambridge with plans for five concerts a year

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CAMBRIDGE

The Cambridge Community Orchestra has hired its first professional conductor in hopes of boosting its popularity in the community.

Sabatino Vacca, 45, will begin his new job Sunday, when he takes over the baton from the orchestra's founder and interim conductor Ann Green.

"I'm very, very excited about it and about the potential that's in the orchestra," he said yesterday from his Hamilton home.

The orchestra was formed three years ago but remains unknown to many local residents. Board chair Jill Summerhayes believes a professional conductor like Vacca will make the or-



Sabatino Vacca is the new Cambridge Community Orchestra conductor.

chestra more popular:

"He will bring it to an upper level," she said.

Until now, the orchestra has held only three concerts a year, but Summerhayes said she'd like to see that increased to about five. The next concert will be in March.

Vacca is a graduate of McMaster University and studied piano with Gyorgy Sandor in New York. He is in his eighth season as répétiteur, or vocal coach, with Opera Hamilton.

Vacca said he has clear goals he wants to set for the Cambridge orchestra, including securing more musicians and making the orchestra more visible in the community.

"That's going to take time," he said. "It's not going to happen overnight."

Vacca, who recently completed his master's in degree in conducting at the University of Montreal, said groups tend to succeed or fail within their first couple of years.

The fact that the Cambridge orchestra is still going after three years is a good sign, he said.

The orchestra consists of about 25 volunteer musicians who range in age from 19 to 80. There are also eight board members. All pay \$30 a year to be part of the orchestra.

Vacca was selected from among 15 applicants. The board of directors narrowed down the applicants to a select few, who

came to rehearsal and conducted the orchestra. Afterwards, orchestra members rated the conductors, and Vacca was the clear winner.

He will be paid \$10,000 for 10 months of work, money that was granted to the orchestra by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

In November 2004, Vacca conducted Udo Zimmermann's *Weisse Rose*, which travelled to Prague in June 2005. He's also conducted for Toronto's Opera York and has worked for the International Opera Workshop in the Czech Republic. He also arranged a CD of children's songs to commemorate children of the Holocaust.

Vacca's first rehearsal will take place Sunday at 6:30 p.m. in the Toyota room at Cambridge Centre for the Arts. A tribute to Ann Green will take place at 6 p.m. The public is welcome to attend.

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