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Cambridge orchestra ends year on high note

KEVIN SWAYZE
RECORD STAFF

CAMBRIDGE

The next two years look rosy for the Cambridge Community Orchestra.

Interest continues to grow in the four-year-old group of volunteer musicians. It has money in the bank to retain a popular conductor, professional performers have noticed it and more fundraising is in the works.

For orchestra chair Jill Summerhayes, it's a heartening endorsement of a dream that started with a call for musicians in 2004.

Today, the orchestra has a solid foundation and is partnering with other artists and groups to build wider community interest in classical music.

Last month, it joined with the Kitchener-Waterloo Community Orchestra for joint concerts in Waterloo and Cambridge.

The next Cambridge orchestra concert is tonight, when the Cambridge Kiwanis Boys Choir joins the orchestra in a Christmas for Kids show at 8 p.m. at Forward Baptist Church, 455 Myers Rd.

"That's just what you want to do . . . bring in (something) a little bit different every time," Summerhayes said.

The next performance is set for Feb. 13, and will be a fundraiser for Heritage Baptist College. Musicians will perform with renowned Canadian tenor Ben Heppner.

"That's a huge thrill for the orchestra to play for a person of his calibre," Summerhayes said.

Co-operation with others in the arts community is important to conductor Sabatino Vacca, Summerhayes said.

A recent Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of \$33,500 ensures that Vacca will lead the orchestra until June 2010. He was hired in 2007 with the help of a \$12,500 Trillium grant.

Concerts are free and held in the Forward Baptist Church sanctuary.

Each concert costs \$2,500 to present, not including Vacca's salary.

At a typical concert, the 500 or so people in the audience put about \$1,200 in collection jars, Summerhayes said.

Summerhayes is optimistic about more donations next year, after the orchestra achieves charitable status, something that will allow it to issue tax-deductible receipts to donors.

There's also a corporate fundraising effort that is set to start in the new year.

It will seek sponsors to help cover the cost of individual concerts, Summerhayes said.

kswayze@therecord.com

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