

## **William Rowson**

### **SSO principal conductor**



The Stratford Symphony Orchestra has chosen William Rowson to be its principal conductor.

A musician (violin), conductor and composer, Mr. Rowson is music librarian for the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as resident conductor of the HPO's What Next Festival of New Music. He is artistic director of the Sneak Peek Orchestra (Toronto). He is also conductor of the Mooredale Youth

Orchestras (Toronto).

“He has a great depth of experience in spite of his youth (he is 37),” says David Murray, who was chair of the SSO principal conductor search committee. “He has experience in conducting a lot of the major classical repertoire but he also works with new music and different genres of music very easily.”

The SSO has not had a permanent conductor since April 2011. At that time, Jerome Summers, one of the orchestra's founders, left his position as music director, and the financial position of the orchestra was precarious. For the past several years, Berthold Carrière and Barbara Young served as co-music directors and the SSO's finances have improved.

Now, says Mr. Murray, “we're looking to put more bums in seats. With the stability a principal conductor will provide, I think we will be able to do that.”

That is a challenge that Mr. Rowson seems to relish. “You have to develop inroads into your community and become relevant to your community,” he says.

He adds, “I would love it if we could together – all of us – make our orchestra, of the orchestras of its type in southern Ontario, THE orchestra that people want to play with.”

In his view, nothing compares to live music. An essential part of the concert experience for him is to connect personally with the audience after a performance. “It’s amazing how I find often that we have so much in common, all of us, and it builds a community.”

Randi Patterson, an SSO musician and member of the search committee, said the committee was impressed with Mr. Rowson’s “ability to grow with the orchestra and take it to an even higher level. We all look forward to Bill’s unassuming grace, control and sensitivity in our eleventh season: New Beginnings.”

Programming for future seasons will be a co-operative effort between the principal conductor and the SSO artistic advisory committee. The committee, which came into being after Mr. Summers’s departure, has planned the programming for the past several seasons, featuring mainly musical talent from Stratford and area.

Mr. Rowson has a Bachelor of Music degree in composition from the Curtis Institute of Music (Philadelphia), a Master of Music degree in conducting from the University of Western Ontario, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition from the University of Toronto.

He and his wife, Yvanna, also a musician, live in the Bloor West Village neighbourhood of Toronto. They have a two-year-old daughter, Helen.