

The Place to Be Saturday Evening

The 26th Gala des affaires: Filled with Humour and Surprises



By Cynthia Giguere-Martel

About 1,000 people took part Saturday evening in the 26th Gala des affaires of the Drummond Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCID), and were treated to an event punctuated by humour, songs and heartfelt emotions.

A little after 8 o'clock, the 26th edition, with its theme "The Numbers That Count," got underway. The Chairwoman of the Gala, Gloria Lemire, opened the soiree by thanking all in attendance and introducing the festivities to come.

It was with surprise that Richard Voyer, General Manager of Soprema, took the stage to accept the Prix Distinction, awarded to the Enterprise of the Year. Mr. Voyer and his employees had just previously been treated to a very special tribute. Alain Stanké, well known for his writing talents and social involvement, had lauded the company for its contributions to the building, which is home to the Travail sans frontier Foundation. Mr. Stanké, who is president of the Foundation, expressed his thanks in his unique way, by making several allusions to the word "toit" (roof).

"We all love your *toit extérieur vert* (exterior green roof) and your *toi intérieur* (inner you)," affirmed Mr. Stanké toward the end of his address.

Soprema's principle product line is waterproofing products for roofs. Ten other enterprises collected Napoléon's.

"I am truly honoured by this award. I thought our 11 to 1 odds of winning were statistically slim, and that's one of the reasons I didn't prepare an acceptance speech," said Mr. Voyer.

Mr. Voyer proudly noted that the family enterprise is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year with only a third president in its history at the helm. The people who work at Soprema do so for many years, with the company supplying whatever means necessary for them to grow in an environment of well-being.

Cheers rose from the audience when Brian Illick was named "Drummond Personality of the Year 2008." Mr. Illick distinguished himself by organizing the fundraising campaign for the Cultural Centre.

"I'm surprised and happy to receive this honour. I didn't think a fund raiser would ever result in an award like this."

The community leader announced that he and his group would soon reveal the exact level of their outstanding fundraising effort.

"It's good to give without asking in return. Because when we give, we receive a great deal," concluded Mr. Illick, who said he considers himself a millionaire today.

Two other honours were bestowed during the evening. Marie-Claude Lapierre, the Director of Services at the Cultural Centre was named "Volunteer of the Year," and received her applause and recognition with great emotion Saturday evening. Gérard Fradet was honoured with the title of "Builder," for his creation of a first-class residential development and serving 14 times as president of various organizations.

Mr. Fradet said he was very touched to know that, even after many years, people remember what he has been able to accomplish. He added that there's no magic recipe to being a builder.

"It's often just an accumulation of circumstances. It can be enough to take the opportunity when one presents itself."

The Evening's Entertainment

Again this year, the staff and students of the Cégep de Drummondville worked in close collaboration with Gala organizers. Amongst others, members of the Ateliers de danse du Cégep ensured there would be dance entertainment, which was choreographed by Maryse Blanchette. A group of musicians under the direction of Sylvain Marcotte was joined by percussionists from the Cégep.

Three local singers showed they know how to make hands clap and toes tap at the Cultural Centre with a program called "Your Age...in Music," which brought the house down. That was the cue for Solange LeBel to instantly transform herself into Dalida! Near the end of the evening, singers Julie Lauzon, Dominique Godin and Mégane Cyr presented a medley of charming Quebec songs. For the final number, Gérald Bergeron performed "Maintenant je sais" by the famous Jean Gabin.

Since no party is complete without comedy, the organizers couldn't resist the chance to present Rogatien, brought to life by Jean-Guy Bilodeau. The celebrated taxi driver made his appearance, but this time on a bicycle! He explained to his business audience how he lost his license, while keeping in mind the evening's theme: numbers.

The evening was punctuated by a new twist; Master of Ceremonies Luc Gaudreau qualified it as a surprise act: the new wave of video-jockeys (VJ's), in which nobody in particular originates a visual animation, Marion Carassou-Maillant alias VJma and Nicolas Delffont alias DJ HPnautic put together a video out of the ordinary, to say the least.

The organizers had promised a fun evening and they succeeded.

"I'm happy because we did what we were supposed to do," was Solange LeBel's enthusiastic summary. She says she was very proud of the outcome and appreciative of her entire team, without whom the evening would not have been possible. A great part of the congratulations go to her colleague René Fréchette, who was her co-planner of the Gala. In summing up her interview, Madame LeBel confided her feeling of privilege in having Alain Stanké present.

"It was a real coup to have Alain Stanké here, as he's currently on tour."

The last word came from Gloria Lemire who said she was very happy and satisfied with the 26th edition of the Gala. "It was a great team effort, and I congratulate them all."



Photo Caption: Richard Voyer delivered an address from the heart, tinged with a sense of humour. (Photo: Ghyslain Bergeron)