

Loving it up at the ball



michael schratter
ON THE TOWN

Another Valentine's Day has come and gone, and if you ask me, not a moment too soon. For the life of me, I don't understand how the event can be anything but a thinly disguised money grab for the chocolate and flower industry! Surely people in relationships don't need Feb. 14 to remind themselves to show their love for their partner? And surely singles don't need Feb. 14 to remind themselves that they are single? Break up the heart of winter by making Valentine's Day a statutory holiday and I'll change my tune.



The fairytale of the city's Valentine's celebrations must have been the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra's **Lover's Ball**. The \$400-a-ticket affair was once again held at Hotel Vancouver, and once again the elegant evening set the standard in glitz and haute couture. Sold out four months in advance, the 17th annual event was the most successful yet, raising \$575,000 towards funding the VSO and its education programs. This year, the 400 guests enjoyed an evening inspired by "Winter in Russia." With fine music, food and wine, they danced the night away to the sounds of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. I wonder if next year I can persuade my editor that a pair of Lover's Ball tickets is a reasonable "journalist research" expense and that the \$800 should be taken care of by the paper?



On a completely different note, and for a completely different Valentine's Day experience, you could have gone to see a burlesque show! You had two choices from, **Burlesque Beauties** were grinding at the Caprice Night Club, while the ladies of Chaz Royal were swinging their tassels at the Plaza Club just a block further north down Granville street. Both shows were definitely entertaining, but not to the point of you feeling dirty...



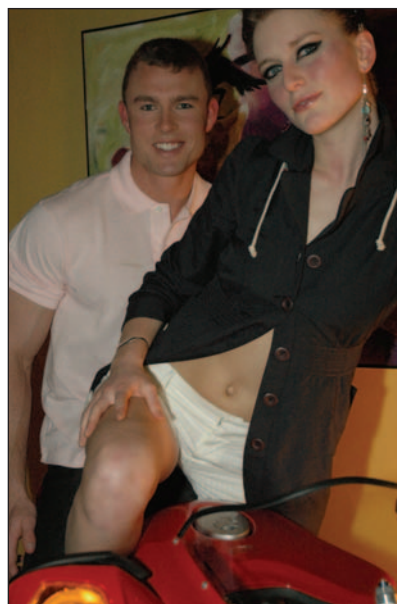
And 48 hours later, the party was happening at **Connor Butler's Restaurant**. Normally a fine dining establishment, the restaurant transformed itself Friday night so that Urban Mixer could host a special cocktail party. And what a transformation it was! The soiree's Milan-inspired theme was complete with gorgeous John Valk Ducati's parked inside and stunning models parading Italian fashion. The newest trend in upscale vodka, U'Luvka Vodka, was being poured generously at the bar, as to was the uniquely bottled VOGA Italia Pinot Grigio. With partial proceeds from the event going to the B.C. Women's Hospital & Health Centre, over 150 Urban Mixer members walked through the door and partied guiltlessly until the big chef kicked them out. Twenty-four hours later, Connor Butler patrons were enjoying their Saturday evening fine dining, with none of them aware of the previous night's shenanigans.

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Chef/Proprietor Connor Butler smiles in between Urban Mixer Hosts Nina Sohi & Raj Taneja during their Friday night cocktail party.

Sarah, Cassidy Bast and Purdy Cheung were looking delightful at the Urban Mixer's "This is Milano" cocktail party at Restaurant Connor Butler on Friday evening.



Fine food, fine fashion, and plenty of eye candy. Will it be the gorgeous Ducati or the scrumptious models? They were all to be had at the Urban Mixer soiree at Connor Butler's.

The splashy VSO gala had Minister Stan Hagen and daughter Corinne enjoying the moment with Lovers' Ball Honorary Chair Nezhat Khosrowshahi.



Lovers' Ball Co-chairs Maria Menten & Heidi Baroness von Pffeten graciously welcomed their guests to the 17th Annual Vancouver Symphony Lovers' Ball.



graeme mcraenor
AFTER SIX

SHOWS

■ VERY TENACIOUS

Jack Black and Kyle Gass take the stage as Tenacious D, the comedic rock duo recently featured in the film, *The Pick of Destiny*. They'll be playing music from album of same name. Both tonight's show and tomorrow night's show @ the Q.E. Theatre are SOLD OUT. Can you say scalper?

■ THE ZUCKERMAN

Ken Zuckerman & Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri perform together as part of the Chutzpah! Festival, tonight @ the Norman Rothstein Theatre. Go to www.chutzpahfestival.com for more info. Starts @ 9.

ON STAGE

■ GET OPTIMISTIC

Hope is a wee word with infinite promise. Check out *The Optimists*, running until March 3 @ the Granville Island Stage. Tickets are \$25-\$36.50 at Ticketmaster, 604-280-3311 and the Arts Club box office 604-687-1644; info at www.artsclub.com.

■ SHHHH....

Better Don't Talk stars South African-born actress/playwright Naava Piatka, who animates the remarkable true-life stories of her Yiddish comedienne mother, singer Chayela Rosenthal, known as the Star of Vilna Ghetto Theatre, whose irrepressible humour brought light and laughter into the darkness of war-torn Europe. Visit www.chutzpahfestival.com for more info.

THIS WEEK

■ CARNAVAL

Remember to get your tickets for the annual Brazilian Carnival featuring Show Brazil. That's right, it all goes down @ the Commodore (868 Granville) Saturday, Feb. 24. Tix available @ Ticketmaster. Doors @ 8; show @ 9. This one always sells out, so get on it, would ya?

■ TIME FOR A WINTERRUPTION

Vancouver's Coastal Jazz & Blues Society and Granville Island have again assembled a dynamic lineup of performers, events and workshops for the second annual Winterruption. The event takes place between Feb. 23 and 25. Visit www.winterruption.com for more info.

CLUBS

■ THE FATTEST TUESDAY

Sometimes, even Tuesday looks fat in pants. It's the Fat Tuesday Mardi Gras Bash @ the Plaza Nightclub (881 Granville). Fairly cheap drinks, so you too can look fat in your own pants on Hangover Wednesday. Doors @ 9. Please drink responsibly.

■ SALSA 911

It's still very picante. Salsa 911 continues to burn up the dance floor @ Atlantis (1320 Richards) every Tuesday night. Doors @ 9.

To let us know about an upcoming event
e-mail me at: listings@24hrs.ca