

A really different stage of mind

By Caroline Phillips, The Ottawa Citizen November 1, 2010

Remember, it ain't a party until something gets broken. What a blast it was, then, when businessman-turned-Greek Zorba dancer Aik Aliferis intentionally smashed a pile of plates during the grand finale of A Different Stage of Mind variety show held Thursday for the Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health.

Aliferis, principal of Primecorp Commercial Realty, was one of four community leaders (and good sports) to perform before several hundred enthusiastic guests at the Shenkman Arts Centre. Royal Ottawa supporter Barbara Crook came twirling out on stage in a white apron to sing à la Julie Andrews from The Sound of Music and later returned as country crooner Patsy Cline. Iraqi-born Paul Hindo, principal of Nautical Lands Group, sang and strummed American Pie under the guise of Jordan Heavyfoot (think Gordon Lightfoot in an Arab head scarf).

Former Citizen publisher Jim Orban, now director of international and corporate business development at Algonquin College, performed Frank Sinatra. Did he sound like Ol' Blue Eyes? Let's just say he did it his way. The show conjured up the feel of a live broadcast with its stage manager and TV studio set design with flashing laugh and applause lights. There was also a 12-piece band, Johnny Carson impersonator and all-female comedy troupe.

The \$1,500-a-ticket event was hosted by Gary Zed, Graham Macmillan and John Ruddy's philanthropic Lift Foundation. Attendees included Shirley Greenberg and her son, Dan Greenberg (married to Crook), Debbie Drew of major sponsor RioCan, Alana Kainz, CHEO Research Institute CEO Martin Osmond and its director of mental health research, Mario Cappelli, and the Royal Ottawa Foundation's CEO, Tim Kluge. Mayor-elect Jim Watson was so busy mingling he barely had time to scarf down Tulips & Maple's macaroni with three-cheese velouté and fresh crab served in a cosmo glass.

Zed, a partner at Ernst & Young, is still trying to convince Macmillan and Ruddy, president of Trinity Development, to do The Three Tenors with him next time.

Other names being mentioned for next year's show are Watson, lawyer Charlie Saikaley and the always glamorous Jamilah Murray.