

*Excerpts from the GUELPH MERCURY by Joanne Shuttleworth, Mercury Staff*

### **Guelph Symphony Orchestra starts new year on a high note.**

From the spirited opening bars of the *Introduction of The Merry Widow*, to the final notes of *Auld Lang Syne* where the audience got to sing along, the GSO put on an entertaining New Year's Day concert that filled the River Run Centre's main hall Sunday afternoon.

...Yan powered the orchestra through some tricky repertoire that included arias from Franz Lehar's *The Merry Widow*, waltzes by Johann Strauss, and a little Mozart to round out the program.

The orchestra was joined by tenor Mark DuBois and soprano Corrine Lynch, who had an easy chemistry on stage. DuBois is a perennial favourite with the GSO and he's as funny as he is talented.

*Excerpts from THE EXPOSITOR Brantford review by Murray Charters after the GSO Dec 11<sup>th</sup> concert*

### **Grand River Chorus plays Guelph - and wins!**

There's nothing quite like seeing your home team play an away game.... Just ask the bunch of Brantfordians who made it to Guelph's beautiful River Run Centre last Sunday afternoon to hear the Grand River Chorus sing with the Guelph Symphony Orchestra.

This afternoon orchestral performance is nearly sold out ... then the choir is in place, the orchestra ready, and the conductor sweeps to the podium.

Yan is truly a musical communicator. Every gesture means something and produces instant audible results. The opening of the famous and spirited Gloria by Antonio Vivaldi shines brighter than the afternoon sun out in the lobby and the GRC just floats over the orchestra in lovely Baroque style.

And so it went through excerpts from Messiah and Christmas music by Vaughan Williams; the GRC has never sounded better. And, yes, we can blame Yan for this sound. She "just loved working with this choir" and reported: "They rehearsed well and then kicked it up a few notches for the concert." Inspiration is key to all art, and Yan has just signed a contract in Guelph because she felt immediately the "love, spirit and energy" of this orchestra. "The chemistry was fabulous from the beginning. Like on a first date, you just know."

Despite dealing with professional orchestras around the world Yan is passionate about these players all drawn from the immediate region. They reciprocate by sounding very polished in favourites from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Ballet.

They have some real stars in their midst, such as principal trumpet Chris Cigolea who added a seasonally creative cadenza to the last movement of Haydn's Trumpet Concerto.

Also on the program was baritone James Westman whose commanding voice strode through music by Handel and then was soothing comfort in Vaughan Williams's Fantasia. But for the hometown supporters of the GRC, when the concert finished with a rousing Hallelujah chorus (with the original words) it was time to go find a deep glass of red wine and toast the thrilling sounds we had just heard.

And perhaps reflect on the visual element too, of a young, dynamic conductor appearing to lift the music off the page before her and send it winging through the hearts and minds of performers and listeners.

Murray Charters ([murraysmusic@rogers.com](mailto:murraysmusic@rogers.com)) is a musician, teacher and writer in Brantford who advises music lovers that it's worth the drive to Guelph.