

Warm songs for cold days of autumn

Minsk ready to host 8th *Junior Eurovision* Song Contest

By Viktor Korbut

On June 8th, 2009, the European Broadcasting Union officially informed us that *Junior Eurovision-2010* would take place in the Belarusian capital, on November 20th, 2010. The recently constructed sports and concert site — Minsk-Arena — would host the contest, organised under the slogan 'Feel the Magic'.

Truly, Belarus deserves the right to host this children's competition. Since the event began, in 2003, Belarusian children have taken part joyfully and with success. For three years in a row, Belarusians won gold and silver. In 2005, Ksenia Sitnik won the contest in Belgium, followed by Andrey Kunets taking silver in Bucharest the next year. In 2007, Alexey Zhigalkovich claimed another gold for Belarus.

Minsk-Arena is already a major venue, so is perfect for hosting the grand event, gathering young stars from 14 countries. Participants are to perform one after another on the 2m high stage, with a special bridge built for the singers' final songs. This year's *Eurovision* is to be 15 minutes shorter than previously, lasting two hours. It is sure to be dynamic, full of national colour and sincerity.

The Belarusian TV and Radio Company is the contest's organiser. It has informed

that illuminated wands will be given to audience members to wave during the show, filling the arena with thousands of miraculous lights. "We're making the show dynamic and full of national flavour. People will watch with bated breath. We've eradicated the unnecessary elements and long pauses; if the show loses momentum, viewers change channels," explains the Executive Producer of *Junior Eurovision-2010*, Alexander Martynenko.

For the first time in the show's history, the winners of all seven previous events are to perform, jointly singing a medley of their winning songs. *Eurovision* will begin with Alexey Zhigalkovich and Ksenia Sitnik singing *Hello, Eurovision!* together, in the form of a dialogue. It could be the next big hit. "Alexey begins, asking Ksenia a question. She, in turn, replies — via the song. Then, they sing the refrain together. Both sing as equals, since they're independent artists," explains Ksenia's mother and Artistic Leader Svetlana Statsenko. The song has been written by Belarusian Maxim Aleinikov and Andrey Kostugov.

The junior contest sees Belarus represented by Daniil Kozlov, who often comes to Minsk from his native Zhabinka, to see his vocal



Daniil Kozlov to sing with great inspiration at *Junior Eurovision-2010*



Souvenirs for contest's guests



Minsk-Arena transforming into a concert site

teacher. Daniil has been giving concerts and having fun in the capital. "Of course, I'm tired but this matters little. I'll do my best to perform worthily at the contest," he says. He's now rehearsing his *Music Light* song, to be performed for the thousands gathering at Minsk-Arena and the millions of TV viewers. Daniil, 13, aims to show his mettle and is already preparing his winner's speech — just in case. Of course, he knows that all the contestants are true stars and hopes they'll become good friends in Minsk.

Daniil began singing at the age of three and now studies under Nelli Dukova, who teaches him stage vocals. He also has violin lessons at Zhabinka Arts School and says he loves to relax at his family's dacha. His favourite book is the Bible while his favourite singer is Piotr Yelfimov, who represented Belarus at *Eurovision-2009* in Moscow. He loves Belarusian folklore and classical music,

while dreaming of singing opera.

An interesting programme has been prepared for the foreign participants, including a circus show and a meeting with Belarusian Father Frost. Each European guest will be given a coupon book, allowing them to choose some small national souvenirs from Minsk's shops free of charge. Around the capital, their photos and performances will be viewable on huge plasma screens, making them feel like true stars.

Besides the major winner's prize, miniature prizes are being prepared for every entrant. Among them are warm, Belarus-made, white felt boots, decorated with original patterns, by designer Lora Pavlova. "I've developed a special design, with a hand-cross-stitched, embroidered logo.

Additionally, I've drawn several words on the footwear — 'Junior Eurovision-2010' and 'Minsk-2010'," Lora tells us. It's not easy making felt boots since it takes a long time to process the wet wool, turning it to compacted felt. The 'valenki' (from the Russian 'valyat' — or 'felt') have been made in Belarus for two centuries and are still popular today, being made to every taste. Perfect for spring and autumn, they come decorated with colourful drawings and patterns. Some 30-40 years ago, felt boots were the main footwear of Belarusians; now, they're worn more rarely.

However, on cold winter days, Minskites sometimes put them on. It's no surprise, as felt boots are made from wool. As doctors say, this keeps colds at bay.

The MT's reference

Some of the money collected from *Junior Eurovision-2010* will be sent to fund UNICEF programmes. Dmitry Koldun (who represented our country at the *Eurovision* contest several years ago) is to sing 'A Day Without War' for a UNICEF project. "My song is not about war but about children. I'd like it to resonate with adults who look after children, reminding them not to violate their rights," says the singer.

Heartwarming meetings at artistic studio

French-German exhibition of children's illustrations in Minsk offers bright example of cultural co-operation

By Alina Grishkevich

L'Art de l'illustration pour les enfants (Art Illustration for Children) is being hosted by the Belarusian State Academy of Arts and showcases works by Reinhard Michl from Germany and Marcelino Truong from France. Peter Dettmar, the Deputy Head of Mission of the German Embassy to Belarus, notes that the joint French-German project is another step in cultural collabora-

tion between France and Germany, with similar events organised in Minsk for around 10 years.

Minsk is hosting other events featuring French and German illustrators. Reinhard Michl has conducted an artistic workshop for children at the N. Ostrovsky Central Children's Library and at Minsk's secondary school #56. Meanwhile, Marcelino Truong has organised a master class for children at the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, with

both artists teaching a master class for Academy students.

The project has been organised by the diplomatic missions of France and Germany to Belarus, jointly with the Goethe Institute in Minsk. Undoubtedly, the art of European book illustration is well known all over the globe. Many European artist-illustrators (including those from Germany, France and Belarus) have won major contests of book art, particularly at the interna-

tional biennale of book illustration, held in Bratislava and Belgrade.

Mr. Truong realised that drawing was his vocation while a cadet at naval college and having a degree in political sciences. As a self-taught artist, he illustrated *Le Dragon de Bambou* (The Bamboo Dragon) in 1991 — an album of comics. He was later awarded a prize at the Bologna International Fair of Children's Books, for his illustration of *Enfants Prostitués en Asie*. He is also involved

in painting and animated films.

Before entering a private school for graphic painting, Reinhard Michl studied typesetting at a printing house. He graduated from the School of Arts and Crafts in Munich and received a diploma as a graphic designer before graduating from the Munich Academy of Fine Arts in 'artistic education'. He is now one of the most famous children's book illustrators in Germany and beyond.