

Leaves and stereotypes fall

Intrigue on eve of 17th Minsk International *Listapad* Film Festival



Famous Italian actress Ornella Muti among *Listapad*-2010 guests

By Irina Petrovskaya

This year, the festival's organisers have promised a new concept, with the content and format greatly altered. We were able to compare films not only by the number of awards they have won at various film forums (not always prestigious). This year's *Listapad* was filled with strong works, although not all boasted awards. However, each stood as a significant phenomenon in the world

of global film making, already much discussed at festivals held in Cannes, Venice, Rotterdam and elsewhere.

The audience did not choose the major *Listapad* awards this year; nevertheless, filmgoers were encouraged to play an active role, being invited to ask questions of the directors, actors and producers after each screening. The unique new format certainly differed from many others'.

On the first day of the

event, the much revered Chairman of the *Listapad* Film Festival, Rostislav Yankovsky, solemnly passed on his authority to Genady Davydko, customarily breaking a plate covered with the autographs of last years' guests over a film camera tripod. *Listapad*'s anthem was played and, then, surprise guest Ornella Muti appeared. The wonderful Italian actress played Adriano Celentano's girlfriend in *Il Bisbetico Domato*. Bad weather delayed her

entrance, with the hosts filling the time with awkward jokes, but the audience forgave her all when she finally arrived; her presence was the highlight of the day for most. However, in my view, Ms. Muti perhaps did not deserve such great attention, having barely achieved much to talk about compared to others who were present — such as Sharunas Bartas (whose films always impress at world festivals) and Vahtang Kikabidze (whose films are screened

worldwide).

No doubt, our *Listapad* remains a 'top festival' but it shouldn't be in too much of a hurry to emulate other prestigious cinematic events. Naturally, the achievements of our national cinematography are quite modest, so is it necessary to gather the celebrities of Cannes or Berlin in Minsk, bringing red carpets and the sparkle of glamour? We could argue that more interesting personalities exist in modern cinema.

Judging by the first films screened at *Listapad*, our directors seem to have invited those whose charm masks their professional acting skills. The main character of much-talked-of Levan Koguashvili's *Quchis Dgeebi* works as a painter in real life, while François Ozon invited a musician to play the leading role in his *Refuge*: Louis-Ronan Choisy. The latter did a good job, and happily shared 'behind-the-scenes' information on Mr. Ozon with the Minsk audience, regarding script writing and his work with actors. He also gave an impromptu concert in the Belarusian capital, performing in a rather ill-equipped cinema, at a piano unexpectedly brought in for occasion. No doubt, this year's *Listapad* had many surprises...

Admiration of classics inspires cinema

Famous Serbian film director Emir Kusturica has told journalists that he is ready to co-operate with Belarusian and Russian cinematographers in creating his new film, dedicated to Fyodor Dostoevsky, from whose work he draws inspiration.

Mr. Kusturica is passionate about the Russian classics: Lermontov, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Bulgakov. "This literature helps me understand and learn about the world," he notes. The film director reads Russian classics translated into Serbian and believes that these translated works are almost identical to the originals, due to our similar mentality. On being asked whether he plans to film Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, he explains that two film directors have tried before with little success. "I think it's an opportunity I should allow to pass. Can genius literature inspire a genius film, and will audiences perceive it as a genius film?" he wonders.

Pictures drawn by schoolchildren in co-authorship with nature

By Yevgenia Pestelova

Belarusian schoolchildren bring fully-fledged exhibition from international open-air forum, held in Bulgaria

The children's works depict the light and shadows of the famous Botanical Garden in Balchik, its cosy architecture and ancient stones warmed by the sun. No doubt, the schoolchildren from Minsk gymnasium #75 and Soligorsk school #9 have been lucky. Last summer, the best pupils were able to spend 17 days in an atmosphere of rest and creativity, participating in an international open-air forum in Bulgaria.

The children devoted most of their time to creating their pieces, for which their teachers — Tatiana Alyabieva and Irina Filimonova — are full of praise. The young artists managed not only to depict a theme

but to capture the tiniest of changes to the light, which alter the appearance of the natural environment. They also depicted the wind, touching leaves and flowers. The best works are



Pupils from Minsk gymnasium #75 stand by their works

currently on show within a display entitled *To Love Our Dear Belarus*, hosted by the Museum of Ethnography and Folklore at the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Art Studies, Ethnography and Folklore.

"On the first day of the

open-air forum, we were searching for themes for a long time; it's no wonder, since each painter needs to create their own unique pieces. The botanical garden in which we worked

has many beautiful corners. However, our work there was specific, with conditions determining our efforts: the bright light and warm climate made it impossible to work with water colours. Gouache was preferable," explain gymnasium #75 pupils Liana Chek-

urishvili, Yana Ivanova and Natasha Vasilieva. The girls are each showing two works at the exhibition. They were inspired by more than just nature, however. Yana was attracted by the serene architecture of churches and local Turkish banyas, while Liana and Natasha paid special attention to Balchik's unique mountains. Their interest can be well explained, since the gymnasium gives much time to studying architecture and art. The girls also attend a club for straw weaving and study computer design, which helps them to think figuratively.

"I had almost no time to draw, as I needed to focus on the children. I only took up a pencil or brush when I saw that a child was missing their home and mother. We then sat and chatted while I drew the child's portrait. The atmosphere of art accompanied us even in our minutes of rest," recalls Ms. Alyabieva.

Festival news Favourites and finances

Listapad's major awards are not being chosen by the public this time. Instead, a professional jury is choosing the winners

However, audiences are still allowed to give their personal vote, with results updated daily on a special screen at the House of Cinema. From the very first day of the festival, a Venezuelan film — called *The Brother* — proved most popular. The tale of a neighbourhood football team was Marcel Raskin's full-length debut in the young directors' fiction film nomination, although his efforts have already won the People's Choice Award at the recent Moscow International Film Festival. Other favourites so far are Levan Koguashvili's *Quchis Dgeebi* (showing amazing Georgian humour) and an enthralling film by Srdjan Dragojevic — *Saint George Shoots the Dragon*. The latter is perhaps the most expensive Serbian film ever, costing about 3m euros.

Dappled debut



Lyudmila Gurchenko — famous post-Soviet space actress — presents her *Dappled Twilight* in Minsk

Ms. Gurchenko, whose birthday coincides with this year's *Listapad* Festival, has a successful directorial debut on her hands. She gave her input on the script, music and sets. No doubt, her film is a wonderful gift to others, as well as herself. "I was invited to act in several films but I didn't like any of the scripts," the talented actress admits. "Suddenly, I realised that I should be taking the initiative myself. I wanted to work with wonderful musician Oleg Akkuratov, who is blind." Oleg, 18, appears in the film via Russian TV archive footage, showing him as a child, but his voice and music were recorded recently. Ms. Gurchenko does not imagine that her film will appeal to a wide audience but its screening in Minsk gathered a full house.