

Sounds of bygone days heard in international atmosphere

Postavy gathers lovers of folk music from all over the world

By Viktor Korbut

In early June, the 14th International *Cembalos and Accordions Are Ringing* Festival attracted over a hundred musicians, dancers and singers from Belarus, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and China, in addition to an ensemble from an Arabian settlement in Israel's Golan Heights.

The festival is over 200 years old and was initially hosted by Vitebsk and Mogilev. Over the course of time, it moved to Postavy, as the village of Gruzdovo is situated nearby, where masters making cembalos have lived for centuries. Their musical instruments are diatonic, making them rare. The craftsmen passed their skills from one generation to the next, creating highly prized cembalos. In the 1980s, the Gruzdovo Cembalo Orchestra made a name for itself in the Soviet Union, with its talented members often performing on TV and radio, or giving concerts at the USSR's largest venues. The present folk festival originated from those 'provincial' talents and is now among the biggest in Eastern Europe.

Alla Keizik, the Deputy Chair of the Postavy District Executive Committee, proudly admits that Gruzdovo melodies — including her favourite wedding songs — have been performed by the best Belarusian bands. Among them have been the I. Zhinovich National Academic People's Orchestra (led by Mikhail Kozinets, who prepared sheet music six



Largest folk festival in Eastern Europe traditionally held in Postavy

months before the festival) and leading folk ensembles from the Vitebsk Region.

Deputy Culture Minister Tadeush Struzhetsky helped organise the *Cembalos and Accordions Are Ringing* Festival and stresses its special significance, "Such festivals seriously inspire the development of regions where true Belarusian traditions are still observed. In the 1980s, folk culture was perceived to be dying. Now, it's clear that an increasing number of

young people choose to learn traditional instruments. Youngsters can also learn cembalo and duda making; original musical culture could hardly be imagined without these instruments. We can now relax, as this art will never disappear. UNESCO has been paying special attention to our folk customs in recent years. In the twenty five years since our festival was first organised, Belarusian folk legacy has gained recognition both domestically and abroad. This

is a sign of the times: however paradoxical it may seem, globalisation is helping promote our traditions worldwide. The diverse international representation at the Postavy holiday confirms this."

Discussing the results of the festival with Ms. Keizik, we realise that it is more than a mere international show of folk arts; it is a fully fledged holiday of regional culture. It echoes far beyond the sounds of cembalos and accordions in the Postavy Dis-

trict. This year, the 225th anniversary of the birth of Konstantin Tizengauz was marked on the steps of his early 19th century manor. At the age of 18, Konstantin entered Vilno University, being fond of zoology. However, the 1812 War interrupted his scientific studies. Tizengauz fought on the side of Napoleon and, in 1813, was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour. A year later, he returned home, building a manor in Postavy. He spent the rest of his life studying birds and becoming a founder of Belarusian ornithology. Tizengauz conducted his studies in Belarus while also travelling to the Carpathian mountains, Bessarabia, the Black Sea coast, Paris, Dresden, Milan and Venice in pursuit of bird life.

Tizengauz's Postavy manor now houses a hospital but some of its rooms are open to tourists. Famous *Khoroshki* ensemble prepared a special programme dedicated to the scientist, with boys and girls in national costume carrying torches dancing to the accompaniment of ancient music. Postavy's residents and guests were transported two centuries back. Tizengauz's ornithological traditions continue in the area, with a farm near Postavy breeding ostriches (unique in Belarus). People from all over the country and, even, abroad come to see them.

Over twenty years ago, the cembalo sounded a new page in the history of Postavy. Today, the town is known as one of Belarus' festival capitals and as a major tourist centre, worth visiting in any season.

Topical art demonstrates most diverse pieces for public

Largest show of modern art — 54th Venice Biennale — opens

By Polina Victorova

The forum is gathering masters from 89 countries, with an amazing 4,000 accredited journalists attending. Venice is known as one of the world's major tourist destinations, drawing guests from all five continents. Local citizens may not be delighted by seeing crowds of bearded painters in the street, behaving noisily, but nothing can be done to change this: the Venice Biennale breaks all records for the number of foreign nationalities in attendance. The forum demonstrates the best of modern art, with entry to the major venues of the Giardini and Arsenal costing just 20 Euros. Additionally, hundreds of exhibitions are open free of charge.

The official launch began with an awards ceremony. This year, its 'Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement' went to American Elaine Sturtevant (who reproduces famous works) and to French sculptor Franz West. Moreover, the best artist, the best pavilion and the



Venice Biennale

best young artist are to be awarded, chosen via a professional preview. Experts, art critics and gallery runners have already begun their work in Venice, with modern Belarusian artists attending for the first time. The Belarusian pavilion solemnly opened at the Biennale, featuring works by Yuri Alisevich, Artur Klinov, Konstantin Kostyuchenko, Victor Petrov and Denis Skvortsov.

The curator and author of the Belarusian pavilion's concept, Mikhail Borozna, tells us, "We've met all the requisites given to us, receiving many visitors and positive reviews; interest in Belarusian art is evident. Yesterday, Victor Petrov presented a 3m long

graphic illustration of his own literary work, while other performances were given in keeping with the theme of the pavilion. We're showcasing the *Kodex* project — a modern interpretation of the text illustration. We're delighted that the Director of the present Biennale, Swiss Bice Curiger — the Curator of Kunsthau Zürich and Editor-in-Chief of *Parkett* (one of the most authoritative and innovative contemporary art magazines in the world) — gave a warm welcome address at our opening. Some members of the art world were convinced that Belarusian painters are too conservative, being apologists for Chagall and Malevich, but I'm convinced that we've changed their opinion. In Belarus, diverse forms of art flourish, while many authors create original works from modern ideas."

Venice is hosting the exhibition for at least four months, so any visitors to Italy this summer should certainly drop by the Belarusian exhibition at the Biennale. You'll be warmly welcomed.



A scene from *Ryzhik in Wonderland*, shot by Belarusfilm Studio

Time at film forum not spent in vain

By Tatiana Pastushenkova

Italian filmmakers keen to buy *Ryzhik in Wonderland* adventure fairy-tale, made by Belarusfilm National Film Studio

Belarus received an offer while attending the Cannes Film Festival, where Belarusfilm presented at the national pavilion.

According to the Director of the Belarusian Culture Ministry's Cinematography Department, Oleg Silvanovich, the pavilion at the international film forum has yielded concrete results. Over ten days, negotiations with cinematographers from over 30

countries were organised. Our specialists have established contacts with producers, directors and distributors from Poland, the USA, Lithuania, Ukraine, the UK, Italy, Armenia, France, Russia, Estonia, Turkey, China, Belgium, the UAE, Jordan, Germany, the Czech Republic and elsewhere.

In particular, potential partners are interested in working with Belarusfilm National Film Studio, suggesting jointly making documentaries, films and full-length animated 3D films. They also invited Belarus to show its works at other international film festivals. "After studying each variant, we'll decide on the best course of action," notes Mr. Silvanovich.