

Open air entertainment

Open air concerts and those held in medieval castles make delightful and fashionable change from traditional venues

By Viktor Korbut

This summer, why not attend a concert in the countryside; melodies are especially enchanting at night. Recently, a grand concert took place not far from Minsk, featuring leading soloists of the Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre, the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre, the State Academic Bolshoi Theatre of Russia and St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre. Organised in the open air, the festival seems likely to become an annual event.

American conductor Philip Simmons attended the open air concert and noted that nothing similar exists in the USA. No one has ever played classical music at a folk museum. "It adds some special charm; it was extremely unusual to hear nightingales singing in tune with opera soloists."

It was the first time that the Museum of Folk Architecture and Everyday Life has hosted such an event, although it has many times organised folk festivals. Classical music has never before been performed there but it took just one month to arrange for the best voices

from Belarus and Russia to attend. Larisa Yudina, a soloist with St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre and an Honoured Artiste of Russia, arrived only for one evening, to please the Belarusian audience. "I think Belarus pos-



Larisa Yudina (L) and American conductor Philip Simmons in the countryside

sesses perfect musicians and very grateful listeners," she noted.

Among the arriving cars were those with diplomatic number plates. It's a real pleasure to spend a Friday evening on a lawn listening

to the strains of a symphony orchestra. Around thirty performances were organised over two hours, with the concert conventionally divided into two sections: masterpieces of classical opera and those from classical



Vienna operetta. Works by Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Mozart and Verdi were, of course, performed live.

Oleg Lesovik, chief conductor of the Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre, tells us, "Next

year, a similar concert will certainly be held." Nesvizh is to host a summer festival of opera and ballet, entitled *Nights of the Bolshoi Theatre in Radziwills' Castle*. The open air event, which was launched in 2010, will be



hosted by the former residence of the noble Radziwills family.

The Radziwills' residence courtyard can accommodate several thousand people. Vyacheslav Volich, a conductor of the Bolshoi Opera Theatre

and one of those who helped launch the festival, notes that, in the mid-1990s, the theatre toured widely, taking part in various open air festivals in Switzerland and Germany. "From experience, we're well aware that it's rather difficult to organise an open air festival in a city. Nesvizh Castle is an ideal venue, boasting a stone courtyard, closed on four sides, high palace walls and a stone floor — all perfect for creating the right acoustics. It's great when a concert is held in the open air and there's no need to amplify sound using microphones. There are very few places where this can be achieved. Moreover, the 16th-19th century castle itself adds festivity and flamboyance to the performance."

Popular Belarusian music has already been performed near the walls of Mir Castle, with a traditional concert organised by ONT TV Channel. Meanwhile, Molodechno is preparing for the Festival of Belarusian Song and Poetry, which will take place in autumn and will be dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the birth of

Vladimir Mulyavin. The concert will feature songs from the repertoire of legendary *Pesnyary* band and its artistic leader.

The Molodechno event takes place every other year, with songs performed in Belarusian; lyrics are taken from verses by our most wonderful poets. This year's major event is a contest of young performers of Belarusian pop songs, with three entrants representing each Belarusian region and the city of Minsk. These will be accompanied by the National Academic Concert Orchestra, headed by Mikhail Finberg. A concert is also scheduled, dedicated to the creativity of Belarusian composers Dmitry Lukas, Grigory Pukst, Piotr Podkovyrov and Alexey Turenkov.

At night, jazz music will be heard in Molodechno, with the jazz band of the National Academic Orchestra presenting a programme. The festival will finish with a concert featuring the Titovich State Folk Academic Choir and *Pesnyary* State Ensemble.



New validator to check transport fee payments



Electronic tickets soon to become common in Minsk

By Yekaterina Inokentieva

Electronic tickets soon to be available for Minsk's trolley buses, trams and buses, with Eurasian Bank of Development expected to finance the expensive project

Transport workers have long thought of introducing electronic tickets, having a clear idea of how the new system would work. Moscow's attempt was not

a big success, so Belarus has chosen not to follow it. A decade ago, turn-styles were installed on Moscow transport, in an attempt to ensure fewer ticketless passengers, but these caused delays and queues, while some still managed to travel free of charge. The system is now being dismantled, replaced by the deterrent of fines doubling for those failing to buy tickets.

Minsk is learning from

Moscow's mistake, instead installing validators to read tickets (resembling punchers in appearance). Their number will vary from 5 to 7, depending on the size of each trolley bus, bus or tram. Minsktrans has calculated that about 12,000 such devices will be needed.

Meanwhile, not everyone uses monthly tickets. Vladimir Lezhnyuk, the Head of Minsktrans' Department for Automated Management Systems and Computers, explains, "Validators will also have a special hole for tickets. The date and time will be registered when a ticket is punched. Apart from this, we plan to develop a system of bonuses and discounts: for example, a ticket covering ten days of bus travel will include several free trips by trolley bus."

It's yet to be decided when the new e-tickets will be launched in Minsk. However, Minsk Mayor Nikolai Ladutko has asked Minsktrans to implement the novelty this year.

Combat ship discovered beneath Lake Naroch

By Alexander Pimenov

International Day of Water Cleaning sees divers make sensational discovery: a mysterious combat ship at the bottom of Lake Naroch

No ordinary boat or barge was discovered by the divers, but a true combat ship from WW1 — probably part of Naroch's river flotilla of armoured boats, about which almost nothing has been known until recently.

"We were cleaning the bottom and banks of Lake Naroch, collecting 600kg of rubbish," explains Andrey Likhachev, Director of the Sea Pegasus Diving Club. "Before departure, we had a few free hours, so decided to check out information published recently by Myadel historian Gennady Malyshev in a district newspaper. He wrote that, in 1916, a flotilla of Russian Imperial armoured vehicles were based at Lake Myastro (connected with Lake Naroch). There were rumours among local residents that a barge lay on the bottom, but most lakes have legends of ships or aircraft having sunk in them. The stories



Divers shall soon return to Naroch to continue research

aren't always true; however, we thought it was worth a shot."

The employees of Narochansky National Park gave permission and the divers soon discovered a 10m long and 2.2m wide ship, resting bottom-up. Its strong armour, connected by rivets as big as three Kopeck coins, and a huge hole in the side from a shell or mine showed that it was no civilian boat. Moreover, a piece of barbed wire, used during WW1, was found nearby. The divers are cautious, since the ship is almost completely buried in the silt, making it difficult to examine the details.

We possess extremely little information about the flotilla to which the boat might have belonged. In 1916, a frontline crossed the Narochansky area, with 12 to 18 (according to

various data) river gunboats brought from the River Pripyat. Some were constructed in the USA by Mullins and Co, fulfilling an order from the Russian Imperial Navy. Their equipment included one 37mm gun and a 'Maxim' machine-gun on a rotating platform, with 4-6 crew. The ships belonged to a separate, special purpose sea brigade of the Russian Imperial Navy. According to various data, it may have been commanded by either much awarded Lieutenant Yuvenaly Svobodin or by Lieutenant Olshevsky. Nothing is known about the destiny of the two motor boats of the flotilla, which fought on Lake Naroch. Perhaps the divers have found one of them. Alongside scientists, they'll conduct a more detailed investigation in the days to come.