



Many reasons for rejoicing at *Braslav Lightning Festival*

By Yelena Bogomazova

Those coming to the festival danced, sang and... concluded investment agreements. It's no surprise: this year, the Vitebsk Region is realising an extended programme of local districts hosting investment forums. "Over the past two years, we've held investment and innovative forums in our regional centre," notes the Deputy Chairman of the

Regional Executive Committee, Oleg Matskevich. "The prudence of such events is clear from the realisation of several dozen agreements, which will no doubt benefit the economy of the region. Taking into consideration investors' wishes, we are focusing on promoting the region's attractiveness directly by districts. Meanwhile, cultural forums hosted by the Vitebsk Region are a wonderful opportunity for others to

gain acquaintance with us and agree co-operation, weighing all the pros and cons."

The recent *Braslav Lightning* was rich in pleasant surprises. A dozen existing co-operative agreements were supplemented by another: the Podlaskie Voivodships' Hajnówka is keen to establish long term, multi-faceted ties with the Braslav District. Moreover, two economic entities have officially

Hospitable warmth of *Braslav Lightning*

International holiday of traditional culture gathers guests from eight countries in Braslav

signed protocols of intentions with the District Executive Committee, planning interesting projects within the district. Already, Latvian JSC Madara is building an apartment building in Braslav (on sub-contractor terms). Meanwhile, in a few months' time, it is to launch a mini plant producing concrete — badly needed in the district. In turn, Lithuanian Eva Tour is to construct a road-side hotel with a café, purchasing a neglected building from a local agricultural enterprise for the future site.

In a word, there were many reasons for joy at the 44th *Braslav Lightning Festival*. This year, traditional participants from Belarus, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine and Poland were joined by

Venezuelans, with their show given in bright costumes and unusual masks, attracting attention even before the curtain lifted.

As usual, the festival featured various staged shows, crowned by a holiday of medieval culture on Zamkovaya Hill: a parade of knights, a symbolic handing over of a blazing torch and a tournament. On the banks of Lake Drivyaty, thousands enjoyed the *Water and Fire* show, featuring amusements, pedalos, a dance programme and festive fireworks. The event concluded with a gala concert at Lesnichevka Park.

The Braslav District has bid farewell to friends old and new until next summer, when we will gather once more in the open air, amidst pines.

Rare books from ancient family

Digital version of Sapegis' family library presented in Ruzhany

By Felix Mironovsky

The ancient town of Ruzhany in the Pruzhany District has brought together experts on book rarities from Belarus, Russia and Lithuania. The restored annex at Ruzhany Palace Estate, which once served as a residence for the ancient family of Sapegi, has hosted the launch of a CD listing the bibliography of the family library. The latter was collected by Lev Sapega, Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and his sons. Digital variants of the most precious books were also on display.

The collection includes 250 books from the family estate at Kodeń, now located over the Polish border. In line with the will of the Hetman's son, these were later donated to the University in Vilno (later, the capital of Lithuania). The books, collected by representatives of the Sapegi family, are kept in national libraries in Russia, Sweden, Poland and the USA. According to Tamara Danilyuk, Director of Brest's Maxim Gorky Regional Library, none of these rarities remains in Belarus.

In 2008, library employees organised the international *Berestie Book Collections: Problems and Prospects* conference in Brest, inviting their colleagues from St. Petersburg, Vilnius and Warsaw. As a result, the idea of electronic book editions appeared. This has been jointly implemented by the national libraries of Minsk and St. Petersburg and the regional library in Brest. The idea has been funded by the UNESCO Office in Moscow as part of the international *Virtual Reconstruction of the Sapegis' Family Library* project.

The unique CD's launch is a key moment of the *Ruzhanskaya Brama* (*Ruzhany Gates*) holiday, organised at the Belarusian 'Versailles' — as the Sapegi Palace in Ruzhany was known in the 18th century. The festival included an exhibition of various craft items, a concert of amateur and professional artistes and a round table discussion tackling how best to preserve the library and the architectural legacy of the Belarusian family. The Ruzhany holiday finished with a bright fireworks display.

Amber tears of the sea and fragments of the sun

Exhibition of amber and amber goods opens at Gomel's Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace

By Nikolay Dyuzhev

The collection embraces over 200 exhibits, including amber watches, candlesticks, caskets, interior decorations, scientific reconstructions of 18th century items and exclusive natural compositions. The exhibits featuring this natural stone are being showcased at the Kaliningrad Museum of Single Mineral — unique throughout Russia. Unsurprisingly, the modern Kaliningrad peninsula is known for having the largest global deposit of amber: known beautifully as 'tears of the sea' or 'fragments of the sun'.



Items from amber attract glances

The Kaliningrad Region factory industrially mining and processing this natural

mineral. According to the General Director of Gomel's Palace and Park Ensemble, Oleg Ryzhkov, the Amber Museum opened in 1979 inside a former 19th century fortress. It was a branch of the Kaliningrad Art Museum and, eight years ago, gained the status of an independent establishment. It boasts over 11,000 exhibits.

The exhibition has been organised as part of an agreement on bilateral co-operation between the largest museum of Gomel (which is the CIS' cultural capital) and the museum of Russia's western cultural centre of Kaliningrad.

Museum collection replenished

Israeli artist Mikhail Grobman donates ten of his works to Minsk's Modern Fine Arts Museum, with the ceremony hosted by the Belarusian Embassy to Israel

Mikhail Grobman noted at the ceremony that many Be-

larus-born artists successfully work and are well-known in Israel. "Belarus is the homeland for many outstanding Jewish painters, including avant-garde followers," he said. In turn, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belarus to Israel, H.E. Mr. Igor Leshchenya,

thanked the artist for the donation and expressed confidence that his works would occupy a worthy place in the Modern Fine Arts Museum's collection.

Mr. Grobman's initiative is the result of kind relations between the Belarusian Embassy and the famous artist.

He is one of the founders and leaders of the Second Russian Avant-Garde movement. Mr. Grobman's artworks are exhibited in the Centre Pompidou (Paris), the State Tretyakov Gallery and the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts (Moscow) as well as at the State Russian Museum (St. Petersburg).