



Radziwiłł's castle has been major source of culture in Belarus for four centuries

Revealed mysteries of ancient Nesvizh Castle become widely acknowledged

Tourists visit one of the restored buildings at former Radziwiłł Residence — Kamenitsa

By Viktor Korbut

The walls are over 400 years old, built by Mikołaj Radziwiłł Sierotka — a famous traveller and devoted Christian who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and then returned to Nesvizh (a town south-west of Minsk). He invited Italian architects to construct a castle, town hall, Catholic church, monasteries and towers — all stand today and are on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

In Belarusian and Polish, 'kamenitsa' is a building constructed from stone. Since most buildings in Belarus were built from timber four hundred years ago, the appearance of a stone residence in Nesvizh — the Kamenitsa at the Castle —

was an extraordinary event. It recently reopened, welcoming visitors, as Sergey Klimov, Director of the Nesvizh National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve, says. He leads me through its restored halls and we climb a staircase to the second floor. Immediately, we find ourselves in a restaurant. In the times of the Radziwiłłs, these were living rooms. Recently, restorers uncovered an 18th century fresco on the walls, in Chinese style. It seems that artists were actually brought from China to undertake the work.

The White Ballroom is situated opposite the restaurant, its walls decorated with tapestries and sculptural compositions. Many details remain from

the times of the Radziwiłłs — almost untouched. Meanwhile, 200 people can simultaneously sit in the Chimney or Main Dining Hall — the hosting hall of the castle. Sadly, few items of furniture or interior adornment remain from the days of the Radziwiłłs, although some appear occasionally at auction or from private collections.

Mr. Klimov explains why the treasures have been lost, "The last of the Nesvizh Radziwiłłs — Duke Dominik — joined Napoleon and perished in 1813. The castle was then confiscated by the Russian Empire and given to Dominik's adopted daughter, Stefania, who married a Russian nobleman called Wittgenstein. They paid little attention to

the property, so it was only in the late 19th century that things were brought into order — by Maria Dorotea de Castellane, wife of Prussian General Anthony Radziwiłł. The family moved from Berlin to Nesvizh, making it their permanent home, and began to restore the estate." Full restoration of the unique site only began this century, following an order by the President of Belarus.

Mr. Klimov shows me other halls where restorers are still at work, and tells me about future exhibitions. "My colleagues and I have compiled a list of what should be purchased to decorate the halls," notes Mr. Klimov. "We need tapestries, vases and clocks, costing around \$1m. Many exhibits have already been

bought — currently kept in storerooms. Soon, items from the collection of Duke Maciej Radziwiłł will appear in the castle, donated temporarily from his own collection in Warsaw. Slutsk sashes, minerals, coins and medals once belonging to the Radziwiłłs will be on display. The website www.radziwill.by has further details and has been operating for two years already, run by those who are passionate about Belarusian history."

Nesvizh recently hosted its second musical festival, featuring the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre: *Nights of the Bolshoi Theatre at Radziwiłł Castle*. The venue was perfect, since it acquired a court theatre in the mid-18th century, organised by

Franciška Ūršula Radziwiłł. She staged her own plays at Nesvizh in the Polish language, as well as comedies and tragedies by French playwrights. Radziwiłł Castle has been a major centre of culture in Belarus for four centuries, being 'an outpost of European culture among forests and marshes', as noted by Mr. Klimov.

More regular theatrical performances are planned once restoration of the Theatrical Hall is complete; it was especially built in the 18th century, over one of the residential buildings, to welcome Polish King Stanisław August Poniatowski. Now, anyone, regardless of title or rank, can enter the grand reception room.

World is more beautiful when we're together

By Vasily Namin

International Slavonic Unity-2011 Festival of Slavonic Nations takes place near Friendship Monument, at border of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine

The event was attended by official delegations from the border regions of our three Slavonic countries, as well as participants of an international *Druzhba-2011 (Friendship)* youth tent camp. The Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Kirill, was also among the honorary guests of the festival.

A traditional festival, organised by Russia this year, was held under the slogan "The World is Beautiful When We are Together: a World of Faith, Brotherhood and Love!" Meanwhile, the forum included a festival for the historic towns of the Bryansk, Chernigov and Gomel regions. They met near the Friendship Monument, enjoying sporting competitions and a concert by famous performers and popular bands. Numerous guests visited the creative stands of Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian regions, particularly "The Planet of



Festival gaining wide popularity

Childhood' and 'Space and Us', while trade fairs offered a wide range of goods by domestic, Russian and Ukrainian manufacturers.

The International Slavonic Unity-2011 Festival of Slavonic Nations, held near the Friendship Monument, on the border of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, is the biggest

international event for our three countries and has won great popularity far beyond the border areas. Delegations from the Gomel, Bryansk and Chernigov regions first met in 1969 and, in 1975, the Friendship Monument was erected; now, each year, the holiday brings together dozens of thousands of guests.

Reality and fantasy theatrically intermix

By Alexey Ivanyushin

Republican Theatre of Belarusian Drama stages final premiere of the season

The plot of *The Happy Husband* — a musical comedy based on a play by prominent Belarusian political and cultural figure Frantishak Olekhovich — takes place in Western Belarus in the 1920s. A young and dreamy noblewoman, Magdalena, tired of life and her predictable husband, Gaudent, decides to indulge in a love affair with Duke Matsalsky. She is even ready to leave her husband but Gaudent won't surrender so quickly...

While writing the play, Mr. Olekhovich was in the

grip of serious family difficulties himself (his wife wanted to leave him); accordingly, his feelings clearly transfer to the tone of the comedy, in which women are presented as egoistic and self-righteous.

The Happy Husband is based on true events from the playwright's life, when he, as a poor young artist, had to pretend to be a 'celebrity' at a middle-class house.

Polish producer Stanisław Potocki once wanted to bring Mr. Olekhovich's work to the big screen, with famous American actor Charles Boyer in the leading role. However, these plans were interrupted by WW2.