

Gothic style invites to Renaissance

Travelling through Belarus, you can discover how life was lived several centuries ago

By Viktor Korbut

Despite economic difficulties, Belarus continues to invest funds in the restoration and preservation of its historical and cultural legacy, while organising festivals of traditional and medieval culture. Soon, Belarus' cultural centres will appear abroad, showing foreigners the past and present of our country, situated at the heart of Europe.

Vitebsk: export of traditions

"The Belarusian Culture Ministry is to organise more cultural events abroad," notes Belarus' Culture Minister, Pavel Latushko. "Four cultural centres are to open in Russia, Lithuania, Germany and Ukraine with this purpose, while more cultural forums are to be organised abroad, over a wider geographic radius. Meanwhile, memorable anniversaries are to be honoured, such as those marking the birth of Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas — classical writers of Belarusian literature."

The Arts Festival of the Belarusians of the World was recently held as part of the International Slavonic Bazaar in Vitebsk Arts Festival, with craftsmen presenting their creations, made according to 19th century traditions. Belarusians abroad continue to preserve their customs, explains Mr. Latushko. He tells us, "We don't need to create myths and legends. Our historical heritage provides enough inspiration for contemporary national culture."

Nesvizh: doors are open

16th-18th century Nesvizh Castle has an exhibition constantly being expanded with items from private collections and foreign auctions. According to Sergey Klimov, Director of the Nesvizh National Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve, four more halls are to open at the Castle in August, located in the Kamenitsa and Southern Gallery. These are now ready, with the halls about to welcome their first visitors.

By the end of the year, 27 more halls are to open, if enough funding is forthcoming, while the restoration of frescoes and mantelpieces will continue through 2012.

To fill the rooms with exhibits, authentic items are being sourced from foreign auctions and private owners. Collections of Slutsk sashes, coins and medals have already been acquired in this way.

Most of the necessary furniture has been purchased, although some requires restoration in several stages. At present, two wardrobes and a bed from the 17th century are being restored, alongside famous Radziwiłł mirrors,

which have returned from the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre, where they've hung since 1940.

Mogilev: greeting from fire chief

A 19th century fire-fighting depot is being returned to its former glory in Mogilev's Pozharny Lane. In 1853, a fire protection brigade operated in Mogilev, headed by the fire chief. A fire-fighting wagon train was situated in Pozharny Lane and a building which housed fire-fighters' horses remains.



Vitebsk's streets have recently hosted Slavonic Bazaar Festival



Town Hall and Radziwiłł's Castle are major sights in Nesvizh



Exhibits of pharmacy-museum have been found and, if all terms are met, the city will have a new tourist site next year.

Borisovshchina: Gothic style in the village

The restoration of historical and architectural sites also continues in the Gomel Region. In the 19th century, the family estate of the Yastrzhembskis — a manor and water tower in neo-Gothic style — was built in the Khoyniki District's Borisovshchina village.

The tower's neo-Gothic style astonishes everyone, having such delicate lines. Drafts are now being prepared to reconstruct the estate, with the district administration keen to attract people bearing the family name of Yastrzhembski to the restoration works.

Minsk: Renaissance sounds

On September 10th, the Children's Philharmonic Society is to open in Svobody Square. The unusual building is the restored Holy Spirit Church, constructed in the 17th century in Renaissance style. Minsk Mayor Nikolai Ladutko is personally supervising the restoration of this architectural masterpiece. Works are conducted from 7am to 11pm, including Saturdays.

The first chamber music concert is to take place at the Children's Philharmonic Society on Minsk City Day, featuring talented youngsters.



Ancient Lutheran church in Grodno

Baranovichi: medicine from flask

An exhibition dedicated to the history of medicine is being created at Baranovichi's reconstructed pharmacy #21, located not far from Polesky Railway Station.

Since its construction in the 1920s, the building has been used solely as a pharmacy, even during the Great Patriotic War. Pole Stanislaw Laewski built and owned it until 1946, when he left for Poland. There was a 24 hour pharmacy on the ground floor while the second was used as accommodation. The pharmacy provided residents and the hospital with medica-

tions, selling ready-made medicines and preparing ointments, suppositories, pills and cosmetic creams. Cosmetics and herbs were also available, alongside glasses.

At present, the pharmacy is undergoing major repair and restoration. The second floor is to house an exhibition, with central district pharmacies from the entire Brest Region promising to help with exhibits. Colleagues from Pinsk have already donated glass flasks, which were used previously.

Grodno: German accent

An ancient Lutheran church, once used by local Germans, is be-

ing restored in the city, located near the border with Poland and Lithuania.

An ancient bell announces that the church service is about to begin, rung by long time bell ringer Yuri Labotsky. His grandfather also used to climb the steep steps a hundred years ago, when the bell tower was also graced with a clock.

The restoration of the Grodno church began 15 years ago, with interiors repaired to allow church services to be held. Today, this is Belarus' only operational Lutheran church. It has even hosted a wedding service.

In the late 18th century, King Stanislaw August Poniatowski donated a former tavern to the Grodno community of Lutheran-Protestants, which later became used for the church. There were enough Lutherans in Grodno, who had arrived from Germany to help with royal manufactures.

Today, the Lutheran community unites around a hundred parishioners while architects often select the church building as an object for their diploma papers.

Funds to reconstruct the church