

Audiences appreciate artistes' inspiration

Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre finishes 41st season with 'musical firework' — a new premiere of *Italian Style Love*

It would be difficult to select a more perfect title for the union of these two one-act performances. Each is interesting in its own way, being fascinating, witty, romantic and wistful. Gaetano Donizetti's *Night Bell or Apothecary's Wedding Night* comic opera and charming Neapolitan songs, collected in the *Hits of the Neapolitan District* musical review, are united by the unique talent of Italian composers. Their creative legacy has long taken its rightful place in the 'golden collection' of world music.

Gaetano Donizetti wrote the score and libretto for *Night Bell* in 1836. He was delighted with the result, smiling at his own jokes

and music, which 'jumps', obeying the rhythm of verses. His graceful comic opera is an easy addition to most theatrical companies' repertoires and is ranked alongside his other opera masterpieces.

The plot is simple yet amusing: Don Annibale, an old apothecary, is newly married to young Serafina. As they prepare for their wedding night, young Enrico, Serafina's delinquent lover, interrupts. He appears in several disguises, ringing the night bell and asking the unfortunate groom to fill a preposterous list of prescriptions.

Passionate Enrico's artifices are just one of the fascinating peculiarities of the performance,



A scene from the Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre's *Italian Style Love*

which remains charming despite its predictability. International contest laureates Natalia Dementieva, Lesya Lyut, Andrey Morozov, Victor Tsirkunovich and Sergey Sutko play the leading roles. Anna Motornaya is the director-producer while Oleg Lesun conducts and Vyacheslav Inozemtsev choreographs. Susanna Tsiryuk directs the stage version of *Hits of the Neapolitan District*, with Alexandra Tikhom-

irova of Russia choreographing the ballet.

Of course, Italy is renowned for its wonderful musical traditions, being called the cradle of opera. However, we shouldn't forget that it has also given the world amazing Neapolitan songs; the genre is still very popular. Think of such pearls as *O Sole Mio*, *O Surdato 'Nnamurato* and *Funiculi, Funiculà*. These world famous hits are sung by the

world's top performers.

Hits of the Neapolitan District depicts one day in the life of a small Italian town, where sunny Neapolitan songs are heard from every window, full of emotion and energy, tender and sensitive. The theme of love is ever significant, eternal through the centuries. The Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre is inspiring in its use of improvisation, as appreciated by the audience.

Exclamatory reviews for bright show

75 contestants from 20 countries participate in 1st Beijing International Ballet and Choreography Competition, featuring Yekaterina Oleinik — a leading soloist with the Belarusian Opera and Ballet Theatre

By Inessa Pleskachevskaya

Despite her tender age, Yekaterina is a veteran of ballet contests; Beijing is her ninth event. The dancer explains her love of competitions, and yearns to keep learning, understanding her place in the ballet world. "Competitions are extremely important for ballet dancers, enabling them to watch other dancers from all over the globe, viewing different schools and learning from famous masters. If you stay with a single theatre and the same troupe, it can be interesting; a diverse repertoire and performances help artistes develop. However, at competitions, you gain another view and see yourself in relation not only to your own theatre but to the whole world. You can watch Chinese and European schools, comparing them and taking on the best from them," Yekaterina smiles.

Speaking of the Chinese school, a famous Belarusian ballet master and honourable guest at the Beijing competition, Valentin Yelizariyev, notes, "The path which has taken 200 years for the Russian ballet school has taken the Chinese just 50 years." The Chinese occupy top places at the most prestigious world contests — such as those held in Moscow and American Jackson.

Ms. Oleinik admits that every troupe has outstanding dancers but some troupes stand out more than

others. "The opening evening featured a concert of several Chinese troupes. Their training and commitment were amazing. These were large troupes, of 30-40 people, but each danced as if they were a soloist; their mastery was impressive," she says. With this in mind, it was no surprise that the major award of the Beijing competition went to Chinese artistes, though it may have helped that the event was being hosted by China. In just a short period of time, the Chinese may be acknowledged as worldwide leaders. Meanwhile, they celebrate wins at prestigious contests — not only for their excellent skills but for a large number of entrants. Ms. Oleinik explains that, in recent years, large troupes from China and Korea have been common.

Chinese audiences are as prepared as their performers, loving ballet as much as they do in Korea and Japan. The Chinese are true experts in this art. Accordingly, words of recognition and admiration pronounced by Asian profes-

sionals have significance. Reviews of Ms. Oleinik's performance were full of exclamation, with greatest emphasis on her advanced fouettes. Kenji Usui, the Chairman of the Japan Ballet Association, notes in Russian, "She is wonderful. Not many artistes like her exist."



He adds in English, "This is great. I've been attending ballet competitions since 1986 but her

standard is rare. She is now among the best ballerinas in the world."

Actually, the start of the contest was not easy for Yekaterina. On the eve of the event, her Kazakh dance partner was injured. Fortunately, Honoured Artiste of Belarus (and Ms. Oleinik's theatre mate) Konstantin Kuznetsov offered his help. He greatly impressed the Beijing audiences and, even, the other artistes. Each of his supports was accompanied by loud applause and, after his *Don Quixote* variation, cries of 'Bravo!' were heard. He noted, modestly yet with satisfaction, "Ballet artistes earn respect during their performance but it's afterwards, when your colleagues offer approval, that you know you've done well."

Ms. Oleinik convinced the jury, who awarded her performance. There were few representatives of the European school in the finals, so a special prize from the National Centre for the Performing Arts was a true success for her. The contest was being held for the first time, so each winner is already part of history.

I sincerely envy all those who attend Belarusian Opera and Ballet Theatre performances this coming season. They'll undoubtedly admire the ballet and Yekaterina. Meanwhile, I'll be awaiting the next Beijing competition.

Exhibition on three Egyptian kingdoms

By Alexey Vladimirov

Mummies, ritual canopic jars and Queen Nefertiti's bust welcome visitors to the National History Museum

The Great Mummies of Egypt educational and entertainment project includes an exhibition of the same title, alongside *The Tsar of Scorpions* 3D short feature film. "The exhibition explains about the three Egyptian kingdoms: Old, Middle and New. Their history covers several thousand years," notes curator Tatiana Tsygan. "Visitors can trace the development of Egyptian written languages, as well as the theory and practice of burial and mummification. It's no secret that the cult of the dead played a vital role for Egyptians. Pictograms were used to bring the contents of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* to crypts and sarcophaguses, ensuring a good place for the dead in the spirit world, guiding them in how to behave."

Three dimensional models, alongside mummies and canopic jars used by the Egyptians to hold the internal organs of the dead, are on show, alongside busts of Pharaoh Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti. Her beauty, according to legend, was so dazzling that she was called the Perfect One.