

# Belovezhskaya Pushcha inspires painters in their improvised art

Open air workshop at National Park results in an exhibition in capital's gallery

By Victor Mikhailov

Who is not moved by the majesty and beauty of the Belovezhskaya Pushcha? Its rich landscapes, flora and fauna inspire the imagination like nowhere else. Centuries-old trees charm with their thick crowns, while the animal world is amazing in its diversity. Even the most emotionally restrained are bestowed with memories to last a lifetime. True nature lovers are beside themselves with delight.

Naturally, it is a superb environment for any artist, so the open air workshop in the Pushcha resulted in diversity of technique and mood. The results are now on display at the Belarusian Union of Artists' Gallery, in Minsk's Palace of Arts. The emotional response of the artists is evident in every stroke of the brush.

For Vasily Kostyuchenko, the Belovezhskaya Pushcha has inspired his expression and use of an unusual palette — for which he is already known. Naturally, his intense green tones reproduce the wild purity and wilderness of the reserve, set off by blue skies, the golden sun and gentle rose rays of morning light. Life in the Pushcha appears impressively tranquil and peaceful, while teeming with activity.

Piotr Sharypa reflects the reserve's beauty in a more homely manner while Alena Sharypa presents the Pushcha's wild flow-



Colours chosen to depict Belovezhskaya Pushcha and resident aurochs — by participant of open air workshop

ers as still life. Her rainbow of chamomiles, bluebells and daisies is painted with such soul that the bouquet in a vase appears as a colourful carpet.

Kastus Kochan paints residents living close to the Belovezhskaya Pushcha, busy in everyday activities. He shows that man can live alongside nature without harming

it, repaid in a natural bounty of mushrooms, berries and fresh air.

Oleg Skovorodko has remained true to his usual style, capturing the dynamism of a thunderstorm. His trees sway in the powerful wind and summer light awakens the bright colours of nature, filling near-by villages with joyful daylight.

Naturally, all those who visited the Belovezhskaya Pushcha focused on the unique wonder of nature and the fascinating animal world of the forest reserve. This was the Belovezhskaya Pushcha's third open air workshop, entitled *Belovezhie-2009* and celebrating the six hundred year anniversary of its status as a natural reserve. Sur-

prising as it may seem, several centuries ago, the first laws protecting the Belovezhskaya Pushcha were adopted, helped preserve the local beauty and the richness of the site for future generations. Every year, Belarusian artists see the charms of the Pushcha in a new way. We hope that their impressions will result in many new exhibitions.

## Altar returned to its former beauty

By Lidia Vikentjeva

It has taken five years to restore Farny Roman Catholic Church's altar — one of Grodno's spiritual and cultural treasures; soon, it will be unveiled, for use by parishioners from August 5th

One of Belarus' most beautiful churches was built in the late 17th century and consecrated in 1705. The altar, damaged by fire in 2006, was created in the 1730s by Königsberg carver Schmidt, designed by Prussian architect Pauker. Its four burnt wooden sculptures have been restored: those of apostles Jacob and Thomas, Saint Ambrose and patron of arts Lozovoy, as well as relief columns, and part of its balustrade and decoration. Only solid lime timber has been used, as in the original, carved by a father and son team from Voronovo: Kazimir and Igor Misyura.

The final stage of reconstruction envisages gold leaf covering, being conducted by specialists from Vilnius and supervised by Paweł Sadlej, a restorer of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

## 'Dance is my only passion in life'

**She entered Minsk's Institute of Culture without hesitation, knowing that she wanted to choreograph dancing, rather than simply perform herself. Vera Chichina, Artistic Leader of Belye Rosy, tells us about her choice of profession.**

As a student, she almost 'lived' in a folklore laboratory, studying everything gathered from expeditions. When the time came for her state exam, she knew that she should stage a Belarusian dance. Her *Zaglyady* was highly assessed and became part of the repertoire of *Belye Rosy* youth ensemble.

She was always creative, from an early age, observing dancing and ever wishing to bring her own fantastic and imaginative interpretation to dance. Soon, her gift was appreciated, and the young actress was assigned a choreography tutor.

Ms. Chichina was among those interviewed for the post of her band's artistic leader and she was chosen from several worthy candidates. "It wasn't easy," she recalls. "We all stood in line that day. The next, I found myself as artistic leader. I had to show that I deserved the responsibility — primarily, to my colleagues." Now, eight years on, no one in *Belye Rosy*



Belye Rosy performs music, songs and rousing dances

or the sphere of Belarusian cultural doubts the correctness of the choice.

Five years ago, the ensemble celebrated its 20th anniversary with a solo concert on the stage of

the Palace of the Republic. It's now preparing a big tour of Belarusian cities for its 25th birthday — to be celebrated next year. Concerts are planned for Grodno, Minsk and, even, the prestigious P.I. Tchaiko-

vsky Concert Hall in Moscow. The Grodno performers have already performed on this legendary stage; in 2010, the Year of Belarus in Russia finished with *Belye Rosy's* big concert.

The group is preparing an original programme for the holiday, inspired by Belarusian folklore. It will include seven choreographic novelties, alongside vocal and musical performances. Moreover, Ms. Chichina dreams of realising another unusual project.

"At present, the genre of song visualisation is very popular," explains Ms. Chichina. "This isn't merely a dance accompaniment to a vocal performance (previously called backup dancing), but the embodiment of music and lyrics through dance. We've created such performances with many Belarusian musical stars and now plan to unite these in a single concert. If we succeed, it'll crown our jubilee tour."

*Belye Rosy* will doubtless enchant its audiences, having unlimited talent. "My life is a constant creative process, allowing me to be in harmony with myself," notes Vera. "I live as I see myself: in a rehearsal hall, among artistes, creating dances."