

‘My heart always strives to people’

Singer Anya Sharkunova discourses on her love for her homeland, family values and talent

By Viktor Korbut

Singer Anya Sharkunova has been awarded with the President's letter of gratitude for her participation in the Republican *Belarus is Us!* public-cultural action, held countrywide in 2010, with the aim of promoting national culture and supporting Belarusian performers.

“I feel great responsibility and a desire to do something new,” admits Anya. “I feel with my heart that people need Belarusian songs. I wish so much to continue my performances to the public.”

Have you had any rest recently?

I'm always working — giving concerts or rehearsing. Last year, I attended the 'Songs of the Sea' Festival in Ukraine. I miss the gentle waves now. To be frank, this summer, I spent each weekend in a village. It's wonderful there: beautiful, clean and calm. Unsurprisingly, agro-ecotourism is developing well in our country; I think that every Belarusian enjoys the countryside.

You seem to be an absolute urbanite. Where did you learn about life in the villages?

I work there, touring with my concerts. I also know how my grandparents and great-grandparents lived. We also had a summer cottage in a village, 6km from Pinsk.

Where is it now?

It's been sold. Later, my parents moved from a Pinsk multi-storeyed apartment house to their own house and my mother created a true fairy-



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Anya Sharkunova's concert songs often resemble musical performances

tale in the garden. Flowers were everywhere. I learnt from her example and, at my friends' house near Minsk, I've made alpine gardens, planted roses and grape vines, restored the beautiful grass lawns and cut the bushes. I love to do this. Sitting in the natural environment afterwards, I feel absolutely happy. I

already understand landscape design and can distinguish flower varieties. I planned to plant some flowers, seeing an empty bed, so went to the Botanical Garden (which has huge greenhouses full of flowers). I spent a long time there, leaving with boxes full of plants. It was quite tricky to transport them all to our summer

cottage.

You sing beautiful songs which are sometimes sad. Are they about you?

My producer, Vladimir Kubyshkin, composes songs for me. He knows all my heart-piercing stories and what I feel at a certain moment. He is aware of the reasons behind

my tears and smiles and... presents songs to me. I wonder at how he, being a man, can compose songs for women, being able to narrate their stories. It may seem strange but he succeeds perfectly. We're all different — in age and our place in society. However, we all have similar stories; we feel the same sorrows.

What are your dreams?

Recently, I've been thinking about the number of great women who fail to have a family. I feel sad for them, as they suffer such internal pain. No job can substitute for a woman desire to have a family. Some actresses focus so much on stardom that they only realise they need a family when they reach 40 or 45. I hope I'll avoid this. Many artistes are successful wives and mothers, combining pleasure and fame. If I faced a choice, I'd choose family.

Do you visit the 'world' of clubs very often?

I'm tired of this 'world'. You meet the same faces even if you only visit once every six months. A light atmosphere reigns, which has nothing special. I don't wish to breathe it. I'm more interested in flowers now.

Have you substituted people with flowers?

Not people but the 'in-crowd'; I'd never substitute people.

What helps you achieve success?

Firstly, nothing would have been possible without Vladimir Kubyshkin. However, on a wider scale, any talented person can achieve success.

Verdi, Strauss and Tchaikovsky eternally warm audiences' hearts

By Leonid Ivanshin

Fairy Open Air Night of Classical Music in Strochitsy village, near Minsk, gathers music lovers for enchanted evening

The Belarusian Musical Theatre's open air symphony concert was a great success, notes the Musical Theatre's Director, Alexander Petrovich. He explains, “In Europe, open air performances are wide-spread in summer. Why shouldn't we use our wonderful site in the village of Strochitsy, near Minsk — at the Belarusian Museum of Architecture and Daily Life.”

Following the best foreign traditions, classical pieces were performed during the two hour concert, entitled *Fairy Open Air Night of Classical Music*. Thirty pieces by Verdi, Strauss, Kalman, Tchaikovsky and other composers were enjoyed by an audience of a thousand music lovers. Soloists from musical and opera theatres across Belarus were joined by the Bolshoi and Mariinsky theatres of Russia. Five conduc-

tors interchanged: four Belarusians and American Philip Simmons — who is soon to stage a performance at the Belarusian Musical Theatre.

Mariinsky Theatre soloist Larisa Yudina could hardly hide her emotions on returning to Belarus, with which she shares close ties: her husband, also an operatic soloist, began



Classical music performed for the first time in Strochitsy

his career here. In Strochitsy, Ms. Yudina performed several pieces, including Alyabiev's *Nightingale*. “Belarus has welcomed me with open arms,” she said. “My husband's relatives used to ask me why I often performed abroad rather than singing for Belarusian audiences. Eventually, I gained the wonderful chance to sing for Belarusians, which I do with great pleasure.” She

is a regular performer at St. Petersburg's city festivals, so the Belarusian open air format was nothing new to her. She admits that she finds it easier to sing in the open air since the microphone is a useful aid.

The Belarusian Museum of Architecture and Daily Life is a reconstructed Belarusian

village, with wooden houses, mills, churches and other buildings. It has already hosted several cultural forums, including pop and folk festivals, but this was the first classical concert. “We tried to choose the best pieces from world operatic classical music — well known and loved by everyone,” stressed the project's artistic director, Adam Murzich. “Next time, we'll also include

Belarusian music.”

Open air classical music concerts are gaining popularity countrywide. The first of the kind was organised within the courtyard of Polotsk's Sophia Cathedral. Concerts at Mir Castle followed, with Mr. Petrovich personally helping in their organisation. “Open air concerts are quite expensive,” he notes. “A stage is needed, in addition to seating for the audience and artistes. Moreover, transportation and security services must be provided. We would hardly have succeeded without support from the Culture Ministry, Minsk authorities, heads of the Minsk Region and sponsors.” Speaking of why Strochitsy was chosen to host the event, he tells us, “The museum has its fans. Moreover, the site is popular among tourists coming to Belarus. The country is now promoting tourism development, with culture as a focus.”

Mr. Petrovich is convinced that the project will be repeated. Next year, Strochitsy stage should host two or three concerts of classical music.

Pictures on show indicate parallels and meridians

Belarus represented by about 200 works at Slovak Andrej Smolak's Painted Equator show, hosted by National Polotsk Historical-Cultural Museum-Reserve Art Gallery

The show features paintings by Alexander Konovalov, Georgy Poplavsky, Vladimir and Andrey Savich, Vladimir Vishnevsky and other artistes and cultural figures of Belarus. Each was asked to create a single work on any positive theme (negating terrorism, fascism or any other tragic element). “The project aims to strengthen friendship and mutual understanding between nations. Accordingly, only positive works are accepted,” explains Mr. Smolak, adding that figures of culture, science, politics and sports were asked to contribute.

The project was launched in 2007 and has collected over a thousand works to date, created by those from Israel, Russia, Cuba, China, Japan, Poland, Germany and other European states. Eventually,



Pictures of new project

Mr. Smolak aims to collect forty thousand and five works, each representing one kilometre of the Earth's equator. Pictures are to be kept by the artist in Slovakia and, once the project is complete, will be showcased at a specially established gallery.

Andrej Smolak is an outstanding artist and public figure, organising numerous exhibitions, symposiums and art projects. He holds the European Union of Fine Arts Award (2002), the International Alliance of Salvador Dali Prize and other prestigious awards.