

Final autumn accord

Minsk hosts *Panorama* International Festival of Theatrical Art

By Mikhalina Cherkashina

The festival is being held for the fifth time, but is less extensive this year, as the Yanka Kupala Theatre building (which usually hosts the event) is undergoing reconstruction. Theatrical troupes from Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary and Belarus are giving performances at various theatrical and concert sites around the city for the week-long forum, giving nine shows in all. So far, three have been staged at the Central House of Officers and at the Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre.

The festival opened with Chekhov's *Seagull*, staged by St. Petersburg's Baltic House Theatre-Festival. The joint Lithuanian-Russian project aroused huge interest, featuring prominent actors Juozas Budraitis, Vladas Bagdonas and Regimantas Adomaitis (well known to Belarusians for performing in Russian and Lithuanian films).

The Anželika Cholina Dance Theatre surprised everyone with its unusual interpretation of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, combining ballet, drama and mime. Its shows always gather full houses in the



The *Seagull* Lithuanian-Russian project opens *Panorama* Festival

Baltic States, Europe and Russia. *Anna Karenina* was being staged in Belarus for the first time. The Yanka Kupala Theatre's *Not Mine*, by Adamovich, which won the first National Theatre Award's 'Best Belarusian Performance' prize, re-

ceived a warm reception.

The next shows are also set to delight audiences: the Meno Fortas Theatre's *Idiot*, by Dostoevsky, staged by Eimuntas Nekrošius; the Moscow Vakhtangov Theatre's *Dedication to Eve*, featuring

Vasily Lanovoy and Yevgeny Knyazev; the Hungarian Csokonai Theatre's *Hairdresser*; Polish Ramp's *Pinsk Gentry*, staged by *Panorama*'s director and Artistic Leader Nikolay Pinigin; and the Belarusian State Puppet Theatre's *Drei*

Schwestern, staged by talented Alexey Lelyavsky and based on Chekhov's story.

The event is to conclude with Nikolay Pinigin's *Abduction of Europe, or Ursula Radziwill's Theatre*, performed by the Yanka Kupala Theatre.

National costumes encapsulate cultural legacy

By Alena Germanovich

Gomel hosts *Historical Armenia* exhibition

The exhibition at Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace in Gomel includes national costumes from the Yerevan History Museum, as well as carpets, jewellery and Armenian household items. This museum keeps the history of Armenia's capital which is of the same age as Nineveh, Carthage and Rome, so it boasts an amazing cultural legacy. The collection of national costumes is one of the best in the museum.

National costume was worn in the Armenian capital until the early 20th century, when European clothes became more popular. However, families always kept complete sets of traditional clothes for wear on festive occasions. Jewellery made from precious metals was an essential part of the costume. Armenia was famed for its beautiful silver bracelets, buckles and cigar cases, each being a work of art.



True composers aren't afraid of competition

Young Belarusian composer Konstantin Yaskov ready to show how harmoniously our musical traditions can fit pan-European context

kov and Belarusian Musical Autumn festivals? Experience shows that people tend to respond to promotion.

These festivals primarily aim to popularise our long standing musical legacy of classics, designed for a wide audience. Of course, this is good, but our festival has a different direction. It does not aim to compete with popular classical music and there are no other such events in existence with which to compare us. We've already invited musicians from Switzerland, Ukraine, Germany and Poland, so they can each demonstrate the latest musical trends in their country.

Is it possible to learn the skill of composing?

It can be taught in a general way but it's a spiritual craft. Certain formulas can be mastered by anyone but it's impossible to teach someone how to reveal their inner feelings and fantasies. I'm deeply convinced that composers need to be born with a natural inclination.

We're now seeing our music being registered within a Euro-

pean context, with those living abroad liaising with Western bands. Undoubtedly, we have common pan-European educational standards, which are naturally reflected in creative activity. Meanwhile, globalisation is leading to musical culture losing its national identity. A composer's personality becomes a 'brand' rather than national motifs. Belarusian music isn't homogenous, as every composer has their own style: Smolksy, Kuznetsov and Gorelova would never be confused.

Some rely solely on folk traditions while others use western trends and some are keen on contemporary American trends. How can we surprise the world? I stress that quality is foremost. At present, there's little high quality music, considering the abundance of contemporary composers (maybe never so many in the history of world culture). There's a great deal of unprofessionalism and trash. Unfortunately, even mere professionalism is rare. Few professionals have

remained in academic or pop music. Composers have access to huge audiences on the Internet, yet there is much ignorance, alongside some talented works.

What influences your creativity?

From the very beginning, Belarusian folklore — in its primeval, wild state — has influenced me greatly as far as musical language is concerned. However, the impact of Western European traditions is also great: baroque, classicism, romanticism, impressionism, avant-garde, and post-avant-garde... I'm also keen on American minimalism.

Probably, everything is mixed in my creativity, merging into a universal language. When I analyse my work, I discover elements from various layers. Nevertheless, I'm convinced that, while maintaining their own style, a contemporary composer should be able to satisfy any order — even the most remote from their own world outlook and philosophy. I think this is professionalism.

Mr. Yaskov is keen to explain why young Belarusian composers sometimes feel neglected.

I think that a whole range of inter-dependant reasons are to blame. Firstly, we don't have many young Belarusian composers; compared to Europe, the number per capita isn't great. Secondly, we are yet to create an annual stage for music composers to show their talent (at any age). We lack a festival of contemporary works, so composers must rely on concerts organised by the Belarusian Union of Composers, which take place once every five years. It's simply not enough. Thirdly, such a festival is expensive, as everything must be paid for: the hall rental and fees for performers and composers. No one

works free of charge.

Sponsors in Russia and Ukraine, Germany and Poland are more eager to invest money into the musical sphere, since this is an issue of prestige. They organise a great many festivals.

I sometimes hear young composers reproached for being inactive, failing to offer their works to the public; it's fair to some degree of course. The Association of Young Belarusian Composers, which was established a year ago and which I currently head, has set up a goal which is both practical and artistic: to find a common language with sponsors. We're searching for how best to organise our association's work with the minimum of state support.

Are you succeeding?

Yes, but it's a gradual process. I don't see anything terrible in music being treated as a commodity under market conditions. Quality is vital, so the same laws should apply as do in material production.

You also organise the International Dialogues Festival of Contemporary Academic Music but I must admit I've heard little about it. Is it still active?

It took place only twice: in 2007 and 2009. Those who attended were pleased, so we've tried to keep in contact with anyone keen on contemporary works; a new festival is planned for April.

Aren't you afraid of competition from the widely promoted Bashment, Spiva-