

Promenade through Versailles in the centre of European territory

By 2015, many architectural treasures from long ago will have been restored in Belarus

By Viktor Korbut

Not long ago, restoration work began at Drucki-Lubecki Palace, in Shchuchin. Meanwhile, Michał Kleofas Ogiński's house is to be revamped over the next two years — in Zalesie, near Smorgon (he composed the famous *Farewell to the Homeland* polonaise). Major archaeological digs are being conducted on Novogrudok's Zamkovaya Hill, where a strong fortress once stood, and well-known artist Valenty Vankovich's house, in Minsk's Filimonov Street, is undergoing repair.

Shchuchin's French silhouette

Belrestavratsia's restorers are working in Shchuchin, repairing the façade of the local palace, which was once quite magnificent. All are alumni of Mir's Art-Restoration College, trained to recreate the original decorations and fretwork. City residents often stop by to thank them for restoring the palace, which is a true architectural pearl and Shchuchin's calling card. Work on the façade is due to be complete by 2015; afterwards, the interior will come under focus. It's planned that the palace will then host the Centre of Creativity for Children and Young People.

Drucki-Lubecki Palace was built in 1900, copying Versailles' Petit Trianon — which housed the French kings. Duke Ksawery Drucki-Lubecki was sent to France as an ambassador of the Russian Empire and, on returning home, decided to create 'a small Versailles' near his own home. The dukes owned the palace until 1939; in Soviet times, it was used as the House of Officers.

Meeting in Zalesie to the accompaniment of a polonaise

Michał Kleofas Ogiński's mansion in Zalesie is soon to be revamped. The famous composer and state figure received the land near Smorgon in 1801, immediately building his own house there, in the Classic style popular at the time. It was designed by Vilno's professor of architecture, Schultz, with architect Poussier later taking over. The

building is situated in a wonderful French park, near a lake.



Zalesie was once called the 'Northern Athens', with Ogiński often visited by the artistic elite and by high ranking officials from Poland, Russia, Lithuania and Belarus. The composer spent two dozen happy years in the Smorgon District, where his three children were born and raised. His best musical compositions were composed there, including his most famous polonaise — *Farewell to the Homeland*. Finally, he moved to Italy.



Medieval culture festival

During the Great Patriotic War, the mansion housed German staff and, later, became a home for the elderly. Now, this early 19th century historical and architectural monument is to benefit from the Grodno regional investment programme. A



Novogrudok's Farny Roman Catholic Church was built from 1712-1723

tourist-cultural complex is planned, with four zones: museum rooms (with restored 19th century interiors); two concert halls — small and large; a hotel located in the pavilion; and a greenhouse. Ogiński personally created two greenhouses at his home, which are soon to be restored; Smorgon Polytechnical Lyceum is to source plants. The French park, which existed in Ogiński's times, may also be revived. Restoration works are to be complete by 2013 and, in 2015, the 250th birthday of the composer will be celebrated.

The Ogińskis did much to develop art in Slonim and family traditions continue on at the Slonim Drama Theatre — the only professional troupe in the Grodno Region's district centre. From 1770-1791, the Grand Hetman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Michał Kazimierz Ogiński (the composer's relative), founded the first theatrical troupe there. From 1777-1788, a magnificent building was constructed on the bank of the Oginski Canal: the Baroque style Opernhaus, which could seat 2,000 and had a large stage. This could be transformed into a lake if necessary — featuring scenes with boats.

serve the castle's ruins, with works complete by 2015. The buried ruins are to be uncovered, while strengthening the partially preserved Shchitovka and Kostelnaya towers.

Construction on the castle began in the mid-13th century. It housed the grand dukes of Lithuania and, in the 16th century, had seven towers connected by stone walls (now being unearthed). Once conservation works are complete, Zamkovaya Hill will become an open air museum, with one tower probably housing an exposition.

Cup of tea on Grozovo Palace's porch

The palace in the village of Grozovo (Kopyl District) is a large two-floored white building, with open windows and a dilapidated roof. Its major feature is a four-columned portico on the main façade and the remains of a park are found nearby.

The palace has a typical Belarusian history. After the Revolution, the luxurious mansions of noble families were used to house hospitals, boarding schools and village administrative offices. In the 1970s, a school opened in Grozovo Palace but, after the USSR's collapse, the building fell into neglect. Six months ago, it was purchased by a Soligorsk company, which is now strengthening the basement. Windows will be in soon and, next year, a hotel and restaurant (seating 60) are to open. Most of its 24 rooms will be 'three-star', with four deluxe rooms also planned. Each will have tea making facilities.

Romanticism of Vankovich's house

A house is being reconstructed in Minsk's Filimonov Street, where famous artist Valenty Vankovich lived — a contemporary and friend of Mickiewicz and Pushkin. The mid-19th century building is situated in the former Slepianka District, close to the National Library. Its roof and walls are currently being revamped, with the façade being decorated. Modern technology will allow us to preserve

this architectural treasure for years to come. Tourists will be able to explore it next summer, as the scientific head of the project, Alexander Konovalenko, explains. The house originally had several halls, a kitchen with a fireplace and an impressive library. After restoration, the mansion's main halls will reopen, with the interior meeting the best Classic style traditions. An entertainment complex and summer café are to open there, in addition to a restaurant and wine cellar.

