

Maslenitsa rich in pancakes!

The cheerful parting with winter and the greeting of spring have been accompanied by ritual and celebrations since the dawn of history, with the Slavonic people having their own set of unique traditions

By Olga Bestemyanova

According to the church, the holiday is also known as Cheesefare Week. People would enjoy themselves and eat well, knowing that the longest and strictest Great Lent lay ahead. In the Orthodox church calendar, Cheesefare Week follows Meatfare Week, during which believers refrain from eating meat (though not from other modest food). The idea is to reconcile us with God as we ask him to forgive our misdemeanours. The time is devoted to good acts and to spending time with family, friends and those dear to us.

Pancakes are synonymous with Maslenitsa, being round like the Sun; in pagan times, people thought themselves to be eating a small part of the Sun's warmth and power. Unleavened cakes were originally baked, with pancakes appearing once people learnt to make leavened dough. Naturally, ritu-

als abounded, with hostesses preferring to cook in secret, so that no one could curse their work. The first pancake (often said to be a 'failure') was usually given to the poor, to honour dead relatives. Various types of pancakes were cooked for Maslenitsa: from buckwheat, wheat, semolina, maize or rye and lenten pancakes, alongside those with eggs, onions and whitebait, 'Gurievskie' and 'Tsarskie'. Pancakes were also given various fillings.

Maslenitsa is linked to no definite date but is usually celebrated in the last week before Great Lent, seven weeks before Easter. It always begins on Monday and each day traditionally has its own title and meaning. The first is for greeting, when pancakes are baked and people play games while Tuesday ('zaigryshi') begins with 'pancake' eating and riding.

Wednesday is 'lakomki' (gourmand). When a son-



ALEXANDER RUZHECHKA

Delicious home-made pancakes on offer, alongside plenty of fun, during Maslenitsa Week

in-law visits his wife's parents, they often joke that he has come for his mother-in-law's pancakes. Mothers-in-law cooked pancakes for their sons-in-law directly on Maslenitsa. The holiday's culmination is Thursday

— 'revelry'. Friday is considered to be 'mother-in-law's holiday', with sons-in-law inviting their mothers-in-law. Saturday celebrates sisters-in-law, with family gatherings and gifts presented.

Sunday hosts the fare-

well ceremony of Maslenitsa. Traditionally, a Winter effigy was burnt, alongside other unwanted old items — such as old 'lapki' (bast shoes). Any of the rural residents would be given a bright kerchief scarf and be

driven through the village on a sleigh, with everyone showing their respect, until the party reached the last village fence. Then 'Maslenitsa' was thrown from the sleigh into the snow with a laugh.

Interpretation of images, cast as famous characters, with irony and parody

By Mikhail Gorsky

Modern Fine Arts Museum hosts Tatiana Gordashnikova's *Cat's Game*

The exhibition features 25 pictures which interpret the world of cats, as seen through the eyes of the artist. The museum's director, Na-

talia Sharangovich, explains that our beloved fluffy pets are personified in the works, taking on the character of humans, with our feelings and emotions. The cats are cast as famous characters: pop stars, actors and historical figures — including Marilyn Monroe, Marcello Mastroianni and Mao Tse-Tung. "Human

features penetrate the animals' nature, giving birth to a mocking aspect and ironic portraits. The nuances of each one's character are carefully depicted, allowing us to identify ourselves in her works, easily empathising." Ms. Sharangovich calls the show 'professional, integral, womanish, warm and delicate'.

This is Tatiana Gordashnikova's first personal exhibition and is due to travel next to Italian Bologna. She focuses on pictorial art, posters and book illustrations, while also being involved in design. She has been awarded diplomas at international poster contests, held in Lithuania, Russia and Japan.

Unique ancient tapestry reborn

By Irina Ponomareva

Borisov Applied Art Factory copies Korelich ancient tapestry — Granting Princely Title to *Mikołaj Radziwiłł Czarny*

Tatiana Potapovich, Yelena Alekhno, Irina Polonevich and Alla Fedisova have spent three months meticulously working on the reproduction, which is to go on show at the National Historical-Cultural Museum-Reserve at Nesvizh. "This is the first time that a

copy of the ancient tapestry has been made in Belarus. The original is kept by Poland's Narodowe Museum, in Nebrowo. Our specialists visited to study the tapestry in detail," explains the Director of Borisov Applied Art Factory, Grigory Shemit. "The colours have faded over the centuries, so it has been a challenge for artist Nina Pilyuzina to capture the original style and palette of the 17th century."

Ringling echo of silence

Vitebsk hosts exhibition of pictures created by deaf children

By Galina Yevmenova

Echo of Silence captures scenes from everyday life, revealing the thoughts of children who are hearing impaired. For them, the world remains quiet, yet deafeningly tender at the same time. They learn to understand without sound and speak without words. Gestures and expressions allow them to reveal many emotions, but there are some feelings that cannot be 'read' on one's face or through the wave of a hand. However, it's easier to reveal

one's feelings with the help of a brush.

Vitebsk has gained acquaintance with the creativity of Minsk children who study at Farba workshop (at school #14 in Minsk, for children with hearing impairment). Their works have been exhibited in Switzerland, France, the UK, the USA, Israel and Japan to date.

The *Echo of Silence* project has been implemented with support from the National Art Museum, the Belarusian Education Ministry and the American Embassy. Each



Pupils from Maladzik keen to hear their peers from Minsk

painting is filled with splashes of warmth, love, sincerity and the great desire to be heard.

Works by these young artists are fascinating and surprising, inspiring us to ponder our place in the world. Ordinary schoolchildren explore the works with pleasure, as do pupils from specialised educational establishments in the Dvina

River Region and those from Maladzik Aesthetic Education Centre, which is hosting the exhibition. Photos by Marina Batyukova are also on show, capturing the lives and communications of the children who live in their world of silence. Of course, they aren't deprived of other opportunities to perceive our bright world.

Classical poetry read along the way

By Sergey Kulyagin

Belarusian poetry broadcast on Mogilev's public transport for International Mother Language Day — February 21st

Mogilev's public organisations initiated the idea to support the Belarusian language, with city authorities and transport workers agreeing. Poems were read by pupils of the city's schools, gymnasiums and lyceums, who previously recorded them at the Mogilev TV and

Radio Company's studio. Youngsters recited poems by Belarusian literary classics and modern authors — including Yakub Kolas, Yanka Kupala, Sergey Grakhovsky, Vladimir Korotkevich and Ivan Pekhterev.

"We hope this will be another step towards Belarusian cultural revival and the popularisation of the native language," explained the Chair of the Co-ordination Council for Mogilev's Public and National Associations, Political Parties and Trade Union Organisations, Zinaida Penkova.