

# Great Master in the bosom of family and close friends

Exhibition of paintings by People's Artist of Belarus Leonid Shchemelev hosted by Minsk's City Art Gallery

By Victor Mikhailov

The newly renovated gallery in Minsk has relaunched with an exhibition of works by Leonid Shchemelev. His amazing creativity inspired the city's authorities to find a place in the capital for his permanent exhibition. The decision was based on his huge popularity and public interest. However, some have criticised the gallery's location, so far from the city centre, in a residential district little known for cultural facilities. Naturally, most theatres and concert halls are found in central locations, although trends do change.

We could equally argue that the placement of Shchemelev's *My Family* exhibition at the modest gallery has raised the cultural profile and attractiveness of the Serebryanka District. The gallery's recently installed neon lighting now rivals that of the nearest supermarket, luring visitors with its beautiful façade. Inside, the building has been revamped to meet European standards. Naturally, clean walls are needed to really set off artworks. The Master's pictures certainly look impressive in the updated hall.

The launch saw a crowd of eager faces awaiting a glimpse of the famous artist. In fact, the atmosphere was quite cosy, with people chatting informally with each other and Mr. Shchemelev, exchanging opinions. The former Head

of the Presidential Administration, Ural Latypov, who currently resides in Moscow, was among the guests, being a fan of Mr. Shchemelev. He looked at each picture, had his photo

ite theme of Mr. Shchemelev. He stood by patiently, listening to the warm and sincere words of admiration from his fans.

His latest exhibition offers a small departure,

dedication as a mature master as he did as a young painter. He shows us that which he considers essential and interesting and, in past times, received criticism for his

of his exhibition) but Mr. Shchemelev wasn't being pompous. He was simply giving his assessment of the difficult conditions under

computer culture, leading his family to worry about his passion for computer games. However, the boy was enchanted by one of Shchemelev's pictures which hung on their wall at home. It depicted a white horse — an image of luck, hope and determination often used by the artist — and touched the young man's heart. He began drawing and his parents have been happy to fund his new hobby, seeing a welcome change in their son's attitude. He has even insisted that the painting hangs in his own room.

Mr. Shchemelev received much praise at the exhibition launch and, having known him for some time, I felt inclined to add my own admiration. He works tirelessly, even at the weekend, despite his venerable age (in February, he celebrated his 89th birthday). He goes to his studio daily: a spacious room completely covered with pictures, with more stacked carefully in his store-room. Before approaching his easel, he often likes to re-arrange his works, which are as dear to him as his children. They are also part of his family!

The current exhibition opens a series of creative events to mark the 90th birthday of the Master — a People's Artist of Belarus. He has been given numerous prestigious awards and is a laureate of the Union State Award for Literature and Art.



Artist Leonid Shchemelev during opening of his exhibition



Many works explore images of people brightly and expressively

taken with the painter and then departed. Two smartly dressed young people presented the artist with a large bouquet of yellow tulips after briefly touring the exhibition, apologising for needing to leave early. In fact, so many flowers were placed on the piano that they looked just as dazzling as the pictures on the walls. Of course, floral still life works are a favour-

comprising portraits of his children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and his wife, Svetlana. Most are captured individually, underlining their particular personality. Meanwhile, we see the passing of time, as some were created recently and others half a century ago.

Clearly, Mr. Shchemelev has remained true to himself, showing the same

unwavering stance. However, he had faith in his path and has now received his deserved recognition, while becoming famous and popular.

As ever, during his speech, he gave his own personal views on life and society and asserted that painters need more state support. Not everyone may agree (various cultural officials attended the opening

which most artists work. He has no worries for himself, as he has everything he needs. Rather, he wishes to help his colleagues.

Shchemelev's art brings warmth to people's lives, as proven by one story told by a visitor to the exhibition: a middle-aged man. Shchemelev's pictures boast the power to influence. His son, like most teenagers, was heavily swayed by

## For the first time in secular establishment

Treasures of church libraries from Gomel and Turov eparchies on show at unique exhibition in Gomel

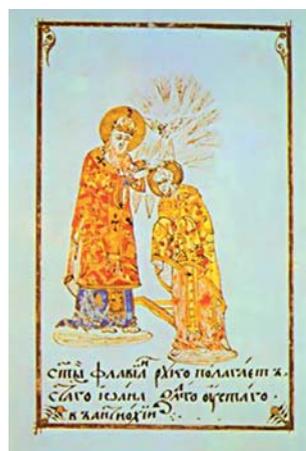
The exhibition at Gomel's Museum of Auto-graphs features Bibles and Testaments published at various times and in various countries. Also on show are works by John Chrysostom, Yefrem Sirin and St. Dmitry Rostovsky. The editions

are both religious treasures and objects of interest to historians, literary critics, publishers and teachers.

Among the rare books is a limited edition Bible illustrated by famous French artist Gustave Dore — published in 1876 by Maurycy Wolff. It contains not just reproductions with illustrations but original engravings, and is considered to be one of the best in its

translation and decoration. It's a true bibliographic rarity.

On the day of the exhibition's opening, a unique New Testament and Psaltery edition was presented — published in 1737 in the Kiev-Pechora Lavra, at the order of Russian Empress Anna Ioannovna. It was a gift to her attendants and contains unique engravings depicting the Apostles; its



gilden case and clasps remain in perfect condition.

This is the first such exhibition of its kind to be showcased at a secular establishment.

## Delicate greeting to cheerful spring

Mogilev hosts ballroom dance contest

Mogilev has bade farewell to winter via its spectacular *Spring Tango* ballroom dance contest, hosted by the Olympiads Sports Complex. A year ago, similar competitions for European and Latin American programmes brought together dance couples from throughout Belarus. The 175 couples included outstanding dancers well-known far beyond the

borders of our Republic, as well as novices taking their first steps.

A competent jury chose the winners, with ballroom clubs from Minsk, Vitebsk and Mogilev celebrating victory. Those from the city over the River Dnieper, impressed by the Venice waltz, rumba, cha-cha-cha and, of course, tango, are sure to be looking forward to the return of this spectacular contest in a year's time.