

Genetic code for humour

Belarus' National Academy of Sciences making intriguing study of genes in Gomel Region's Bolshie and Malye Avtyuki villages

By Boris Yuferovsky

The villages of Bolshie Avtyuki and Malye Avtyuki are well-known for hosting national festivals of satire and humour — as initiated by Belarusian writer Vladimir Lipsky. In fact, the villagers seem to have their own unique brand of wit. They call a saw 'mother-in-law's tongue' and have a wealth of other amusing sayings — as explored in Mr. Lipsky's book, which features 650 such phrases from the two villages.

From where do Avtyuki residents originate and how did they arrive in the Gomel Region's Kalinkovich District? Research continues but, in the early 20th century, Belarusian ethnographer and folklorist Isaak Serbov wrote about local Polesie residents in his *Trips through Polesie from 1911-1912*. He noted: 'Standing out in their appearance and

pronunciation from neighbouring people, they are of an extremely interesting ethnographic type. Avtyuki villagers are primarily Southern, having dark hair and medium height, with attractive figures. They speak in tongue-twisters, with a Southern-Russian accent, cutting words abruptly'

The Belarusian National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Genetics and Cytology has been looking into the genetics of Avtyuki villagers. The Y-chromosome (inherited exclusively from father to son without being mixed with the mother's genetic material) allows us to track the origin of any person. Of 27 Avtyuki men taking part in the study, 22 had similar Y-chromosomes; if we select out of these all with a shared family name, we find that all are related, albeit remotely, through parental lineage.



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Further studies are needed but it's currently thought that the Avtyuki family originates from a small group of men who

Vladimir Lipsky 'settles' folk humour festival in Avtyuki

resettled in the village from a neighbouring region of Belarus or Ukraine — most probably, from Western Polesie. For various rea-

sons, residents became isolated from neighbouring territories, resulting in their differing Y-chromosome.

Monument to Maxim Bogdanovich to be erected in Grodno

By Yevgenia Semidetova

Regional centre sums up results of contest for creating sculpture dedicated to the poet

Over four months, artists and sculptors presented around 20 ideas to the jury, which featured specialists from the construction industry, as well as architects and cultural experts. They chose 'Vyanok' ('Wreath'), designed by a team of Minsk artists, headed by Leonid Gumilevsky. The sculpture is to undergo some modification to ensure a good appearance from all sides and will then be erected in the central park (named after Zhiliber), near a fountain and the Maxim Bogdanovich House-Museum.

The classical Belarusian writer spent his childhood in Grodno and died at the tender age of 26, leaving a rich artistic legacy. Bogdanovich's contribution to Belarusian literature is comparable with that of Russia's Alexander Pushkin in its diversity. Bogdanovich was the first in Belarusian literature to compose various verse forms, including sonnets and rondels.

The sculpture is to be unveiled as part of celebrations devoted to the 120th anniversary of the poet's birth.

Peers present hope to one another

23 works by young artists from Dzerzhinsk children's art school and 18 works by pupils from Borisov art school travel to Japan for exhibition as part of Fukushima: One Year Later... project

The idea of working with Belarusian youngsters belongs to a UNESCO employee. She realised that children born in Chernobyl affected territories could bring hope and optimism to their Japanese peers.

Works for the Tokyo exhibition were selected by Japanese and Dutch art experts. "We printed photos of the works, before sending them to Japan's city museum. This is a spiritual bridge of sympathy and support between Dzerzhinsk and Tokyo," notes a teacher from Dzerzhinsk children's art school, Vladimir Shcherbin. "Postcards are to be released in Japan depicting the works of our pupils and other youngsters taking part in the exhibition — to raise funds for charity projects."

Fully-fledged festival in Chagall's city

By Darya Kurilova

Festive events organised in Vitebsk in April to honour the 125th anniversary of Marc Chagall's birth

Undoubtedly, the 22nd Chagall Readings and the marking of Chagall's birthday will be central to the celebrations planned. Readings are to be dedicated to the history of Vitebsk's Art College from 1918-1923 — as launched in the city by Chagall himself, in his capacity as Commissar for Art Affairs in the Vitebsk Province. Applications to take part have been received from art experts and Chagall researchers from Belarus, Russia, Latvia, France and Germany.

Chagall's birthday is being celebrated in Vitebsk from July 7-8th and, on July 6th, the Art Museum of Vitebsk is to open an exhibition of a single painting: Chagall's portrait by Yehuda Pen — Marc Chagall's first



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Desire to touch famous painter's easel easily brought to life

teacher (from the National Art Museum archive). The celebrations are to be crowned by a programme entitled 'At Marc and Bella's' in Pokrovskaya Street, comprising theatrical and circus performances, a solemn wreath-laying ceremony, a craft fair, literary readings

and musical performances. On July 6th, Belpochta is to organise a special cancellation of the envelope and a postal stamp dedicated to the 125th anniversary of Chagall's birth while the outdoor 'Vitebsk — A City of Artists' event is scheduled for the next day, hosted

by Vitebsk's central squares. Traditions of pictorial art remain strong in the city, with young artists and designers annually graduating from its two universities. Masters of all ages are invited to open air workshops: from pupils of children's art schools to well-known and

acknowledged masters.

In early April, the Vitebsk Regional Methodical Centre of Folk Art is to host the 4th *Insita-2012* National Exhibition of Native Art at Marc Chagall's Art Centre, featuring works dedicated to the legendary artist. Other festive events include two open air workshops: an international students' open air event and another open air workshop organised by the Vitebsk branch of the Belarusian Union of Artists. The jubilee year is to end with the *Teacher and Pupil* exhibition, hosted by Vitebsk's Art Museum. It is to showcase works by Yehuda Pen, Marc Chagall's teacher, and works by the artist himself (titles as yet undisclosed as negotiations are ongoing with those currently holding works).

The Tretyakov Gallery is also to host an exhibition, while the Hermitage is organising a conference dedicated to Chagall.