

Rhythmic musical expression

Young Minsk *Morfe Acoustic Band* performs topical melodies



Morfe Acoustic Band treats listeners with respect

Among Belarusian bands, *Morfe Acoustic Band* stands out for having an international team, uniting musicians with Belarusian, Armenian, Russian and Tartar roots. They perform a dynamite mixture of instrumental free-jazz, eastern folk songs, hip-hop and, even, rap. The band's leader, Oganés Avanesyan, tells us how the band's name is connected with its activity (in Greek, 'morfe' means 'unity of form and material').

Oganés, is it true that *Morfe Acoustic Band* gave its first concerts at academic halls?

When we first came together, our musicians were studying at Minsk's Conservatoire, at the State University of Culture and at other establishments. Each had to give final concerts at their departments before becoming a true band. Our early audience comprised the lecturers and students of musical educational establishments, who

found our music interesting.

You are the band's leader and the writer of its music, yet are not a professional musician. Moreover, I'm sure you'd agree that it's rare for a percussionist to lead a band...

I'm a lawyer by education but have played music since the mid-2000s. I've always loved Latin rhythms and percussion and bought myself a set of drums, learning to play independently. I was born with music in my head. Ini-

tially, this resembled Brazilian salsa; later, it transformed into more complicated pieces.

Over the course of time, professional musicians began gathering round you...

Yes. They are professionals but all are young. 'Morfe' offers a start for all of us which I hope will be a success. Anatoly Taran — a graduate from Minsk's Conservatoire and one of our band — has won an international contest for accordion players in Germany.

Moreover, you have a wonderful wind group, with the clarinet and flute playing in turn...

In my view, Andrey Minkov is among the most serious Belarusian musicians; I'm proud that he's been performing with us for many years. He plays wonderful compositions on the clarinet: amazing avant-garde music and free-jazz — solo, in support, and improvised. How could we not place him to the fore?!

Morfe plays complicated instrumental acoustic music, with an eastern accent. How would you define it?

I'm Armenian, so many of our musical ideas originate from there. However, I wouldn't say that we perform Armenian music. It's always been difficult for me to define our music — as avant-garde or jazz. We perform jazz with folk elements. However, rap singers also perform at our concerts.

Does this mean that you play what you love, inviting listeners to choose their own definition?

Musicians should follow their own idea of what is topical, what they can do well and what they wish. The most awful music is that which has no topicality and is predictable. There's an ocean of music out there, with many people capable of playing, but a true musician should have a distinctive and recognisable sound. Listeners should im-

mediately proclaim: 'Oh, this is 'Morfe!''

Do your listeners say this?

We don't especially aim to be unique in order to sell more albums or concert tickets but we do spend time on arrangements and practice diligently to ensure we play to the best of our ability. Social networks show us that our major fans are aged 25-40, who have an understanding of music. Initially, our audience comprised teachers and students but, now, we are touring Eastern Europe a great deal, visiting Ukraine, Poland and Russia. Among our listeners are artistes and those involved in art.

They dance while you play...

I must admit that I can hardly keep my own feet still while listening to 'Morfe's music, as it's so rhythmic. Some dance — depending on how they feel.

Morfe Acoustic Band is preparing its first album for release, uniting traditional clarinet, conga drums and contrabass — supported by electronic backing.

Musicians need to be flexible and willing to experiment. Famous sound director Andrey Zhukov — working with 'Troitsa' band — has been working with us, showing wonderful professionalism and intuition. He's given us a new outlook which I'm sure you'll notice on the CD.

Sakura song among repertoire

Mozyr Merry-Makers (Mozyrskia Vesyalushki) to give Japanese children a taste of traditional Belarusian culture

By Tatiana Borovikova

At the invitation of Japan, the children's team is to tour the six regions most affected by the Fukushima disaster in May, performing songs and dances to their Japanese peers at schools and kindergartens. Interestingly, *Mozyr Merry-Makers* has prepared choreographic and vocal performances in both Belarusian and Japanese; their singing of *Sakura* in Japanese has already been highly praised.

"This visit by our young Belarusian artistes will support mutual enrichment in the cultural sphere, while aiding the expansion of co-operation between artistic teams and will bring new friendships,"



Children's folk team *Mozyr Merry-Makers* prepares for trip to Japan

explains the Deputy Head of the Gomel Regional Executive Committee's Culture Department, Olga Antonenko.

The team, headed by Svetlana Polyn, has a repertoire which includes the best national songs and dances.

Works on display for first time

Grodno residents able to touch creativity of famous Lithuanian classical master

Mikalojus Čiurlionis died at the tender age of 36, at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. He created over 300 pictures, including a series of graphical works, and around 400 musical works. He was a painter in music, a musician

in painting and a mystic in both.

Visitors to the exhibition, organised by the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry and the General Consulate of Lithuania in Grodno, can even view rare photos connected with the artist's life and creativity. Extracts from his most famous literary works are also on show.

Yanka Kupala's verses read aloud in public

Read Kupala Together celebrates anniversary of the birth of great Belarusian poet

The Yanka Kupala State Literary Museum's idea is to see various people — from schoolchildren to state figures — unite in popularising the work of the great Belarusian poet. His wonderful poetry is being read aloud in public. The programme has brought together actors from leading Belarusian theatres: the Yanka Kupala National Academic

Theatre, the Maxim Gorky National Academic Drama Theatre, the Republican Theatre of Belarusian Drama and the Znich One Actor Theatre.

Readings have also been held at the Yakub Kolas House-Museum, where the works of this other prominent Belarusian poet (whose jubilee is also being celebrated this year) have been performed. After the event, a CD (*Belarus is Reading Kupala and Kolas*) is to be released, at the initiative of the Culture Ministry.