

Singing only in Italian

International contest for Italian opera singers (*Competizione dell'Opera*) to take place in Belarus for first time, coinciding with 3rd Minsk International Christmas Opera Forum

By Tatiana Pastukhova

During its years of existence, the *Competizione dell'Opera* has become one of the largest vocal competitions in the world, being the only singing contest whose participants sing exclusively in Italian, from an Italian-language repertoire — including ancient and 20th century music. Selective rounds are organised all over the globe: in Europe, Asia and America.

The General Director of the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre, Vladimir Gridyushko, explains that, simultaneously, two events are being held: the 3rd Christmas Opera Forum (at the Bolshoi Theatre) and the semi-finals of an Italian opera singing contest (at the Chamber Hall — named after L. Alexandrovskaya — and on the second small rehearsal stage).



Artistes from National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre at Big New Year Ball last year

The finals will then feature winners singing jointly with famous soloists, as part of the Christmas Forum's gala concert.

The *Competizione dell'Opera* was first held in 1996, when Pro-

fessor Hermann Rauhe (then President of the Hamburg Higher School of Music and Theatre) organised an opera contest: *I Cestelli* (Castles). Since 2001, the contest has been held in Dresden

and, in 2011, was for the first time organised outside Germany (its semi-finals and finals took place at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre). A year ago, the semi-finals attracted over 200 participants.

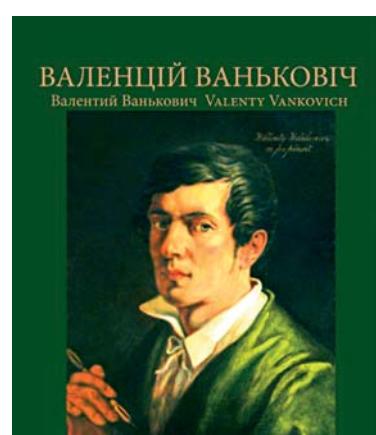
Vankovich's pictures collected in single album

By Victor Andreev

Two ancient Minsk buildings, in Parnikovaya and Internatsionalnaya streets, remember the 19th century artist, who was a friend of Adam Mickiewicz, as does Moniuszko House in Engels Street

Sadly, Belarus (where Valenty Vankovich was born) lacks any of his original pictures, although the National Art Museum is currently exhibiting Wojciech Pusłowski's portrait by the great artist — on loan from the Lithuanian Art Museum. Other pictures by Vankovich are on show in Russian, Polish, Lithuanian and French museums and are now available to view in the latest release from the Belarus Publishing House: *Famous Artists from Belarus*. The new edition in the series is devoted to the prominent painter.

"We aim to show works by masters born in our country in the context of modern culture. They worked abroad and are sometimes viewed as being representatives of Russian or Polish art. However, in reality, they combined several traditions, while remaining our countrymen — as confirmed by their art," asserts the Director of the National Art Museum, Vladimir Prokoptsov, who authored and co-ordinated the project. He tells us that another album is soon to be released — featuring paintings by Vitold Byalynitsky-Birulya.



Cover of new album

The edition devoted to Vankovich has been compiled by the Head of Minsk's Vankovich House (a branch of the National Art Museum), Natalia Sycheva. She notes that the painter was at the peak of his artistry while residing in Minsk. "In February 1829, he was working at two studios: in Small Slepianka and in the city centre, alongside his friend, Czeslaw Moniuszko," she explains.

Vankovich drew portraits of his relatives and friends, and had an 'appointment' by the St. Petersburg Emperor Academy of Arts. Ten years later, he emigrated from Minsk to Paris, where he died on May 14th, 1842, in the arms of his friend, Adam Mickiewicz. His remains are kept at Montmartre.

The unique album is to be presented in Minsk and Berezino — where the artist was born.

Red unites creativity of talented youngsters

Students from over 30 Belarusian universities take part in Republican ART-Academy exhibition of modern visual creativity, hosted by Minsk's University of Culture Art Gallery

The exhibition showcases 280 student works: paintings, graphical pieces, items of decorative-and-applied art and artistic photos. The event is interactive, with presentations, creative workshops, installations and catwalk demonstrations.

Each year, the contest is defined by a colour: this year, red. The slogan for the event is: 'Red. Obsessed

with Success'. According to Nadezhda Vasilchenko, Director of the National Centre for the Artistic Creativity of Children and Young People, the exhibition features works by many talented youngsters.

An expert judging panel is to choose winners in categories 'Preserving Belarusian Folk Traditions', 'Design and Creative Ideas' and 'Conceptuality and Creative Solutions'. Moreover, the jury will select those who have been most original and innovative, creating integrated and profound images and showing themselves to be most creative. Next year, the ART-Academy's theme colour will be blue.

Films screened at prestigious film festivals

Belarus' Amateur Filmmaker. Autumn Dream to take part in International Documentary Film Festival

According to Oleg Silvanovich, Director General of Belarusfilm National Film Studio, this film, directed by Olga Dashuk and shot by Anatoly Kazazaev (Letopis Film Studio) has been chosen for the International Documentary Film Festival in Krakow (Poland). This year, the event will take place for the 52nd time and is deservedly considered to be one of the most prestigious and largest forums in Europe.

The picture has also been selected

for the Silverdocs Festival — held not far from Washington DC in June. Running for the past decade, it is one of the most interesting in the USA. In 2012, it will bring together cinematographers from 50 countries, with the Belarusian film selected from over 2,000 entries.

The Bell Ringer, by Yekaterina Makhova, is taking part in the French International Film Festival, entitled *One Country — One Film*. It has already been screened at several events and was awarded 'For Faith to Traditions' at Minsk's *Listapad-2011* International Film Festival.

Yanka Kupala Square to appear in Israeli Ashdod

Square named after great Belarusian classical writer to appear in Israeli city of Ashdod

Ashdod municipality's city authorities are supporting a proposal by the Belarusian Embassy to Israel and the All-Israeli Union of Belarusian Expatriates in naming the square. "The adopted decision reflects the unique history of good neighbourly relations between Belarusians and the Jewish community and is dedicated to the forthcoming 130th anniversary of the birth of this Belarusian literary classic," notes a statement from the Belarusian Embassy to Israel.

Ashdod is Israel's sixth largest city, located on the Mediterranean Sea coast. It boasts a population of around 210,000 and has one of the largest communities of Belarus-born people in Israel. It was recently twinned with Brest.

The city's sights include Givat Yona (Jonah's Hill): according to legend, it houses the tomb of Jonah the Prophet. There is also the unique natural phenomenon of the Big Dune, and an artificial harbour for yachts, which can moor up to five hundred vessels.

Classical pieces mixed with jazz

By Tatiana Bolgovskaya

An original programme has been presented at Golom's Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace, performed by Ivan Kucherenko, a laureate of the Classics in the Streets International Contest in Bad Ragaz, and Valery Shcheritsa, a soloist with the National Academic Orchestra of Symphony and Pop Music (under the guidance of Mikhail Finberg)



Ivan Kucherenko is training

The *Classics Meets Jazz* programme explores a new musical movement in Belarusian piano music. The idea appeared during Mr. Kucherenko's study of classical and jazz styles on the piano. After noticing their common features, he has combined the genius of classical music and the contemporary flavour of jazz, paying tribute to the rich legacy of Liszt and other great composers. His experimentation adds jazz elements to classical pieces, synthesizing the 'old' and 'new'.