

# Sounds of heart-warming polonaise under River Shchara

Ancient dances and cordial melodies on Slonim's main stage

The *Polonaise-2012* Festival has been held for the eighth time in the town on the banks of the River Shchara, featuring 417 artistes: 27 art groups from Belarus and Polish Bialystok.

As is traditional, the event was launched with a ceremonial church service, followed by participants gathering near the fire tower. There, in the 1920-30s, the town orchestra played Oginski's legendary polonaise — *Farewell to the Homeland* — every day, from 8am to 8pm. After laying flowers at the monument to fallen soldiers, a festive parade took place through the main streets of Slonim, headed by a brass band. At that moment, the whole town seemed to be one big musical ground...

The Chair of the Slonim Department of the Union of Poles in Belarus, Leonarda Revkovskaya, envisaged just such a scene on initiating the festival in 2005. She explains, "I was sure that the festival would be popular, as so much is associated with Michal Oginski in the town. A canal and street are named after him and, each morning, the local radio station begins by broadcasting his famous polonaise. Only ten groups took



**Participants of Polonaise-2012 Festival**

part in the very first festival and I will be ever grateful to them for their support. Now, the local authorities actively help us, so I'm sure that the festival has a great future."

The high point of the event was a competition of polonaise performances, kicked off by the *Kryshtal-naya Krynička* choir, from the city Berezovka (Lida District). Every seat in the

District House of Culture was filled, as a famous melody by Michal Kleofas Oginski resounded through the room. Another, played by two button accordions, brought rousing applause,

and the audience also loved the *Echo of Ostrovtsev* choir, which performed two ancient polonaises. According to its soloist, Natalia Tokarchuk, this is their third time at the Slonim festival, sing-

ing in Belarusian, Russian and Polish.

*Sviatyazyanka* choir, from Novogrudok, also sings in various languages. Artistic leader Marina Yurchik seemed a little nervous before appearing on the stage, saying, "Our group often performs in our town and at concerts elsewhere but this festival is very special. Only polonaises of the most famous composers are heard here. I hope that *Sviatyazyanka* won't disappoint the audience."

Meanwhile, elegant ballroom dancers also received a storm of applause. The musicians played masterly polonaises, including a masterpiece by Oginski — on button accordions, violins and dulcimers. Young Karolina Bogdan, from Slonim, fascinated the audience with music by Chopin, played on the piano.

The festival continued in the town park, making everyone feel in a joyous mood. An illustrated album, entitled *Welcome of the Motherland*, was brought by Katarzyna Pawłowska from Bialystok, detailing the Slonim festival. It was a great surprise for all participants, created by this passionate fan of the polonaise.

## Night not for sleeping

**Over 100 Belarusian museums take part in international Night of Museums**

Last year, about 60 Belarusian museums welcomed visitors for the special event, explains the Deputy Head of the Institution for Culture and Folklore at the Ministry of Culture, Svetlana Gavrilova. Now, small district museums have joined the major movement, alongside those of national and regional importance, organising interesting programmes.

Besides the usual exhibitions, guests enjoy entertainments during the nocturnal event. This year, the Belarusian National History Museum turned back the clock 200 years, transporting visitors to the time of the Napoleonic Wars with its exhibitions *1812 War in Minsk's History* and *Fleeting Moments of Time*.

The National Art Museum of Belarus presented *Apocalypse*. Cancelled... exploring the fact that mankind has several times faced the 'end of the world'; the next is predicted for December 2012. Gloomy predictions were replaced by an optimistic outlook!

The Yanka Kupala State Literary Museum chose to celebrate the centenary of *Paulinka* — the great man's wonderful play. A parade of Belarusian Paulinkas took place, with the



**Symbol of Gomel — huge lynx — at Rumyantsev-Paskevich Palace**

best costume awarded. Meanwhile, the Yakub Kolas State Literary and Memorial Museum displayed previously unseen letters written by famous writers and politicians to the legendary poet, as well as those from his loved ones. Archive photos of Yakub Kolas' elite friends were also on show, recreating the atmosphere of Soviet 1940-1950s, when creativity was only allowed within certain boundaries.

The State Museum of Theatrical and Musical Culture, the Belarusian State Museum of Folk Architecture and Life, the Maxim Bogdanovich Literary Museum, the Petrus Brovka Literary Museum, the Belarusian Great Patriotic War Museum and others also prepared interesting programmes.

The international event first took place in Berlin in 1997, with Belarus joining the *Night of Museums* in 2004.

## All variety of tourist excursions in Nesvizh

**By Yekaterina Antokhina**

**Electronic guides for visitors to Nesvizh Museum-Reserve**

Five electronic information panels are to be placed around the estate, guiding visitors find the café, restaurant, entrance or exit, or to learn about the displays in each hall.

"The Radziwills' interior is rich, so we can't always copy items or place everything on show at once," ex-

plains the Deputy Director of the Nesvizh National Historical-Cultural Museum-Reserve, Natalia Zherko. "The electronic panels are to help visitors learn about those things they can't see."

These unusual guides, which look like electronic terminals, are being presented by Alpari Company. Currently, they are only Russian and Belarusian-speaking, but later, will present information in English, German and Polish.

## Collecting donations to buy rarity for museum

**By Olga Kiseleva**

The Museum of History of Mogilev has begun collecting donations to buy an original edition of the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania — published by Piotr Mstislavets and paid for by Mogilev's Mamonichi merchant family, in Vilno, in 1594-1595.

The Statute was published three times and only 60 copies still exist — although none in Belarus. The copy offered for sale belongs to a Moscow collector and costs \$45,000. Within two weeks, at least one tenth of the sum needs to be collected as a deposit securing the sale: donors are sought from those interested in the history of their city.