

Serious ideas intertwined with spectacular plot

In late summer, Vitebsk's historical centre is to become a film set — with shooting dedicated to the 20th century's two greatest avant-garde painters: Marc Chagall and Kazimir Malevich

By Tamara Mitrokhina

Famous Russian director Alexander Mitta has written the script for the new film. He is already known for a host of wonderful films: *Shine, Shine, My Star*; *How Tsar Peter the Great Married off His Moor*; *The Crew*; *The Border*. *Taiga Romance*.

The new film bears a poetic yet obscure working title: *A Miracle Play about Chagall*. Of course, miracle plays were medieval mystery plays exploring the miraculous lives of the saints. The initial title was *Commissioner Chagall and Citizen Malevich* but the International Chagall Committee insisted that the title should be changed before it would approve the script. Mr. Mitta admits that the title may yet change again, having chatted with Vitebsk journalists.

Combining serious ideas with spectacular plots is Alexander Mitta's trademark. He reveals that art critique and melodrama will collide



During a visit to Marc Chagall Museum

in the film. The plot's villain ('a provincial Robespierre' as Mitta calls him) falls in love with Chagall's wife Bella. He employs underhand

methods to try and 'win' her, involving Chagall's family in blackmail. Finally, to save her husband from a political article which

would bring his execution, Bella agrees to betray him.

Mr. Mitta admits that the events in the film are entirely fictional and certainly

not evident in the artist's biography, since there was no such 'love triangle' in the life of Chagall and his muse Bella. In fact, the whole

world knows of their devoted romantic love, floating through Vitebsk heavens.

The director is yet to disclose who will play the lead roles but shooting is to begin in late July-early August.

According to Mr. Mitta, chief artist Eduard Galkin is conjuring up the Vitebsk of the 1920s for the set 'as if by jigsaw'. Naturally, all must be done within a strict budget. "How can we create the world of Chagall without his pictures? Of course, they will be in the film! However, his family asks for 2,600 Euros each time one of his paintings appears on camera. Fortunately, we have reached a compromise of a 50 percent discount (or even more)," he tells us.

The premiere will take place in Vitebsk, Chagall's native town. Mr. Mitta hopes that he can do justice to the beauty of this ancient settlement, saying "Vitebsk is a dynamic, cheerful city, full of life, which I hope will be obvious from the film."

Splendid performance full of acting and beautiful dancing

Famous ballet inspired by Chekhov's story staged at Belarusian Bolshoi Theatre for the first time

The National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre recently premiered its *Anyuta* — based on Anton Chekhov's *Anna on the Neck*. Known as the ballet 'most inspired by Chekhov', it was prepared by world famous dancer and choreographer Vladimir Vasiliev. The People's Artiste of USSR and Russia and a laureate of many prestigious awards, including the State Awards of the USSR and Russia, was even named 'Best Dancer in the World' by the Paris Dance Academy.

Curiously, the first performance of *Anyuta* took place in May 1982 — not on stage but for Soviet TV. Outstanding ballerina Yekaterina Maximova took the lead role of Anna. The film was a great success, purchased by 114 countries, and was widely broadcast. The film was the joint work of Vladimir Vasiliev and director Alexander Belinsky, who also wrote the script, using Leningrad composer Valery Gavrilin's score.

In 1986, at the request of the Royal Theatre of St. Charles, Mr. Vasiliev cre-



Scene from *Anyuta* ballet

ated a stage version of *Anyuta*, which premiered at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow several months later. It has been a success there ever since, going on to be staged in Riga and across Russia, appearing in most repertoires.

On the eve of the premiere in Minsk, Mr. Vasiliev told journalists that *Anyuta* is unique in always being accompanied by success. As the years pass (this May, it celebrates its 30th anniversary of being premiered on TV) interest only grows.

"This performance boasts the main thing: acting and dancing inspired by

Chekhov's characters. These images are wonderful," adds Mr. Vasiliev, hoping that *Anyuta's* premiere on the Belarusian stage won't break the pleasant tradition. Audiences are sure to leave enlightened — as happens in all theatres where the ballet is performed.

Mr. Vasiliev is joined by Honoured Artist of Ukraine and Russia Victor Ploskina, the conductor-director, and Honoured Figure of Arts of Russia Rafail Volskie; they are responsible for set design and costumes. The show features leading soloists from the Belarusian Bolshoi ballet company.

Playing unique instrument with real inspiration

Belarusian Artem Shishkov wins 'Violin' prize at Queen Elisabeth Music Competition in Belgium

This year saw the 75th jubilee of the competition, with Artem Shishkov winning the 'Violin' nomination for Belarus. Over four rounds, 78 musicians performed brilliantly, presenting the best world traditions in fine music. Just twelve entered the finals, representing Belarus, Albania, Russia, Belgium, South Korea, Japan, China, the USA, Canada and the Czech Republic. Six were awarded prestigious awards and have entered the elite of world violin playing.

Artem is a graduate of Professor Eduard Kuchinsky, having studied at the Belarusian State Academy of Music, and is a postgraduate of the University of Music and Performing Arts (Vienna, Austria), having studied with Dora Schwarzenberg since 2010. Artem has won prestigious contests in Belarus, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Lithua-

nia, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. He took second place at the International *Torun 2007* Violin Competition (dedicated to the memory of Karol Szymanowski), hosted by Poland, and at Austria's Johannes Brahms International Competition, in 2006. In 2012, he claimed third prize at Germany's International Max Rostal Competition.

Artem is also a laureate of the Special Presidential Fund for the Support of Talented Young People and receives sponsorship from the Vladimir Spivakov International Charity Foundation. He is part of the *Lipkind Quartet* and has performed at musical festivals across Europe.

The Belarusian Culture Ministry and the Belarusian State Academy of Music have provided Artem with the opportunity to play a unique violin crafted by Andrea Guarneri, in 1673. It was bought with funds allocated by Belarusian sponsors and Artem helped select it from London's Florian Leonhard Fine Violins.