

# Anniversary of Chagall's birth celebrated in Vitebsk

Exhibition of master's original works being prepared for Minsk

By Viktor Korbut

In July, the 125th anniversary of Marc Chagall's birth will be celebrated, with festivities held in his original hometown of Vitebsk. In fact, the home in which the famous artist was raised remains standing today.

## This street, this house

Poet David Simanovich is the initiator of annual Chagall readings, the opening of a museum dedicated to the great man and a monument to the artist. He recalls a time when Chagall's house in Dzerzhinsky Street (now, Pokrovskaya) was unknown to most. He tells us, "It looked different than it does today, with a neglected courtyard and only a plaque bearing the inscription '11 Dzerzhinsky Street'. It turned out that Chagall was associated with several addresses in Vitebsk."

In the 1990s, the local authorities in Vitebsk joined intelligentsia from across Belarus in initiating a series of actions to revive the name of Chagall in Vitebsk. Some of his works went on display and a creative outdoor workshop was organised. For the first days of Chagall, People's Writer of Belarus Vasil Bykov made a special trip; the second such event became international and, in 1992, a monument to the wonderful artist appeared in the city. Meanwhile, some suggested renaming Dzerzhinsky Street as Chagall Street. Mr. Simanovich gave wise advice, saying, "Does it sound right that Chagall lived in Marc Chagall Street? No. The street should be given the name it bore when the artist lived there — Pokrovskaya."



Exhibition of reproductions of Marc Chagall's works opens at Yakub Kolas Square in Minsk

The house-museum in Pokrovskaya Street officially opened in 1997.

## Here lived Malevich

Interestingly, Chagall's most famous period of life in Vitebsk is connected not with his childhood, but with 1918, when he became the head of the local Art School, nurturing other talents of Belarusian and world art. From 1918 to 1923, he not only worked but lived with such well-known artists as Kazimir Malevich and El Lissitzky.

The Art School building remains, at 5a Pravda Street, having survived WWII (despite Vitebsk being heav-

ily damaged). Old photos show that just a few houses stood in Pravda Street, with the Art School among them. From 1945, the building was occupied by various economic organisations and changed its internal appearance several times. In 1998, the Vitebsk Centre of Modern Art moved into several rooms of the historic building and, in July 2011, took over the whole house. In 2013, restoration of the original façade is planned, if funds can be raised.

## From Paris — home

At the beginning of June, the 22nd International Chagall Readings were held in Vitebsk, devot-

ed to the history of the Vitebsk People's Art School from 1918 to 1923, as well as to the future of this unusual place in the city.

On July 7th, the traditional holiday *At Marc and Bella's* will be held in Vitebsk — a beautiful show in Pokrovskaya Street. On July 8th, Vitebsk — *City of Artists* is to be organised: a huge outdoor workshop. Vitebsk has launched various art schools since Chagall's times, training the creative professions. Two Vitebsk universities teach artists, fashion designers and advertising specialists. Meanwhile, an exhibition of original works by



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Chagall is planned for Minsk.

"Works by the world famous artist born in Vitebsk will be on display at the National Art Museum of Belarus," notes Belarus' Culture Minister, Pavel Latushko. "In October, there will be several works by Chagall at the museum, thanks to the support of one of the major banks, which has purchased works by Belarusian artists whose lives were connected to the Paris school. Marc Chagall is among them. Negotiations are being conducted with a museum in Jerusalem, with 92 original works by Chagall to come to Minsk at the end of the year."

# Opportunity to enter age of knights' tournaments

**2nd Heritage of Ages International Festival of Medieval History Reconstruction hosted by Mir Castle from June 29th-July 1st**

For three days, the Western European Knights' Tournament, held near the walls of Mir Castle, will turn back time. Registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List, the castle was originally built in the 16th century, with additions and reconstructions added until the present day. The rules and customs of the

medieval tournament will be followed by thousands of participants — from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and elsewhere.

Visitors will be able to enter the age of knights' tournaments, witnessing recreations of actual battles



and enjoying a festive atmosphere, with music and dance. The event will culminate with a grand theatrical performance of a medieval battle, involving up to a thousand warriors bearing

field and arm artillery and displaying siege and engineering techniques.

The entertainment programme is to include various contests and master classes, alongside a crafts fair, amusements and a big concert featuring Belarusian folk bands *Stary Olsa* and *Testamentum Terrae*, as well as other musical groups. A fire show and medieval dancing is also planned.

## The MT's reference:

*The Heritage of Ages is the largest festival of medieval history reconstruction. It is unrivalled in Belarus and ranked among the best of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe. In 2011, around 600 representatives of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine took part.*

# Sonorous chime from the depths

By Sergey Gomanov

A 19th century bell has been recovered from its underground hiding place in Glubokoe, found by builders mounting poles of power lines near the Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity. At a depth of one metre, the drill ran into a solid object, requiring removal, which proved to be the 70cm bell, weighing 50-60kg.

According to an inscription on the bell, it was cast in Warsaw in 1882. A senior researcher at Glubokoe's Local History Museum, Alexander Khainovsky, tells us that the bell was probably buried on purpose. He notes, "The bell was buried without a tongue, very carefully. Perhaps, someone wanted to protect it from the Germans during WWI or to

keep it safe during the revolutionary turmoil of the early 20th century. The bell was then clearly forgotten; its tongue, and maybe even other bells or antiquities, could be buried nearby."

The bell is now in the Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity — the oldest in the district, founded in 1628. Its priest Mechislav tells us that, in the 1930s, new bells were cast for the church. However, he hopes that the bell (in almost perfect condition) may be reinstalled in early September, coinciding with the Day of Belarusian Written Language, being celebrated in Glubokoe.

