



Awards to Lev Leshchenko and Georgy Poplavsky



During opening of the Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk Festival

Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk raises a toast

Last Thursday, thousands of people in Vitebsk exclaimed, either aloud or to themselves: ‘Hello, *Slavianski Bazaar!*’

Thousands more were glued to TV screens to watch the launch of the multi-day marathon of song, dance, theatre, film and friendly communication. How time flies! A year ago, the 20th Jubilee International Arts Festival took place. Now, like the special express train from Minsk to

Vitebsk, launched by Belarusian Railways for the forum, the 21st Vitebsk festival has arrived.

The President of Belarus opened the event, as is traditional. Performers new and old have gathered, including Russian singer Lev Leshchenko who, this year, gained a star on

Victors’ Avenue, on July 12th. That evening, Mr. Lukashenko presented him with the ‘Through Art — to Peace and Understanding’ award. In addition, Belarusian artist Georgy Poplavsky and Russian poet Gleb Gorbovsky were awarded Union State prizes in the fields of literature and art.



Alexander Rybak performs



Mikhail Finberg and Maxim Dunaevsky



Full house at Vitebsk-2012 international pop song contest



Buranovskie Babushki sing and dance at the festival

Inspiration creates musical mood

The international pop song contest *Vitebsk-2012* is being held within the *Slavianski Bazaar*, featuring young Yevgeny Slavich, of SPAMASH. He describes his musical tastes...

Why is it that not all the winners of the Vitebsk pop contest continue to have a career?

Think of Ruslana and Taisia Povaliy; they certainly have strong careers, as do Željko Joksimović and Maxim Sapatkov. Polina Smolova is doing well in Moscow. Inna Afanasieva, Irina Dorofeeva and Alena Lanskaya took part in the ‘Slavianski Bazaar’ and later became Honoured Artists of Belarus. As for others, who are now unknown, they may have lacked investment or been poorly managed. There could also be personal reasons. It helps to have a clever producer or company; they keep you afloat through head-spinning success and setbacks.

Do you think that the competition may have become outdated, lagging behind the latest trends in music?

It’s hard for me to judge, as I don’t have much experience. The ‘Slavianski Bazaar’ and I are peers; I see it as an established event. Meanwhile,

the ‘New Wave’ event is like a party for youngsters, trying out the latest trends. The ‘Slavianski Bazaar’ embraces classics with national colour; it has changed over time, updating its image and encouraging young blood, but it is utterly different to the ‘New Wave’ contest or that in San Remo.

Going back to the very beginning, who influenced you as a musician?

First of all, my teacher, who wrote one of my contest songs, Yelena Atrashkevich. When I was small, I listened to Piotr Yelfimov and now have Adam Lambert on my iPod. Music creates a mood, so needs to change with you.

What do you think of the phenomenon of the Internet allowing anyone to become a ‘star’ by uploading their amateur music video onto YouTube? Do we no longer need musical education?

It is wonderful that we have such a wonderful thing as the Internet —

especially YouTube. It really can bring almost immediate popularity. However, this can be positive or negative.

Talent and education still play their part and it’s better if you have both!



That’s why I studied at the Minsk Art College. On graduating, I entered the Department of Stage Arts at the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts. I feel great.

Do you get on well with your colleagues in SPAMASH or are you ever jealous of their success?

I don’t know quite what to say... Of course, it’s great when someone has a cool new song — as Ivan Buslai has now. I may want the same or even better but this is in the hands of our producers: creative people who know the difference between ‘like’ and ‘can’. Everyone in SPAMASH is different, with their own style. I can’t envy anyone. Ivan Buslai, Daria, and Alena Lanskaya once began from scratch, just like me, so how can I envy them? Everything comes with time. By the way, I appeared at the centre not long ago; everything happening is encouraging.

Do you write your own music?
Not really; I’ve tried but I’m not confident enough of the results to show them to anyone.

Tell us more about the compositions performed by you at the competition in Vitebsk.

The first — ‘Musician’ — is a heartfelt ballad about the fate of those whose creativity is discovered too late. Yelena Atrashkevich, my vocal trainer at college and, now, at the University of Culture, wrote it. It’s very melodic, with a personal story, and deep feelings. The second is ‘Shores’, by famous composer Leonid Shirin. It has a different character, expression and tempo.

Yevgeny, how do you view your future?

I’d like to be successful, with an adoring public. It would be sad to become ‘lost somewhere half way’. By the way, those words are from my song ‘Shores’.

By Valentin Petrovsky