

Performances keen to inspire revelations

New season at National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre is unprecedented in its significance

By Valentina Timofeeva

The Theatre hopes to make its jubilee year rich and exciting, with 12 premiers planned. The season has opened with a two-act opera entitled *The Grey Legend*, using music by Dmitry Smol-

sky and Vladimir Korotkevich's libretto almost unchanged. Clearly, the Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre is sending a message that Belarusian composers and national traditions must be preserved.

Chief director Mikhail Pandzhavidze chose *The Grey Legend*, explaining, "In the 1990s, we faced stagnation, failing to stage plays by contemporary compos-

ers; we were deprived of a huge experience. I'm happy now, as I have this opportunity. We always enjoy our rehearsals and are experiencing an atmosphere we lacked for a long time. Our audiences will soon be convinced."

Chief conductor Victor Ploskina admits, "A special spirit was present at our first rehearsal, as the performance is essentially Belarusian. It's a large and worthy work. Never before has Belarus given such a performance."

Theatre's Director General Vladimir Gridyushko notes, "We want our performance to change popular opinion about Belarusian musical art, making it more positive. I'm convinced that *The Grey Legend* will enjoy popularity and love. We are truly now gaining momentum, enhancing our performances. You can judge yourself: last theatrical season, we sold 263,000 tickets, with over 90 percent of seats occupied at each performance."

"Belarusian operas have always been worthy," notes chief choir master Nina Lomanovich. "However, it's hard to describe what's happening now: three hours of rehearsal pass as if they are a few minutes. This is a wonderful national play. While working on it, we've been continually surprised. The performance features all the best artistes and is already felt to be our 'strongest'; the choir deserves special attention, as it sings



Chief director Mikhail Pandzhavidze pays special attention to sets



under the most complicated stage conditions."

Meanwhile, the Theatre is preparing other premieres, as Mr. Gridyushko explains, "We're focusing on the renewal and enrichment of our repertoire. In November, audiences will be welcomed to two premieres: *Duke Igor* (in early November) and *Koschei the Immortal*. Youngsters will enjoy *Winnie the Pooh*, staged by Olga Buravleva, in December. In addition, we're mastering new choreographic styles, en-

tering a new age in the history of Belarus' choreographic art."

Italian opera is still being scheduled, with *Turandot* planned for spring, alongside *The Nutcracker*. *The Flying Dutchman* — by Richard Wagner (whose jubilee is being celebrated) — is being staged for the first time at the Belarusian Theatre, which remains faithful to its traditions. It organises and participates in many major international projects, with 19 co-operative memorandums already signed

and exchange tours common: in February, the Estonian National Opera is to stage its best pieces in Minsk.

May 2013 will see the release of *The Large Encyclopaedia of the Bolshoi Theatre*, in addition to a commemorative coin and a postal stamp: all issued to mark the Theatre's anniversary. Many guests will arrive to congratulate the troupe, including famous artistes, musicians and heads of the largest opera theatres in the CIS and Europe.

Theme and melody created with good taste

Their music is enchanting, combining synthesised electronics with real musical instruments; melodies flow and ebb, with guitar and flute chasing each other. Even their name is attractive — *CherryVata* — as is that of the keyboard player, *Diamos Roll*, (alias Dmitry Litvinovich) who also leads the group...

By Andrey Veselovsky

Our stage name reflects our style. At the time, I was thinking of a DJ name for us. My friends suggested Spanish-Italian sounding 'Diamos' (from Dmitry) and 'roll' — as in a drum roll.

You began as a DJ in Minsk clubs before deciding to compose your own music...

It wasn't a sudden decision. I was very interested in 1990s culture, listening to music and combining DJ sampling with traditional composition. My friends (also musicians) liked my first at-

tempts, so I built on those.

You didn't study music but your compositions are very well arranged and played.

I trained as a radio engineer and designer-technologist; of course, there are people with academic degrees in the band: bassist Alexey Budko and trumpeter Valery Ketris. They also work for professional orchestras.

But you bring the musical ideas to the band.

Usually, everything starts with my drafts; then, the guys add their ideas for the melody and lyrics. Alexey and Yura, our

lead guitarist, also write music, while drummer Pavel Gorbach recently produced his own CD. We share a common outlook so it's easy to collect ideas and layer them.

As a result, your style is unique — a combination of reggae, break beat and jazz, with drum'n'bass and trumpet arriving from nowhere...

I studied music theory, concentrating on rock and jazz, but realised that freedom of expression is best, without reference to firm genre. When we gather together, we create something



CherryVata band always part of club life

unique. We work with a great many musicians, showing them something which inspires them further.

You make beautiful, rich music with a commercial, dance beat which must prove popular.

You know, we don't aim to do that but our music fits the club scene and works for corporate events and festivals. We've

performed with such giants as 'Camouflage', 'Banco de Gaia', 'The Herbaliser' and 'Boombox' to huge audiences. Traditionally, they aren't interested in pop-culture, preferring a cheerful mix of jazz, electronics, beautiful voices and live instruments, as 'CherryVata' presents at its concerts. I believe that our fans have their own opinions and tastes.

So why do you lack com-

mercial success?

When we came together in 2003, we were independent. We've gradually broken into various markets but we haven't achieved world success yet (laughing).

Would you like to?

'CherryVata' isn't performing live right now but we'll do so again as soon as we finish the album. I personally want to review and rewrite much of our work, assessing its prospects...

Will the new album differ from *Via Vanilla* of 2009?

We're free people and have no inclination to follow a particular style or direction. I hope that we'll continue to grow and change with the music industry. There will be a lot of electronics and live instruments on our next album.