

Amazing artefacts in original museums

Belarus boasts not only traditional museums of local and wider history or literature but some unusual examples. One such is the tram museum in Minsk. Another is the apron museum in the village of Bezdezh, in the Drogichin District, Brest Region; it has about 200 exhibits, with some over 100 years old! It's unique worldwide. Our correspondent tells us about several other unusual museums in Belarus.

By Lyudmila Minakova

Tea for everyone

Walking through the Zhdanovichi trading house in Minsk, it's impossible not to stop at the Our Heritage collection: one of Europe's largest samovar exhibits. Hundreds shine golden in glass cases, available to view free of charge. The collection began in the spring of 2002, when the trading house bought over 150 of Minsker Nikolay Shevtsov's samovars. These form the basis of the exhibition, which now numbers over 260 antique samovars and about 1,000 other household items from the 18th-20th century. New items are being constantly added, sourced from

private collections, antique shops and, even, market stalls. Many have been donated by visitors who find interesting antiques in their attics.

Museum from vegetable garden

The village of Rakov, in the Volozhin District, 40km from Minsk, boasts unusual red-brick buildings, found in the vegetable garden of a local resident. According to a large inscription on the facade, this is the 'Museum Art Gallery'. The site is protected by a large aristocratic bronze sculpture of a greyhound, as in Nesvizh; both have been created by Valerian Yanushkevich, the brother of the museum owner, Felix Yanushkevich. The latter has a Ph.D. in

Art History and has worked as a restorer. He is also a famous painter, with works hanging in the Tretyakov Gallery. His gallery is filled with interesting possessions which reveal Rakov's history: paintings by Felix and his talented brothers; ancient documents, furniture, musical instruments, pottery, fragments of Slutsk belts; and much more. Every item has its own story and over 12,000 artefacts reside there!

Country at a glance

The Museum of Folk Architecture and Life is found in a remarkably beautiful location, near the village of Ozertso, in the Minsk District, where the Ptich and Menka rivers meet. It opened in the late 1970s, housing items collected during expeditions

by historians, architects and restorers. For ten years, they searched the country for monuments of wooden folk architecture, household and craft items, with the most valuable transported to Ozertso.

The 150 hectare site recreates villages, towns and farms of the late 18th-early 20th century. Examples from central Belarus, Podneprovie (The Dnieper River area) and Poozerie (lakeland) are open to visitors, with others from Ponemanie (the Nieman River area) and Eastern and Western Polesie soon to be launched. "Ethnographers have distinguished six historical and geographical regions," explains the director of the Museum of Folk Architecture and Life, Svetlana Lakotko. "They are each individual — in language, traditional costume and buildings — so the museum is divided into sep-



Dzivosnyya Sustrachy Festival at Strochitsy Museum of Folk Architecture and Life



More than 250 samovars on display at the museum

arate areas of area and time." Each building is filled with sympathetic objects to create an authentic atmosphere: antique furniture, house wares, woven fabrics and tools. Some halls host particular exhibitions — such as *Zabrodskiya Snastsi*, which explores the history of fishing in Belarus. *Transport Means* includes an early 20th century sledge, as well as an ancient cart, which you can ride between the old wooden houses and windmills.

Of course, many more fascinating museums are to be found across Belarus: we could write a whole book! Minsk's Museum of Money (at the National Bank of Be-

larus) features Byzantine coins from the 10th-11th century, and the leather purse in which 127 Golden Horde coins were found, as well as money from Prague, West European thalers and Spanish reals. Meanwhile, the Museum of Items Confiscated by Customs, in Brest, includes valuable 16th-20th century icons, a Fabergé grooming set made of rock crystal in a silver setting, Chinese and Japanese handmade vases and seascapes by Aivazovsky. All were confiscated by Brest customs officers during the interception of smuggling operations.

Evidently, there is much to inspire wonder in Belarus.

Bright performance of tragic film role

Belarusian Vladimir Svirsky named best actor at international film festival in Germany

Vladimir Svirsky, who plays the tragic lead of Sushchenya in a joint film project entitled *In the Fog*, has been named best actor at the 22nd International Festival of East European Cinema (in German Cottbus). The film is based on Vasil Bykov's story and is directed by Sergey Loznitsa. The international cinema project involved Belarusfilm National

Cinema Studio, MA.JA.DE Fiction (Germany), the GP Film Company (Russia), Rija Films (Latvia) and Lemming Film (the Netherlands), as well as ZDF/ARTE TV Channel (Germany) and EURIMAGES (European Cinema Support Fund).

In the Fog also won the prize of the ecumenical jury. The International Festival of East European Cinema has been organised since 1991 and, this year, brought together over 150 films from 36 countries.

Delight of world class singing

Belarusian State Academy of Music students win prizes at 2nd International Vocal Contest (named after prominent Belarusian opera singer Larisa Alexandrovskaya), held in Minsk

The competition brought together entrants from Armenia, Belarus, Germany, Kazakhstan, China, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine and Sweden. Organised in three rounds, the finals were accompanied by the State Ac-

ademic Symphony Orchestra of Belarus (conducted by Mikhail Sinkevich from St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre).

Fifteen Belarusians reached the second round, alongside four vocalists from Russia and four from Ukraine, two from Kazakhstan, two from China and one from Lithuania. Students from the Belarusian State Academy of Music became laureates and diploma holders: first place in 'Solo Academic Singing (women)'

went to fifth year student Lyudmila Karpuk (soprano) while third prize went to fourth year student Marta Danusevich (soprano). Two other students — in their third and fifth years — received diplomas.

The international jury was headed by Honoured Artiste of Belarus Lyudmila Kolos — a professor of the Belarusian State Academy of Music. She was joined by Honoured Figure of Arts of Belarus Margarita Izvorskaya-Yelizarieva — a famous op-

era director, People's Artist of Ukraine Professor Valery Buimister — a soloist with the National Philharmonic of Ukraine, Honoured Artiste of Russia Lyudmila Shemchuk — a star of the Bolshoi Theatre, Honoured Artist of Kazakhstan Prof. Shahimardan Abilov — a soloist with the State Kazakh National Opera, opera singer and teacher Valeria Shirokanska (Bulgaria), and world famous singers Francesco Anile (Italy) and Branislav Jatic (Serbia).

