

# Impressions from jubilee dance forum

25th International Festival of Modern Choreography (IFMC-2012) in Vitebsk has finished with four Ukrainian dancers claiming prestigious awards. All four are pupils of Kiev's Radu Poliktaru, who danced for ten years at our Bolshoi Theatre. He studied under famous Belarusian ballet master Valentin Yelizariiev and has won the IFMC many times, now heading Kiev's Modern Ballet Theatre.

By Victoria Popova

## Thought

The 'jubilee' inspired a truly spectacular event, with *A Dance Tribute to the Art of Football*, by Jo Strømgren Kompani, launching the competition. The ballet entranced casual fans and professionals alike, proving still contemporary despite celebrating its 15th anniversary. The dancers' elegance and amazing skill were evident immediately. Strømgren's work turns the world of football on its head, proving that any passion can appear dangerous or comic to observers. Even the daring male striptease within the performance didn't meet with disapproval from Prof. Yulia Churko, Honoured Figure of Arts and a member of the festival's expert council. However, unnecessary bareness in the French La Vouivre's *Oups* ballet appeared

tasteless.

The major thing lacking among some stage managers can be originality. Naturally, choreographers borrow from well-known ballets of the last century. Sadly, the traditional dance pair scenario seems to have been 'ridden to death'; even variations on this (pairing two men or two women) fails to add a great deal. The IFMC stage lacked a great deal of innovation and there was much 'inexplicable grieving' as dancers flew about the stage in the beam of the spotlight.

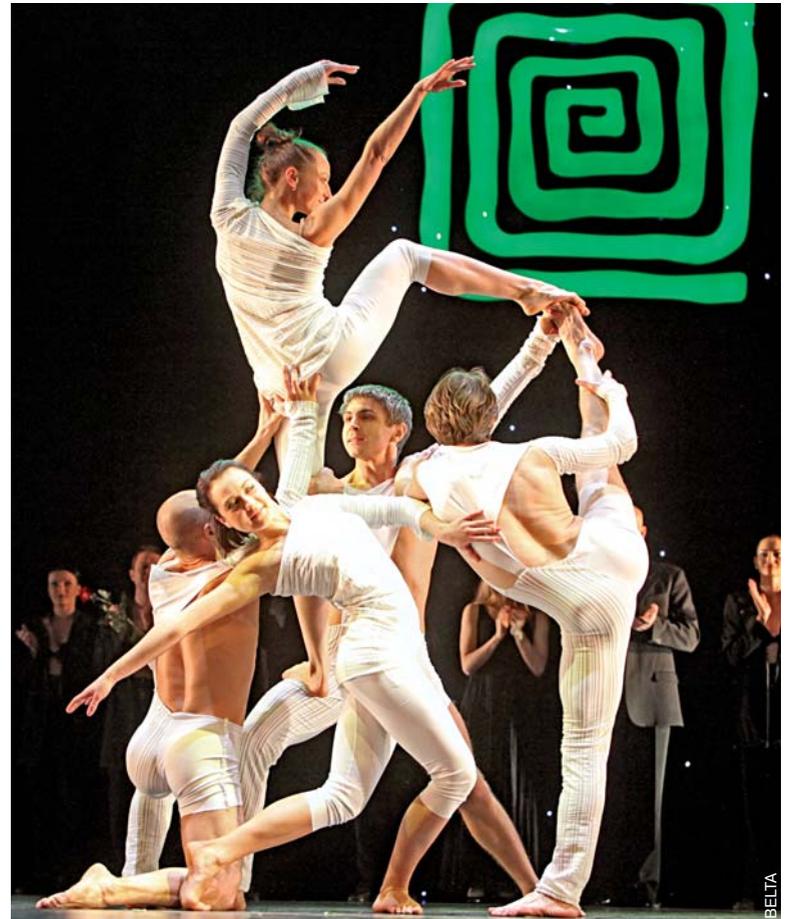
## Music

The musical choices also tended to be quite predictable, featuring much Ravel and Handel. Singer Pelageya may hardly be suitable of course, compared to serious contemporary com-

posers, and her songs wouldn't suit original ballet works. Of course, it's possible to dance even to the rhythm of dripping water from a tap. Japan's Dance Creation Award chose this option, but disappointed us in only offering tawdry Matryoshkas jumping across the stage. As ballet critic Vita Mozūraitė advises, interesting music choices are vital. She explains, "If you can sing along with what you hear, it inspires a natural sympathy from the audience; people immediately feel involved when they hear familiar melodies."

## Dance

The international professional jury, headed by People's Artist of the USSR Vladimir Vasiliev, noted the high technical level of the



International Festival of Modern Choreography (IFMC) in Vitebsk

entrants, with almost every group demonstrating perfect knowledge and showing intricate combinations, as well as good partnership.

Heide-Marie Härtel is pleasantly surprised that the genre of dance is surviving so well in Eastern Europe. She asserts, "Today, many German choreographers install a screen and show a film clip, then portray something as random as knee surgery, calling it contemporary choreography.

After your festival, my confidence is re-

stored regarding what we've already lost: trust in your body and movement. Never lose this capability!"

American choreographer Wendy Perron believes that the short pieces boasted stronger content than the one-act ballets, which needed 'serious editing.' Jury chairman Vasiliev added, "Choreographers need a head on their shoulders to edit well; you don't need to include everything ever invented in every dance. Some of the 20 minute ballets were weak while some miniatures were a true revelation, almost bringing me to tears. This is the greatest achievement for an artist, when you can move your colleagues so sincerely."

The jubilee forum left diverse impressions of strong dancers but a lack of talented ballet choreographers. We need clear heads on beautiful bodies while preserving the traditions so admired by foreign guests.

# Expecting to see emotions from the audience

By Lyudmila Nikolevskaya

**Belarusian State Philharmonic joined by famous jazz singer Gabrielle Stravelli of the USA, who prefers Minsk to New York and has her own secret for curing melancholy**

This is my first time in Belarus. Before my arrival, I knew nothing about you. Now, I see a city with a rich and ancient history. New York, where I live, can't boast such a thing. Minsk also offers more open spaces, filled

with light; our skyscrapers rob us of this. In New York, we feel pressed upon, as our city is so densely built up. I was astonished to see how quiet Minsk is. I'm happy that I can walk about so easily and relax.

My life revolves around jazz; I've sung at the top venues from Atlanta to the Netherlands. Jazz music is a powerful weapon in America. However, the explosion of applause unites rather than maims. My signature song is called *Skylark*; it's a delicate piece with many

nuances, which stir the imagination — mine and those of the audience. I always expect to see emotion from the audience when I sing this song.

Musicians are rarely rich but, when you do have money, it's best spent on travel. Like most people, I've been saving for old age. There's a shop selling linen goods near your Philharmonic, so I'll certainly buy presents there for my family. Linen is highly admired in our country. Meanwhile, I enjoy shopping, seeing it



Gabrielle Stravelli

as therapy rather than a 'disease'. The greater my troubles, the larger the purchase! You don't need to cure mel-

ancholy with medication — just buy aromatic foam bath.

I like to visit museums and galleries, as I feel that anything touched by the hands of great masters bears their incredible energy. I've been told that three major museums operate in Minsk: art, war and history. After a tour of Belarus (Gomel, Mogilev, Vitebsk and Brest) we'll return to Minsk, so I'll try to visit these museums, as well as the National Library. I saw it on our way from the airport and would

love to see it at night.

I don't believe in these, as so many thousands have been predicted. I'm more concerned about December 25th than the 21st. I'm a romantic and love Christmas carols and the aroma of pine. I'll be celebrating Christmas in New York with my family: my mother, brother and sister, and their children, as well as with my boyfriend Patrick [Patrick O'Leary — bass guitar with the *Manhattan Jazz Connection* with which Stravelli sings] and his relatives.