

# 'Gzhel' alloys art with dance and song

Traditions of art pottery find embodiment in vivid choreography

By Yevgeny Muromov

The word 'Gzhel' is associated with pottery manufactured in the village of Gzhel (now in the Moscow Region's Ramen District) from the second half of the 18th century. Those traditions have been taken up by the Artistic Ceramics Factory in Turgino, which manufactures pottery painted in rich blue designs against a white background.

Recently, world famous 'Gzhel' goods were presented

in Minsk at the 1st International *World of Glass and Ceramics* trade fair. Meanwhile, Moscow's *Gzhel* State Academic Dance Theatre surprised everyone with its level of artistic mastery and bright performances during the Days of Moscow in Minsk. Before the concert at the Palace of the Republic, the Minister of the Moscow Government and the Head of the Moscow Government Department for External Economic and International Ties, Sergey Cheremin, greet-



Moscow's 'Gzhel' State Academic Theatre of Dance performs at Palace of the Republic in Minsk

ed all those present, joined by Minsk Mayor Nikolai Ladutko and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to Belarus, H.E. Mr. Alexander Surikov. They spoke of the importance of ties and all-round co-operation between our two capitals: the hero cities of Minsk and Moscow.

Aiming to reinforce this

partnership, official documents have been signed at the House of Moscow: a programme for Moscow and the Republic of Belarus regarding trade-economic, science, humanitarian-cultural and social collaboration for 2013-2015; and another on the Days of Minsk in Moscow in 2013.

From the very first dance by *Gzhel*, the applause was

continuous. The Belarusian 'Kryzhachok' (a traditional Belarusian folk dance) was followed by the Russian 'Barynya' (a fast *Russian* folk dance), the 'Travushka-Muravushka' and 'Yablochko' (a dance of Russian sailors). The songs, dances and bright costumes created a series of vivid tableaux scenes reminiscent of Russian artistic crafts. It was as if the poetry

of dance had harmonised perfectly with art.

The concert finished with the well-loved 'Kalinka' and a storm of applause. The audience gave a huge ovation for the leader of the Dance Theatre, Vladimir Zakharov - a Professor and laureate of the Moscow Government Award. The wonderful event will stay long in our memories, evoking feelings of friendship.

## Puppets and puppeteers return home

Grodno Regional Puppet Theatre reopens after reconstruction, its near three hundred year old building renovated, extended and returned to its former glory

By Yekaterina Charovska

Before its repair, the theatre was almost falling apart at the seams and could hardly accommodate its actors (those made from wood, fabric, metal and papier-mâché as well as those of flesh and blood) in addition to its sets and props. The puppeteers would create new characters and decorations on their knees in the most unexpected corners of the building — later to thrill their audiences young and old and inspire admiration, sympathy, tears and laughter.

Regional authorities have funded new sound and light equipment, as well as a smoke generator and a device for artificial light. There are even new timber and metal processing machines and a welding unit, alongside industrial washing machines for costumes and decorations and a new vacuum cleaner. Traditional theatrical dust should become a thing of the past.

To improve comfort, aisles have been widened and the number of seats has been reduced, with wide, padded



A scene from the Grodno Regional Puppet Theatre's *Snow People*

chairs installed; seating capacity is down from 300 to 242. The 18th century building is fundamentally sound and was last reconstructed in the 1970s, when its coquettish towers were removed from the roof. They've now been restored, returning the theatre to its former glory and charm, using drawings by Napoleon Orda and some photos of the original silhouette.

Director Valentina Tsyganest notes major disputes regarding wall colour. "For some reason, the design organisation insisted that the theatre should be painted in burgundy but we were very much against that idea. We had to seek out historical evidence for the building never having been painted in garish colours. We located the information, finding that the halls and the building it-

self were always painted in pastels."

Forged balcony parapets, open-work curtain rods, sparkling parquet, a graceful colonnade, velvet curtains with heavy fringes and crystal chandeliers which sparkle in all the colours of the rainbow now grace the interior. The theatre looks just as it did when it first opened to the public — in all its glamour and pomp.

## Even brighter melodies

**Modernisation of St. Sophia's Cathedral organ to be launched at Polotsk's Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve in January**

The Polotsk cathedral received its organ in 1985 and this is its first serious upgrade, with several elements being replaced and a new keyboard being installed. This will make it easier to play and improve its tone. Russian and Ukrainian specialists are working with the German organ-building company Hessler, paid for by the Culture Ministry of Belarus.

St. Sophia's Cathedral and its organ are well-known far beyond Belarus, having hosted the international *Zvany Safii* (Sophia Bells) organ music festival for the last 17 years, gathering outstanding organists from all over the world.

Ksenia Pogorelaya, a soloist of St. Sophia Cathedral concert hall, recently received the Frantsisk Skorina Medal, having taken part in the *Days of Frantsisk Skorina in Prague* project. The latter is organised by the Embassy of Belarus to the Czech Republic with assistance from the Belarusian Culture Ministry and the Belarusian Union of Composers.

The puppeteers used the Drama Theatre during repairs, seeing full houses despite cramped conditions. They even premiered a historical tale called *Auroch Hunting* (based on Mikola Gusovsky's poem) and *Boy-Star* (a philosophical fairytale based on Oscar Wilde's play). The children's *Fairytale about a Magic Clock* is also ready for performance.

Remarkably, their temporary home has brought luck to the Grodno puppeteers, whose *Queen of Spades* won four out of ten nominations at the latest National Theatre Awards ceremony. The performance is opening the new building and should become its talisman as it enters a new age. No one doubts that the talented theatrical troupe will find success in future. Already, all tickets until mid-January are sold out.

In May, the stage will welcome foreign companies and is to host a new festival entitled *Puppets under the Nieman River*. Puppeteers from Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Serbia have confirmed their participation.