

Listening to life rhythms of 'knocking and ticking' music

Belarusian Dzerzhinsk clock-master uses wooden mechanisms

By Natalia Stasevich

"Everything is really knocking and ticking in here!" I exclaimed, on entering the living room of the master from Dzerzhinsk, Andrey Martynyuk. On the walls, rows of large wooden clocks hang, each individual in appearance. Some resemble houses; others fish or trees. Their pendulums swing, beating out a perpetual 'ticking symphony'.

Alive and glowing...

Everything in the house is handmade from wood, bearing testimony to Andrey's skill. There's a cupboard with Shakespearean scenes carved upon its doors, an elegant staircase to the second floor and small, intricate tables with turned legs. Resting upon the main table are sketches, books, pieces of wood and a laptop (the only sign of modernity beside an energy-saving lamp). Even the light fitting recalls another age, being made from a decorative cartwheel. The tree outside sends dappled sunlight through the window, creating an air of mystery.

We sit on a wooden sofa with a high upholstered back and Andrey lights a pipe. I can't help but imagine us in a fairy tale. The watchmaker's face seems illuminated with its own light and energy; it's almost palpable. Just being in the room with him fills me with a strange sensation.

Aesthetic beauty of mechanisms

"I've made about 50 clocks: all different. Creativ-



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Original clock mechanisms master Andrey Martynyuk able to surprise any collector

ity does not tolerate copies," Andrey smiles. "One is a 'solar eclipse': the pendulum-moon covers the sun-dial. Often, my original ideas mutate while I'm working." Most feature exquisite carvings; one even uses 15 types of wood! Andrey has his own milling machine for cutting complex shapes, which is computer controlled. Everything else is done by hand: every last detail and gear. Moreover, each clock keeps time accurately.

As we chat, I'm a little distracted by the surrounding ticking, as if rain is beat-

ing on metal. Andrey explains that his family is also rather mesmerised at times. "Sometimes, my wife sits on the sofa and just stares at the clocks. I also do so myself, just sitting and looking; I can hardly believe that I made them."

However, while he works, Andrey tends to listen to music: rock, heavy metal or jazz, depending on his mood. Each clock was born to the accompaniment of music, which may account for the rhythms, though not synchronous, having unusual accord.

Folly has a serious 'face'

Even as a child, the future master was impressed by wooden clocks. Almost thirty years later, he realised that he should fulfil his secret dream of making clocks, using natural wood. His gaze is intense as he explains what drives him. Andrey notes, "If you forget your dreams, you become too serious, even plunging into apathy or despair. In the film *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, they say that most folly is performed with a serious face."

Andrey spent 15 years working as an engineer, which naturally helped him understand clock mechanisms, although he views their inner workings as the most daunting of engineering challenges. Each clock contains a piece of his soul but he admits, "In order to gain something, we must give something." It takes determination and hard work, as he emphasises. Each clock is brought to life with his 'blood, sweat and tears'. In fact, he jokes, accidental cuts ensure that his blood really is present in each clock!

Earning his bread

Andrey is a member of the Union of Belarusian Folk Art and the Academy of Russian Folk Art and teaches at the Dzerzhinsk Folk Art Centre. He also makes furniture and stairs to order, which brings in money but not spiritual satisfaction. He laments that it's necessary to earn a living, rather than indulging in pure creativity. However, his wonderful clock-making has earned him a reputation beyond Belarus. His talent has been featured in several Russian TV documentaries, promoting another aspect of Belarusian culture.

Master and Margarita

His talent has also found expression in the making of musical instruments, thanks to his wonderful violinist wife, Margarita, who teaches at a music school. His violins and cellos are the result of his muse — like Bulgakov's heroine. It's clear to see that he adores his wife, who he admires for having always supported him. "I know very well how lucky I am with my wife, who has never once asked me to exchange my work for something earning more money."

The 'Master and Margarita' ensemble, comprising students from musical schools, plays at city events: jazz and rock 'n' roll numbers.

Andrey runs his hand affectionately over the casing of one of his violins. The wood seems warm and alive. "How can you not love to work with this?" he sighs, his eyes lighting up. It's obvious that Andrey's inner energy comes from his passion for creation.

Ships and docks of underwater Atlantis discovered in River Sozh

By Yuri Pinchuk

Remains of Potemkin's dockyard in River Sozh could become 'Mecca' for divers

Candidate of geographical sciences Alexey Yarotov tells us that the Belarusian Geographic Society has discovered the remains of famous Potemkin's dock, from the late 18th century, in the River Sozh (near Krichev). The senior teacher of Physical Geography of World and Educational Technologies at the Belarusian State University continues, "We intended merely to check the hypothesis of its existence, yet discovered a true Belarusian Atlantis. Potemkin's dock was on such a large scale that it was almost like a town, with

workshops, a drafting room and warehouses along the River Sozh. From there, ships set off to the Mediterranean Sea via the River Dnieper. Yekaterina II made her voyage on these vessels from Kiev to the Dnieper Rapids. Later Desna battleship set off from here, becoming famous fighting the Turkish fleet."

Over 20 rooms, 3m in width, were discovered underwater, near the bank of the River Sozh, their walls made from thick oak logs and with floors of smooth black stone. Various lifting mechanisms (including large gears) remain, as do shipbuilding elements, made from oak. The foundations of



Divers take fancy to River Sozh

a range of buildings have been unearthed, assuring us that this is famous Potemkin's dockyard.

Expedition initiator Eduard Kisil notes, "This unique object is so well preserved that it's a true underwater museum — a possible 'Mecca' for divers."

Wonderful exhibits from river bottom

By Pavel Smirnov

Belarus' first open air museum of river anchors soon to launch in Mirogoshch village (in Gomel Region's Cherikov District)

Sergey Dubyago, who owns Lileya agro-estate, plans to set up the museum, having been collecting anchors since having stepped on one while swimming in the River Sozh. Since then, 'iron paws' have regularly taken up residence in his home.

Friends, colleagues and, even, strangers have learnt of Sergey's unusual hobby and have brought along their discoveries. Holidays along the River Sozh have also illuminated new

findings. Some anchors have been donated by residents of the neighbouring Klimovichi District, swelling Sergey's collection to 27. A few date back several centuries, all stored in his barn, placed on lit platforms. His mission is now to teach tourists something of the history of the Belarusian and Russian anchor industry.

A small guesthouse is to open nearby, in the shape of a ship, while a recreation zone is planned for the bank of the River Sozh, with designs being approved and the site cleared in preparation. The museum should be open to tourists next year, being already registered on the 'Live Water' green route: part of the Land of Vivific Springs tourist cluster.