

Avowed authority of high art

Brest hosts 18th International *Belaya Vezha* Theatre Festival, gathering actors from 14 countries

By Yuri Butrimovich

The first day of the festival saw the Brest Drama Theatre filled to capacity for the opening event. The Chairman of the Brest Regional Executive Committee, Konstantin Sumar, gave an opening speech, noting that the Festival now has national importance. "As in previous years, we've tried to keep the fine traditions born by our Festival, which has gained popularity with people from around the world. They know that participating brings prestige and status," noted Mr. Sumar.

The opening was followed by two performances: *Who Laughs Last* by Kondrat Krapiva, performed by Minsk Theatre-Studio of Film Actors, and *Queen of Spades*, by the Grodno Puppet Theatre. Audiences were encouraged to leave their tickets in either a black or white box at the end of the performance, to denote dislike or approval.

Over the eight-day event, 23 performances were given, including an amazing staging of *Portraits of Polish Kings*, by the Helena Modrzejewska Narodowy Stary Theatre (National Old Theatre) from Kraków. *Antibodies*, by the Baltic House Theatre, also aroused great interest. This was the first year that prizes were awarded by critics and the organising committee, rather than an independent jury, and other novelties were also in evidence. These included literary readings on the play *Blockhead*, by Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczuk, and on *A Couple of Poor, Polish-Speaking Ro-*



Brest hosts week of theatrical novelties, including *Who Laughs Last*

manians, by Dorota Masłowska. Master classes were conducted by Krzysztof Garbaczewski, the director of *Portraits of Polish Kings*, by

Konstantin Mishin, from the Moscow School of Dramatic Arts, and by critic Roman Pawłowski.

The Festival programme was

very eventful. On 8th September alone, the Polesie Drama Theatre, from Pinsk, performed children's play *The Story of Baba-Yaga Res-*

cuing a Fairy Tale, and Moscow's School of Dramatic Art gave us *Mtsyri* — based on the poem by M. U. Lermontov. That evening, on Lenin Square, there was a street performance of *Salto Mortale*, by Teatr Strefa Cizzy, from Poland's Poznań. Tackling the chaos, absurdity and madness of the Second World War, when not only cultural treasures but, even, equipment from factories was stolen from Poland, the audience awarded the actors with storms of applause. In addition, the Lvov's Voskresinnya Theatre and the Swedish Theatre's Reich+Shyber were performed free of charge.

Many spectators have called this year's programme the most interesting to date. Lyudmila Gromyko, a theatrical critic and the editor-in-chief of Art magazine, believes that *Belaya Vezha* is constantly developing. She tells us, "Besides the usual performances, there were a number of master classes and meetings with well-known theatrical figures: in particular, with Krzysztof Garbaczewski — one of the best young Polish directors. Brest residents and visitors were presented with Belarusian performances which have received the national theatrical award; this is very important for spectators."

Brest's *Belaya Vezha* Festival has been held since 1996, gathering theatre groups from more than 50 countries. This year was certainly no exception in surprising and delighting audiences, placing the event firmly on the international map.

Dramatic dancing against endless dome of starry sky

By Yuri Pinchuk

Kamyanitza Folk Festival held in two-day format for first time in early September, at Museum of Folk Architecture and Life, in village of Ozertso near Minsk

The 5th *Kamyanitza* Folk Festival was held, for the first time, over two days, rather than one. Responding to the success of past years, dancers donned their embroidered shirts to dance in circles under the starry sky, delighting visitors. Those attending in national costume were granted free entry to the event, which gathered an impressive 5,000 people or more.

The Friendly Evening group opened the festival, followed by such Belarusian performers as *Palats*, *Sary Olsa*, *Guda*, *Alexandra* and *Konstantin* and Irena Kotvitskaya. *Dakha-Brakha* (Ukraine), *Orkiestra Sw. Mikolaja* (Poland), *Hvarna* (Russia) and *Folkneri* (Ukraine) also entertained. Some were promoting their latest albums and *Shuma* headlined the wonderful event, combining national vocal and modern electronic music. Children's groups also brought a smile to the audience.



Kamyanitza Folk Festival always raises smiles

In between concerts, visitors enjoyed sampling tea and honey and browsing the craft stalls. You could play old-fashioned games, buy a clay penny whistle or take a master class in throwing a pot.

Kamyanitza was first held in 2009, aiming to promote traditional culture and attract visitors to the Museum of Folk Architecture and Life. Its wonderful collection of authentic wooden architecture from

the 18-20th century is certainly worthy of seeing. All profits from ticket sales help support the Museum. Svetlana Lokotko, the Director, tells us that the takings from the past four festivals have paid for the restoration of 21 buildings on site, with three more still under reconstruction. Meanwhile, *Kamyanitza* guests have increased in number six-fold since the festival began: over 60,000 people now visit annually.

Music uniting people

Classical music concerts performed by Belarusian orchestra to be held in autumn in France

Strasbourg and other French cities will be hosting the concerts in October and November of this year, featuring the European Youth Orchestra, conducted by Mikhail Kozinets, People's Artist of Belarus.

Joint Belarusian-French musical projects are already a tradition in our cultural co-operation, with early September having seen French con-

ductor Olivier Charlier take part in an anniversary concert at the Belarusian State Philharmonic, marking its 85th anniversary. The maestro from France conducted the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Belarus.

France and Belarus are actively developing co-operation in the sphere of music, as evidenced by a series of concerts featuring the National Orchestra Île-de-France, conducted by People's Artist Alexander Anisimov, from 24-31 May, 2013, in Île-de-France, in the Paris Region.

Overcoming obstacles

Belarusfilm finishes shooting children's film *Polesie Robinsons*, or *Wonder-Island*, based on well-known story by Yanka Mavr

Polesie Robinsons, or *Wonder-Island*, tells of the adventures of Ilya, Miron and his sister Yulia, who go on an island search. Journalist Vasily and treasure hunter Yuri also take part: Vasily looking for sensations for his newspaper, and Yuri seeking treasure. Miron's grandfather, Vladlen, tries to protect the children from danger, becoming their guide through the Polesie marshes.

The amazing island defies time, allowing the children and adults to

reach another dimension, where their bravery, knowledge and, most importantly, friendship, are truly tested.

The leading roles are performed by Belarusian schoolchildren: Alexander Talako, Mikhail Karenetsky, Yegor Rozsudovsky and Yegor Shik from Minsk, alongside Gomel's Anastasiya Kravchenya. The adults include People's Artist of the USSR Gennady Ovsyannikov, People's Artist of Belarus Alexander Tkachenok, and Sergey Vlasov, Igor Denisov and Vladimir Ivanov. The script was written by Fiodor Konev and Yegor Konev, while the production director was Sergey Sychev. The film will hit screens early in 2014.