

Improvisation revives classics for modern day

Having heard a student moan that they hate Pushkin, seeing him as boring, I've given much thought as to why classical writers are failing to ignite a spark within our modern readers



Queen of Spades staged by Grodno residents has already received lots of awards at home and abroad

By Tatiana Tovstonogova

Some might say that our writing legends' themes are no longer relevant today, making them difficult to understand, or that their language is outdated. The answer came to me recently, after the 2012 National Theatre Awards.

Two years ago, Grodno's Puppet Theatre began planning a new play, initiated by Chief Director Oleg Zhyugzhda. He had been dreaming of the show for a decade, imagining a synthesis of poet Pushkin and composer Tchaikovsky, supplemented by the talent of Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck and artist Margarita Stashulyonok, as well as Nikolay Karamzin's *Poor Liza* and an Italian gondolier, four talented young actors and the author of

the opera *Elixir of Love*, Gaetano Donizetti, joined Mr. Zhyugzhda in planning the play — all being eager to ignite a 'spiritual thirst' in their audience. Pushkin's sedate 19th century verse was brought alive with dynamic force.

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The result was the play entitled *Queen of Spades*, inspired by Pushkin's works. It promotes morality, harmony, lofty thoughts and simplicity and is more than a bold experiment — as we often see these days. It recalls the

classics with its poetic language, romance and tragedy, holding up high ideals while entertaining with wry humour and irony.

Over the past two years, the show has been regularly awarded at home and abroad, appealing widely with its light and

merry manner. Critic Vissarion Belinsky has praised it greatly, although viewing it more as a collection of anecdotes than as a cohesive story. It must be said that, beneath its whimsical style, much sense and wisdom is to be

found. Known as 'mystical mystification', it combines Pushkin's novel and Tchaikovsky's opera. The expected is reversed for the naughty duchesses, timid foster daughters and reckless guardsmen. Promoted as 'a sun of Russian poetry' and 'a genius of Russian music', it's easy to recognise the influence of Pushkin and Tchaikovsky. The kind angels in the cast charm us with their perfect Russian, wonderful opera singing and rich metaphors.

Of course, children are easily able to suspend any disbelief, entering the world of the puppets and accepting the spiritual symbolism of the play. The play combines games and fantasy, inspiring the imagination and allowing the younger generation to enjoy the beauty of the classics.

Retrospective of director Mikhail Ptashuk's films

Minsk cinemas honour People's Artist of Belarus Mikhail Ptashuk, screening films to mark the 70th anniversary of his birth

Two landmarks of Ptashuk's film legacy were screened: *About Vitya, Masha and Marines*; and *In August 1941*. The first was

his diploma work, winning prestigious international awards, including the Grand Prix of the Barcelona Film Festival. However, the second assured him worldwide popularity. Years later, the Department for Registration and Archives at the Russian Federal Security Service noted its belief that the film is the most authoritative in detailing the work of a Russian (Soviet) double agent.

The commemorative evening was hosted by Minsk's Cinema House, on January 28th, gathering former colleagues, pupils, friends and those close to the great man. Director Sergey Katier presented his *Commemorative Evening* documentary devoted to the life and creativity of Mikhail Ptashuk.

Mikhail Ptashuk (1943-2002) was an Honoured Figure of Arts and a laureate of the State Award of Belarus. A whole epoch in domestic cinematography is connected with his name. He screened works by Belarusian authors, such as Vasil Bykov's *Sing of Misfortune*, Vladimir Korotkevich's *Black Castle of Olshany* and Ivan Shamyakin's *I Will Take Your Pain*. In total, he directed over 30 pictures.

Best of the decade

Litesound band awarded EUROSTAR AWARD-2012

A popular *Eurovision* site has seen fans and professional judges voting for their favourite entries over the past decade — from a list of over 4,500 artists. Ten candidates were chosen and interactive voting over several months has selected a winner: the Belarusian band earned the greatest number of votes (14,422).

Iosif Kobzon agrees

Jury of international *Zolotoy Shlyager-2013* pop music festival, hosted by Mogilev in October, to be headed by patriarch of Russian pop stage

By Semen Kulakov

A preliminary agreement has already been reached with Iosif Kobzon, who has agreed to take part in the festival," notes Anatoly Sinkovets, Head of the Mogilev Regional Executive Committee's Cultural Department. "On our side, we'll do everything possible to welcome such a prominent personality to Mogilev; he has made an invaluable contribution to the develop-

ment of singing."

It's planned that the jury of the contest will also include diploma holders and laureates of last year's contest, who are now known at home and abroad: Natalia Podolskaya, Irina Dorofeeva, Iskui Abalyan, Ruslan Alekhno and Yevgeny Gor (Russia) and Teimur Bodzhua (Georgia). They can also hold master classes for young entrants.

The young people's pop song contest was re-

placed by a contest for vocal and instrumental ensembles (memory of Vladimir Mulyavin) but is now being revived, with entrants singing popular hits from previous years. The fate of the Vladimir Mulyavin contest is yet to be decided, as such musical groups are few in number in Belarus and the CIS, with the number of entrants dwindling in recent years. "We've elaborated all possible variants of its organisation and preservation,

while thinking about a new concept and format," explains Mr. Sinkovets.

The International *Zolotoy Shlyager-2013* Music Festival was first organised in November 1995, with support from the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko.

The forum has become a unique event in the cultural life of the Republic, the region and internationally, being a wonderful holiday of music and song. Its sincere poetic lyricism is unique



Iosif Kobzon agrees to head the jury

while the festival brings together 'forgotten' artists who perform golden Soviet classics. The *Zolotoy Shlyager* was accepted into the International Federation of Festivals, and has featured acknowledged masters from around the world, from over 20 countries.