

# Silver of native land

Pictures by three artists — Anatoly Baranovsky, Yelena Baranovskaya and Vitaly Gerasimov — occupy a whole floor at Minsk's Palace of Arts. Their large scale and significance makes one think that even more space is needed to fully demonstrate all these interesting and bright works.

By Victor Mikhailov

Although their work is individual and each has their own personal style, the painters are related. Yelena Baranovskaya and Vitaly Gerasimov are married, while the People's Artist of Belarus, Anatoly Baranovsky, is Yelena's father.

Vitaly enjoys avant-garde images and allegory while Yelena represents female tenderness which she originally depicts in her canvas. Her landscapes make us feel the fragility of our life and the instability of the universe. Yelena's works are evidently influenced by her father's school, which is natural. Anatoly is a true rock of Belarusian fine art. His landscapes often depict the Braslav District, as well as the Pripyat and Nieman rivers, Mozyr and Mogilev. His canvases abound with the poetry of autumn and spring: silver clouds and golden birch. The melodies of the seasons resulted in his *Clouds Sailing Over Native Land* (1977), *Land of My Golden Birch Trees* (1981), *Melody of Autumn* (1994), *Miraculous Days — Clear and Blue* (2003), and *Autumn over the Pripyat* (2004). He also painted architectural landscapes, such as those depicting the 12th century Kalozha church, the towers of ancient Mir Castle, and Peter and Paul's Church in Novgorod, all of which radiate historical spirit. His epic pictures are no less magnificent: *Mother. 1941* (1972), *Braslav Width* (1991), *Portrait of a Daughter* (1994) and *The Lilac* (2008).

Mr. Baranovsky's artistic path is an example of a master who confidently promotes realism in the early 21st century, while enriching our Belarusian art with poetic mystery and precious radiance of the pearl palette. Anatoly was awarded an Honoured Artist of Belarus title which summed up a long period of his artistry (beginning in the 1960s). The master's purposefulness and self-consistency are impressive. In

his landscapes, the painter depicts rich natural motifs, while focusing on his native land's mood and colours. He succeeds in continuing the innovative Impressionism-guided tradition of the 1920s

Belarusian nature.

He reveals his soul most fully at his workshop, where his most beloved pictures are kept. Mr. Baranovsky rarely speaks, but here, shares sincere views on art and his



Belarusian pictorial art, which added special Belarusian colour. This trend is rich in delicate silver and flax-coloured paints to depict endless forests, fields and swift-flowing rivers.

Each of Mr. Baranovsky's works is individual, with its own initial impression and chosen corner of nature.

However, they form a harmonious, almost musical whole, rarely seen amongst his contemporaries. His canvases depict fragile birch-trees, spring fields and transparent blue skies, with tenderness. He seldom repeats himself, since each day brings new views. His study of nature dominates, with each landscape resembling an open window. Looking through them, we cannot but admire the untouched beauty of Be-

work.

*I believe that art is more significant than literature, as argued by Leo Tolstoy. On attending an exhibition of the great Russian painters, Surikov, Repin and Serov, he told a rather anxious Repin that the latter had no need to worry. Tolstoy stressed his envy of artists, believing it possible to read a picture simply by looking at it briefly. He joked that it was far more arduous and less enticing to read two volumes of 'War and Peace'!*

*Gegel also ranked art above music and poetry. As a student, I read his books but only now can admit to true admiration, having learnt through experience. This art expert placed pictorial art at the supreme height!*

**How did you begin drawing?**

*From childhood, I had problems at home, so devoted all my time to drawing. I couldn't sleep properly at night, as I wanted to stay up alone and paint. I was born in Minsk's suburbs and my family*

**However, you don't always depict nature in an obvious way.**

*A landscape painting is not a photo; it reveals its creator's perceptions. My landscapes are filled with ideas*

*through our souls. We must make audiences our co-artists, establishing a connection.*

**Some fail to achieve this and others do not wish to follow this path.**

*There are plenty of such cases, especially in our modern days. Anything is permissible and accessible. In the 19th century, it was felt that we lagged behind by at least two hundred years. We are now in a new millennium and morals are falling, evidently.*

**Is this bad?**

*Yes. It is, although there are many talented young people. They need support. We need to help them reveal their talent.*

**As a teacher, can you pass on the principles of hard work and perseverance?**

*I've always felt a connection to nature, and have encouraged young people to follow the same path. Many years may pass, but they still remember my lessons. I've fulfilled my duty. I've experienced times of anxiety, when I could hardly draw, but I've always tried to attend open air sessions with my pupils.*

**You were recently awarded the title of 'People's Artist'. What will follow? What are your feelings?**

*I'm anxious. However, this is supplemented with joy, a sense of responsibility and gratitude to our people.*

**Can the Motherland give artists all they need to fully reveal their mastery?**

*Yes. Our talents are given by God. Our education system could be improved upon, and needs attention, being viewed from all angles. Everything will work out fine if we keep an open mind.*

**Do you work hard?**

*Every day — without any days off.*

This is the master, open and sincere in his speculation. As an artist, Mr. Baranovsky is nonintrusive, yet appealing. It's always a great pleasure to visit his shows and to meet his pupils, who share the same artistic views.



Congratulations on the occasion of the exhibition are accepted by Anatoly Baranovsky



*were involved in agriculture. My mother used to say that I was interested in nothing but paper and paints. My grandmother was talented, making patterns, and came first at an international contest in Belgium. Years later, the Belgian Parliament purchased three of my works. I was self-taught and loved to walk along Botanicheskaya Street (where we lived), painting all I saw with water colours. I then entered college.*

**Evidently, you paint landscapes more often. Why?**

*This is a good question. A landscape is a universal theme. To be more exact, it is the essence of eternity. I was young when I fell in love with nature. It captured my soul forever.*

*and moods. Painting is the core of my life, as it was in my student years, when I used to draw every day: morning and evening.*

**Is silver your favourite colour?**

*Look [he shows me a picture]. This is the Braslav area, which is unforgettably beautiful. I've always loved drawing it with my students (some are well-known now). Our countryside is so wonderful, in Polesie and the Mozyr District. Mist is the most delicate of nature's mysteries; I'm yet to unravel its secrets. When it reflects in water, it gives me chills.*

**What of artists' responsibility?**

*We have a responsibility to ensure that the truth passes*