

# Films can stand alone without good music

The tour schedule of the well-known Italian composer and conductor Ennio Morricone is planned for several years ahead, as indicated on his website. However, this summer, he made an unexpected appearance at Minsk Arena, to the delight of Belarusian music lovers. His magnificent concert brought a storm of applause.

By Yuliana Leonovich

Before interviewing Mr. Morricone, we were warned that questions about film work might anger him. We also discovered that he dislikes the term 'spaghetti westerns' — as those by director Sergio Leone are often referred to; Mr. Morricone worked with Mr. Leone for many years. He also has an aversion for the word 'soundtrack', the number 17 and the colour purple, once refusing an interview because the journalist was wearing a jacket in a plum colour. There is nothing to be done; such famous people are allowed their whims.

**Your capacity for work is legendary, as famously asserted by your old friend, Russian director of 72 Metres, Vladimir Khotinenko,**

**who says you work from dawn until dusk. Today's interview is scheduled for 8am.**

*It's true that I dedicate a lot of time to work. I get up early in the morning, do some exercises, then have breakfast and read the morning newspapers. By 8.30am, I'm already at my desk and only stop after dinner.*

**I must mention your cin-**

**ema work; how many films have you composed for?**

*At about 500 I stopped counting.*

**Are you afraid of repetition?**

*No. Before starting to compose, I talk to the director for a long time, to try and understand his thoughts, intentions, desires and ideas. If I find no common language with the director I won't work with him.*

## The MT's reference

Ennio Morricone is an outstanding Italian composer, arranger and conductor, writing music for film and television. He was born on 10th November, 1928. Aged 9, he entered the National Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome, where he studied for 11 years, receiving three diplomas: for the Trumpet in 1946; for Instrumentation for Band Arrangement in 1952; and for Composition in 1953. He won an Oscar in 2007 for 'Outstanding Merit in Cinema' and has eight times won the national film award of Italy — the *David di Donatello* — for best film music.



Concerts featuring Ennio Morricone are a great success

**Have you experienced failure? Some say that you didn't like 120 Days of Sodom, by Pasolini.**

*Pasolini, for some reason, did not want to show me the scenario of the film. He only wanted me to create a complex piano composition. It was only at the premiere that I discovered the piece accompanies a scene in which a woman jumps from a window; I wasn't pleased about that. I understand that music is not the main focus of a film and should rather supplement than dominate. Sometimes, a director creates a masterpiece, which is let down by poor music. However, the film loses nothing. Sometimes it happens*

*the other way around and, no matter how beautiful the music, it cannot save a film.*

**Sicilian Clan is rarely spoken of, although your music, written for it, remains popular.**

*Wow, you know this film? The musical composition I wrote is a meditation on Bach: my favourite composer.*

**Mr. Morricone, have you changed your approach towards writing screen music over the last 40 years?**

*Many truly talented composers are working these days, so progress in this sphere has been considerable. Multi-channel surround sound has appeared also, which creates additional, incredibly inspir-*

*ing, possibilities.*

**In 1978, you wrote the World Football Championship theme.**

*I love football so, when our national team was to play in the championship, in Argentina, I was asked to write a melody. I did so quite quickly but it brought incredible pleasure.*

**Mick Jagger once said that if he could read music he'd like to turn the pages of the score at one of your concerts.**

*Who is Mick Jagger?*

**Are you serious?**

*Absolutely.*

**He's the lead singer of The Rolling Stones.**

*He's welcome; I'll employ him with pleasure (smiles).*

# True love can perform incredible miracles

First national musical *Sofia Golshanskaya* premiered in Minsk

Lyudmila Minakova

School textbooks tell us that Princess Sofia Golshanskaya was just 17 when she married Polish King Jogáila, aged 71. She became the Queen of Poland, and mother to three sons: heirs to the throne. The Belarusian State Musical Theatre's performance gives its interpretation of the young queen's character and motivations, showing how she coped in ruling a mighty state and dealing with intrigues.

The Artistic Leader of the Musical Theatre, Adam Murzich, notes that he has long wanted to stage a 'national' performance. He explains, "The theatre needs productions using a Belarusian composed score and libretto, as well as local direction. I'm delighted to have been involved, although a little disappointed that our troupe is not ready to translate the show fully into Belarusian: such a musical and lyrical language. Not all of our actors can speak Belarusian properly, which could affect the quality of singing. Therefore, only

six songs are in Belarusian, with the rest in Russian."

The composer, Vladimir Kondrusevich, began work on the idea in 2006, when a friend brought him a coin issued in honour of the 600th anniversary of the birth of Sofia Golshanskaya. Mr. Kondrusevich recalls, "He showed me the annotation, thinking that it might inspire me. Since then, I've accumulated material and ideas and have replaced perhaps five librettists. It's quite difficult to write and stage historical performances, since you need to portray more than just facts; you need to reveal people's character. Thanks to Yelena Turova, we've managed to create a very interesting libretto, with exciting intrigue and an unexpected ending."

Creating such a plot took a great deal of thought, as Yelena — the director and author of the libretto — admits. "We have few historical facts about Sofia Golshanskaya, although there is more on other, more famous, people such as Barbara Radziwiłł. We lack information on Sofia but we

do know that King Jogáila chose to wed her after rejecting her sister, Vasilisa, as being too temperamental. There were attempts to challenge her sons' right to the throne and to accuse Sofia of unfaithfulness, as Sofia was looked down upon by some at court, including the King's brother Vytautas. He believed that Sofia did not behave like a queen, having too much playfulness and mischief. Horrifically, there is evidence that Vytautas and Jogáila even tried to give her less food, to encourage her to behave with dignity. Apparently, manners at court were above all. This is all that we know about her and is the basis for our drama," Yelena tells us.

Ms. Turova explains the plot: Great King Jogáila plans to marry a beautiful woman, Vasilisa. However, he unexpectedly falls in love with her younger sister, Sofia — beloved of young warrior Gancha. Vasilisa, offended by the king's fickleness, decides to take revenge on Sofia, who suspects nothing. On Kupala night, a sorceress gives Sofia a fern flower, predicting her meeting with her be-



trothed and, soon, Sofia's heart fills with love for Jogáila. War arrives, with Jogáila and Gancha fighting side by side, until they return victo-

rious, with the King making Gancha his sworn brother. Meanwhile, cunning chancellor Ugo joins forces with Vasilisa to spin intrigue; the clouds gather over beautiful Sofia, who we see in the final scene imprisoned, awaiting execution.

Yelena explains, "Love helped our heroes pass all tests. Our Sofia really loved her husband and her children were born of love. She dedicated her life to them, doing everything possible to ensure that the throne was left to them. Through the entire performance, we try to emphasise this aspect, showing that love can perform miracles and remove all obstacles. Regardless of birth, we are all human — even kings. To leave peacefully in this world for which we are responsible, we must, foremost, have self-knowledge, and we should remember our duty to our family. Our life is largely shaped by these factors and we can learn simple lessons from history, which we shouldn't forget. This may be the main reason why we love to hear about history."