

International premiere develops rapidly

Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus soloist Oksana Volkova debuts at New York's Metropolitan Opera

By Liza Yasinskaya

The Belarusian National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre's Oksana Volkova, who possesses a rich mezzo-soprano voice, has made her debut on one of the world's most renowned opera stages, performing the role of Maddalena, in Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

The Belarusian singer has joined other outstanding professionals and world opera stars: Zeljko Lucic, Diana Damrau, Piotr Beczala and Stefan Kocan. Young Italian Michele Mariotti is conducting Michael Mayer's vision, which has moved the action from 17th century Italy to 1960s Las Vegas.

"During our live radio broadcast, I was announced as a singer from Belarus, which was lovely," admits Ms. Volkova, who is an Honoured

Artiste of the Republic of Belarus. Singing with the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus, she has played Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, Polina in *Queen of Spades*, Konchakovna in *Prince Igor*, Carmen, Fenena in *Nabucco*, Flora in *La Traviata*, Marfa in *Khovanshchina*, Amneris in *Aida* and Lyubasha in *The Tsar's Bride*, besides other roles.

Her international career is developing rapidly, including leading roles in performances at the Bolshoi Theatre of Russia, with the Nice Opera, with the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, and with the San Carlo Theatre in Naples.

Seven more performances of *Rigoletto* are scheduled for the Metropolitan Opera stage while, on February 16th, the performance will be screened in cinemas worldwide.



Opera singer Oksana Volkova playing lead role in *Carmen* opera

In March, Belarusian audiences will be able to see Ms. Volkova at the Bolshoi Theatre of Belarus. In April, she will be performing her favourite

role of Carmen at the Colon Theatre in Buenos Aires. Japanese television is already shooting a film of the performance, featuring Oksana.

Earning the right to one's own exhibition

By Yulia Prokhorova

Minsk painter Vadim Kachan awarded Grand Prix at 4th International Terra Nova Digital Art Festival for his *Parallel World* series

Mr. Kachan has been awarded the Labyrinth Gallery diploma, from the National Library of Belarus, explains Fiodor Yastreb, who organises the *Terra Nova Digital Art Festival*. "We don't give the Grand Prix every year, sometimes just awarding first places in various nominations. However, this year, our winner deserves a personal exhibition at one of the National Library's galleries."

Members of the jury, headed by People's Artist of Belarus Alexander Yefremov, examined works in the following nominations: 'Digital Photography'; 'Computer Graphics'; 'Digital Painting'; 'Video Art'; 'Music Videos'; 'Animation'; 'Advertising Trailers'; and 'Short Metre'. Over 170 digital format works went on show, with video screenings in the Labyrinth Gallery's Hall of Educational Technologies.

The winners of the festival include representatives from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Estonia.

International project unites two countries

Tales of Hoffmann illustrations presented in Minsk for first time



Graphics based on fairy tales

The illustrations accompanying the German tales by Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann have been presented for the first time at the State Literary and Memorial Museum of Yakub Kolas. The *Drawings of Hoffman* exhibition, dedicated to the 237th anniversary of the writer, includes collections from the Kaliningrad Regional Museum of History and Arts.

Every year, the birthday of the master is celebrated internationally with *Hofmaniana* exhibitions. This year, Russia's Kaliningrad Regional History and Arts Museum, and the State Literary Museum of Yanka Kupala joined forces with Belarus' State Literary and Memorial Museum of Yakub Kolas to organise displays of his illustrations: these included the *Fairy Tales of Life* display, by Belarusian poet Yakub Kolas.

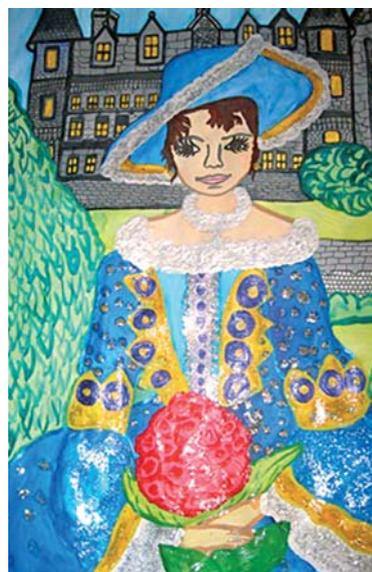
Hoffmann's first book of stories was published in 1814: *Fantasy Pieces in Callot's Manner*. It was well received but, in 1822, the writer died. Since then, Hoffman has gained popularity around the world, with his novels and stories translated into French and English. No other German romantic writer has received such global recognition.

Naïve portrait for museum

By Galina Grishkevets

International exhibition of children's drawings hosted by National Centre of Art Creativity for Children and Young People

The exhibition showcases over 100 children's works from Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. According to Vladimir Schastny, the Chairman of Belarus' National Commission for UNESCO, who spoke at the presentation, Minsk is the first capital to host this international event on its tour.



Drawing at the exhibition

The exhibition has been initiated by the Forum of Slavic Cultures and was first presented in May 2012 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, to mark the Day of Slavic Culture and Written Language, helped by the Belarusian Embassy to France. National contests were held in participating countries to select works. Over 400 children (pre-school and junior age) took part in the Belarusian national contest, with the best 16 works sent to the international exhibition in Paris and awarded prizes.

The current exhibition has been organised by the Belarus' National Commission for UNESCO, the Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs and the National Centre of Art Creativity for Children and Young People, with assistance from the Belarusian Embassy to France. Foreign diplomats from participating countries attended the launch, alongside representatives of the Foreign Ministry of Belarus and those from Belarusian Education Ministry institutions and pupils from children's art schools.

A representative of the Slovenian Embassy to Russia and Belarus (concurrent), Denis Mantsevich, noted that this exhibition should promote more active cultural dialogue between member states.



Celebration of the 'Kolyady Tsars' rite in the village of Semezhevo

Local residents preserve tradition

By Alexander Semenov

Daily Mail familiarises British with 'Kolyady Tsars' rite

The 'Kolyady Tsars' rite is a tradition marked in Belarus on January 13th — the old date for the New Year. The British Daily Mail newspaper recently noted the event, which is performed only by the residents of Semezhevo village, near Minsk, and is registered on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

The custom originates in the 18th century, when the Tsar's mili-

tary troops were stationed near Semezhevo. On the eve of the New Year, officers and soldiers visited homes to give comic performances in return for reward. The unique and spectacular event involves around 500 people, with seven chosen to play the 'Kolyady Tsars'. They dress in white trousers and shirts, with red embroidered belts crossed across their chests, and high caps adorned with colourful paper ribbons.

The characters of Dzed (old man) and Baba (old lady) are played by a young girl and boy respectively.