

Wonderful city where 'houses look onto the wide Dnieper'

Vladimir Korotkevich — Belarus' original writer of Gothic horror stories, whose books are translated into dozens of languages — is much loved and revered in his native Orsha, where the city museum keeps unique exhibits devoted to his life and artistry

By Yuri Chernyakevich

A monument to Vladimir Korotkevich — known to all lovers of historical novels in Belarus and beyond — can be found in the city of Orsha, on the banks of the River Dnieper. His stories have been translated into dozens of languages and several streets are named in his honour. A monument to Mr. Korotkevich even stands in Kiev.

His last book — *The Black Castle of Olshany* — quickly sold out in bookstores and was even stolen from reading halls and libraries. Visitors to Orsha's Vladimir Korotkevich Museum can learn so much about the writer! Interestingly, the building is located on the central city square, where a maternity clinic was once situated and where the writer was born, on November 26th, 1930.

Mr. Korotkevich — who mostly wrote mystery novels — actually predicted that a museum named after him would open in the centre of Orsha. Olga Pashkovich, a senior museum officer, tells us, "As a teenager, he was once walking along the street with his sister when it began raining. The youngsters found shelter by the maternity clinic and, smiling, Vladimir told his sister, "A museum will open here when I grow up and become famous." Everything has happened as he predicted: our museum exhibition opened in 2000, on the 70th anniversary of his birth."

The museum welcomes visitors with a replica of the writer's study, which features numerous photos on its walls: all show Vladimir's brooding eyes. His desk stands by the window and several cabinets hold the writer's personal belongings — including masks of outlandish Papuans, a collection of smoking pipes 'a la Sherlock Holmes', clay pots and lithographs by famous graphic artist Arlen Kashkurevich.

Another room is a happy hunting ground for lovers of the writer's works, since it holds many editions by Korotkevich (in various languages) and magazines in which his writing appeared. In addition, there's an electronic database uniting Internet texts on the life of this outstanding poet, playwright and prose writer. You can watch a short film on Mr. Korotkevich's life, as well as films based on



Visitors to Korotkevich Museum learn wealth of interesting facts

his novels: *Christ Lands in Grodno*, *The Black Castle of Olshany*, *The Grey Legend*, and *The Savage Hunt of King Stakh*. The latter is of special interest, been viewed as a Soviet pioneer of horror and Gothic stories. Ms.

Pashkovich notes, "*The Savage Hunt of King Stakh* is a truly Gothic film, shot in Soviet times: it has nothing in common with modern horrors or detective stories, but takes us to a dark, decaying castle, surrounded by obscure grey marshes, full of ancient legends and family curses. The material world 'dissolves' under the pressure of such mystic forces."

Christ Lands in Grodno (another tragic novel screened in Soviet times) was shot in 1967, and then banned for over two decades, before being publically released in 1989, as an edited version.

Interestingly, the first translation of Mr. Korotkevich's book into a foreign language was made while he was completing his university studies. Czech translator Vaclav Jedlicki so admired his *Impossible to Forget, or Leonids Won't Return to Earth* that he immediately translat-

ed the novel into Czech and it was published abroad 17 years before it gained release in Belarus.

Walking through Orsha, I can't help but imagine Vladimir Korotkevich promenading its streets, parks and squares, several years ago. Standing on the riverbank, he must have admired the 'cherry houses looking onto the wide Dnieper', leaves falling in the city park and the revival of St. Epiphany Kuteinsky Monastery (founded almost four centuries ago by local Bogdan Stankevich).

Orsha residents continue to remember their famous countryman with love: all those from whom I requested directions were easily able to guide me to his monument, museum and family house. This surely indicates that modern Orsha could hardly exist without Vladimir Korotkevich. It seems unlikely that the situation will ever change.



Museum exhibits

Favourite occupation of a genuine cinema maitre

By Sergey Smirnov

Lithuanian actor Juozas Budraitis presents photo exhibition in Vitebsk

Well-known Soviet and Lithuanian theatre and cinema actor Juozas Budraitis has presented an exhibition of photographs, taken by him on film shoots: *My Cinema. 1970-1990*. Hosted by Vitebsk's Marc Chagall Museum, the venue also organised a discussion with Juozas, allowing fans to meet their hero.

The display of photographs first went on show in Minsk, during the *Listapad* Film Festival, in November 2013. The photos capture

popular actors from Soviet and Russian cinema, as well as shots of Mr. Budraitis' spouse. Her photo inspired the others, explains Juozas. "This shot was taken in 1969 and the sincerity of the portrait caught my imagination, sparking my hobby. Over numerous trips, at airports and stations, I watched people's faces, giving me a unique sort of 'acting education,'" notes Mr. Budraitis, stressing that he never received specialised education.

Juozas admits that he was unsure about exhibiting his photos, having always intended them to be for his own pleasure. "I thought that I'd just look at them from time to time, remembering these faces

and these eyes, and my feelings from each moment. However, it turned out that these faces are of interest to other people as well," he reveals. He was amazed by people's reactions at the first exhibition, held in Moscow in 2010.

The actor emphasises he was flattered by the opportunity to showcase his works at the Marc Chagall Museum. "I'm charmed by this wonderful city and have been fascinated to see the house where Chagall was born. I'd like to return in warmer weather to stroll Vitebsk's streets and see its houses. The walls of Chagall's house are so picturesque, you want to touch them," Mr. Budraitis smiles.

Good spring tradition

By Sergey Ivanov

Kvetkavy Rai art exhibition launches at National Library of Belarus' Labyrinth Gallery

The traditional exhibition features about 60 works by painters, graphic artists and photographers, with flowers being the theme of the show. Artist Vladimir Rynkevich notes that all artists explore floral images, which can represent so many moods and ideas. "For one artist, flowers can be a self-portrait; for another, they represent a particular, disturbing event. I paint my understanding of myself through flowers — all year long. Flowers illustrate the life cycle," asserts Mr. Rynkevich.

Brama Gallery founder Larisa Finkelstein, an art critic, considers the floral theme to be dangerous for a painter, since it can easily become a



generalised vision, rather than showing something original. She notes that *Kvetkavy Rai* (Flower Paradise) boasts highly creative works, saying, "It's very hard for an artist to remain on top form, producing something original, yet recognisable. It may be difficult to ascend a mountain, but it's even more difficult to remain there! At this exhibition, we present artists who've successfully remained at the top."

Tatiana Malysheva, who works with glass to create floral sculpture, is just one of the masters whose beautiful pieces are on show.