

Allow opera inside your soul

Bolshoi Theatre presented musical premiere at end of last year

By Yuliana Leonovich

German Hans-Joachim Frey's direction of Richard Wager's *Der Fliegende Holländer* (The Flying Dutchman) — staged by Austrian Manfred Mayrhofer — was a premiere for Belarus, opening at Minsk's International Christmas Opera Forum. Stanislav Trifonov's golden baritone enchanted the audience, as the captain of the famous phantom ship.

Mr. Trifonov is singing with the Bolshoi Theatre for the eighth season, having auditioned seven years ago, arriving from Odessa. Theatre heads immediately recognised his talent and signed his contract. However, even some of Stanislav's colleagues are unaware that he holds a Belarusian passport, having grown up in Grodno with his family. He was born in Siberia but moved to Belarus aged just 11 months.

Stanislav admits that he never planned on becoming a musician, let alone an opera singer. He worked in a factory and sang for a church choir. However, his elder brother is a professional musician and encouraged Stanislav to go to Minsk to allow a good teacher to hear his voice. The led to him entering the Musical College, showing that our destiny is sometimes laid before us: 'what man proposes, God disposes.'

Are you a fatalist?

Like all those with an artistic personality, I believe in fate rather than coincidence. On graduating, I had the choice of continuing my studies in Odessa or in St. Petersburg. Before my entrance exams, I was promenading along the main avenue, near the Philharmonic Concert Hall, when I noticed a poster stating that Minsk would soon host 'Quo Vadis' — performed by Vasily Navrotsky. The latter would be-



Der Fliegende Holländer was performed at the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre

come my teacher if I chose to move to Odessa so I decided to attend the show and see him perform. He then listened to my voice and advised me to come to Odessa, so I did.

Did you feel regret choosing Odessa over St. Petersburg: the cultural capital, boasting the Mariinsky Theatre?

Odessa boasts vocal traditions and a past just as rich and charismatic as those in St. Petersburg. I feel no regret at all, having met my love there: my wife Diana (now a soloist with the Belarusian Opera). We met during our entrance exams for the Conservatoire, performing a scene together from the 'Fountain of Bakhchisaray'.

You were a soloist with the Odessa theatre for ten years. What made you return to Minsk?

Our troupe was experiencing a long-drawn out artistic crisis, with no

new performances staged. Our repertoire was unchanged. I then went to Belarus, auditioning for 'Tosca', and stayed.

Are you pleased with your present repertoire?

Of course. My roles in 'Rigoletto' and 'Boris Godunov' are most artistes' dream. These dramatic characters are close to my spirit, so I don't need to 'act'. I simply put on Boris Godunov's costume and I'm ready.

I personally love your role as the Tsar in Nabucco.

Thank you. I'm pleased to hear this, as I also love this role; I consider myself lucky. 'Nabucco' is among the most complicated performances at our theatre, requiring concentration and great acting skills.

Do the amazing lighting effects and stage transformation steal the audience's attention?

I tend to be disturbed more by whispers in the auditorium and mobile phones ringing.

Can you hear whispers from as far back as the eighth row?

Of course; it's a mistake to think that the actors see and hear nothing beyond the stage. Of course, we're intent on our roles but we notice things like people leaving the auditorium. Noise and movement backstage also divert our attention. When you're performing, you're in an extreme place, with high levels of adrenalin. It's a true psychological challenge.

Have you ever forgotten your lines?

I'm made from flesh and blood so, yes, of course I have. Happily, I tend to sing on autopilot, so my brain takes over. I even think of my lines while I'm in bed. When I was preparing for 'Der Fliegende Holländer', I could hardly

think of anything else. I'll soon be singing in Cortes' Bear but keep thinking of lines from 'Der Fliegende Holländer'.

Is it easy for you to sing in the original German?

I've sung previously in the language of Goethe and Schiller, so it's not been a huge problem. Naturally, it is a challenge to sing in a foreign language and German is a tricky language for opera — like Russian; I'm always impressed by those Western vocalists who sing brilliantly in Russian. German consultants helped us rehearse for this performance — teaching us pronunciation and our lines.

Director Hans-Joachim Frey described the recent premiere as 'emotionally fine!' How do you assess the first night?

The audience's reaction is key and, judging by the warm words we heard after the premiere, the show met people's expectations. However, it's too early to say that the performance is strong and steady: if people continue showing the same interest after our tenth staging, then we'll be able to speak of success. It's a shame that no TV channel has ever recorded any premiere for broadcast (although our theatre presents many annually).

It probably isn't profitable for them.

I understand this but people can't grow to love culture simply by watching soap operas and talk shows. It's disappointing that modern people think of Galkin's travesty of Baskov when they think of opera. I can't understand why the media prefers to make a pop awards ceremony the key musical event of the year, rather than the Bashmet or Spivakov festivals. The media tends to popularise the view of opera as being for the elite but I disagree, believing that the theatre should be open to everyone.

Modernity in the Mirror of Time

Exhibition by Belarusian painter Marina Elyashevich opens at Repin's Zdravnevo Museum-Estate

By Andrey Fiodorov

Marina Elyashevich presented ten portraits of women, created using the Chinese painting technique. To create the works, the artist used rice paper, ink, and mineral pigments. "The project has been intended for this particular museum and is dedicated to the early 20th century. The works feature images of young women from the times of Ilya Repin. This is an attempt to connect



The Grodno artist, Marina Elyashevich, at the exhibition opening

the present day with the past. The *Mirror of Time* presents the modernity, reflected in the past," noted Ms. Elyashevich at the exhibition.

The artist emphasised that her works unite two cultures. "I use Chinese materials and technique, but the emotions and inspiration are purely Belarusian," she added.

The artist said that she visited the museum in Zdravnevo for the first time last year. Since then she has wanted to return to the place, but not empty-handed. The *Mirror of Time* exhibition made her dream come true.

Alexey Sukhorukov, Head of the

Zdravnevo branch of the Vitebsk Regional Local History Museum, noted that both the artist and the museum were interested in the co-operation.

"The personal exhibition will last till February, and we've also agreed that in the spring Marina Elyashevich will give a master-class and participate in our 'plein airs', our outdoor painting event. This year, all the events at the museum will be held in the context of the 170th anniversary of Ilya Repin and the 25th anniversary of the museum. The *Mirror of Time* personal exhibition by Marina Elyashevich is the first event to celebrate these anniversaries," stressed Mr. Sukhorukov.

Folk art for the generations

By Sergey Smirnov

Belarusian State Academy of Arts' Academia Art Gallery hosts commemorative meeting of famous Belarusian historian Mikhail Romanyuk, accompanied by the Name Continues Life exhibition, devoted to him

The exposition features works by prominent masters, those who knew Mikhail Romanyuk personally, as well as pictures by novice students of the Academy. The exhibited pieces present pictorial and graphical art, photography and decorative-and-

applied art.

One of the corners of the exposition is dedicated to Mr. Romanyuk's ethnographic activity, showcasing items brought by him from his research expeditions among Belarusian villages: folk art items and elements of women's festive costumes.

The installation of the researcher's personal belongings is an important emotional and symbolical accent of the exhibition. The results of the researcher's works on Belarusian folk costume studies can be seen in reconstructions of the national costumes, made by Academy students.

Forty years of playbills

By Andrey Fiodorov

Lithuanian Movie Poster international exhibition project displays works from Lithuanian Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinema, at Gomel's Art Gallery of Gavriil Vashchenko

Forty posters are on show, covering almost four decades of cinema. The oldest advertises *Ausra prie Nemuno* (Dawn Over the Nieman) from 1953. Other exhibits include

posters promoting *Eternal Light* — by Raimundas Slizys, *Flight Through Atlanta* — by Vytautas Kaušini, and *Noah's Ark* — by Jokūbas Jacovskis.

Lithuanian film posters were born and developed against a background of strict censorship; they kept a strong Lithuanian cultural influence, rather than being guided by external trends in cinema. The Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinema began collecting such posters in the 1950s and boasts almost a complete collection.