

Town Hall by candlelight — it is original

On the eve of the exhibition opening in Vitebsk, Vladimir Prokoptsov organised an unusual 'inflammatory' performance in the centre of the city

By Sergey Golesnik

Near the building of the Town Hall, where the Vitebsk Regional Museum of Local History is located, there are always many people. Tourists, enamoured couples and mums with children come here. The ancient building looks especially beautiful in twilight, when the illumination is switched on. Recently, the already habitual radiance was augmented by the light of three candles which sat, somewhat precariously, on the wide-brimmed hat of an artist. This artist was the Director General of the National Art Museum of Belarus, Vladimir Prokoptsov, who arrived in Vitebsk from the capital to open his personal exhibition. The previous evening, he continued working near Town Hall on one of his canvases and any interested person could help him with his artistic endeavour. If anyone was frightened by the candles' naked flame, a fireman, armed with a fire extinguisher, was on duty near the easel and was ready to extinguish it in case of any

emergency situation. The artist admitted that the last thing he wanted was to start a fire and be compared to be Herostratus, especially in the city which he seriously considers his second native land.

"I am not only the director of the museum, but also an artist!" This is the way Vladimir Prokoptsov positions himself. "In the daytime I have little time, therefore I have to work with easel and paints in the evenings." Last year, Vladimir Ivanovich turned 60. Since then he has travelled across the country with his anniversary tour. Exhibitions have been already held in Lepel, Dobrush and Svetlogorsk. The artist, who born in the Gomel Region, did not chose Vitebsk for his next exhibition casually. 40 years ago, he finished at the Art and Graphic Department of the Vitebsk State Pedagogical Institute. His personal exhibition, *Strings of Space and Time*, consisting of 23 pictures, opened in the regional library and according to Prokoptsov it is the original artistic report before the



Vladimir Prokoptsov's performance was unusual and spectacular

city where he spent his student years. "Vitebsk is my second native land. This city possesses a remarkable creative aura and still gives me powerful spiritual replenishment. Here we learnt drawing and dreamt to become as well-known as Marc Chagall. My teachers and friends live here. These are Professors Vyacheslav Shamshur and Yelena Zhukova, colleagues and artists Leonid Medvedsky, Oleg Skovorodko and many others. In the picture, *My Vitebsk*, which together with the townspeople I finished near the town hall, contains part of my great love to the regional centre. I do not exclude that, in the future, a whole series of pictures devoted to Vitebsk will appear in the future, which I will present to the city."

Vladimir Prokoptsov has a picture, *Vitebsk Dreams about Paris*.

It has something in common with Chagall's, *Walk over Vitebsk*. But Chagall with Bella, fly over Vitebsk, while Prokoptsov, with his Muse, are on the moon, over Vitebsk and Paris simultaneously. Each time, he comes to Vitebsk, Vladimir Ivanovich worries that he will not see the city of his youth, "The well-known 'blue house', depicted in the pictures of the famous watercolourist, Felix Gumen, was unfortunately repainted white. It was an original, colourful and dominant building, now it has disappeared into the background. Fortunately, perhaps, it is the only disappointment. In other respects, Vitebsk blossoms. It is pleasant to see, for example, the majestic, restored churches."

The presentation of the Boris Krepak book, *Quadriga of Life*, took

place during opening of the exhibition in the regional library. It is the narrative of the writer, and also material he collected from art critics about Prokoptsov. These materials contain information about his study at the Art and Graphic Department. So Vitebsk of Prokoptsov, Vitebsk of the 70s, which was experiencing an artistic renaissance, will remain, for a long time, engraved in the memory. In the printed word and on canvas, written in oil. One such canvas is *My Vitebsk*, where City Hall in the evening is depicted, a blossoming chestnut tree and the artist in a wide-brimmed hat with burning candles...

Even foreign amateur artists can get acquainted Prokoptsov's paintings as he has already received offers to organise exhibitions in Hungary and Serbia next year.

In beat of polonaise from Michał Kleofas Ogiński

The 10th International Festival *Polonaise-2014* was held in Slonim. More than 500 amateur artistes from Belarus, Poland and Lithuania gathered there. Sincere melodies and songs sounded, while numerous dancing collectives performed on stage.

By Iosif Popko

The anniversary festival started near the ancient tower, where about a hundred years ago each day — at 8am and 8pm — the city orchestra performed the legendary polonaise *Farewell to the Homeland* of fellow countryman, composer Michał Kleofas Ogiński. The Chair of the Slonim District Office of the Union of Poles in Belarus, Leonarda Revkovskaya, did not hide her excitement during the opening of the holiday, "I will never forget the day when the first festival took place. We started from nothing, only 10 collectives gathered and in songs and dances, they showed all fascination of polonaise. But gradually, a big river appeared from a small musical stream. The geography of the concert programme extends. I am proud that the festival of Ogiński lives not only in Belarusian, but also Polish and Lithuanian cultures. Special gratitude should be made to the local authorities who took upon themselves the basic financial ex-



At the festival in Slonim

penses. Only by being together we could give people such a remarkable holiday."

The holiday continued on the central streets of the city. Performances of two brass orchestras — from Slonim and Białystok became the zest of the 'polonaise' processions and the resonant melody of trumpets and drums were echoed far and wide. There was the impression that the ancient city had been plunged into never-ending music...

formed on piano, violins, guitars, dulcimers, trumpets, flutes, button accordions and cellos... Such melodious and lingual diversity has not been seen and heard for a long.

In total, 32 collectives performed at the festival. Guests from Poland pleasantly surprised the audience. They arrived in Slonim in five buses from Białystok, Warsaw and Poznań. In total, there were more than 150 artistes, while the orchestral group became the most numerous, with 38 people.

The Białystok children's vocal chorus *Melodyka* debuted at the festival. Its head, Jerzy Boltut often visits Belarus, "School #34 of Białystok, where I work as headmaster, concluded an agreement on co-operation with the secondary school #16 of Lida city several years ago. We are connected not only by education, but also by sports and culture. We regularly meet on both sides of the border. Therefore, we willingly responded to the offer of Slonim residents to take part in the polonaise festival. Our girls per-

formed here. I hope that the spectators liked their performance."

Guests from the twin-city of Slonim, the Lithuanian city of Molėtai, which is located 60 kilometres from Vilnius, came to the festival for the first time. A quartet of musicians, masterly performed their polonaise pieces and, as a result, became one of the winners of the competition. The head of the collective, Inga Narushene sees great prospects of the festival, "The composer with a world name of Michał Kleofas Ogiński is equally valuable for Belarusians, Poles and Lithuanians. Therefore I have a suggestion — to hold such a musical festival by turns in the three neighbouring countries. For example, it is possible to start at the Augustovskiy Canal, which unites our states. While the final of the musical programme, certainly, should be Slonim, with its rich traditions of such a holiday."

The festival of polonaise came to an end in the evening in the city park.