

Belye Rosy ensemble visits Tchaikovsky Hall

Year of Belarusian Culture in Russia embraces various events and venues

By Tatiana Vlasova

"The year has been full of projects," notes Tadeush Struzhetskyy, Belarus' Deputy Culture Minister. Tour activity has intensified, with our leading groups performing in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other Russian cities. The *With Love from Belarus* pop tour featured leading performers and pop bands while the State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Belarus performed in Moscow, alongside the State Dance Company of Belarus and the Yanka Kupala National Academic Theatre.

The Days of Belarusian Culture were hosted by St. Petersburg and included a gala-concert by Belarusian pop stage masters, a concert by the State Chamber Orchestra of Belarus at the Hermitage Concert Hall and a round table discussion of writers. Events also took place in Yaroslavl, where a thematic exhibition from the Maxim Bogdanovich Literary Museum went on show. Days of Belarusian Cinema were hosted by various Russian regions.

The Legend of Ulenspiegel ballet was staged at the State Academic Bolshoi Theatre of Russia, marking the solemn opening of the Year of Belarusian Culture. Its music was composed by Russian-born Belarusian classic Yevgeny Glebov while the choreography and staging were prepared by Valentin Yelizariyev, People's Artiste of Belarus and the USSR; it involved artists from the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus and is considered to be a pearl of classical Belarusian legacy.

Brest Fortress — a film by Alexander Kott — has been a wonderful example of co-operation and a symbol of this year. The picture premiered in Brest, with veterans



Belye Rosy song, music and dance ensemble closes Year of Belarusian Culture in Russia

among the audience, and greatly impressed everyone. Later, it was also premiered as part of the opening of the *Listapad* Film Festival. Moscow hosted the Days of Belarusian Cinema and our country was an honorary guest at a book fair in the Russian capital.

The Year of Belarusian Culture in Russia finished with a performance by *Belye Rosy* — a song, music and dance ensemble; the event was hosted by the Tchaikovsky Hall, including a performance by *Natkhnenne* — a straw weaving studio.

"*Belye Rosy* ensemble was established in 1987, in Grodno, and has

won prestigious festivals," explains *Belye Rosy's* Artistic Leader, Vera Chichina. "It's very popular abroad. We give almost the same number of concerts abroad as we do in Belarus: we have a 16 year contract with Spain and a 10 year contract with France. Foreigners ask us to stage former USSR national dances, as our repertoire covers Russian, Ukrainian and Georgian dance."

Your dancers have wonderful costumes.

Our costumes are hand-made, sewn by the artistes themselves.

You also play unusual instruments.

We have dulcimers, which are

Belarusian instruments. However, we also play the lyra and duda.

Why is this performance so important to you?

The road to Russia is again open to us. Long ago, we arrived in Kuban feeling worried, as we were a provincial band. However, after our performance, the governor showed us the newspaper reviews, saying: 'Look, how well they're writing about you!'

A programme has been signed for further collaboration between our two countries. The Year of Belarusian Culture and the Year of Russian Culture will continue into the future.

Singing promotes friendship

Grodno hosts traditional Artistic Meetings Grodno-Bialystok festival

The event takes place in both regions by rotation, with Belarusian songs performed by ethnic Belarusians living in Poland and Polish songs sung by Belarusian Poles. This year, the event was dedicated to the *Path to Reciprocity* conference, organised by the Committee for Religion and Nationalities, the Grodno Regional Executive Committee, Yanka Kupala Grodno State University and the Belarusian Philology Chair at Bialystok University, as well as the Union of Poles in Belarus and the Belarusian Public and Cultural Society in Poland. Over a hundred scientists arrived from Minsk and Warsaw, Gomel and Lublin, Gdańsk, Brest and other cities in neighbouring states to discuss topics of common interest.

Grand Prix for Minsk

Young Belarusian artist wins contest in St. Petersburg

The Grand Prix of the International *Tausen* National and Folklore Creativity Contest in St. Petersburg has been awarded to Andrey Demyanenko (playing the domra) of Minsk. Young talents from various cities and regions of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia, Korea, China, Hungary, the Czech Republic and elsewhere took part in the event. Belarus was represented by two entrants: 14 year old Andrey Demyanenko and 7 year old Sofia Vorsa (mandolin). Sofia was awarded a contest diploma for 1st place among solo performers playing folk instruments. The contest was organised as part of the international *Vivat, Talent!* contest and festival project, aiming to preserve and develop national cultures while popularising traditional amateur arts with folk roots and enhancing the professional mastery of artistic and creative bands.

When dancers stir feelings on stage

Vitebsk hosts International Modern Choreography Festival

By Victoria Mikhailovskaya

Unsurprisingly, the Grand Prix of the event was won by the state dance company of the Chinese People's Liberation Army; who can surpass the virtuoso technique of the Chinese? Maybe this was why choreographic groups from the Baltic States and Belarus have tried to deconstruct the genre of modern dance, feeling their way to the very edge which divides physical movement from the essence of dance. At what point do physical dance movements become a true performance?

Who can say why simple movements on stage can arouse cheerful laughter among the audience yet injure the feelings of a professional

jury? Just a few hundredths of a point separated Belarusian *D.O.Z.S.K.I.* from the main prize, with choreographer Dmitry Zalessky — a Vitebsk's public favourite — staging *Nothing Common*, an eccentric short. In his performances, Dmitry usually works skilfully with colours, preferring a dramatic palette to the semi-tones of black, white and dark blue. He chose an amusing children's song for his new performance — *Two Merry Geese Were Living With Granny* — with the two dancers conflicting in the same way as the characters from the song. Zalessky has found conflict between European, Chinese and Belarusian contemporary dance at international festivals. "Our modern dance is classical," he notes. "Various

dance styles are seen in Europe but aren't always interesting to audiences. We have nothing in common." Meanwhile, the acknowledged Italian *Spellbound* Dance Company (translated as a 'dance enchanted studio') was among the leading stars of the recent event. Their *Downshifting* ballet impressed both IFMC entrants and the professional jury. Dancers from the Kiev Modern Ballet were left with great impressions for several hours after the performance by Mauro Astolfi's troupe. From a technical point

of view, it was perfect ballet with prolonged action, requiring some time to understand.

The Italians were impressed by the organisation of the Vitebsk event. According to choreographer Astolfi,



Chinese performers win festival's Grand Prix

if such a festival had taken place in Europe, it would have been shifted to Paris, making it a premier event in the dance world.

This year's IFMC brought together 25 artistic troupes from Belarus, Germany, China, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Switzerland, Estonia and Japan. As is traditional, next year, the Vitebsk festival will embrace troupes from throughout the nation. According to Marina Romanovskaya, Deputy Director General of the Vitebsk Culture Centre's Special Projects, new dance groups are already sending applications from Minsk, Grodno and Soligorsk, many for the first time.

Asking Mr. Zalessky whether he'll be able to stage a major performance in time for the next IFMC, he noted, "I'd love to but I won't jump the gun. This year, before the festival, some colleagues were blowing their own trumpets, saying they'd be performing at the IFMC as guests. However, many didn't make it onto the contest programme. We shouldn't rest on our laurels. We need to constantly reinvent ourselves."