

People from all over Europe arrive to see *Khoroshki*

Khoroshki Dance Company has long been a musical symbol of Belarus, like Vladimir Mulyavin's *Pesnyary* band

Since 1974, the head of the ensemble, Valentina Gaevaya, has toured over almost every part of the planet with her dancers. Spectators from Denmark, Syria, Cyprus, Jordan, Finland, the UK, Belgium, Japan, India, Italy, Spain, Poland, Germany, France, the USA and Russia have given standing ovations to our Belarusian artistes. Several members of Ms. Gaevaya's 'dance theatre' are now involved in the National Bolshoi Theatre troupe.

Ms. Gaevaya, how did you come to create *Khoroshki*?

It was a long road. I had been keen on dance since childhood but hadn't ever thought of becoming a choreographer.

What did you dream of as a child?

I dreamt of being an actress. However, a teacher once told me: 'Valya, you're very feminine and small. Which roles could you suit? Think of something else.'

Not everyone is aware of how the title for the dance company appeared. Can you remember how it came about...

Khoroshki village in the Mogilev Region had its own amateur group, comprising ten singing and dancing elderly women and a flaxen-haired young boy, who headed the local club. We saw these creative people at a performance in Mogilev and were impressed by their sincerity. I've remem-



Each dance by *Khoroshki* is a small performance, with its own complicated drama and system of images

bered them for ever afterwards and have a 'Gusariki' show in our repertoire: a dance of the Khoroshki village.

You began your career in Mogilev, so how did you come to appear in Minsk?

The Culture Ministry asked me to set up a folk dance company at Minsk's Philharmonic, encompassing new programmes for Belarusian dances. In 1973, I took up this job, as chief ballet master of the Philharmonic Society. We often toured Russia and gave concerts for tourists in

Leningrad. At that time, In-tourist offered us a wonderful stage at the Leningrad Hotel, with good lighting and music. We rehearsed our new programmes there, including 'Polotskaya Tetrade' — a historical panorama dedicated to the Renaissance age. The Finns used to visit our shows several times while in Leningrad; we came to recognise them individually. In 1984, I was given a room at the Philharmonic Society and my own ballet class. In the early 1990s, I prepared 'Farewell, 20th

Century', based on the passing century's popular music. I drew on Jewish customs, as these traditions greatly influenced Belarusian culture. On demonstrating 'Bobruisk Pictures' in Moscow, Igor Moiseev especially attended.

How do Belarusian and Russian dances differ?

After arriving in Belarus (I was born in Russia), I immediately saw how wonderfully Belarusians dance and dress and how melodically they speak. This greatly differed from Russian and Ukrainian

traditions. I began to set up an ensemble, reflecting the national characteristics of the Belarusian nation, encompassing the Belarusian spirit. I noticed the gestures and expressions of rural performers and used them to inspire my work. With its first programme, 'Khoroshki' toured Ukraine, proving a great success. Our programmes couldn't be confused with others, since each dance was a mini performance, with its own drama and appearance. We told audiences about the life and tra-

ditions of Belarus through our dances.

What inspires your costumes?

As soon as our first programme was launched, I began to think about costumes. I went to the Academy of Sciences and asked for documents on Belarusian costume but they had very little information. I then decided to apply to Leningrad's Opera and Ballet Theatre and ethnographic museum, studying piles of historical documents.

You've toured widely through the West. How did people there perceive *Khoroshki* and Belarus?

Since 1975, we've been touring abroad annually, as part of the friendship society. Previously, all who arrived in the West from the USSR were considered to be Russian. For foreigners, there was no difference between Belarusians and Uzbeks. However, when we entered the stage, everyone was surprised, saying that our performances greatly differed from the 'Russian pattern' of balalaikas, red shirts, crackers and prisyardka (a step in Slavic folk dancing in which the dancer squats on their haunches and kicks out each foot alternately). People wondered what Belarus was all about. After 1986, we often visited Italy and earned money for the Chernobyl Foundation. Interestingly, people from all over Europe arrived to see 'Khoroshki'.

By Victor Andreyev

Françoise Limouzy able to amazingly draw with water

Modern French artist's show opens at Gomel's Palace and Park Ensemble

By Alena Germanovich

The *Water and Rock* exhibition has been organised with assistance from the French Embassy, showcasing over 70 pieces in ink and acrylic paint, on canvas and paper. Ms. Limouzy's works have already been exhibited in Belarus — at Marc Chagall's Art Centre in Vitebsk. Now, her exhibition is likely to visit the Modern Fine Arts Museum in Minsk.

"I don't belong to any academic school. I'm enthralled by the curious and mysterious process of contemplation, allured by the sensuous, charming power of nature. I have very personal relations with colour and form. Being confident in what I'm doing, my brushes are weapons of creativity. At first, I used water-colour and pastel techniques; I then shifted to acrylic paints and ink



Françoise Limouzy

with big brushes. I can draw sitting, standing or kneeling, with a big sheet of paper in front of me on the ground, grass or in the kitchen. I'm interested in traditions and always listen to advice — given to me by life itself. I use water to draw, some-

times rainwater, since it's a pleasure for me to be closely connected with natural elements. I need to 'dissolve' colour, making it more transparent and easier to use. I want to make it flow, illuminate and mix, while playing with its intensity. If I'm in the countryside, I usually leave my works to dry in the sun."

Françoise Limouzy was born in July 1957. After studying the history of art and drama, she began her career as a theatre comedy actress (primarily in Paris), to which she devoted the next 12 years of her life. Afterwards, Ms. Limouzy left Paris to travel. Impressions from her trips are reflected in her paintings: a lake in Norway or sea foam at Réunion Island from the Indian Ocean. At present, she lives in Paris, where she teaches yoga, and in the south of France, in Catalonia, where she was born.



Minsk's theatrical shows become part of excursions

Educating tourists

By Andrey Alferov

Theatrical Minsk excursion, popular some twenty years ago, is revived

"The idea of reviving this cultural excursion has been debated for several years," notes Yelena Solovieva, a consultant at the Sports and Tourism Ministry's Tourism Department. "Necessary documents have been prepared and, soon, the first training for guides will take place."

Undoubtedly, the theatrical ex-

cursion will be interesting to those keen on culture. Minsk's theatrical life is dynamic, so the tour promises plenty of interest. Sightseers will see the original site planned for the circus, learn what connects famous Russian actor Oleg Yankovsky with Belarus and why he was invited to Los Angeles for the 'Oscar' ceremony.

Naturally, the tour will include visits to theatres, with tickets to a performance offered from a list for any particular day.