

Exhibitions open to public day and night

Museum Night gathers thousands of art fans countrywide for interesting performances

By Viktor Korbut

The event was first held in France, enabling those with small incomes to visit museums. Some time later, it gained popularity all over Europe, with Belarus joining in 2004. The National Art Museum pioneered the festival, with thirty percent of all Belarusian museums now part of the event, remaining open to the public all night. The figure rises every year, as a greater number of museums open annually countrywide. So far, there are 150 of them.

Museums in the capital and beyond are demonstrating interesting exhibitions. The National History Museum's *Exhibited for the First*

Time presents a treasury of 17th century printed editions, alongside graphic pieces by Pavel Tatarnikov and paintings by Yuri Nesteruk (featuring the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania). Also included are photos depicting battle scenes from the liberation of Belarus against the Nazis and the National Bank's state awards and commemorative coins.

Even after *Museum Night* is finished, the History Museum continues the tradition of showcasing rarities, presenting the restored 16th century *Apostle*. The book was printed by Belarusian Mamonichi merchants' printing house, in Vilnius, for further distribution among Russian Orthodox believers (at that

time, book printing was underdeveloped in Russia). It was purchased from a private owner ten years ago, in a bad state. Restorers Andrey Krapivka and Irina Zelenaya have spent over a year restoring it to its original form.

This summer, the largest museum complex in the country opens: Nesvizh Palace and Park Ensemble. Decorations are now being prepared, with the site boasting over a thousand chandeliers. The most luxurious have a great number of crystal pendants and are covered in gold, chrome and brass — all produced by a private company in Lida.

Meanwhile, the tourist season is in full swing at Mir Castle, with guests able



Museums countrywide open to visitors on this May night

to visit the ancient fortress (part of the UNESCO World Heritage List). The castle has been operational as a museum since early 2011. Acting Director Sergey Berezovsky tells us that it is enjoying increasing interest, with Belarusians from all over the Republic arriving, in addition to Russians. Tourists from the UK, Germany, France,

Japan, China and elsewhere also come.

From time to time, the castle's interiors and inner courtyard have been used to shoot documentaries and feature films. The castle also traditionally hosts concerts organised by ONT TV Channel, with the next scheduled for June 17th-19th. At present, tourists can visit the

south-western tower and two towers in the northern block, in addition to the chapel of the Svyatopolk-Mirskie dukes. A Minsk company is to open a restaurant and a hotel on the premises — soon to welcome their first guests.

By 2017, a museum quarter will have been built in Minsk, with the project approved by the Government.

Masterpieces in virtual space

By Darya Kirillova

Information and Educational Centre — Russian Museum: Virtual Branch — opens in Polotsk, with local university acting as its partner



Modern day Polotsk University

The Russian Museum's virtual branch is to work from the former Jesuit Collegium, which dates back to 1581 and now houses two departments of Polotsk University: history and philology, and IT. The Information and Educational Centre's primary goal is to educate, providing access to important electronic and printed materials from the Russian Museum.

Visitors will be able to 'tour' the outstanding palaces of St. Petersburg and see digitised masterpieces by established Russian artists. Individual and group excursions will be possible, via a classroom equipped with computers and a multimedia cinema hall equipped with projectors. Polotsk University has allocated special services for this joint project.

For the opening of the branch, museum staff prepared a lecture on a famous painting from the Russian Museum: *Vladimir and Rogneda* by Anton Losenko (1770). It shows the tragic history of the Princess of Polotsk and the Prince of Kiev.

According to Dmitry Glukhov, the Polotsk University's Pro-rector, the opening of the Russian Museum's virtual branch will contribute to the aesthetic education of students, meeting the highest requirements of university education. It will also spiritually enrich future professionals. Virtual tours of the Russian Museum will be available for Polotsk schoolchildren and tourists and will doubtless prove to be an exciting experience.

Mr. Glukhov hopes that other projects will follow. He notes that Polotsk University and the Russian Museum are currently discussing opportunities for joint activities, including those using information technologies.

Polotsk University continues the traditions of the great philosophers of Belarus, having 16 doctors of sciences and professors on its staff, alongside over 150 candidates of sciences and assistant professors. University scientists have created and patented over 900 inventions, in Belarus, Russia, France, Germany, the UK, Italy, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, the USA, Canada, Japan and China. The Polotsk State University is the only Belarusian higher educational establishment to have branches in two cities: Polotsk and Novopolotsk. 14,000 students are currently enrolled.

Time for festival comes

By Yelena Bestuzheva

Tickets for 20th International Slavonic Bazaar in Vitebsk Arts Festival selling like hot cakes

The city over the Dvina River saw box office queues on the first day of ticket sales for the festival, with eager music lovers appearing at 6am, despite opening being scheduled for 10am. Meanwhile, tickets were also available via the Internet.

"Prices are quite reasonable," notes student Anna Vasilenko. "My friend and I want to see Didier Marouani and *Space* band." The concerts cost no more than \$20, with each sector of seats priced differently — quite affordable for everyone.

"My relatives from Brest are coming especially to visit me during the festival," Vitebsk pensioner Valentina Korotkevich tells us. "We've decided to go to the closing concert,



Vitebsk residents ready for Slavonic Bazaar festival programme

as such celebrations take place only once a year! Today, I'll buy tickets for us all."

The first concerts are to take place on July 6th, at the Summer Amphitheatre.

New model for museum work

By Olga Shvaikova

Over 20 new museums have appeared in Belarus over the last five years

Belarus' Deputy Culture Minister, Victor Kurash, has noted at a press conference in Minsk that, in addition to opening new museums, dozens of buildings have been reconstructed and 69 museums have received new equipment.

Meanwhile, work continues, with a new museum model sought, able to meet contemporary requirements. Last year, the

152 Belarusian state museums were visited by over 4.5m people. Moreover, in 2010, over 3,500 exhibitions and more than 100,000 excursions were organised.

At present, a range of major projects are being implemented, with Nesvizh's Palace and Park Estate to open this year. A state catalogue of museum treasures is planned, with the most precious items, currently kept in museum archives, being registered on a database this year. Within five years, all museums should be provided with contemporary computer technology, with funding allo-

cated as part of the *Culture* state programme. Audio guides will be purchased, alongside multimedia projectors and info-kiosks.

The problem of keeping exhibits securely and in the best conditions remains acute, with a depositary for Republican and city museums currently being discussed.

International collaboration is also actively developing, with over 40 agreements with more than 10 states signed. Belarus is currently working with museums in Russia, Germany, France, Serbia, Azerbaijan and beyond.