

Centuries only enhance this masterpiece of operatic art

Opera and Ballet Theatre stages *Aida*, by Giuseppe Verdi, in 19th century style

By Tatiana Pastukhova

The original costumes and sets for *Aida* were designed by Yevgeny Chemodurov for his staging in Bucharest in 1953. The People's Artiste of Belarus and Honoured Figure of Arts of Russia, Lithuania and Tajikistan is known as a legend to the Belarusian Bolshoi Theatre and restoring his original creations has been no easy task. Few set sketches remain, so today's designers have had to read between the lines, using black and white photos to decide what must have inspired Mr. Chemodurov. On enlarging photos, details were uncovered regarding costumes, although the original colours remain a mystery. His original sketch books and drawings have also provided vital information.

The theatre's First Deputy General Director, Vladimir Rylatko, tells us, "I think audiences are seeing the true designs of Mr. Chemodurov, while the actors have tried to reflect the spirit of the performance, as well as its mood and character." Despite its large scale, the show is quite compact, able to be performed on any stage world-



Mikhail Pandzhavidze's *Aida* is among the largest shows performed at Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre

wide. It is still unknown whether the Belarusian version of *Aida* will tour abroad. Three casts of actors take part — all outstanding soloists with the theatre.

Director-producer Mikhail Pandzhavidze believes that Mr. Chemodurov's vision is embodied in *Aida* while the sets follow the classical style intentionally. "It is not an 'archive piece' but a styli-

sation, with Mr. Chemodurov's sketches brought to life via modern means. Our performance is not a literal copy; it is a reproduction using artistic license. We've simply followed colours and compositions," notes Mr. Pandzhavidze. In fact, the modern version differs in scale, power and pomposity — as characterised by Mr. Chemodurov's set designs and the style of

grand-opera. "Its peculiar feature is its traditionalism," the director stresses.

Verdi's *Aida* occupies a worthy place in global operatic art. It premiered in Cairo in December 1871 and, since then, has gained huge international recognition. Almost 140 years of staging at the most famous theatres has made it part of opera history, symbolising

all that is great and grand in the genre.

Aida occupies a special place for the Belarusian Opera and Ballet Theatre, being a popular performance. It was first staged by the company in 1953 by Belarusian singer Larisa Alexandrovskaya, director Lev Lyubimov and artist Sergey Nikolaev and has remained on the circuit for 55 years.

The Beatles in Chagall's city

Vitebsk takes the role of summer festival capital of the country

By Viktor Korbut

Garik Ogandzhanyan, Chairman of Vitebsk's Beatles Club, has initiated the International *Ob-la-di, Ob-la-da* Beatles Festival, scheduled for June. The event, dedicated to the creativity of the Fab Four, will be first hosted by the regional centre. Fans of the legendary British band will be offered several dozen thematic events on the city's streets and in Vitebsk's Attic Beatles Club. Moreover, major concerts are to be organised at the Summer Amphitheatre.

Chagall's city is already prepared to host the 20th International Slavonic Bazaar in Vitebsk Arts Festival. Young singer Alena Lanskaya will represent Belarus at the International Vitebsk-2011 Pop Song Performers Contest, promising to conquer hearts with her Belarusian language songs *Young and Unmarried* and *White Swallow*. Valery Daineko — a member of *Pesnyary* band, which is honoured in Belarus in the same way as *The Beatles* are worldwide — will help Alena with vocals.

New songs in the Belarusian language will be sung this autumn



Postavy festival is major event in world of folklore music

in Molodechno, which is to host *Maladzechna* — a festival of Belarusian poetry dedicated to the Republican *Dazhynki-2011* Festival-Fair of Rural Workers. The National Concert Orchestra, headed by maestro Mikhail Finberg, is also preparing for the holiday.

In the north of the Vitebsk Region, on the border with Lithuania, the 14th International *Cembalos and Accordions Are Ringing* Festival has been recently held, being the

major event in the cultural life of Postavy. The town is famous for its Baroque-style historical centre, and the preserved residence of the magnate Tizengauz, an ostrich farm and the residence of Zyuzya (the Belarusian Santa Claus).

In early June, Postavy brought together artistic bands from Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, China, Kazakhstan, Israel and Poland — around 1,000 guests in total. The I. Zhi-novich National Academic People's

Orchestra performed in the town's main square and, as is traditional, the *Music of Belarusian Palaces and Estates* concert was organised on the porch of Tizengauz's manor. The State Academic People's Choir (named after Tsitovich) ended the event with a gala-concert.

The Postavy festival is the largest in the life of folklore music in Eastern Europe. The 11th International *Golden Bee* Children's Art Festival, held in Klimovichi (in the east of the Mogilev Region, on the border with Russia), was no less spectacular, showing that the regions are taking a leading role in the nation's cultural life, leaving behind the capital during the summer period.

By autumn, festival life will be concentrated in Gomel, which will be hosting the 6th International Festival of Choreography — *Sozhski Karagod*. It promises to be one of the brightest events in the cultural life of Gomel, which is the cultural capital of Belarus and the CIS for 2011. The festival allows professional choreography groups and the best performers from Belarus and abroad to demonstrate their talents.

Truthful yet imaginative expression

Arshin Mal-Alan operetta — by Azerbaijani composer Uzeir Gadzhibekov — proposed for Belarus' National Theatrical Award

The performance premiered at the Belarusian State Academic Musical Theatre last autumn, with Azerbaijani opera stars performing the lead roles. Director Khafiz Guliyev and choreographer Medina Aliyeva worked together on the project.

"The participation of our colleagues from Baku helped us create convincing images while reflecting a true Eastern colour," explains People's Artiste of Belarus Natalia Gaida. "My new Azerbaijani friends gave me advice on how to play Aunt Dzha-khan's character, which I took on board with pleasure."

The theatres continue their co-operation, with Ayyub Guliyev — who is listed in the 'Golden Book of Young Talents of Azerbaijan' — recently directing a performance at the Minsk Musical Theatre. He tells us, "Belarusian artistes playing operetta characters take note of even the smallest intonations; I was especially impressed by Margarita Alexandrovich, playing a daughter of Sultan-Bek. I was also amazed by the orchestra; the musicians rehearse as much as needed, ever supporting their conductor."