

Play for theatrical exports

Pinning down Victor Manayev in Minsk is increasingly difficult these days. You're more likely to see him travelling by train, or you'll find him in Warsaw, where the Kupala Theatre's actor is playing at the Rampa Theatre. Nikolay Pinigin's staging of *Pinsk Gentry* is causing a stir, with Polish critics unanimously proclaiming it 'the major performance of the season'. Since no suitable Polish actor was found for the leading role, a Belarusian was invited. Mr. Manayev plays Kryuchkov, a bureaucratic bribe-taker who comes to Pinsk's marshes to settle local villagers' disputes. To date, Victor is the only Belarusian actor to be regularly invited abroad to play this role

How did the Poles learn about *Pinsk Gentry*?

They attended our 'Panorama' Festival and saw the performance staged by our Kupala Theatre, much admiring the directorship and actors. 'Pinsk Gentry' can be read in just 22 minutes but the performance lasts an hour and 40 minutes. Our Polish colleagues were surprised at how this could be possible.

Who proposed the idea of a Belarusian-Polish theatrical project?

A year ago, our chief director, Nikolay Pinigin, approached me, saying, "Let's go to Warsaw!" The Poles wanted Nikolay to stage 'Pinsk Gentry' for them. However, I dared not agree immediately. I don't speak Polish, though I understand the language. I asked Nikolay to let me think it over for the night and I soon realised that I don't take enough chances. Moreover, it occurred to me that I've known him for 25 years; thus ended my quiet life!

Did you start learning the text by rote?

I was given the script and spent three months learning it. Igor Skripko, who heads our theatre's literary section, advised me, being an expert in the Polish language. Even in Belarusian, it's difficult to pronounce the tongue twisters as they originally sounded. The situation is even worse in a foreign language. However, it's

important. The role of Kryuchkov presupposes a virtuoso treatment of words.

To what degree is the Rampa Theatre known in Poland?

Warsaw alone has 20 theatres — including a national theatre, which aims to appeal to the public, like our Kupala Theatre. Rampa has its own loyal audience, highly professional actors and two halls, which play to full houses, just 15 minutes from the centre of the city.

What do people in Warsaw say about you?

I've seen posters stating that 'the most outstanding Belarusian director — Pinigin' has come to Poland. My family name is also mentioned, alongside praise...

Why are you so modest?

I wish to appear ordinary. Some interviews with actors are irritating as the subject appears so egotistical. I prefer modesty. Mark Bernes once sang: 'The sun would not have risen in the morning if I were not alive'.

Should actors remain silent?

Why silent? It's better to speak on stage though, knowing your script by heart. Additionally, an actor can remain silent; I've performed in such stagings.

However, readers need society columns...

This is just gossip: lies and falsities — a bright cover, with rot inside. Speech sets us apart from animals but we also have



Victor Manayev well known by foreign theatrical audience

the power of reflection. We should consider our words, since we are responsible for each one.

It seems to me that your character of Kryuchkov says whatever he wishes without thought for the consequences...

True. He might tell Pinsk's gentry that it's March 69th and no one would contradict him! However, Kryuchkov has a particular goal: to dumbfound and bewilder.

Do you associate yourself with Kryuchkov?

This would be terrible!

What do you feel when playing him?

Pleasure.

Why? Kryuchkov is a scoundrel...

leagues?

I won't say I'm on such terms with all of Warsaw but I do have warm relations with those from the Rampa Theatre. During rehearsals, my colleagues give me cues on how to pronounce words. At weekends, they treat me to dinner, bringing tasty dishes from home and inviting me to their summer cottages. They're surprised to see a foreign actor come to their country knowing a Polish script yet not knowing Polish. We'd also be surprised to see a Polish actor in Minsk speaking Belarusian fluently on stage. We'd be grateful for this though. We worked well in Warsaw, with 'Pinsk Gentry' selling out quickly. Many Warsaw actors wanted to see the show, as it intrigued them greatly.

How often do you plan to visit Warsaw?

The repertoire is set for a year, until December. Polish colleagues love our theatre and, I'd say, are fond of Belarus.

Are you tired of spending so much time on trains?

Life should never be annoying. I've been performing on my native stage for 30 years. The theatre is currently being revamped and we all await the reopening. Of course, everyone seeks a calm life but it's good to shake things up a little. Sometimes, after a Minsk show, I'd take a train to Warsaw — to perform in two or three performances of 'Pinsk Gentry', returning to Minsk for a rehearsal the following morning.

The MT reference:

Pinsk Gentry is a comedy, laughing at the gentry's pride and at the cunning of civil servants. It was written by Wincenty Dunin-Marcinkiewicz 150 years ago. Few Poles know of him, though he wrote in Belarusian and Polish. Meanwhile, all self-respecting Poles love composer Stanisław Moniuszko and consider him to be Poland's national hero. For them, Moniuszko is as significant as Chopin. He was a friend of Dunin-Marcinkiewicz and both lived in Minsk at the same time.

By Viktor Korbut

Rare violin more than an expensive instrument

17th century violin by Guarneri recently played at Belarusian President's 'For Spiritual Revival' awards ceremony

"The acquisition of the violin by Italian master Andrea Guarneri is the first step in Belarus gaining its own collection of unique ancient instruments, similar to those existing in other countries," believes Eduard Kuchinsky, a professor at the Belarusian Academy of Music.

The ultimate goal is not

simply to gather a collection but to promote success, which ancient instruments can bring to Belarusian performers. The first example is from London's famous Florian Leonhard Fine Violins, costing \$230,000: Belarus' first such expensive instrument. Vlada Berezhnaya, a student with the Belarusian Academy of Music has been fortunate enough to play the rarity several times in Belarus and abroad.

Acquiring Guarneri's violin



Vlada Berezhnaya, with unique violin by Guarneri

for the state is rather like buying a painting by an old master; it isn't just an instrument but a true work of art. "Andrea Guarneri is one of the most mysterious masters," notes conductor Andrey Galanov. "Actually, he created few instruments. Even countries boasting great musical achievements may not

own one of his violins."

Mr. Kuchinsky believes that we should aim high and may one day own a violin by Antonio Stradivari or Giuseppe Guarneri (Andrea's grandson). These are considered to be the best in existence and currently sell for up to a million US Dollars.

Ballroom dance as a good alternative to mass culture

Winter ball brings together dance couples from throughout Belarus

Around 100 dance couples from Minsk, Brest, Gomel, Bobruisk, Grodno, Kobrin and Vitebsk arrived in the Belarusian capital to take part in the ball. The programme included three segments: 'Russian Seasons', 'Promenade through Western Europe' and 'Dances from Around the World'. The latter, for example, featured *Erebuni* Armenian dance ensemble.

During intervals, participants were entertained with live music, games and surprises.

This is the third such event for young people, aimed at providing an alternative to contemporary mass club culture. It popularises international cultural ties, while promoting appreciation of dance heritage and encouraging friendships across nations. The revival of ball culture is going hand in hand with understanding of the dance traditions of various nations.