

# BELARUS

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Politics, Economy, Culture



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INTERNATIONAL

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## BELARUSIAN BALLET COMPANY HEARTILY WELCOMED IN MOSCOW

# 52

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## To every taste

**T**ruly, sports unite us, as seen at Rio Olympics, accompanied by emotional exaltation and joyous faces, from sportsmen and fans. There's no doubt, sport makes the world go round!

We support our Olympic athletes, wishing them all luck and victories. However, we're no less impressed by the achievements of other sportsmen who demonstrate undisputable mastery and determination to win. Just as we adore our favourite actors and singers, irrespective of their nationality, sport brings us together. Talent and charm are truly international.

Speaking of singers, and festivals, Belarus transforms into a true festival mecca in summer, with the Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk being the key event. Festival veterans unanimously agree that a quarter of a century ago none could imagine that the modest festival would evolve into a major musical and theatrical art event, of the highest standard. In 25 years, the Slavianski Bazaar has significantly expanded its borders, to welcome performers from 70 countries, and organisers plan on extending this further.

Like a magnet, Vitebsk attracts talented people from all corners of the world, as well as music fans. In this Year of Culture, the Festival has attracted entrants from beyond neighbouring European countries, even drawing those from other continents. This level of interest is truly impressive.

Another Belarusian festival is Alexandria Gathers Friends — devoted to the Kupalle traditional folk holiday and its modern interpretation. Many Belarusian cities, towns and villages host Kupalle events but that in Alexandria, Shklov District, Mogilev Region, gathers most guests, delighting them with its lively originality.

We all know that laughter prolongs life. Residents of Bolshiyе and Malye Avtyuki, Kalinkovich District, Gomel Region, have long demonstrated that a sense of humour is good for

the constitution. Avtyuki residents, like all Polesie people, are known for their wit. When young writer Vladimir Lipsky spent several days there, collecting information on Avtyuki and its people, he chatted with heads of collective farms, spent nights with ordinary villagers and focused on the small details of life. Despite hardships of those post-Perestroika years, especially for villages, where people could hardly imagine today's wealth, humour triumphed over adversity.

Mr. Lipsky, born in the Polesie area, recorded local jokes and humorous anecdotes; in doing so, he realised that meaning lay behind those (often bawdy) jokes. He suggested that a Belarusian festival of folk humour be arranged, noting that five minutes of laughter is worth two blini with caviar, or a feast of bacon, onion and salted cucumber! The festival lasted not minutes but days, and he knew that more would be likely to follow. Avtyuki might yet join the international festival circuit.

With support from the Ministry of Culture, the Grodno Regional Executive Committee and local authorities, Avtyuki villagers organised the first All-Belarusian Festival of National Humour in 1995. During that first event, among the honourable guests were comedians from Bulgarian Gabrovo, Lithuania and Ukraine. This year, the event took place for the eighth time!

The Cherry Festival, in the small Belarusian town of Glubokoye, was held for the fourth time this year. This merry holiday, devoted to the sour-sweet berry, gathered many friends, occupying a worthy place among the festivals of the Vitebsk Region.

Really, can we ever have too many interesting, merry and humour-based festivals? They bring diversity and joy to our lives, and enrich us spiritually.



BY VIKTOR KHARKOV

## ► Making friends in the neighbourhood

**Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Witold Waszczykowski, expresses satisfaction with progress of relations between our countries**

“Normalisation of relations is taking place across all fields of co-operation, not only political and parliamentary,” noted Yelena Kupchyna, Belarusian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, on meeting the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Witold Waszczykowski, in Warsaw. Our country has been long striving to establish not just an equal partnership



with neighbours, but a true neighbourhood across all spheres. The Polish diplomat says that strengthening of sectoral dialogue attests to a thaw in relations between our two countries, involving all ministries. Mr. Waszczykowski has again extended an invitation to the Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to visit Poland.

## ► Training in serious subject

**Academy of Public Administration (under the aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus) to promote ease and correct methodology during election campaign, thanks to IT**

New software is allowing the modelling of more than 500 potential situations (some quite unorthodox) at polling stations, including a married woman being listed under her maiden name. Alexander Ivanovsky, First Pro-rector of the Academy of Public Administration, tells us, “Answers to this and many other questions are to be given by our training.” The software is programmed to reveal solutions to real situations which have arisen during previous election campaigns, from the formation of electoral committees up to the day of voting and the procedure of counting votes.

The Academy has been using simulations via computer training since 2010, with software updated over time, to improve its performance, and reflect changing conditions. The current format considers various nuances of previous election campaigns while being relevant to today’s situation.

## ► From winter to polar summer

**Ninth Belarusian expedition headed for Antarctica in November**

Six Belarusian scientists and researchers will be delivered to eastern Antarctica by the ship Academician Fyodorov, continuing the construction of infrastructure for the Belarusian Antarctic station. The team will be involved in the implementation of Belarus-Russia joint scientific and environmental projects, such as are realised annually (3

or 4 projects) on the southern continent. One involves the study of the atmosphere using modern equipment, some of which was made in Belarus. This year, a scientist from the Laboratory of Optics and Scattering Media of the Institute of Physics of the National Academy of Sciences will go to Antarctica to take measurements using lidars and radiometers, and to study the size and quantity of particles in the atmosphere. Representatives of the Russian delegation have been discussing the research programme and finalising details of the expedition with colleagues.

## ► Bonus must be used profitably

**Government considering new state programme to boost transit potential**

Belarus intends to raise its transit revenue by up to \$1.5 billion over the coming five years. Obviously it won’t be easy, as sanctions between Russia and the European Union affect our earnings (though such sanctions surely won’t last forever). Two trans-European corridors pass through



Belarus but we are yet to fully take advantage of this, providing a high level of service to foreign carriers and guests.

Everything should come together as in a puzzle: quick customs clearance, high-quality roads, and a well-devel-

oped network of cafes, hotels and service stations. A special clause in the draft programme stipulates the development of logistics infrastructure. According to the plan, the total area and volume of services will increase 1.5-fold.

By 2020, more than a thousand kilometers of roads are planned for building or reconstruction in Belarus: doubling the volume targeted for the past five years. Legislation is being updated, to reduce the number of documents needed for international road transportation of cargo, and the use of digital documents is being expanded.



# Fanipol is winning fame in Europe

**Meeting between Peter Spuhler, CEO and owner of Stadler Rail Group, and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko affirms that from the former Soviet assembly workshop Belarus has transformed into a high-tech production venue for all Europe**

In 2013, the company concluded a contract with Russia's Aeroexpress for the delivery of 25 double-level trains to be made in Fanipol. Sadly, due to the economic crisis, the order was reduced to 11 trains, and Fanipol was unable to make the order 'pay': a case for concern during the recent meeting at the Palace of Independence.

Mr. Lukashenko said, "I know you have some problems you're working on and I'm ready to discuss these

issues. You've created almost 500 highly productive jobs in Belarus, and you're working with innovations 'on trend' today. These are our main objectives, which we'll pursue from 2016 to 2021. In this regard, you can be sure that we're ready to work with you and implement all your company's proposals."

Mr. Spuhler commented, "Aeroexpress was unable to pay for part of its order and revoked it. We had to extend the timeline on production processes to find new sources of fi-

nancing. The issue is almost solved today." Speaking to journalists, he added, "We've taken the initiative to shift some orders aimed at Western European states here. One deals with Norwegian state railways. In addition, the plant will focus on the assembly of trams for St. Petersburg's city lines."

The parties also discussed the possibility of Fanipol producing trains for the Minsk metro third line. Some are already operating in Berlin and shall soon launch in Glasgow, UK.

By Vladimir **Khromov**

# Comfort and speed highly important

## New state-of-the-art electric InterCity train launched between Gomel and Minsk

**H**The train is intended for passenger transportation between the capital and regional centres, offering comfort and high speed, with the InterCity taking just 2 hours 59 minutes for the trip (45 minutes faster than before).

The train was assembled at the Stadler Minsk plant in Fanipol, and although our passengers are already familiar with new Stadler electric trains, the green InterCity stands out, having seven carriages, and 7,382 seats, of which 16 are business class, located in a separate zone in the first carriage and equipped with greater comfort.

All the seats are adjustable, and there is free Wi-Fi on board, while the temperature is maintained at comfortable 22 degrees. There is a thermal curtain to prevent the passenger compartment from being chilled in winter and sensors in the doors to prevent even little fingers becoming caught. A small bar offering drinks and snacks is located in the middle of the train, while a trolley of beverages and snacks also travels through the aisles. The train has a multifunc-



The InterCity business class electric train was launched between Gomel and Minsk

tional area for physically challenged people and a retractable wheelchair ramp for independent boarding and departure.

Meanwhile, the driver's cabin is mostly computer automated, with only a few levers and three large monitors. Information on the train's technical conditions and required maintenance is transferred wirelessly to service centre staff.

Driver Andrey Bitus tells us, "The controls are located so that I can operate the train without any additional

manipulation. The diagnostics system shows any failure alerts on the monitor, and the computer prompts how to fix them. As a rule, it's enough to press a single button for a system command to repair a defect."

Neither Andrey, nor his assistant, Dmitry Golubovich, have ever conducted a maiden ride so, of course, they were very excited. Yet, they are familiar with the train itself, as the crew were trained at the production plant.

By Anton **Kostyukevich**

# Chinese investors pleased with co-operation



The construction of a business and hotel complex with a tennis court has started in Minsk with the participation of the Chinese Citic Group

**Chinese CITIC Group Corporation is one of the largest business holdings, currently implementing \$40bn of projects worldwide, with part of these investments being allocated in our country. In Belarus, the investor from the Heavenly Empire has implemented a modernisation project of three cement factories and is now building the BelGee Automobile Plant near Borisov while also reconstructing the Orsha Linen Mill. The success of previous projects inspired Chinese investors and they are ready for new injections.**

**T**his issue was tackled during the meeting between Alexander Lukashenko and the President of the CITIC Group Corporation, Wang Jun.

Mr. Lukashenko is convinced that such partners as the CITIC Group Corporation create the economy and the foundation of the bilateral relations, enabling to make progress and to enhance all-round strategic partnership. The President called on Chinese partners to treat Belarusian people and Belarus as a very close nation and state in spite of the big distance between the two countries. The Belarusian Head of State also stressed that any joint project and product should have a high added value, minimal expenses and should rely on advanced technologies.

The Chinese guest signed a range of important agreements and memorandums while in Belarus, particularly, a general contract for the construction of Amkodor-Mash

Plant. Two enterprises are to be built: a production facility in Kolodishchi, near Minsk, to assemble telescopic loaders and energy-intensive tractors, and a joint tractor plant in Novopolotsk, to manufacture up to 50,000 units annually.

The first Belarusian-Chinese investment fund is also to be launched, with initial capital of \$50m. Wang Jun's visit coincided with another important project for CITIC Group: laying a capsule into the foundations of a new multi-functional business and hotel complex on Pobediteley Avenue in Minsk, with the Chinese state corporation acting as sole investor.

Wang Jun noted that all his company's projects in Belarus have been successful and the CITIC Group leadership sees big opportunities for co-operation development. He also voiced his hope for assisted expansion of partnership, including the attraction of other leading Chinese companies into Belarus, which is viewed as a foothold for future business.

# Security is the most important factor

**State border protection is vital to national security, inspiring the President to call a meeting on border control authorities' performance, scrutinising the strength of our borders**



BELTA

**A**lexander Lukashenko informed those gathered that border control bodies had been examined recently, upon his assignment. He commented, “The results of this unscheduled examination have been reported to me. It’s essential to do so, all the more because some inspection findings have seriously alerted me. Some areas of the State Border Committee activities are in a deeply unsatisfactory state.”

The meeting’s main objective was not to draw conclusions, but to analyse the current state of affairs and discuss ways to enhance border service efficiency. The President clearly stressed, “It’s not about thanking or punishing. It’s about improving border authority performance. I have no doubt that it can be improved.”

The State Secretary of the Security Council, Stanislav Zas, told journalists after the meeting that the President has allocated specific tasks, both practical and of a more global nature. He explained, “The performance of servicemen operating at border checkpoints needs enhancing. Efficiency of co-operation between border officers and residents of border zones should be improved. Most importantly, the State Border Committee management should assess the agency’s priorities. This is needed for clear understanding of the threats against which they’re protecting our country. Anti-terrorism and economic security are today’s priorities.”

Organisational and technical capacities to fulfil the President’s commissions are in place, notes the Chairman of the State Border Committee Leonid Maltsev, telling us, “We’ve been working and will continue to work in this direction. New risks, challenges and threats should be analyzed, and the entire state security system should be adjusted correspondingly. Much is being done to achieve this, such as creating the Pauk (Spider) fast-deployable alerting complex domestically. It can recognise not only humans and animals, but aircraft and helicopters at a height of up to 1,000 metres. Low altitudes have always been most problematic for border protection.

Inspection of border guards will continue on an ad hoc basis, to inspire maximum efficiency.

By Maksim Osipov

## Reference

■ A new Military Doctrine has entered into force in Belarus. The document has been passed in the wake of changes in global military and political conditions, and in the nature of armed struggle and to reflect contemporary trends in the development of the Belarusian state.



VADIM KONDRASHOV

**On 25th July, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko signed the Culture Code of the Republic of Belarus, passed by the House of Representatives and approved by the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus. Belarus is a pioneer in this matter: the Culture Code has been prepared for the first time and is unrivalled across the post-Soviet space.**

**What is so peculiar about this document, who is interested in it, and what innovations does it bring?**

The Culture Code has been prepared for the first time and is unrivalled in the post-Soviet space. Belarusian cultural relations are regulated by a considerable number of legal acts, which creates difficulties for their application. Each legal act is only valid for a certain period of time, though it has sustainable character, has been

tried and tested in practice. Belarus has accumulated sufficient legislative experience to codify its cultural legislation, continuing the tradition of the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (written in the Belarusian language) and that of codex thinking, which is typical for the Belarusian jurisprudential practice.

**What documents form the basis of the Culture Code?**

Consolidated laws unite about sixty normative legal acts of different

legal force, including seven laws, four decrees of the President of Belarus, about twenty Government regulations and thirty normative legal acts of the Ministry of Culture. In particular, the Code relies on the norms of such Belarusian laws as 'On Culture in the Republic of Belarus', 'On Library Science in the Republic of Belarus', 'On Arts and Crafts in the Republic of Belarus', 'On Creative Unions and Creative Workers', 'On Film Making in the Republic of Belarus', 'On Museums and the Museum Fund of the Republic of Belarus', and 'On Protec-

tion of Belarusian Historical and Cultural Legacy'. All existing rules have been revised, with foreign experience being analyzed at the same time. As a result, the document includes pragmatic and useful rules.

### **What is the structure of this 'bible' of culture?**

The document has more than 200 pages, comprising general and special parts, and containing five sec-

ordinary people. It represents a set of rights and obligations, for spectators and visitors to museums, as well as for readers. In total, more than 60 innovations are incorporated into the Culture Code.

A specific range are targeted by the Code: cultural workers and creative professionals, art groups, artistic unions and cultural organisations, sponsors and art patrons, education institutions, scientific and other or-

reducing) the list of criteria for gaining status as a historical and cultural treasure.

Procedures for archaeological research have been defined, noting that research, including archaeological digging, may be carried out by scientific institutions and museums, with permission from the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Permission can only be granted to people working under an employment agreement or with a civil contract with a research organisation or museum. The document forestalls the activity of those who destroy the cultural layer and deny museums the possibility to enrich their collections with archaeological artefacts, while hindering scientific investigations. The document spells out, for the first time, that accidentally discovered archaeological artefacts are publicly owned. In comparison with the current law on museums and museum funds, more serious requirements have been set out regarding the establishment of museums, although those for establishing nature reserves and open-air museums have been simplified.

Many innovations relate to the organisation of concert activity. The Code has adjusted the terms and conditions for the return of tickets for cultural and entertainment events. The period within which an organiser has the right to cancel an event has been defined, alongside conditions for returning tickets for various reasons — such as the line-up changing. A separate article of the Culture Code regulates discotheques.

### **When the Culture Code will come into force?**

The Code will enter into force six months after its official publication. Earlier, representatives of the Ministry of Culture of Belarus voiced an assumption that a set of regulations on culture would be operational for the Year of Culture, i.e. 2016 or early 2017.

By Veniamin **Mikheev**

*The Code has united about 60 normative legal acts of different legal force, including 7 laws, 4 decrees of the President of the Republic of Belarus, about 20 Government regulations and 30 normative legal acts of the Ministry of Culture*

tions ('Principles of Legal Regulation in the Sphere of Culture', 'Subjects of Cultural Activities', 'Cultural Values', 'Cultural Activities' and final provisions), in addition to 257 articles.

The legal regulation of the Code governs social relations that arise in the creation, protection, use, distribution and return of cultural property, as well as legal, economic, social and organisational foundations of state policy in the sphere of culture. The document formalises legal regulation in all areas, in particular, librarianship, creative teams and cinematography.

The Code does not introduce any radical changes; however, it contains innovations aiming to improve relations in the sphere of culture. The document systematically and comprehensively regulates our cultural relations.

How will the Culture Code affect artists? Developers have repeatedly noted that the Code is a living document, useful not only for people working in the field of culture, but for

organisations and branches of legal entities. All who carry out cultural activities should benefit. The Code establishes the main directions of co-operation between Government authorities and commercial organisations/individual entrepreneurs, and specifies Government measures to implement such co-operation.

The document specifies sponsors and art patrons as particular subjects of cultural activity, and it touches on mechanisms of interaction with Belarusians abroad, i.e. measures aimed at their support in the field of culture. Procedures to confirm creative worker status have been simplified, able to be confirmed by the creative union of the corresponding profile, regardless of whether a creative worker is a member of the union or not.

There are also changes to the definition of the folk art sphere, allowing craftworks to include products made by organisations as well as individuals. The document contains a number of innovations relating to historical and cultural treasures, updating (and



# Operation D

**Denomination has been conducted for simple reasons and brings many advantages to the national economy. Primarily, monetary circulation is being perfected: since July 1st, fewer cash banknotes have been needed in Belarus, and soon it will be much easier to calculate them. The National Bank also mentions optimal banknote construction. In the past, the step of 1-5-10 was used but new money (produced in 2009) enjoys a 1-2-5 step, as used by the European Union for cash circulation.**

**M**eanwhile, the major advantage for the state is a significant reduction in the cost of money circulation. Banknotes degrade during usage, necessitating replacement. Those of small value (100 and 500 Roubles) deteriorate rapidly, lasting

only about six months. Once coins are introduced, the cost of printing of this 'small' money will fall drastically.

"The key message of the state — which initiated this denomination — is that consumer market prices will stop rising at the same great pace as before in Belarus," comments Prof. Mikhail Kovalev, of the Belarusian State University's Economic Department. "Ideally, annual inflation growth (under

similar reforms) should be no more than 3-5 percent. We've seen slightly higher figures but, evidently, this parameter should receive increased attention in coming years. Matters of primary and secondary significance must be distinguished. The National Bank considers that the renewal of money will stop inflation and by 2020 inflation should reach 5 percent (from around 12 percent at present).

## The major advantage for the state is a significant reduction in the cost of money circulation

Valery Borodenya, a member of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly's House of Representatives, agrees, saying that this is the ideal time for the denomination. "As the National Bank has recently admitted, denomination was planned for 2009 but the 2008 crisis changed its plans. The economy was then swirling for several years but the time to act has now come, as inflation is falling and anti-monopoly legislation is being optimised. Prices are rounding as a result of the financial reform, but may go either up or down. The President

spoke of the matter seriously recently, noting that the state will attentively follow price growth.

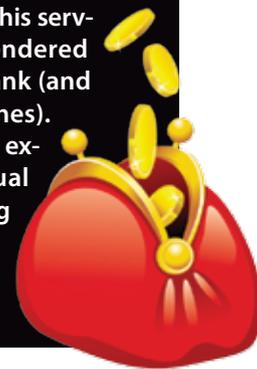
The denomination could entail some problems — such as queues in shops and at agencies rendering services, as well as at desks selling transport tickets. Criminals could also become more active. Accordingly, it's better not to exchange money with individuals and it's necessary to be more attentive when paying for goods and services. In this respect, the National Bank's advice to learn to manage your finances is timely.

By Alexander **Benkovsky**

### Acute question

#### Places to exchange old banknotes for new

■ The denomination was launched on July 1st, at a ratio of 10,000:1. Old and new money will simultaneously circulate till the end of 2016, and old banknotes will become invalid only in 2022. From January 1st, 2017 to December 31st, 2019, old money may be exchanged at any Belarusian bank. Over the following two years, this service will only be rendered by the National Bank (and its regional branches). Anyone wishing to exchange a sum equal to or exceeding 1,000 basic values will need to show a passport.



### Pages of history

#### Denomination in the USSR and Belarus: when and how it happened

**1947** Wartime rationing system was discontinued and old treasury notes were exchanged for new ones at a rate of 10:1. Savings banks exchanged amounts of up to 3,000 Roubles at a special fair rate of one to one and larger amounts were exchanged with a reduction factor. Old banknotes lost their value after December 29th (conversion began on December 16th). The exchange did not affect coins.

**1961** The exchange rate stood at ten to one but did not affect 1, 2 or 3 Kopeck coins, which remained in circulation. In fact, the value of copper coins increased a hundredfold over a 13 year period. The exchange of coins in denomination of 5, 10, 15 and 20 Kopecks was done in the same way as with paper money. The US dollar was worth 4 Roubles before the reform and 90 Kopecks afterwards.

**1991** 100 and 50 Rouble banknotes were exchanged, with the official reason given as 'unearned income and counterfeit money control'. How-

ever, the 'Pavlov reform', initiated by Minister of Finance Valentin Pavlov, had a more pragmatic goal, of eliminating the emerging gap between the richest and poorest social groups. Restrictions on exchange were harsh, with citizens only able to exchange 1,000 Roubles each, within a three day period, from January 23rd-25th. Individual withdrawals from Sberbank were also limited and could not exceed 500 Roubles per citizen per month.

**1994** Back in 1992, new banknotes depicting animals were introduced in Belarus: the famous 'zaichik' (hare), squirrel, beaver, lynx, wolf and bison. However, while the new banknotes were being printed, inflation led to rapid price increases, and it was decided to increase the denomination of the new banknotes by adding an imaginary zero to the figure on the bill. The 'zaichik', denoted as '1 Rouble' became worth ten. Later, in 1994, the imaginary zero was removed, and prices for goods and services were recalculated.

**2000** Inflation continued, with Belarusians becoming 'millionaires'. By 1999, a banknote with a face value of 5 million Roubles was in circulation and it was decided to lose three more zeros.

# Emergency vehicles called by traffic lights



**It might seem strange that a simple traffic light could be the device able to regulate, contact a dispatcher, police and emergency services. While no such lights exist at present, they will be a reality in the near future. Belarusian and Russian specialists are now working on their development at St. Petersburg's Avangard JSC and the Belarusian Scientific-Production Association on Plastics Processing.**

**R**ussians have been familiar with the Belarusian Scientific-Production Association since Soviet times when they supplied components for the famous BelAZ vehicles. Contacts were resumed seven years ago owing to the Business Co-operation Council of Belarus and St. Petersburg. It holds joint sessions annually, alternately in Minsk and St. Petersburg.

During the previous three meetings, the Board focused on the development of the science, technology and innovation sectors — a breakthrough for the Association and its innovative developments. However, to launch production, Belarusians needed partners, co-operation with whom could have facilitated a move to the next level.

“Jointly with the United Institute of Machine Building at the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences, we designed and produced equipment for plasma spraying of UHMW polyethyl-

ene,” explains the Association’s Director — Sergey Tsybukov. “It’s no secret that damage from failure of tanks and pipelines because of corrosion significantly exceeds the cost of their construction. The modern means to protect such equipment is costly and not fully effective. Owing to our proposed innovative technology with the Belarusians, the quality of anticorrosive protection of energy equipment, capacitive chemical equipment and pipelines is increased considerably, as well as their life term.”

This first step was soon followed by further developments. Mr. Tsybukov’s team bought an injection molding machine (to mold plastic products with set properties) from the Baranovichi Machine-Tool Plant’s branch: Atlant JSC. Last summer, it was introduced by the St. Petersburg Association at the Russian Industrialist show. Many did not believe that Belarus could produce equipment able to rival manufacturers from Western Europe. There were even requests to look inside to verify the construction of the machinery.

Belarus is the only post-Soviet state which produces these unique tools, important for Russia’s import-substitution programme. Heads of the Baranovichi plant have proposed that the St. Petersburg Association sign a long-term contract which envisages the opening of a demonstration site, service maintenance and establishment of a spare parts warehouse on the site of the St. Petersburg enterprise — with prospects for complete injection molding assembly. The establishment of a joint Russian-Belarusian training centre is also in view.

The first group of future operators, installers, engineers and casters have already completed their training at the centre. The training programme is planned to comprise of a two-week theoretical course and a month-long practice. New specialists will also soon be trained at this centre: among them are mechanical workers and adjusters of machines and automatic lines for the production of plastic products. These will be universal craftsmen, able to work with several professions. In the near future, this new pro-

fession could be one of the most popular in our country and perhaps set the trend further afield for the production of composite materials and related products. An example of this is the case of polymers for traffic lights and signals. Standard signals — used for many decades on railways — have a cast-iron or metal housing, weighing 13.5 tonnes with their lighting devices. They are difficult to dismantle or repair — especially taking into consideration that the equipment is situated high above the ground. Moreover, it's also necessary to paint them regularly to combat rust, fading and to preserve them black (as required). The vibrations produced by passing trains are also an issue: it significantly shortens their life. In contrast, polymer analogues are lightweight and durable.

“The task now is to equip them with LED lamps,” Mr. Tsybukov continues. “Belarus has been engaged in the production of LED devices for a long time with good results. In this respect, the replacement of imported components in traffic lights, searchlights and signals by Belarusian analogues would appear to be a logical step. I've discussed it with a famous physicist, the Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus — Sergey Kilin. He appreciated the idea, promising to discuss it in detail with his Academy colleagues. We were acquainted with Mr. Kilin at the anniversary celebration of the academician, Zhores Alferov.”

It is already clear, without detailed costings and planning, that the use of multi-polymer LED devices is virtually unlimited. They can work well in transport (railroads, ships, automobiles), the petrochemical complex, and helicopter building.

Mr. Tsybukov has another interesting proposal able to bring Russian-Belarusian co-operation to a new level. This deals with the establishment of a joint innovative distribution cluster using Belarus-made equipment, molds and including parts from the Ural Region and design, testing and manufacturing from the North Western Region of Russia.



In the electronics and setup laboratory of the Vitebsk STR Plant

**Belarus and Russia are planning to organise a joint engineering centre for machine-tool construction. The decision was ratified at the collegium of ministries of industry of the two countries. How do machine-tool constructors co-operate today? Our correspondent, together with the Chairman of the Board of the Vitebsk Plant Stankoremont (STR) Leonid Krivoshei looked for the answer to this question.**

**A**fter a decision by the Ministry of Industry of Belarus, the Stankoremont Plant was opened 15 years ago, and 17 state enterprises were involved in its creation. It was planned that Stankoremont, with its highly skilled engineers and designers, would be engaged in major repairs and modernisation of equipment. At that time, people were beginning to install new computer systems into old machine-tools. In 2006, to facilitate work with Russian engineers, the STR Plant was opened on the Stankoremont site. Since 2011 it has been part of a German group of companies and today uses the most advanced systems of computer numerical control. Vitebsk workers began producing high-efficiency processing centres, which are not available in Belarus and Russia. With their help and a computer command from the operator, it is possible to make any small detailed piece of engineering from beginning to end, with the minimum input from turners or milling-machine operators.

At the St. Petersburg JSC Shipbuilding & Ship Repair Technology Centre, the

designers of the STR Plant developed 9 models of machine tools for this branch of industry. They were made and delivered to the Baltic Plant, the Admiralty and Northern shipyards as well as the Kaliningrad plant at Yantar. However, at the end of 2014, Vitebsk workers learnt that, as they are representatives of another country, they cannot participate in the tenders held by Russia's defence. In order to retain their market and already established ties, the STR Plant tried to enter the machine-tool construction cluster of the Chelyabinsk Region, “The region has powerful machine-building potential. As for the cluster, it is located in a region of advanced development. The Governor of the region, Boris Dubrovsky, who is respectful towards Belarusian traditions of machine-tool construction, is engaged in the project. Last year we received the offer to enter the cluster with the condition that we certify production according to the technical regulations of the Customs Union. The Vitebsk centre of standardization, metrology and certification helped to achieve this task in two months.”



Yevgeny Zelenkevich (centre) at lectures in the library

# Living by touch

**Fourth year student Yevgeny Zelenkevich from the Minsk branch of the Russian State Social University (RGSU) will become a specialist in social work in the next six months. He plans to work in a non-commercial organisation, his interest in the work was stirred up by his practical experiences from co-operation with the public association 'Positive Movement' to a social project based on the decoration of the walls in a children's infectious diseases hospital. The choice of the profession was well-considered by the young man who has first-hand knowledge of how it is hard for those who have serious problems with health. Yevgeny himself is blind, but it does not stop him from living a full life and getting full marks in examinations at the university.**

**T**here are four students living 'by touch' in the RGSU branch, and they quickly became part of the group, wanting no special privileges. For example, Masha Rudko is a student in her second year, studying to be a psychologist, and her level of involvement is enviable. The blind girl goes to classes on the tram, dexterously runs up the stairs of the university, and after her studies, finds time for draughts, chess, table tennis and swimming. Masha received her orientation skills at Kursk musical college, where she also mastered

the piano, "It was a different country, no relatives nearby, I had to adapt quickly and become more independent. After finishing college, I returned home at the end of June, when the entrance examinations had already ended in the Belarusian universities. While in the Russian university, I had time to pass the examinations in Russian, biology and mathematics with the help of the Braille tactile writing system."

Masha has already undergone practical training at the regional social services centre and is so far not disappointed with the profession, she is now looking to find her career niche. She is sure that her experience of interacting with such students as

herself is important. All the more as her peers are glad to help subtly: they quickly agree who will accompany blind friends to the library or dining room and who will help with clothes etc.

Representatives of the university are ready to share their experience in organising of inclusive education with colleagues. The subject is one currently under discussion. However, it is not easy, after the establishment, initially created with the support of the Union State, had its finances cut in 2013, which means that state-financed places are no longer available. Russian involvement does not help, as distribution of free places from the main university passed to the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science, which decided that it is not expedient to spend money for personnel training in foreign branches. The absurdity of the situation is that the branch was opened shortly afterwards for Russian educational services to Belarusians.

“From 1999 to 2013, for example, it spent over 70mln Russian Roubles on the reconstruction of the educational building and hostel repair, out of these 58 percent of the total is the extra-budgetary funds of RGSU, while 42 percent is from the Union State budget. On the site of the old kindergarten there appeared a modern university,” the Director of the Branch, Sergey Poletayev tells us. “A lot of money was invested, but the problem is that now we do not have a real source of financing, and we are engaged in training experts exclusively at the expense of the students and under tripartite contracts with organisations...”

Today, out of 1,751 students, there are 66 from the CIS countries receiving education in the Minsk branch of the RGSU. 59 of them are Russians. Yevgeny is the only one of four blind students who has been able to receive state-subsidized education. First-year students, Artem Myalik and Alexandra Krasko, taking courses in conflict resolution, study on a paid basis, though with their abilities they could get education free of charge. In addition, not every university is ready to receive a student with a visual disorder. The quiet Artem chose conflict resolution with great care. He says there are many conflicts and it's important that there are people to solve them. He has already had time to win the favour of his teachers with his serious attitude to his studies, in the first few days for example, he volunteered to take part in the university subbotnik.

While Sasha, during the first term of study became famous as the owner of the most detailed lecture notes. With the speed of a skilled stenographer she puts all the information into the laptop. During her studies at school, she had mastered piano and singing and was set to enter Grodno medical college to become a masseur, but a medical-rehabilitation commission of experts would not give her permission to study. As a result, instead of the history of Belarus that she'd already learnt by heart, she had to hurriedly learn the history of Russia in two weeks, which she did! Now Sasha is happy to admit that she is pleased about the twist of fortune...



In the salt hospital in Soligorsk

## Pink or white salt treatments

**Three million years ago, modern Soligorsk (in the Minsk Region) was covered in water: home to fish, mollusks and merostomes.**

**As the continents shifted, where ferns had grown, the land became submerged and, in other places, the seabed pushed to the surface.**

**A**s water evaporated, salts crystallized into layers within rock and, so many years later, we began to mine them. It was noted that such miners rarely suffered from respiratory diseases, spending time underground, at an average temperature of 16 degrees, and in optimal humidity, breathing light ions and microscopic particles produced by potassium salts. The latter are now known to stimulate the respiratory organs, helping those suffering from bronchial asthma, bronchitis and pollinosis.

Hospitals offering salt treatments operate in Ukraine, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and the Urals but, like facilities in Europe and Asia, lack individual chambers, to allow patients to avoid breathing their neighbours' harmful microbes.

In Soligorsk, the walls, ceiling and floor of each chamber comprise two types of salt: white stone and pink potassium. Doctors allocate patients to particular chambers depending on their condition.

# Facets of diamond

**As cities grow in size, gaining ever more high-rise buildings, with their many windows, so demand rises for 'industrial climbers' to clean those modern facades. In the summer, they appear like ants, crawling up vertical surfaces. Of course, the rhombicuboctahedron design of the National Library makes it particularly tricky.**

**A**lexey Rys, aged 36, the foreman of a climbing cleaning team, shouts out, "I've reached the 'crown', and we've finished the 'skirt'!" The stained-glass window of the library's atrium is known as the skirt, and he is calling from the very top, speaking to his colleagues Dmitry, Sergey and Vitaly. All use nicknames, to make it easy to call out messages.

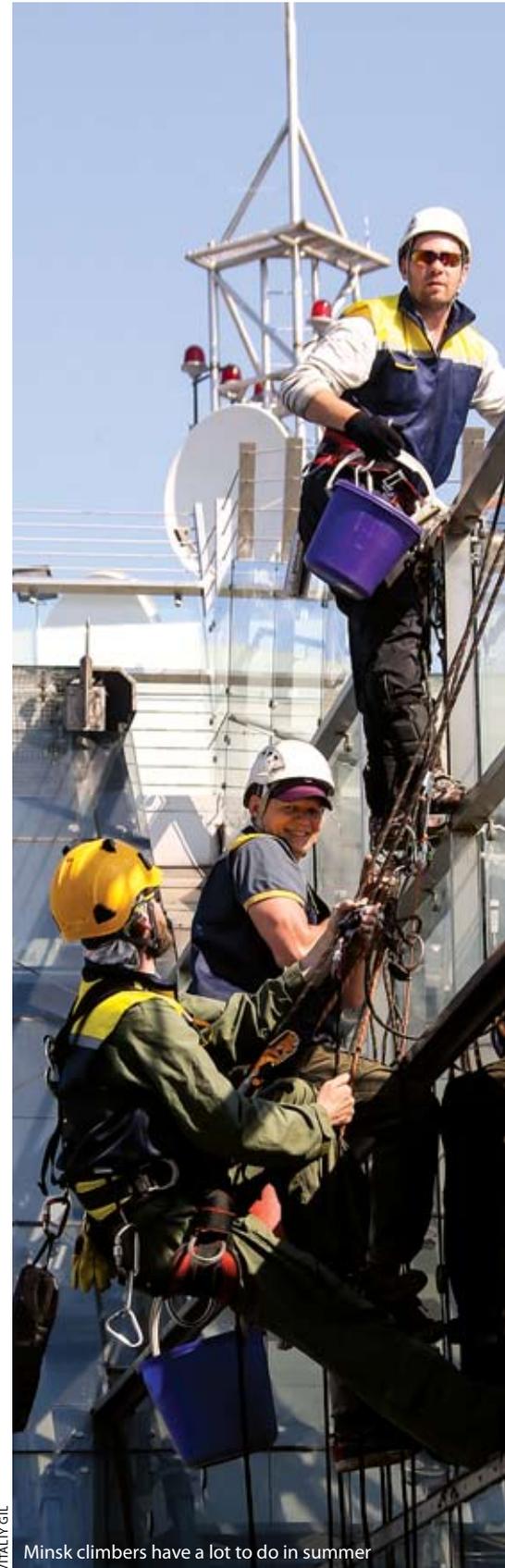
Rys tells us, "Safety is our primary concern, followed by comfort," speaking for all steeplejacks and climbers. "We're starting today by checking bands: the belly band and guideline, descender devices, haul-safe, carabiners and knots."

As they rig up, wearing mountaineering helmets, I join the head of sales, Nina Radevich, from Chisty Svet Plus

company, and her colleague, Dmitry Linevich. We're on the 23rd floor of the library, at the scenic viewpoint, over 73m up. It takes your breath away to see beauty of the city. Suddenly, the team comes into view, descending slowly.

"I see this every day, but I'm still afraid for them," Nina admits, closing her eyes. The team shrugs off such concern. Alexey laughs, "Usually, people have only three questions: are we afraid? How much are we paid? and can we swing on the bands."

Alexey hands out buckets, rags, strainers and roller sleeves for cleaning, as well as microfiber cloths. "For cleaning surfaces, we use different tools than most cleaning teams; the library windows are protected with special film, so we use diluted soap solutions to avoid damaging this, without excess alkalinity or acidity. It's the same method as is used



VITALIY GIL

Minsk climbers have a lot to do in summer



in Dubai, for the Burj Khalifa Tower,” Nina explains.

Some parts of the library can't be accessed from outside, even via mobile scaffolding and skylifts. Nina takes me where no journalist has stepped before, between the bearing wall of the library and the spider glazing system of the facade. I can't help but feel fearful, here, within, standing in the gangway. A female team cleans in this space.

Alexey notes that he spends a lot of time on his knees, which requires endurance. Nina comments that their company cleans most of the tall buildings in Minsk but that the National Library presents the most challenges. She muses that designers don't tend to think

Alexey knows about danger firsthand, having fallen several times in his climbing career. The first was from a height of 7m, which broke his heel. When he fell from the third floor, he got off with only a scare. “I fell through stupidity, failing to think seriously about safety,” he explains. “I was young, so did not feel fear.”

Everyone on the cheerful team has completed higher education. There's a former teacher of physical training, a civil engineer, a coach, and a policeman. Each passed specialised training, involving theory and practice. They're full of jokes, which they explain may be a side-effect of the dangerous element of their job. As to the enjoyment they gain

*The foreman notes that while it takes only a fortnight to become a 'Monkey', able to climb and descend, it takes at least 3-4 years to become a professional able to navigate any object*

about how buildings will be cleaned safely when they're making their plans: adding bars where climbing equipment can be hooked, for cleaning the facade. Instead, she notes, “Our industrial department has to work out how to reach ‘dead zones.’” It takes three to six months for the team to complete a thorough cleaning of the National Library building, working every day, regardless of wind, rain, fog, heat or frost.

Nina notes that it takes a certain frame of mind to become a professional climbing cleaner. Besides being fit and unafraid of heights, you need a diploma in industrial mountaineering and high-rise works. She believes that experience, a clear mind and sharp reflexes are important too. The team underlines the need for a certain serious attitude. Rys tells us, “No matter how you look at it, we fear heights, as is logical. In fact, you need to retain this caution, to remain careful and responsible.”

for their work, they laugh, “We like it so much that we're climbing the walls.”

The foreman notes that while it takes only a fortnight to become a 'Monkey', able to climb and descend, it takes at least 3-4 years to become a professional able to navigate any object. Naturally, the team is most busy in the summer, while February and March are quiet. In the winter, they tend to just remove snow and ice.

Nina Radevich adds, “In the past, only builders tended to employ industrial mountaineering teams but, with the appearance of new high-rise buildings, made from glass and metal, climbers have begun to enjoy popularity.”

Saying goodbye, I ask Alexey whether he'll be sunbathing this summer. He admits that there's too much work to do for that, although he may find time to go to the mountains. He speaks with horror of the idea of parachuting though. Even the bravest have their fears.

By Anna Kisel



BELTA

# Ecological balance

## Belarusian upland marshes boast economic potential worth hundreds of millions of US Dollars, as proven by data from the Experimental Botany Institute of the National Academy of Sciences, through its Contemporary State and Forecast of the Ecological and Socio-economic Efficiency of the Restoration of the Hydrological Regime of Yelnya Upland Marshes.

**T**he Experimental Botany Institute has studied the process of restoring the hydrological regime of the marshes and the appearance of flora and fauna on its territory, while assessing the economic potential of this project. The natural riches of the restored Yelnya are estimated at \$300 million. Meanwhile, if the hydrological regime and ecological balance are restored, Yelnya marshes may bring in over \$30 million of profit annually.

“Unfortunately, we don’t have data regarding damage from the fires which occurred on Yelnya marshes every 2-4 years, from 1975 to 2002,” notes the deputy director for Scientific and Innovation Work at the Experimental Botany Institute of the National Academy of Sciences, Dmitry Grummo. “The cost of lost cranberry harvests, as a result of the catastrophic fire of 2002, could total between \$50,000 and \$125,000. The fire was a tragedy for the upland marshes and for residents of surrounding settlements.”

Over the past decade, measures have been taken to restore the hydrological regime. According to monitor-

ing conducted in early July, despite record hot weather and absence of rain, peat humidity stood at 85-90 percent (it must reach 70 percent to become fire hazardous).

Fresh water is the most precious treasure of upland marshes, with Yelnya thought to contain 450 million cubic metres of such water. At market prices, this is worth about \$247 million. Moreover, peat bogs hold a great deal of water: each hectare may contain up to 680 tonnes of moisture at any one time, removing toxic impurities during filtration. Running an industrial unit with a capacity equal to that of Yelnya would cost at least \$9 million per year.

The Experimental Botany Institute tells us that restoring the hydrological regime of Yelnya marshes should reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8,200 tonnes per year; bogs and marshes with damaged hydrological regimes release carbon dioxide rather than consume it. A similar reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would be possible by installing solar batteries covering 47 square hectares at a cost of \$18 million (plus annual maintenance of around \$2 million — \$3 million).

“In launching the Let’s Save Yelnya Together! project in 2007, we were showing the importance of this unique natural complex for both Belarus and the whole Europe. As the years pass, volunteer initiatives have grown, creating a serious multi-level programme of bog restoration, attracting Belarusian scientists and re-

storation of Yelnya bog is an important ecological and economic project and I’m proud that we’re part of these positive changes,” adds the head of The Coca Cola Company in Belarus, Natalya Tarasevich.

Yelnya is one of the largest upland bogs in continental Europe, covering over 23,000 hectares; its peat deposits are found at a depth of around 3.8m on average (up to 8.3m) while deposits of water are assessed at 450 million cubic metres (accounting for two thirds of Lake Naroch water deposits — the largest in Belarus).

Yelnya marshes are vital to migratory birds, with 98 bird species residing permanently, of which 23 are registered in the Red Book. In the 1930s, drainage channels were dug, disturbing the ecological balance and reducing ground water levels. This caused

numerous major fires between 1992 and 2002. In 2007 and 2008, Coca Cola Beverages Belarus provided funds to an initiative organised by APB BirdLife (public association) and sent its own workers to build 34 bulkheads and dams, keeping water within drainage channels.

Last year, as part of the UNDP’s Peatlands-2 project, implemented with financial assistance from The Coca Cola Foundation, 46 cascade dams were constructed. As a result, water levels within Yelnya bog and lake complex are returning to their former state, helping restore plant life indigenous to the marshes. This is important evidence of restoration of the ecological balance, and these measures show the efficient integration of ecological projects into the country’s economy.

By Vladimir **Mikhailov**

***The natural riches of the restored Yelnya are estimated at \$300 million. Meanwhile, if the hydrological regime and ecological balance are restored, Yelnya marshes may bring in over \$30 million of profit annually***

searchers,” comments the first deputy director general of Coca Cola Beverages (Belarus), Andrey Poshchupkin. “The results of recent research conducted at Yelnya Reserve reflects new approaches towards the notion of ‘ecological service’ and demonstrates how we can receive a serious financial return from comprehensive integration of the eco-system into the economy.”

“Over the past few years, The Coca Cola Foundation has invested over \$250,000 into the Yelnya bog restoration project, and more than \$180,000 in other works to restore the Belarusian eco-system. The res-



Nikolai Cherkas, technical coordinator of the UNDP project for restoration of the hydrological regime on Yelnya marshes, Cand. Sc. (Biology)

VADIM KONDRASHOV



# Ozone highlighted

**Alexander Krasovsky, a candidate of Physical and Technical Sciences and senior researcher at the National Scientific and Research Centre of Ozone Layer Monitoring, within the Belarusian State University, is convinced that extreme weather is directly related to the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere. In constant motion, yesterday's 'hole' can become a 'thick pillow', affecting the lower troposphere, where warm and cold air masses are formed, and where cyclones and anticyclones are born, causing abnormal weather: a hurricane in Minsk, breaking trees like matches; a storm in Rostov crashing a plane; or a flood in Poland.**

**T**he international community has already recognised that the ozone layer of the stratosphere is a vital climatic factor worldwide, absorbing solar emissions and protecting life on Earth. The thinning of this layer, and the appearance of ozone holes, is an issue requiring consolidated effort.

Belarus has acceded to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer but, rather than paying an annual fee in foreign currency, we are doing our part by conducting scientific investigation into the ozone layer: a mission performed by the BSU Centre. Research is being conducted not only in Belarus but in Antarctica, during seasonal Belarusian expeditions. Much information and knowledge has already been gathered.

“We believe that having a thick ozone layer is no better than having little,” says Alexander Krasovsky. “Recent hazardous weather in Minsk and other cities occurred despite there being quite a lot of ozone above us. We numerically simulated the infamous weather situation in Rostov, and found a large amount of ozone and tropopause (the transition layer between the troposphere and stratosphere); this literally ‘crushed’ the lower layers of air.”

He continues, “A low, unsteady jet stream appeared that hit a ‘Boeing’. We used to think that all weather was ‘cooked’ in the surface layer, while the stratosphere, with its ozone, was relatively stable. All weather models rested on the tropopause, and everything above was not taken into account. However, satellite monitoring and advanced computing technologies have changed our way of seeing things. At the Climate Assembly in New Zealand, in January 2014, it was clearly stated that the upper atmosphere cannot be ignored. The atmosphere is solid and, if there are changes, they occur through the entire depth. We’re now developing a mechanism to look at how the ozone affects regional weather conditions.”

Experts believe that binding of weather conditions to the ‘ozone picture’ is about timing. Ozone concentration in the surface layer, in the upper atmosphere, as well as ground-level UV radiation, is daily measured at the National Scientific and Research Centre of Ozone Layer Monitoring at the BSU, using devices created there. For example, a unique instrument for measuring surface ozone, TrIO, provides benchmark data. The hydrometeoservice, which also monitors this parameter, periodically checks its data against that provided by TrIO. Accuracy is important, since this substance is among the six most dangerous to health. The fully automated multifunctional PION-FN spectroradiometer, placed on the roof, is a complex geophysical instrument used in Antarctica. The latest photometer PION-FN is established nearby, measuring the level of ultraviolet radiation and general ozone concentration. It’s completely autonomous and solar powered, transmitting data via Wi-Fi and mobile.

“Several years ago, we established a similar device at Naroch, and it showed us much of interest, including data proving that UV levels there are different from those in Minsk. Due to

a more transparent atmosphere and water surface levels of sun exposure being higher, you’re more likely to tan there. Biologists have discovered that, if the amount of ultraviolet radiation increases, biological processes change in natural waters. Having asked us to help them with research, we’ve developed a device for measuring levels of ultraviolet rays in water. Data was collected from a number of lakes in Naroch and we found a significant amount of biologically active ultraviolet at a depth of 15 metres.

PION-FN is already installed in Gomel, and similar devices will soon appear across all regional centres, sending information to the BSU Centre. Like other countries, it can then pass this on to the World Data Centre for Ozone and UV radiation. Maps reflecting the current situation in the ozone layer, over both hemispheres, are being created.

The deputy director of the centre, candidate of physical and mathematical sciences Alexander Svetashov, shows us his monitor: light areas are ozone holes, which migrate constantly. On

Senior researcher Alexander Krasovsky demonstrates the PION-FN filter photometer



June 25th, there was a ‘tongue’ that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea over Belarus. On another day, it moved eastwards. The thinner the layer, the more UV penetrates, causing not only sunburn but cataracts, lens opacity and melanomas. Meanwhile, dark areas of dense ozone can ‘crush’ the tropopause and cause extreme weather. The picture is ever changing.

The Centre is investigating these processes and can predict how the situation will develop, including calculation of the UV index. Such data shouldn’t be ignored. Long ago, WHO recognised that ultraviolet radiation can contribute to various diseases, especially now, when holidays in distant hot countries have become so popular. The UV index, which gives some indication of danger, denotes

that a level of 0 to 2 requires no protection. A level of 6-7 requires protective clothing, sunglasses and sunscreen, while 8-10 is dangerous, so that staying indoors is advised. Vietnam, so popular

recently among tourists, showed an extreme index of 12 in July, while Greece was given a level of 10, and Spain of 9. Taking into account the ability of ultraviolet radiation to weaken the immune system, we should think twice about vacation destinations. High indices are sometimes registered in Belarus; at the end of June, the level was 8, while July had levels of between 3 and 7. You can monitor the situation at [www.ozone.bsu.by](http://www.ozone.bsu.by).

By Yulia Vasilishina

# Artefacts expand our understanding of the past

**A unique monument has been restored thanks to collectors**

**M**insk postcard collectors are familiar with Kirill Sokol from Moscow, who is a candidate of geography. The researcher of Russian Empire monuments, and member of the editorial board of Moscow's *Filokartia* (Deltiology) journal, is also a staff member of Moscow State University, and frequently visits our capital. Here, he shares his views on the latest events in collecting activities in Belarus.

You like to follow what's happening in Belarusian collectors' lives?

I not only follow, but, as a jealous colleague, participate in their affairs, as far as possible. For instance, I've been helping organise a showcase for Vladimir Likhodedov from Minsk and Vladimir Peftiyev from Moscow.

Tell us more...

Vladimir Likhodedov and Vladimir Peftiyev have been collaborating for quite some time, as devoted collectors of illustrative materials on various corners of your wonderful country. I know that their partnership is a contemporary continuation of the 'In Search of the Lost' project, well known in Belarus. The recent exhibition in Moscow was dedicated to the 1812 war.

Didn't Vladimir Likhodedov publish a book about his collection?

In 2012, Vladimir and I published '1812 War Monuments on Old Postcards' jointly as a book. Working on it was a pure delight. I became convinced once again that old postcards are unique documentary sources for historical geography.



I must mention more recent work by Vladimir Likhodedov, accomplished jointly with Vladimir Peftiyev. The 'Saint Equal-to-the-Apostles Duke Vladimir' album, published by Zvyazda Publishing House, is the result of their great ambitions. I'm astonished and impressed by the scope of their aspiration, both in relation to this album and to all other endeavours. Owing to Vladimir Peftiyev's and Vladimir Likhodedov's efforts, we can view almost every lithograph by Faber du Faur.

They pertain to the War of 1812?

Right. Faber du Faur was a legendary painter of German battle scenes. He survived the entire Russian campaign against the Napoleonic army, as a lieutenant under Marshal Ney. He drew Russian landscapes, camping soldiers, river crossings, troops marching, and battles — all as he saw them. Afterwards, he would finish his sketches with watercolours. Paintings by Faber du Faur were first exhibited to the public in 1816. In 1840, his series was published under the title 'Blätter aus meinem Portefeuille im Laufe des Feldzugs 1812 in Russland'. Various experts view those illustrations by Faber du Faur as an informative source on the 1812 war, from various perspectives.

Vladimir Peftiyev's collection contains lithographs of pictures by Vereshchagin. Presenting these keen Belarusian collectors in Moscow, I talked much about the importance of their work in terms of learning from history. Russia is making efforts to restore its genuine history, focusing on the activities of historical and geographical societies. Many new historical periodicals have appeared, and all want to richly illustrate their publications, including with replicas of old lithographs and with old cards. I believe that illustrations like this, as are held in Vladimir Likhodedov's and Vladimir Peftiyev's collections, will soon be in demand in Belarus too.

So, cards and lithographs should help expand our objective understanding of various historical times...

Indeed! They not only develop our understanding but encourage society towards better judgement. Likhodedov and Peftiyev don't hide away their collections; they view them as engines driving forward practical events. For instance, with their help, Vladimir Likhodedov located a monument of the 1812 war previously unknown.

To be precise, he first found a photograph. Then, he figured out that the monument was situated between Vileika and Molodechno. The monument had been destroyed, with no trace remaining, and we had no information besides his image. We can only guess the efforts and funds required to restore the monument on its original site, where it stood more than fifty years ago. Vladimir Peftiyev and Vladimir Likhodedov involved other like-minds and local authorities to erect a new version of the monument, dedicated to our ancestors who de-

fended Russia and Belarus from the Napoleonic invasion. The monument is dedicated to all those killed in the 1812 war, regardless of the side on which they fought.

Almost 20 deltiological albums and books have been released under the 'In Search of the Lost' project. Are you familiar with all of them? What is your assessment of these collectors' activity?

We lack a library for such editions in Belarus and Russia, maybe worldwide. The collectors' publishing activities are very impressive. I know that the Belarusian state encouraged Vladimir Likhodedov in his project to publish card albums.

It's true, Zvyazda Publishing House has released five out of twenty albums in the 'In Search of the Lost' series. Work on presenting old cards to the general public began long ago with SB. Belarus Segodnya newspaper. The edition's large circulation was an advantage. Later, other media joined in publishing images of old cards from Vladimir Likhodedov's collection.

Most importantly, the books, albums, newspaper and magazine publications all contain significant texts. These editions can be used at schools and universities, as cards can and should help in studying our homeland's history.

What are your plans for collaboration with Belarusian collectors?

Another monument has been restored with help from Belarusian collectors (including financial).

The monument is to Orthodox priest Fyodor Yuzefovich, who sacrificed his life to affirm justice.

He deserves to be remembered by future generations. Vladimir

Peftiyev and Vladimir

Likhodedov are preserving

his memory by restoring

the monument, laying

foundations for future ed-

ucation and enlightening.

I hope to participate, with

my Belarusian colleagues,

in creating new editions

and new exhibitions. I know

that Vladimir Likhodedov

intends to publish a book

about monuments

located in Belarus

before 1941, when

the Great Patriotic

War began. I'll be

glad if my co-operation

is of use.

By Kirill **Ladutko**



Vladimir Likhodedov, collector

VITALIY GIL

# Grades are vital

**Belarusian school graduates must pass centralized testing to enter further education**



BELTA

## Exam not for everyone

In choosing a high school, this influences the choice of two core subjects which must be sat for tests. The third test is mandatory, in Russian or Belarusian language. The Republican Institute for Knowledge Control prepares exams and issues certificates, all under confidential conditions. The State Commission for the Control of Entrance Tests at Higher and Secondary Specialised Educational Institutions charges 0.1 of the base value (2.1 Roubles) to take part in centralised testing. This year, more than 100,000 graduates took part and tests began two days after school leaving parties. These passed without incident, besides 14 people being disqualified for cheating: seeking answers via their mobile phone or using notes. They can try again next year.

There are several undisputable advantages to the system, in which each student takes part 'anonymously', avoiding favouritism in marking. Selection criteria are clear and transparent: the total score of grades received

during CT and in the secondary school certificate governs state-funded scholarship or the necessity for fee-paying. Corruption has been almost eradicated. Recently, there have been no cases of abuse in the system.

## The higher the grade, the better the faculty

The university admission procedure is simplified as far as possible, with each student presenting their secondary school certificate, three CT results and a medical certificate, as well as a letter of application for the entrance examination board.

Students are rated, with the Ministry of Education having defined a minimum of ten points needed for Russian and Belarusian languages, fifteen for mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, and twenty for all other subjects. Those who pass in the lower levels can apply either to universities asking for lower entrance grades or to vocational schools.

To gain admission to the best universities, 360-370 points are required. The

most prestigious is the BSU's Faculty of Law. Last year, to enter Business Law, 396 points were needed, of a possible 400. The highest score recorded is 399.

It is possible to become a student without a CT score. Laureates of the President's Talented Youth Support Fund, and winners of international and republican Olympiads, and international creative contests and sports competitions, are admitted without examination.

## Price of knowledge: paying for a dream

Only a third of applicants gain a state scholarship, with others having to pay, although costs are less than in Russia. For example, one year at the BSU Law Faculty costs 2,616 Roubles, while the Social Psychology and Pedagogy Faculty of Vitebsk State University charges 1,898 Roubles. Naturally, the quality of education is identical, and all students have equal access to lectures, textbooks and even dormitories. They also face the same rigorous examination.

By Gennady **Malakhitov**



## On spiritual wave

### Union State Day at Slavianski Bazaar in Vitebsk full of bright events

**25**th International Slavianski Bazaar Festival of Arts, in Vitebsk, is, this year, bigger than ever, with 130 cultural events and 5,500 participants from 44 countries. The Grand Prix of the International Pop Song Performers' Contest, Vitebsk-2016, has been won by Belarusian Alex Gross, while Russian Anastasia Gladilina won the Children's Musical Competition — also receiving the Grand Prix. The First Award went to Belarusian Anastasia Zhabko, and all were awarded special prizes from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Belarus-Russia Union State.

Union State Day was among the brightest and most memorable at the Slavianski Bazaar, held on July 15th. The holiday opened with laying of flowers at the Pobedy Square memorial, in Vitebsk. Later, the Secretary of State of the Union State, Grigory Rapota, met the Chairman of Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee, Nikolay Sherstnev. The latter noted that Russia is a key strategic partner for the Belarusian Dvina Region, saying, "Our states have no borders, which defines our relationships. Seventy percent of all exports go to Russia. We are seriously considering a programme of economic co-operation for at least



the coming five years, taking into account the transition to major industrial and agricultural projects.”

Mr. Rapota says that issues of regional co-operation and prospects for more active participation of Russian businesses have been debated. “I’m glad we’ve had the opportunity to visit certain enterprises, such as Vitebsk’s Display Design Bureau. It’s actively liaising with Russian scientists and sells its high-tech produce mostly to Russia. We’ve also focused on engineering issues. We share a common theme of flax. Belarusian-Russian co-operation in this respect is truly extensive, as it is for agriculture. At the moment, Russians buy much food from the Belarusian border region but we need to shift from simple purchases to long-term projects,” he notes.

Conversation on the topic continued during Mr. Rapota’s traditional press conference. He believes that co-ordination of the economic policies of Belarus and Russia is vital to our bilateral co-operation. “We need to create an economic basis, enabling us to develop our cultural ties more extensively. Cultural projects can be funded from an economic basis, so we need to pay attention to eliminating gaps in economic relations, which have emerged in recent years,” he explains.

Charitable activities are traditionally organised as part of the Slavianski Bazaar. This year, Mr. Rapota visited Velikoletchansky Orphanage, in the village of Bolshiye Letsy (Vitebsk Region). He saw how its 116 children live, and attended concerts they had prepared. He presented a computer class to the children, in addition to a laptop and an interactive whiteboard. “We’ve managed to find sponsors, who’ve helped us purchase and install the equipment. The equipment will be put to good use, as we know that the younger generation must keep up with the times,” Mr. Rapota declared.

Vera Duk, the orphanage’s director, says that her establishment was founded after World War II and now comprises ten family groups. Its original teaching methods include working in the garden, arts and mini-football tournaments (between orphanages), going to Moscow and St. Petersburg. “Our dream was to update our computer class so we’re happy this has been realised. Our sports-

men also dream of gaining an artificial football pitch,” Ms. Duk told Mr. Rapota, who made note.

Mr. Rapota then visited Ilya Repin’s Zdravnevo Museum-Estate. In recent years, it has transformed into a unique educational and artistic centre. The Union State donated a collection of reproduction paintings by Repin and Peredvizhnik to the museum, which has attracted foreign visitors keen to learn more about the great artist.

The extended museum collection needs more space and is ready to construct a new exhibition hall next door. Mr. Rapota presented the project during his visit, also discussing the possibility of its realisation with Belarusian and Russian culture ministers Vladimir Medinsky and Boris Svetlov. In Zdravnevo, the Secretary of State

also met participants and organisers of the 4th Belarusian-Russian open-air workshop for young artists. Boys and girls demonstrated pictures painted in the festival city and later received diplomas and presents. Moreover, young people, their teachers and guests of honour made a flower bed near the museum’s porch, in the form of a palette. To honour the Festival’s 25th jubilee, a corresponding 25 flowering rose bushes were planted.

In the evening, the Summer Amphitheater hosted the ‘Union State Invites’ concert, featuring the Academic Song and Dance Ensemble of the Russian Army (named after A. Aleksandrov), Larisa Dolina, Nadezhda Babkina, Syabry Ensemble, Nikolay Skorikov and other famous performers.

Mr. Rapota awarded special diplomas from the Standing Committee of the Union State ‘For Artistic Implementation of Ideas of Friendship Between Belarusian and Russian People’ to singers Olga Korkukhina and Ruslan Alekhno, to the Academic Song and Dance Ensemble of the Russian Army, and to the Director of the International Slavianski Bazaar Festival of Arts, Alexander Sidorenko. While congratulating nominees, the Secretary of State pointed out that if people have fun and relax together, then they are really happy to see each other. “In Vitebsk, heads of the country, the region and residents do everything possible for guests to enjoy themselves and feel at home,” he noted.

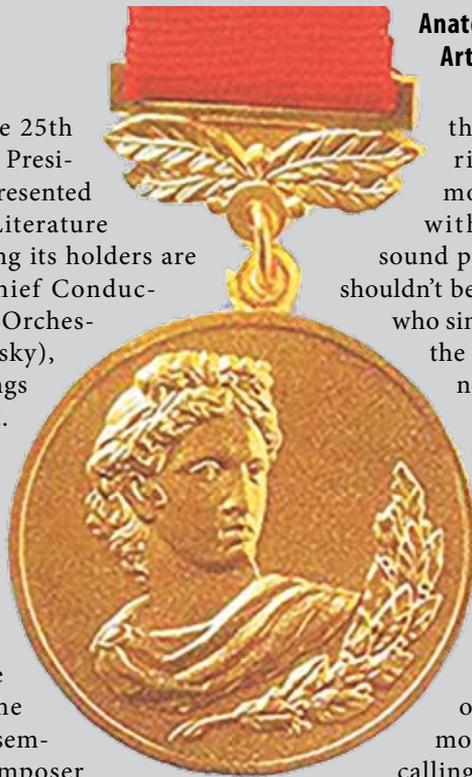


BELTA



## Best of the best

During the opening of the 25th International Festival of Arts, President Alexander Lukashenko presented the Union State Award for Literature and Art for 2015-2016. Among its holders are the Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Bolshoi Symphony Orchestra (named after P. Tchaikovsky), Vladimir Fedoseev, for his 'Songs from the War Years' project. Awarded also were the Head of Minsk All Saints parish, Fyodor Povny, sculptor Vladimir Slobodchikov and architect Igor Morozov, for creating a sculpture of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II, in the Belarusian capital. The second team awarded was the Artistic Director of Syabry Ensemble, Anatoly Yarmolenko, composer Oleh Yeliseenkov and poet Ivan Yurkin, for their 'Where the Viburnum Blooms' musical album.



### Anatoly Yarmolenko, Syabry's Artistic Director, adds,

"The award confirms that we're moving in the right direction in promoting friendly relations with Russia. This might sound pompous but I believe we shouldn't be afraid to say that people who sing songs are reluctant to go to war. Our 'Where the Viburnum Blooms' album is the key component of our concert programme touring China, Mongolia, Ukraine, the USA and Russia. In September, we'll play in Moscow; all tickets are sold out already. Great interest is shown in our songs, since they deal with everything dear to everyone: home life in our beloved corner of the world, where we are born and grow up. We, musicians, consider the album to be a success if even just one song becomes popular. Meanwhile, virtually all the songs on our album are hits: 'My Village' is a song about motherhood, while 'Come to Our Belarus' is a calling card not only for Syabry but for Belarus in general. We're happy to hear our fans all over the globe singing it in Belarus, jointly with us."



### Fyodor Povny, the Head of Minsk All Saints parish, tells us,

"We wanted to depict Patriarch Alexy II to appear modern and interesting, showing his character, inner world and outlook. Thanks be to God, we've succeeded. Several people were involved and it's important that they've received high praise within the Union State. New generations grow up and sometimes fail to realise how our relations — built for centuries — are being dissolved. It's vital to find a common ground of shared values for Russians and Belarusians, since this shapes us. We have no prospects without understanding our internal Union relations. Some share of the money received as part of the award will be invested into reconstruction of St. Sophia's Cathedral in Vitebsk. As regards the Slavianski Bazaar, there is no better peace-making venue, in my opinion — even outside the CIS. Importantly, it boasts real traditions, which — I'm convinced — will last well beyond 25 years."

### Vladimir Fedoseyev, the Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of the Bolshoi Symphony Orchestra (named after P. Tchaikovsky), comments,

"The 'Songs of the War Years' project has stirred so many wonderful feelings among performers and audiences. When we sang 'Arise, Great Country!', 'Bryansk Forest Makes Noise', 'Tachanka', 'In a Sunny Field', and 'Soldiers are Coming to Minsk', at Moscow's Green Theatre and at other concert halls, audiences joined us in singing. I noticed that many people — including young people — had tears in their eyes. The elderly remember the emotions inspired by the war, which we sometimes forget. Music revives those feelings, strengthening our souls in this ever-changing world. Unfortunately, it's not always changing for the best. The Union State Award is the result of a great job, by my orchestra and my own self. Artistes need such gratitude, as it reflects the feelings of audiences. After all, we work primarily for the people."



By Sergey Golesnik



PAUL CHUYKO

## Alexander Surikov: 'We need to unite efforts'

**Regional co-operation is among the most efficient instruments of Union State integration. Economists, entrepreneurs and businessmen of Belarus and Russia come to the understanding that Union State manufactured products will enjoy greater competitiveness if we unite potential.**

**T**he Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia to Minsk, Alexander Surikov, pays special attention to this issue in preparing and organising the 3rd Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia. The goal of strengthening regional interaction and production co-operation remains topical.

***Mr. Surikov, on what does Belarusian-Russian regional liaison rely?***

Speaking of the efficiency of regional co-operation, Russia and Belarus take this aspect seriously. In the late 1990s, I took part in such liaisons regularly, and headed a Russian territory. It was clear even then that, apart from international economic and social aspects of interaction, the Belarusian authorities were focusing on regional ties between Belarus and Russia. There are two levels of co-operation. At the moment, 80 Russian Federation subjects (out of 85) — including the two which have recently become subjects (the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol) — have agreements on economic, social and cultural co-operation with the Government of Belarus, or its regions. Working groups have been established, uniting the overwhelming majority of Russian regions, the Belarusian

Government or Belarusian regions, which work and determine the development of signed agreements.

***Is this system a success?***

Let's investigate it from the point of view of interstate economic co-operation. In 2006, turnover between Russia and Belarus stood at \$15bln: \$9bln from hydrocarbons and \$6bn from regional links between enterprises. This is an example of excellent business, with high added value.

We focused on industrial co-operation and integration of certain Belarusian and Russian companies and, as a result, turnover in 2012 (which was the 'peak' for our economy) reached \$44bln: \$15bln from hydrocarbons and the remainder mainly from regional co-operation. In short, growth from \$6 to \$29bn was registered. Inter-regional and co-operative ties of companies rose five-fold, showing dynamism.

In Russia, around 30 joint ventures using Belarusian components have been established in this period. Among them are Saransk Tractor Works (in co-operation with MTZ, it produces up to 5,000 tractors), Bryansk Agricultural Machinery Plant (in co-operation with Gomselmash, it manufactures 3,000 harvesters) and Nizhny Novgorod's Lift Plant (which makes up



to a thousand lifts jointly with Mogilevliftmash). In turn, the Russian Plant of Technical Carbon, from Omsk, is completing construction of a technical carbon plant in Mogilev. All are examples of co-operation and economic integration.

***Social aspect also in place...***

These ties have created a tremendous number of jobs: hundreds of thousands. They generate profit for families, district, city and state budgets, as well as the pension fund. Owing to these regional ties, 2,500 joint ventures with Russian capital have been established in Belarus and over a thousand with Belarusian capital operate in Russia. All this has helped increase turnover between our countries from \$6bln to almost \$30bln (excluding hydrocarbons).

At present, world prices for hydrocarbons, raw materials, metal, timber and food are falling. Trade turnover between Russia and Belarus has slightly reduced. However, jobs remain. These businesses operate and production processes continue, as do both of our basic economic fundamentals.

***Belarus and Russia have agreed to strengthen co-operation to overcome negative economic effects.***

Certainly, this is true. We must understand that prices for hydrocarbons and all other raw materials have fallen. We can't raise global consumer demand, and we do have our own internal problems. We're working hard to restore and improve the industrial image of Russia and Belarus. It's important to involve Eurasian Economic Union countries in this process, so we have much to consider. In Russia, it's necessary to restore the existing industrial level and, in Belarus, we need to raise this level. If we fail, we won't keep up with modern technological trends. The basic industries remain. While items like socks may soon be printed, it's impossible to print a tractor, a power machine, rye or corn. With this in mind, industrialisation and the agro-complex are vital. We've changed our industrial image since Soviet times, making the most of regional co-operation. However, the world is progressing, with major transnational companies dominating the global economic arena. In recent years, this has gained a geopolitical aspect. Moreover, we shouldn't forget that Russia is a WTO member and Belarus will soon join. Our Eurasian Union partners are already members of this organisation and we cannot ignore WTO rules.

Our task is to integrate our businesses. Belarus and Russia are yet to unite MAZ and KAMAZ. We need to carefully investigate our integration and unite efforts to compete with transnational companies. We should discuss how to make our strategy beneficial to both countries. We need to further enhance our integration ties.

***Why do Russians often say 'Belarusian' or even 'Belarusian foreign product', when there should be no difference between us?***

Competition is probably at the heart of this, especially regarding agricultural products. It's impossible to set up a common Belarusian-Russian collective farm. Small enterprises will compete and this is necessary to enhance quality. Internal competition is important to enter foreign markets where Western companies compete with us.

We need to agree that all Union State products, and those of the Eurasian Union very soon, are 'common' — as in the European Union. Saying this, it's not easy for products made in the Baltic States to reach France, within the EU. Economic issues remain under discussion. We need to fill the market with our own products — including meat, milk and grain. We need to prepare balance sheets and forecast output.

***How far do we have a single industrial and agricultural policy?***

Key issues have been discussed and Union State officials and governments are involved in wording these documents. Our common industrial policy, in my opinion, is a single system of balanced privileges, preferences and technological standards.

To produce common products, we need to unite efforts. We should think of how to unite, develop and put into practice our scientific potential. Later, this practice (in the form of products) will enter the markets of third countries. This is the task of academies of science, governments and businesses. Why am I speaking about the need to achieve a major transnational business? This is because the latter would deal with innovations more seriously.

***Is it possible to develop some projects exclusively within the Union State?***

Some are best developed in the Union State, as it's a union of potential, joint efforts and thoughts. Political will is already observed; now, we should focus on practical action.

***Thank you for the interview!***

By Nina Romanova

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***Owing to the regional ties, 2,500 joint ventures with Russian capital have been established in Belarus and over a thousand with Belarusian capital operate in Russia. All this helped increase turnover between our countries from \$6bln to almost \$30bln (excluding hydrocarbons)***

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# Power relies on words

**Natalia Gres, from Lida, named above over a hundred colleagues from Belarus and Russia, to win young literature teachers' contest**

**N**atalia has won the Union State's 3rd Word Power Competition, despite having only been working as a teacher for one year. Her lesson on works devoted to the rivalry between Vasil Bykov and Mikhail Sholokhov was recognised as the best by an international jury of eminent scientists, linguists and professors, who praised not only her knowledge of the subject but her creativity.

Ms. Gres admits, "Teachers now need to compete with other sources of information — such as news portals and video blogs. There's no getting around it. I try to prepare lessons involving audio and video and involve children in planning a lesson. The teacher should be only a moderator, directed by the children."

This year, teachers under the age of 28 were admitted to the 'literary competition', with over a hundred applications received by the Standing Committee of the Union State and MIA Russia Today. The best were invited to the Moscow finals, with each country represented by five teachers. They enjoyed not only awards and diplomas but also an extensive educational programme.

The State Literary Museum welcomed teachers with a lecture on the popularisation of Russian literature, the expansion of contacts, joint work by teachers from Belarus and across the Russian regions, and the museum's mission as an enlightener and educator. The issue of what a modern literature lesson should look like was also studied and the answer was evident: it must be interactive, dynamic and youth-oriented.

The second day of the seminar began with a master class by teacher-methodologist Roman Doshchinsky, from Moscow's Charles de Gaulle School. He focused on Yanka Kupala's artistry. It might seem impossible to capture Russian children's attention with works by a Belarusian poet. However, Roman



succeeded. Moreover, his young colleagues actively joined in debate and discussion.

The State Secretary of the Union State, Grigory Rapota, tells us, "What is the scourge of society both in Belarus and Russia? We have many pupils who receive less than high grades. Because of them, we have many unqualified engineers, responsible for planes and buildings falling down, as well as bad law enforcement professionals and those in medical provision. Unfortunately, such people are also among men of letters. We want to see fewer low-performing students. Looking at you, young teachers, now, I believe this goal can be achieved. Only excellent students have gathered here: you can show how it's necessary to serve the profession and other people."

The topic of lack of student interest in reading aroused great debate. Even fashionable readers are less popular than we might hope. Roundtable participants agreed that a new approach is needed towards teaching literature. Knowledge is not the only priority; it's important to generate interest in books, writers and characters. This is the key principle of teaching; only those who sincerely care for our native word can master it.

The Head of the Social Policy and Information Support Department of the Union State Standing Committee, Margarita Levchenko, is convinced that the Word Power competition enables teachers to demonstrate their strengths and enhances interest in their subject. "The future of any country relies on its younger generation. If teachers can inspire interest, if they are educated and enthusiastic, then their pupils will emulate them, becoming true citizens of the Union State. This is why work with school teachers is a priority for the Union State Standing Committee.

By Yuliana **Leonovich**



**T**he third working semester at the largest construction site, located in Ostrovets, is in full swing: an ambitious and friendly team of international students, comprising future nuclear engineers and builders, has united efforts. Of course, they're lucky to have the opportunity to participate in this prestigious Union State project. Three years ago, only sixty people were gathered on the site; now, over 420 students from across Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan are working there.

# Students building future

## 'Nuclear' university students meet at largest Union State construction site

The curator of Russian Construction Teams at the all-Belarusian Youth Construction Site (at the nuclear power station), Roman Kopylov, notes that students are enjoying a unique internship. It may seem strange for young people to want to spend their summer holidays in this manner but many are curious to see how complex engineering objects are launched. He comments, "I'm a student at Nizhny Novgorod State Technical University (named after R. Alexeev), focusing on 'nuclear power and thermal physics'. At university, we listen to lectures on nuclear power plants but it's much easier for students to study theory after spending time at the construction of such sites. They'll feel more confident at their first job as a result. Just imagine: we can see equipment only usually seen in textbooks with our own eyes: steam generators, high and low pressure heaters, and much more. No place is out of bounds to us, so we gain a correct and complete picture of a real nuclear power station.

To access the strategic site, students of Belarusian and Russian universities wishing to join a construction team have had to pass an interview. Those applying to head teams have also had to prove their aptitude. "In Moscow, we have a school of command-

ers and commissars of student construction brigades," explains commissioner Ksenia Agibalova. "Applications are submitted by the most enterprising, who want to visit sites not as ordinary workers but in a management role. We're working jointly with Roman for the second year, having helped build Novy Voronezh nuclear power station last year. Now, we're in Ostrovets."

To receive good salaries, young people have to work hard. They lay paving slabs and curbs. Students are attracted to all areas of the construction site but are watched every step of the



way by experienced management. They only perform tasks not requiring special qualification.

Ever more nuclear power plants are being built, and the branch is expanding, needing expertise. Many of today's student labourers hope to work at Ostrovets. Of course, residents of the Union State enjoy equal employment rights and salaries across Russia and Belarus; all will be welcome at Ostrovets.

"We view Belarus as a brotherly republic," Roman says. "It doesn't matter where we work: at a Russian or Belarusian station. Viuras (reactor control engineers) and operating staff will come from Russia and, in the course of time, Russian alumni will join. I don't yet know how many will arrive but experience in the field of nuclear energy — which Russia boasts — will be shared step by step.

By Inna **Kabysheva**



# Correction valid

## Penitentiary institutions across Union State to be improved

**T**he Union State Standing Committee is tackling the issue for the first time, looking at collaboration between Russian and Belarusian penitentiary services.

From a humanitarian perspective, there is a desire to ensure decent conditions for those serving sentences, and to provide an element of rehabilitation, so they may integrate into society on release, rather than becoming hardened criminals. It is both a technical and a humanitarian problem, since prisoners must be kept isolated.

Last October, in the Kazakh village of Burabay, presidents of CIS member states signed an agreement to establish the Council of Penitentiary Service Directors. The first meeting of the Council, dedicated mainly to organisational issues, took place on 9-10th June, in Moscow.

After less than a month, on 4th July, the Minsk headquarters of the Standing Committee liaised with Union State Secretary Grigory Rapota, to discuss specific areas of co-operation. Invited along was a researcher who doesn't deal with penitentiary problems, the head of the headquarters of the National Academy of Belarus, professor Piotr Vityaz, who has a PhD in technical sciences. He has been invited to co-ordinate technical issues, including radio-electronic suppression of mobile phone conversations, so that criminal bosses cannot supervise criminal activities from jail. Both Russia and Belarus have the necessary technologies and qualified personnel to carry out this task.

Safety in places of detention is one of three priority areas for co-operation, alongside convicts' health and juvenile offenders' welfare. Whether these will become the focus of government programmes will be decided later.



**Sergey Doroshko, Head of the Department of Corrections of the Belarusian Interior Ministry:**

***In penitentiary institutions, we must protect teenagers from the harmful influence of mature criminals, while maintaining a system of “social lifts” for them and giving them a chance***

Sergey Doroshko, Head of the Department of Corrections of the Belarusian Interior Ministry, set a humanitarian tone for the discussion, citing the example of a teenager committing an offence for the first time but gaining criminal knowledge on entering prison. When teenagers are sent to jail, their school education is interrupted, and they enter a 'prison university' instead. It seems obvious that young offenders should be protected from the harmful influence of mature criminals, being encouraged to turn a new page. Mr. Doroshko assures us that the Belarusian correction system is ready to move in this direction, with Government support. His Russian counterpart, Valery Maksimenko, the deputy director of the Federal Correction Service and Major General of Internal Forces, supports this opinion. As an example, he cites a mother of three from Moscow, who was detained at a pretrial detention facility for several months, for having stolen a piece of cheese.

The Union State Secretary, Grigory Rapota, notes that standards and methodology of juvenile offender welfare should be developed, taking into account international best practice. The next step is to estimate the cost of a programme and to invest in a new infrastructure. The State Secretary stresses the need to assess legislation in our two countries and to develop proposals for harmonisation. He underlines, “We can do it. We have the right of legislative initiative and there is the Parliamentary Assembly, to which we can pose these questions...”

Shortly after the Minsk meeting, necessary documents were signed and working groups created; real co-operation has begun.

By Victor **Ponomarev**



YURIY MOZOLEVSKIY

# Star brothers leave mark on history

## Minsk aero club opens window to space

**T**he Space Pavilion at Minsk's Voluntary Association for Assistance to Army, Air Force and Navy (DOSAAF) aero club has its focus on the way Belarusians have left their mark on space exploration. On display are such exhibits as a Soyuz spacecraft landing section, a seat liner and Piotr Klimuk's spacesuit. There are suits worn by crew from the international space station, unique photographs taken from low-earth orbit and fa-

mous 'borsch and cutlets', as eaten onboard by astronauts.

Symbolically, Belarusian-born astronauts attended the opening ceremony: twice Heroes of the Soviet Union, former Colonel-Generals Vladimir Kovalenok and Piotr Klimuk; and Hero of Russia, Colonel Oleg Novitsky. Hero of Russia Alexander Kaleri, who spent 769 days in space (the third longest period in the history of space exploration) attended as an honorary guest.

Also in attendance were USSR research pilots: Hero of the Soviet Union Victor Pugachev and a graduate

of the Minsk DOSAF aero club, Hero of Russia Yevgeny Frolov. Belarusian Prime Minister Andrei Kobryakov and the Security Council State Secretary, Lieutenant General Stanislav Zas, participated in the opening, showing the importance of the project.

Oleg Novitsky presented his training suit, as worn at the international space station, while Vladimir Kovalenok and Piotr Klimuk donated their officer uniform overcoats. The core exhibit is a real landing section, with renovated dashboard and chairs, in which astronauts return to Earth. This capsule, although operational, hasn't flown in space. Enthusiasts found it at Minsk's Tsentr research and production organisation, which used to manufacture products for the space industry. Yet another unusual exhibit is the door to room No. 305, from the Cosmonaut Hotel, at which astronauts stay before going into orbit. Space pilots who attended the opening ceremony left their autographs on the famous door. After a spontaneous autographing session, Oleg Novitsky said, "Collaboration is of primary importance, as no one can work in space individually. Russia and Belarus have very close relations, dating back to Soviet times. Belarus can be proud of its excellent optics and sophisticated devices for space investigation.

Four years ago, on July 22nd, 2012, the Soyuz launch vehicle sent a Russian satellite and Belarusian space apparatus into orbit at 500km, showing our two countries' co-operation. Last January, a Belarusian telecommunications satellite was launched into orbit. The satellite forms the basis for the national satellite connection and broadcast system.

Head of Minsk's DOSAAF aero club, Nikolay Mochansky, who collected a large share of the exhibits, believes that the exhibition should be given status as an aviation and astronautics museum.

By Andrey **Drob**

# Spending summer in good mood

## Children's recreation is of state importance in Belarus

**B**y May, it was clear where pupils would spend their summer, being not only looked after, but spending their holidays in the most useful way.

Those who stay in town can choose from a range of options, including school camps, children's creative centres and patriotic shifts.

### Museum night and break dance

School camp life runs to schedule, with lessons tailored to interests, sporting activities and guided tours, plus essential lunches and snacks. Beyond that, every school develops its own leisure strategy, using teachers' imagination and experience. The range of activities includes quizzes, outdoor games, sporting competitions, and visits to museums and cinemas. Often, children are taken for one-day journeys outside the city. Walks in the park and the Botanical Gardens are commonplace.

This year, the High Tech Park's educational centre has opened the Academy of Geniuses

In the Minsk Region, this year's holiday slogan is 'Summer for the Good'. Almost every school will have foreign language classes, taught via games.

The 'Summer for All' action will take place for the first time this year. Upper form pupils will be entertaining younger pupils and school camps will hold their version of Museum Night, as well as knights' tournaments, archery competitions, and Irish dance and break dancing master classes.

A three-week duration for children aged 11-13 will cost BYR 200,000 to 400,000, with the cost of food subsidised.

### Understanding what you want to be

Senior pupils will enjoy a special activity this summer, receiving career guidance from teachers, helping them choose a future occupation. "We give opportunities to try various areas, so that school children can choose their future profession thoughtfully," says Deputy Education Minister Victor Yakzhik.

In the Gomel Region, the 'Professional Holidays' project has been launched, at creative centres for children and youth, allowing youngsters to meet outstanding researchers, travellers, inventors and mothers of large families.





Teenagers from the Quest Time Camp for children visited the Museum of Fire

The High Tech Park's educational centre has opened the Academy of IT Geniuses this year, and schools and lyceums have opened computer camps. Children are taught to make a game or a videofilm within a couple of days. Robotics-making courses are yet another option. This variant, however, is a little more expensive: an 18-day duration at the Academy costs BYR 950,000.

### Go weed pulling!

Labour camps still operate, with children aged 14 and above eligible to enrol. In the past, school children would work in such camps for free. Today, they provide a good opportunity to rest and earn some pocket money. Teenagers work half-days and spend the remainder on cultural activities.

"We start arranging jobs for senior pupils in March. At schools, work is quite easy — they can pull weeds in flowerbeds or collect litter. The pay is just over BYR 1,000,000 a month. Another option is to work at an enterprise, such as Zelenstroy, or to work with a utility service crew. Last year, pupils could earn BYR 4.5 million!" notes the Head of Minsk's

Partizansky District Administration, Veronika Rudaya.

### Who wants some stone soup?

Another free option is to spend summer at a military patriotic camp, arranged by military units, under the initiative of local administrations or the Belarusian Republican Youth Union. They are located in the city and in the suburbs, accessible by bus. Such camps used to be for boys only but girls also like playing war games, camping and eating stone soup. Now, both boys and girls can backpack or take lessons in shooting.

### Funny quests are the best

Minsk teachers have devised an amazing children's leisure activity, similar to a computer game, at the Svetoch Centre for Supplementary Education of Children and Youth, in the Sovetsky District of Minsk. The idea is simple, with each day bringing a new quest.

"Quests are trendy today, and children are happy to do them. During the school year, they become tired of lessons and homework and dream of adventure,"

says the head of the Quest Time Camp, Yelena Latysheva. "Every day, they'll be assigned a new task. We're also holding our version of the 'Voice' children's show, which is popular, and are planning master classes in painting, dancing, theatre, and crafts. Other activities include sporting competitions and guided tours.

Quest Time is available for children aged 7 to 11, who are too young to go to camps outside the city.

Discipline is strictly maintained, with early morning exercise at 7.30am, followed by breakfast and lessons according to their interests. Fulfilling tasks earns them points, with prizes awarded based on total score.

Children love working with Tamara Leunina, of Toptyzhka soft toy studio, who shows them how to work with fabric, fur and leather to make animals or fairy tale characters. With fifteen years' experience, she's a great teacher. Her small room resembles a puppet theatre workshop. She comments that children never seem to stop laughing as they work, which may explain why their toys are so lovely. A spirit of fun reigns.

By Kristina **Khilko**



# style living

**Many of us dream of exchanging urban living for the country life, splitting firewood instead of hitting the gym, riding horses and bathing in crystal clear lakes. Four years ago, the Maslovskies left Minsk, seeking a rural idyll. Our reporter travelled to their new home, to learn what inspired these modern, young people to quit the busy capital.**



It took me three and a half hours by inter-city bus, and another hour on a local bus, plus three kilometres on foot, to reach Yana and Alexander Maslovskie, in the village of Tinovka in the Polotsk District. I realised immediately that the journey had been worthwhile. The air was full of sweet floral aromas, and my heart leapt at the beauty of the countryside. Saying this, I know that rural life isn't for everyone.

"Our farmstead is relatively small: we keep hens, geese and goats, alongside six cats and four dogs," says Yana, inviting me in. They also have four horses, the first being Kolos. She explains, "I was helping my friend to choose a horse and ended up buying one, too. I heard that someone was going to send an eight-month-old stallion to the meat-processing plant. He looked at me plaintively, so I didn't think twice. I spent the money I'd saved for a seaside vacation and bought the horse."

As a second-year student, Yana lived in the usual sort of flat, so she had to send her horse to the countryside. Her life changed in a moment:



she had to wake up at 4am, go to see her horse, then go to university. She'd work afterwards, then return to see her 'pet' in the evening. "She'd return home at midnight, tired and happy," Alexander recollects.

At first, he confesses, he was dumbfounded by his wife's purchase. "Why would a city girl want a horse? Time passed, and we bought another, graceful Barkhat. Then, we acquired Rekord. I chose him, being charmed by his height," says Alexander.

The move to the country was made quite quickly, without hesitation. Yana and Alexander settled in a picturesque, hilly area, set against the curve of beautiful Lake Belaye. "There are numerous springs," says Yana, "And plenty of fish: crucian, tench, bream, pike, carp, perch and roach. The lake is famous for its rare vendace, which is found in only five of Belarus' lakes."

Living close to the water, the couple love to watch the elegant swans. Recently, they even saved one from death. "Last winter, fishermen brought us a bird with an injured wing, which would have frozen to death on the ice. We showed it to a

vet and he set the wing. It lived with us for three months. As soon as the ice melted, we let it go on the water," says Yana, watching the gorgeous swans swimming on the lake.

Far from city life, Yana recollects how difficult it was when she lived with her parents in Minsk, with the rush hour traffic jams, and the constant noise. "I used to get headaches, even though our flat was located near Loshitsky Park, in a green area. It became easier to breathe once we moved to Novopolotsk. However, this town, although small, still depressed me with its noise and fuss," she recollects.

Her parents don't share her passion, preferring life in the big city, with all its opportunities. Yana partly understands, saying, "We've had hard times, when it seemed as if living in a city might be easier. The land saved millions of people from starvation but, in our parents' time, there were few prospects in the countryside. They all wanted to escape to urban convenience and can't understand why we want to return to the simple life."

It may seem strange but attitudes towards life in the countryside are

changing, with ever more people wanting to move away from cities. "Famous businessman German Sterligov owned a mansion in Rublevskoye, facing the Kremlin, but relocated to an isolated farmstead without gas, electricity or paved roads, taking his wife and children with him," comments Alexander, adding that, just because they live in the countryside, it doesn't mean that they're giving up on the latest technologies.

The Maslovskies have Internet access, as well as TV and mobile phone coverage, and often visit town. "I still work in Novopolotsk, but spend my earnings on the animals. A significant amount also goes on paying the utility bills, the electricity and gas. We're gradually fine-tuning our plot and repairing the house, so I'm commuting between village and town: two days here and two days there," says Alexander. Yana is a teacher, having studied history and English at university. In her leisure time, she likes to make leather accessories and is skilled at making items of horse tack.

Under the bright sun, we walk along the shore of Lake Belaye, meeting fellow villagers every now and then; some greet us amiably, some frown and mumble indistinctly. "Not all the neighbours understand why we're here. They think that we don't know how to manage a farm and some complain about the noise our animals make: the horses neighing, cocks crowing and dogs barking," says Yana. "But this is a village! Isn't it the most suitable place to keep birds and animals?"

The young people intend to expand their farm, adding turkeys and ponies to the 'animal club'; they even dream of buying a reindeer. Dealing with animals, eating freshly grown vegetables and fruit, and enjoying nature — this is true happiness, the Maslovskies believe. They're certain that they'll never bore of village life, unlike the city.

By Yulia Popkova



BELTA

# Visiting the garden city, or 5 reasons to go to Kobrin

**Bronze sculptures stand on Kobrin's main square: Prince Vladimir Vasilkovich leans forward, offering his property to his wife, Olga Romanovna — in all sincerity and with love. In 1287, the city was born**

## 1 Spend time in Suvorov's favourite places

After the third division of the Rzecz Pospolita in 1795, Empress Yekaterina II presented the estate Kobrinsky Klyuch (Kobrin Key) to field marshal Alexander Suvorov 'in eternal hereditary possession'. In the military and historical museum, a mansion is devoted to the great commander; it belonged to Suvorov in the 18th century. Other exhibits are also likely to amaze visitors: the weapon room has collected rarities since the 15th century, many of them are unique. Among them are a German two-handled sword from the 16th century and a Sodayev submachine gun developed in besieged Leningrad.

The Suvorov Park is a nature sanctuary of the Republican style. It is truly old — being established in 1768. The park reflects the fashions of different eras. Five years ago, an aquapark was built on the site.

## 2 Find reasons to read 'Woe from Wit'

The Russian classic writer and author of the immortal 'Woe from Wit', Alexander Griboyedov, left his mark on the history of Kobrin. Being a cornet of Irkutsk Hussars, he stayed in the city in 1813 and his first literary attempts were connected with these places.

In 1939, the famous poet Alexander Tvardovsky lived here; he is known all over the globe owing to his Vasily Tyorkin.

An architect of the Russian Emperor Nicholas II — Semyon Sidorchuk — was also born locally. He made a major contribution to the construction of Tsarskoye Selo in the early 20th century. On the completion of the project, a church dedicated to the Mother of God icon — Satisfy Mine Grieves — was built in the residence of the Russian emperors. After the revolution in the 1920s, he restored bridges in the Brest Fortress. There are also streets in Ko-



brin named after Griboyedov and Tvardovsky; however, no street named after Sidorchuk is yet registered in the city.

### 3 Take a selfie by Napoleon's gun

During the 1812 War, Russian troops — led by General Tormasov — gave the first defeat to Napoleon near Kobrin. A victorious volley was given from the walls of the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg in honour of the event. A trophy — the enemy gun — is now situated in the city centre.

### 4 Pray in honour of soldiers

In 1868, the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral was constructed on the bank of the Mukhovets River, to honour the soldiers who died in the battles against Napoleon. In 2012, a monument was erected nearby to mark the 100th anniversary of the victory.

Another place of pilgrimage is the Spassky Convent; last year, it celebrated its 550th anniversary. It was founded by Kobrin's Prince

Ioann and his mother Iulianiya. Until recently, the buildings were occupied by the local police department but, six years ago, the monastery was returned to Orthodox believers.

### 5 Enjoy a 'Northern' oriental cherry

Kobrin is the land of lakes and pine forests. Accordingly, there are many spas around the city — often visited by Russians. There are also many hunting houses: holidaying, hunting and fishing are popular here. The city is rich in gardens. Tourists come here in spring to enjoy blossoming apricots and peaches similar to visitors to Japan who love the local oriental cherry flowers. Many plants — seen as exotic for our latitude — grow in Kobrin, with gardeners enjoying buying local frost-resistant seeds and plants.

By Valentina **Kozlovich**



# Meeting of friends in Alexandria

**Two-day 'Alexandria Gathers Friends' festival attracts 110,000 people, with stalls occupying 650m, allowing 1600 masters from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania to show their handicrafts, while 170 Mogilev Region agrarian and industrial leaders receive awards**

**T** rue friends show themselves not only in troubles, but in times of joy. This is the seventh such festival in succession, having begun in 2010, on Kupala Night, and it has become

symbolic, for the Mogilev Region, and for all Belarus. Neither borders nor political issues hinder it, as is evinced by the mixed nationalities seen on the shopping streets of Minskaya, Moscovskaya and Kievskaya. All along the Dnieper River, our three Slavonic peoples mingled, embracing the warm spirit of the Shklov District celebrations

The President always finds time to congratulate his



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■ Kupala Night is an ancient Slavonic holiday that relates to the summer solstice. In pagan times, people would thank the elements: Fire, Water and Earth. Following the adoption of Christianity, the holiday became linked to a celebration of the birth of John the Baptist. Many magic traditions and rites are connected with Kupala Night. People believed that rivers shone with the souls of the dead, who would appear under the guise of mermaids. Belarusians would cast spells on herbs and wreaths for love, money and good luck. The holiday is now widely celebrated in all Belarusian cities and towns, on river banks and lake shores, with most guests gathering in Aleksandria. The summer solstice is also widely celebrated in Bulgaria, Latvia, Spain and Hungary.



countrymen and friends on Alexandria's Kupala holiday. This time, he announced, "Every year I come here, to our this land. On the eve of arrival, I was thinking that last year was very hard for me. I probably travelled more than once around the globe. But wherever I was, I always thought about home, about this land. Wherever you are, sooner or later, you hear the call of your land, your native home."

The President is especially happy that his native Alexandria has become a place of friendly meetings and a platform for public diplomacy. He notes, "Respect for not only culture but the creative achievements of other peoples is a trait of the Belarusian national character. In this lies the secret of peaceful, mutual understanding, for which Belarussians are famous. I'm sincerely happy that in this beautiful, pure corner of the Mogilev Region, the mighty Dnieper has united masters and amateurs of folk art."

This year, there were a great number: more than 500 skilled craftsmen from Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and, even, Lithuania, all showing their crafts. One Lithuanian, Audrone Lampitskene, brought dazzling paintings. He told us, "It's the first time that my colleague, wood sculptor Gintautas Akstinas, and I have visited Alexandria, invited by the Folk Art Centre. It's truly perfect, with nothing more needed. Everything is eye-catching, while our country tends to be more modest."

The 'Aleksandryiskaya Vandrouka' (Alexandria Travel) tour launched this year, featuring a trip to the ancient printing house. Belarusian books, local cuisine, music and folklore were celebrated, comments the Minister for Information, Lilia Ananich. She tells us, "This year is special for our country, being the Year of Culture. The soul is found in songs, in books and in words."

By Maxim Osipov



# From first to last note

Fanfares and fireworks are in the past, alongside songs, as Vitebsk officially closes the 25th Slavianski Bazaar. The city's nine-day concert programme, comprising 130 cultural events, 5,500 accredited guests and 44 participating states had drawn to a close, with the grand Prix going to Alexey Gross, Belarus. Organisers promise that next year's festival will be even larger. Let's look at the brightest musical moments from previous years.



Alexey Gross, the winner of the Grand Prix of the Pop Song Performers' contest at the Slavianski Bazaar (right), with Valery Leontyev, president of the jury

## Connecting music

**F**or many years, the Slavianski Bazaar has been the cultural highlight of July. Festival veterans unanimously agree: a quarter of the century ago, none could imagine that the quiet festival would evolve into a major musical and theatrical territory of art, of the highest standard. In 25 years, the Slavianski Bazaar has significantly expanded its borders, to welcome artistes from 70 countries, and organisers plan on extending this further.

Director Alexander Sidorenko asserts, "The Slavianski Bazaar is unique in every sense, being the country's calling card and an atmospheric meeting place for friends and

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acquaintances from around the world. Pleasingly, it's becoming a trampoline for recognition and artistic growth of young performers. Among them is Croatia's Damir Kejo: several years after his win at our Festival, he made a name for himself at the New Wave event as well."

continents. This level of interest is truly impressive.

The International Pop Song Performers' Contest, which is the Slavianski Bazaar's backbone, this year gathered 44 bold young artistes at the Amphitheatre. For the first time, a representative of Co-

isn't discouraged, telling us, "Victory and awards aren't so important to me. I fell in love with your country and its people at first sight. As soon as I had the chance, I decided to return. I love being here!"

Lithuania's Valeria Ilyin, 21, also failed to receive the much anticipated Lira prize but has many other no less prestigious awards. Valeria is a well-known Lithuanian musician, born in Panevezys. In 2012, she moved to Vilnius to enter the Conservatory's Jazz Singing Department and, the same year, won the Song of Songs contest. Meanwhile, the Voice of Lithuania TV project named her 'Discovery of the Year'. After graduating from the Conservatory, she studied at Vilnius College, graduating with a diploma in 'Musical Theatre Acting'. Valeria then worked at the New York Academy of Drama. She notes that she came to Vitebsk not to win, having already claimed the International League of Musical Talent Festival Grand Prix this year, but because the Slavianski

***The Slavianski Bazaar is a unique project in every sense, being the country's calling card and an atmospheric meeting place for friends and acquaintances from around the world... The festival is becoming a trampoline for recognition and artistic growth of young performers***

Like a magnet, Vitebsk is attracting talented people and fans from all corners of the world. In this Year of Culture, the Festival has attracted entrants from beyond neighbouring European countries, even drawing those from other

lombia took part, charming Brayan. In fact, he began pleasing Belarusian fans a year ago, touring our country last summer with a concert programme. Later, he participated in the Wreath of Friendship Festival. Though he failed to win this year, he

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Bazaar offers another step in her career and much needed experience.

She tells us, “I’m happy to share the stage with so many talented young people: not only from Slavonic countries, but from around the world. Unlike other musical forums, all are friends rather than competitors. Probably, the country of Belarus is the reason, as its people are hospitable and friendly. As soon as I have the chance, I’ll return to Vitebsk as a spectator.”

## 25 summer moments

**T**he present Festival, celebrating its silver jubilee, invited all those who have left their mark on the Dvina River city over the years: all previous Grand Prix winners and Young Performers’ Contest laureates. The Vitebsk stage helped launch their careers.

Piotr Yelfimov, the 2014 winner of the Young Performers’ Contest, recalls with nostalgia, “I was the first to sing at the Amphitheatre, in the year it was built. My victory contributed to my career, which later included many competitions — including Eurovision. Vitebsk audiences are dearest to me and, with this in mind, I attend the Festival every year, with pleasure.”

Veteran artistes unanimously agree, saying that it’s impossible to refuse a return invitation to Vitebsk. Alena Lanska-ya — a true butterfly of the Vitebsk stage — admits, “My victory in 2011 gave me so much, from new acquaintances and artistic projects to the audience’s love. The Slavianski Bazaar helped me to gain faith in myself, inspiring me to take part in Eurovision. The Vitebsk venue is like an annual meeting of ‘alumni’ and friends. We meet seldom; usually, only during Vitebsk’s Slavianski Bazaar.”

Max Lorens (who then performed under his true name of Maxim Sapatkov) won the Grand Prix in 2003. He recalls, “The Slavianski Bazaar helped me make a name for myself, rather than Moscow or rap singer Seryoga, as many might believe. Thirteen years ago, the Festival was broadcast in many participating countries. I was noticed and later



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invited to various parties and concerts. That same year, Nadezhda Babkina invited me to take part in her solo concert at Rossiya Concert Hall. Just imagine: this was Russia’s major concert venue and I was surrounded by well-known artistes. Being a young performer, this was a real chance for me to demonstrate my abilities. I must admit that I expected more from the Slavianski Bazaar — for example, studio work or concert activity. Sadly, over the years of its existence, the Festival has failed to become a powerful

centre able to care for its winners. After my victory, I had to seek out paths of further development independently.”

Mexico’s Rodrigo de la Cadena helped audiences recollect the wonderful musical past. The performer of our merry Kalinka-Malinka notes, “After my contest win, I returned to Mexico as a hero. Everyone was surprised. Though born in Latin America, I managed to win a Slavonic contest. I have no answer to this. Perhaps my Russian song helped. Two years after the competition, my career in Mexico is

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to Alexey Gross, 26, five years after Alena Lanskaya won the contest. Both are graduates of Spamash studio.

Our performers have won major prizes three times in a row. The triumphal procession of Belarusians in the contest of young performers began in 2003, with Maxim Sapatkov (now known as Max Lorens). A year later, Piotr Yelfimov won, and in 2005 Polina Smolova celebrated.

Alex Gross sang under number 13, which is thought unlucky by some. However, the young man is not superstitious. He tells us that self-confidence is key, saying, “My secret is a good night’s sleep before each performance, in addition to lots of rehearsals. Much depends on the audience; it’s amazing in Vitebsk!”

Last year’s first prize and \$15,000 went to sunny Kazakhstan’s Adam, 29, who lost only two points. Italian Eleonora Vecchio and Anna Odobescu, from Moldova, were so close in points that the jury, headed by Valery Leontiev, decided to allow them to share second prize, each receiving a Lira and \$5,000. Third prize was also shared, between Georgian Andria Gvelesiani and Israeli Anna Timofey (the latter being the unconditional leader of the People’s Choice Award).

This year, the Children’s Contest Grand Prix went to Russia’s Anastasia Gladilina, aged 11, while Belarusian Nastya Zhabko took first prize. Second prize (with \$2,000) was divided between Ukrainian Katerina Manuzina and Tina Ruseva from Macedonia. Third prize was shared by the Czech Republic’s Nelya Zhakova and Kazakhstan’s Ramina Sarmurzina.

In the evening of the closing day, all the winners gathered, with guests and other participants, on the Summer Amphitheatre stage, to receive congratulations from such old friends as Alexander Buynov, Yelena Vaenga, Alexander Rosenbaum, Lyubov Uspenskaya, Alexander Tikhonovich and Yadviga Poplavskaya. We also congratulate you, dear Festival!

By Yuliana **Leonovich**

still progressing; I tour a great deal and give concerts on various continents. I’m delighted to have been part of the Slavianski Bazaar; it’s been a true miracle.”

A special guest of the jubilee forum — Alla Pugacheva — named the Vitebsk stage ‘special’. She tells us, “I met Maxim [Galkin] here 15 years ago. He is my beloved man and our children — Harry and Liza — give my life meaning. I lost weight and beautified myself, wanting them to see a young mother in me — rather than a granny who wants to simply look younger.”

## Vitebsk: key characters

**D**uring the years of the Festival’s existence, it has gained many wonderful traditions. Among them is the Belarusian President’s special award: Through Art to Peace and Mutual Understanding. This time, the honorable award has gone to Belarusian conductor and People’s Artiste Mikhail Finberg. The Grand Prix of the Pop Song Performers’ contest, Vitebsk-2016, goes

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The cherry costume is the most popular during the festival

# Cherry on the cake

**Cherry Festival held for the fourth time in Glubokoye, celebrating the joy of the tart-sweet berry and taking a worthy place among Vitebsk Region festivals**

**E**veryone knows about the Slavianski Bazaar, the IFMC Festival of Modern Choreography, and the music festival in memory of I. Sollertinsky. Belarus is rich in festivals. The Cherry Festival in Glubokoye is described by news agencies and tour operators as one of the country's most authentic cultural events. Moreover, it has featured in the Top-10 most visited festivals in the country. It gained an international status long ago and this year saw participants from Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Moldova, Poland and Germany.



**ВІШНЁВЫІ  
ФЕСТИВАЛЬ**

### Cherry fun and frolics

Early in the 20th century, a landowner of Glubokoye, an agriculturist and breeder, Boleslav Lapyr, popularised frost-resistant sour cherries. Since then, the plants have been widely distributed among local households, making Glubokoye the 'cherry capital' of Belarus. Its Cherry Festival usually begins in mid-July and lasts for a week, including a colourful parade led by the Cherry Queen, and a conference on growing fruit, as well as various sporting events and amusing contests. There's something for everyone: shooting with cherry pits, toe-wrestling, and racing in heels.

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Snails are abundant in the cherry orchards of Glubokoye, so they also participate. This year, two full buckets of snails were brought to the central square, and their shells numbered. Crowds gathered excitedly to see which snail would first find its way out of the centre of a circle; they cheered on their 'own' snail and even cast bets. Of course, all the shelled participants were then released safely back into their orchard home.

Intriguingly, Glubokoye has a monument to Baron Munchausen and another, less surprisingly, devoted to its cherries. Legend has it that rubbing a granite cherry brings good luck, so all are well polished. This year, a new sculpture, entitled 'Family' was unveiled.

A major part of the festival involves trying delicious cherry pies, but guests can also buy handcrafted souvenirs and listen to live music. When I approached the main stage, spoon players from the Sverdlovsk Region of Russia were performing, followed by a folk group from the Georgian city of Telavi.

The chairman of the Telavi City Council, Archil Thlashidze, tells me that there are cherries in Kakheti but those in Glubokoye are perhaps the most delicious. He comments, "We made friends with Glubokoye three years ago, and today Glubokoye and Telavi are twin towns. Last year, we had only one representative, who participated in the accordion-playing contest; this year, we've brought two folk groups. The Investment Forum, traditionally held during the Cherry Festival, may result in our businessmen joining forces for construction and signing a profitable contract with a local timber company. They are seriously interested in Belarusian facade products."

## Economy and investments

While the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation between Glubokoye and Telavi was signed earlier, the administration of the rural settlement of Gremyacha, from the Osa Region of the Perm Krai of Russia, signed a similar bilateral agreement during the Investment Forum at the 4th Cherry Festival. The Russians liaised with organisers online, following the first cherry festival. The Investment Forum has also resulted in the signing of co-operative agreements between the Department of Culture of the Glubokoye Region

Executive Committee with the Centre for Belarusian Culture of Daugavpils City Council (Latvia), and between the Glubokoye District Council of Deputies and the Švenčionys District Municipality (Lithuania).

According to Galina Unukovich, who chairs Glubokoye District Council of Deputies, the Glubokoye District is a keen member of the Euroregion 'Country of Lakes', promoting contacts between working groups across the Euroregion, as well as expanding co-operation between them in the Belarusian-Lithuanian-Latvian border area. She tells us, "Since 2001, we've implemented a number of major joint projects in the spheres of culture, business, and education, and have facilitated co-operation between the municipalities of border areas."

She continues, "In the last three years alone, more than 180 million dollars have been invested in the development of the district's economy. Our district is now a member of such international initiatives as the Local Environmental Action Plan for 2015-2020 and actions for the successful development of the Glubokoye District as a Belarusian territory of the Euroregion 'Country of Lakes'".

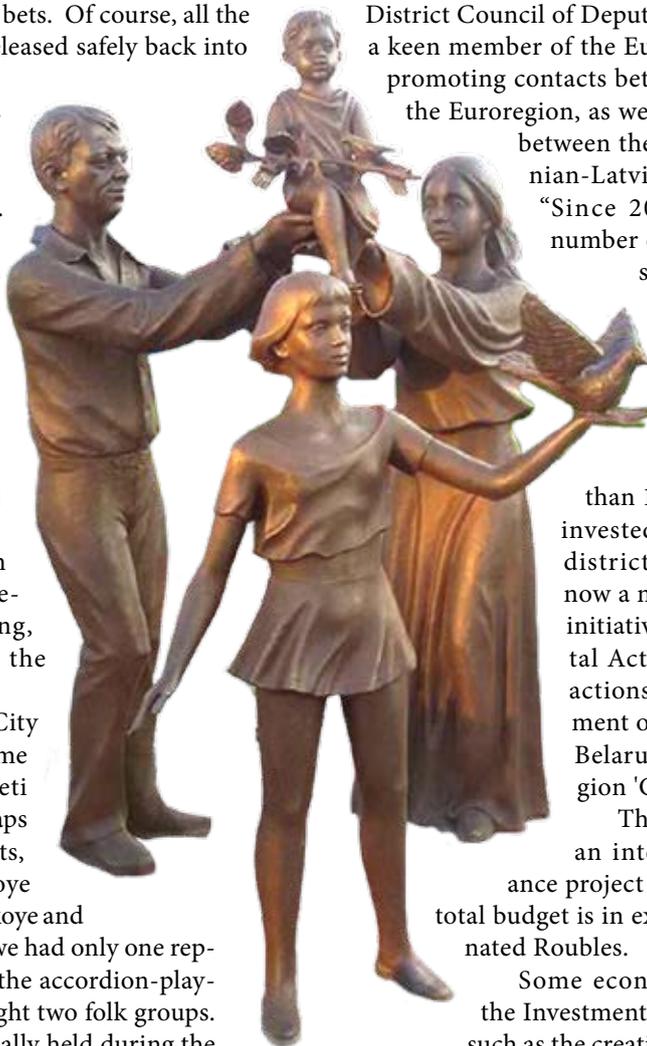
The European Union is funding an international technical assistance project and the Glubokoye District's total budget is in excess of 7.5 bln non-denominated Roubles.

Some economic projects presented at the Investment Forum relate to cultural life, such as the creation of a museum gallery dedicated to Belarusian artist Fyodor Yastreb, who died in 2014. Meanwhile, the meat-processing plant has good prospects, branching into dairy farming, with interest shown from Israeli investors. The factory has its own equestrian club, maintaining close relations with colleagues from Russia and Latvia.

Glubokoye, with its forests and lakes, is a natural destination for tourists, and boasts a spa nearby, in the village of Plissa. Some diplomats like to go there to relax. The Plissa health resort presented a project at the Investment Forum, inviting funding to help with the construction of a new hotel and restaurant complex.

Glubokoye is going from strength to strength, building on the foundations of its orchards.

By Sergey Golesnik



A monument to the family was unveiled during the festival



# I was there — joking and enjoying myself

Notes from jury member  
of Avtyuki-2016 Festival  
of Folk Humour

It's scientifically proven that laughter prolongs life, and residents of Bolshiyе and Malye Avtyuki, Kalinkovich District, Gomel Region, have known so for many years. They recognise that having a sense of humour is good for the constitution.

### Humour is a serious matter

Avtyuki residents have long known the importance of laughter, as is natural for Polesie people. When young writer Vladimir Lipsky, now a journalist, spent several days there collecting information on Avtyuki and its people, he chatted with heads of collective farms, spent nights with ordinary villagers and focused on the small details of life.

Life in those post-Perestroika years wasn't simple, especially in the villages, where people could hardly dare to imagine today's present wealth. However, they endured hardships with jokes and humour. Attentive Mr. Lipsky — who was born in the Polesie area — recorded local jokes and stories and, in doing so, realised that something more lay behind those (often rude) jokes. He suggested that a Belarusian festival of folk humour be arranged, noting that five minutes of laughter is worth two blini with

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caviar, or a feast of bacon, onion and salted cucumber! The festival lasted not minutes but days, and he knew that more would be likely to follow. Avtyuki might yet join the international festival circuit.

## Belarusian Gabrovo of Avtyuki

With the support from the Ministry of Culture, the Grodno Regional Executive Committee and local authorities, Avtyuki's villagers organised the first All-Belarusian Festival of National Humour in 1995. During that first event, among the honourable guests were comedians from Bulgarian Gabrovo, Lithuania and Ukraine. This year, the Festival took place for the eighth time: on July 9th-10th.

Russians and Ukrainians are regular guests and participants, sharing their jokes and laughter in Avtyuki, alongside local villagers. This year, comedians from Ukrainian Slavutich and Russia's Krasnodar Region took part, as did a delegation from Moldova.

Due to the popularity of the festival, it's become less easy to gain a place. Early competitions are organised across Belarusian cities and villages to choose winners worthy to attend, from towns on the Bug and the Dnieper, on the Nieman and the Pripjat. Among those who are now well known for attendance are Kalinkovichi People's Theatre of Humour — Veselye Avtyukhovtsy (Merry Avtyuki Villagers), Molodechno People's Comic Troupe — Tary Bary, and Drogichin's Smekhovie (Humour) Troupe.

Avtyuki Festival is now attended by top competition winners, across various nominations. This year, anecdotes, theatres of miniatures, humorous songs, Mr. Lipsky-based shows, humorous dancing, pripevki and the Miss Avtyuki Pageant (which greatly impressed everyone) featured on the programme.

As a jury member, I gave the highest mark of ten points to Nelly Zasinets, from Yelsk Folk Theatre of Pop Miniatures: for her Ladies' Stuff. Truly, this mother of three children is beautiful and smart. The crown of winner looked perfect on her head!

## Green light from custom

The Festival opened at the crossroads of Bolshiye and Malye Avtyuki, a day before the competition began, gathering participants, guests and jury members near the monument to Spikelet and Kalinka

(in Avtyuki, women are called Kalinkas and men are named Spikelets), next to the Museum of Humour.

To avoid any quarrelling during the competition, chairmen of the endlessly competing councils of Bolshiye (Large) and Malye (Small) Avtyuki (Malye is actually larger than Bolshie) were put on 'a bench of reconciliation', specially made by local craftsmen. Everything was conducted most seriously, like at the Olympics. Teams of artists and comedians then went to Kalinkovichi District villages to perform and next morning gathered in the centre of Kalinkovichi to give a major performance.

Traditional Avtyuki customs included many anecdotes and funny songs, Avtyuki roulette with 'rogotukha' and visits to Avtyuki courtyards. The humorous Avtyuki 'draft board' and funny 'fishing' were hilarious, and the traditional Town of Masters enjoyed much popularity, as did a football match between Avtyuki men and women.

Guests and hosts of the holiday enjoyed an exhibition of satirical drawing, called Peace. Culture. Avtyuki, hosted by Kalinkovichi Central Library. Photos show participants' initial surprise and then smiles, having received a proposal from Kalinkovichi to take the exhibition to Rogachev's Day of the Belarusian Written Language.

Sadly, while covering the event, most reporters focus on the external features of the Festival. Meanwhile, Avtyuki is the result of a great job by organisers, participants and local villagers. These people are always open and friendly, welcoming guests with bread and salt, famous Avtyuki 'rogotukha' and 'adidas' lard (with three layers of meat). I sincerely bow to all of them for arranging Avtyuki Festival. After all, humour unites everyone: teachers, farmers, scientists, milkmaids, students, workers, Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians: all earthlings.

By Oleg Karpovich



# Magic of dance

**Whether the new dancing style, which attracts packed audiences in Belarus, will continue rich folk traditions, remains to be judged by choreographers with time. They will surely find in this unusual borrowing even those national special features, which are typical of Belarusian dances only. As of now, tribal dance, especially in the summer season, leads an active festival life. For example, not so long ago, we could watch a fiery show arranged by Belarusian dancers in the centre of Minsk, near the City Hall.**



**T**ribal dance appeared in the 1960s, in the US, as a mix of Indian, Spanish, and Egyptian dance styles, and is credited to Jamila Salimpour, an American of Italian origin. Every gesture is symbolic, representing ritualistic or sacred elements, creating a new direction for choreography.

Jamila's student, bellydancer Carolina Nericcio, is responsible for the latest craze in Belarus. Anna Yermakovich, who heads the Nimfeya Dance School, tells me that Belarusian tribal dance only began around ten years ago, and resembles yoga, meditation and even self-cognition practices. The ultimate goal is to manage your stream of unconscious thoughts. One aspect of the dance is to focus on one body part at a time so, if your thighs are flexing, the rest of you remains static.

Improvisation is essential, with dancers moving simultaneously with

their leader, via a 'system of signs' (there are about a hundred). The dance moves encourage upright posture, chin-raising, and expression (as seen by Indian Gypsies and the founders of Flamenco).

Dancers wear complicated multi-layered outfits, with skirts, baggy pants, cholis, bodices, belts, and decorations made from coins, flowers and ribbons. Each detail has meaning, while the music is ethereal. Ms. Yermakovich believes that this style will become increasingly popular.

***Anna, when did Belarusian audiences first see tribal dancers?***

"At the First International Tribal Festival, in 2010. It was my first performance. Viewers liked the bright, rousing dancing. One year later, I opened the Nimfeya Dance School. I remember that only two people came for the first class but, soon, the group grew larger. Now, we give many performances at festivals and concerts, delivering master classes, and engaging in charity events, touring all over Belarus. Sometimes, we have

so many concerts that my head spins. However, I dreamt of living an active life, and dreams tend to come true, as you know."

***Where is tribal dance taught in Belarus? How do you see its future in our country?***

"There are four schools in Minsk, and Grodno and Gomel each have a school. As for the future, I dream of seeing more people happy, rather than tired. I don't want to hear phrases like 'I don't have time for myself' or 'we're too old to dance'. Changing this situation for the better and living amidst successful and joyful people is my true, pragmatic wish. We, women, have to bring beauty, joy and femininity into the world. Tribal dancing can help in this noble mission."

***Why does the tribal style attract you as a dancer?***

"When you feel rejuvenated, energised, self-confident and full of self-love after a class, isn't it great? Living in its 'magnetic field', you look at the world dif-

## IN THE CONSTELLATION OF FESTIVALS



"We dance to be happy"

ferently; you gain strength to change for the better. Tribal dance allows you to submerge yourself. It's not about attracting attention, like bellydancing. For me, tribal dance is a tool of self-development."

**How can movements in time with music bring on the desire to change?**

"What is the reason for meditation but meditation itself? Similarly, tribal dance exists for the pleasure of dancing. It's not about seducing, fighting or making sophisticated poses; it's about creating a marvelous reality and understanding the links between the body and the soul. It's hard to explain, but understanding comes while dancing. I tried bellydancing but felt that I lacked room for self-realisation and something else I couldn't quite put my finger on. I had the feeling that the techniques and beauty of bellydancing weren't enough. Once, I was at the concert of American star Rachel Brice, who was dancing in tribal fusion style. I understood that her performance had no coquetry; it was just her 'self'. As she danced, she

was creating a magic world that lured me with its depth and spirituality. After that revelation, my dancing became filled with meaning."

**Dancing solo is one thing, but you lead your Nimfeya School...**

"Indeed, this is an interesting experience. By the way, it's easy to open a school. Being always confident in your strengths is harder. To lead people who aspire to be happy you need a lot of energy and you need to be a professional. I started teaching in 2011, thanks to my own teacher, gifted choreographer Leonid Ignatenkov. Most importantly, I like my work, so no obstacle can halt me."

**I hear that there are more than 100 elements in American tribal style...**

"Right, it has more than 100 specified movements, even the angle of the head bend is regulated. But don't be afraid: the basic movements are less than half as numerous. All the rest are variations and combinations. When you move with pleasure, plunging into tribal dance, you stop noticing the elements and thinking about their number."

**How long does it take to remember everything?**

"It depends on the student. If you study the basic elements thoroughly, you can master the fundamentals within three months."

**Tribal dancers always wear complicated, fancy outfits. Does this help them express themselves?**

"It's a sort of escape from the 'cursor' glamorous appearance of an oriental dancer. Bellydancing is a competitive performance, as every dancer seeks attention. Tribal dance intentionally avoids this: a woman dances for herself, although others may admire her. A tribal dancer is strong, independent, wise and mysterious. Therefore, we avoid costumes which use transparent fabrics or which are cut revealingly. I'm not belittling oriental dance, which is beautiful, but it's different. Bellydancing lets women feel like seducing oriental beauties, while tribal dance suggests integrity, independence and friendship, not rivalry."

**What about dance competitions?**

"We don't have tribal contests. Competitiveness kills the spirit of the inner search, and the freedom of self-realisation, support and sincerity. How is it possible to measure a woman's creativity or the uplifting of her soul, deciding that one is superior? It's like saying 'my mother is a better cook than my wife'. Do you think your wife will cook better and, most importantly, with love, on hearing this?"

**Still, you have festivals, don't you?**

"Of course! We love them! We especially enjoy the International Tribal Festival, attended by coaches from various countries, who give master classes. We've welcomed Manca Pavli from Slovenia, Edenia and Moria Chappell from the US, and other tribal stars. Another large festival, Tribal Light, takes place in February and March. It's always a big event for us."

**We've been talking about tribal style as a woman's dance. What about men?**

"Leonid Ignatenkov was the first to dance it in Belarus. He's an astonishingly energetic man, as well as brave, interesting, bright and masculine. It's time to break the stereotype that real men don't dance. They do!"

**Can children perform tribal dance?**

"They should! By the way, I'm opening special groups."

**I've also heard about Slavic tribal style.**

"Tribal dance involves experimenting. It emerged out of a desire to mix ethnic dance styles. So, it's quite logical to complement it with something from a different dancing culture, such as Belarusian elements. Some dancers add national elements into their performance. It can be music or movements or outfits."

**Do you think that tribal dance popularity will be long lasting? It might be interesting to people until it's a trend but then it'll go out of fashion...**

"Indeed, fashion is capricious and ever changing, while style is eternal. Tribal dance is a style. While aspiration for spirituality remains, and while women want to be womanly and happy and men support their desire, tribal dance will stay."

By Alisa Krasovskaya



VITALY GIL

# Belarusian ballet company heartily welcomed in Moscow

**National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus shows Vytautas performance on Russia's main stage**

## Heroes of the past

In past years, the ballet company would bring to Moscow their best performances: Rogneda, Carmina Burana, and The Legend of Ulenspiegel. This time, our artistes went to Moscow for the Days of Belarusian Culture, choosing to astound Moscow audiences with Vytautas.

Vytautas Ballet appeared on the theatre's repertoire just three years ago but has since become a theatrical hit, being given the President's 'For Spiritual Revival' award. Yuri Troyan, one of the most renowned Belarusian performers of Soviet

times, and currently Art Director for Ballet with the National Bolshoi Theatre, staged the performance. Honoured Artist of Belarus Vyacheslav Kuznetsov created the score, while playwright Alexey Dudarev (whose plays are popular in Russian theatres) wrote the libretto.

Belarusians view Vytautas as a national ballet, its characters representing historical personalities from the glory days of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Cousins Vytautas and Jagiello, brave warriors and heroes of the Battle of Grunewald, become enemies in their struggle for power and for the heart of young beauty Anna.

## Great responsibility

This is the first time when the performance has been shown outside of Belarus. On the eve of the tour, the artistes were clearly full of anticipation and some nerves, despite having rehearsed for hours. The best line-up went to Moscow, with the two main men's roles played by the theatre's leading performers, Anton Kravchenko and Oleg Yeromkin. Russia's Lyudmila Khitrova, from the Nizhny Novgorod Drama School, performed the part of Princess Anna. For many, it was their first performance on the famous Russian stage.

"We feel great responsibility, as every performer dreams of dancing on the Bolshoi stage, at least once in their lifetime," noted Anton Kravchenko, shortly before the beginning of the performance.

Art director Yuri Troyan reassured the young dancers during the full-dress rehearsal, saying, "As an artiste, I performed on this stage many times, although it's been quite a while. The historical stage has been renovated and I have the chance to be here and see all the novelties with my own eyes, at last."

The audience applauded the Belarusian performers with admiration. *Vytautas* is an elegant impressionist-style ballet that touches on past events. The spectacle is not about military valour or territory division, but rather about universal human values, such as love, trust, and courage. Conveyed through dance, these are clear to everyone.

Alongside Moscow citizens, many foreign tourists came to see the ballet. Judging by lively after-performance conversations, everybody enjoyed the show.

By Irina **Mustafina**

## First hand information

# Our history on stage

**Director Yuri Troyan, leader of ballet at the National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre of Belarus:**

I've always wanted to stage a ballet about the history of Belarus, being interested in our people's famed past. I ran across the play by Alexey Dudarev, 'Duke Vytautas', which was popular with drama theatres in our country in the 1990s, and thought it would be interesting to stage it as a ballet. It's a men's ballet with the plot focusing on the relationship between Vytautas and Jagiello, whose diverse destinies intersected. Men's dance is underestimated in ballet, with women tending to perform the classics. Therefore, I wanted to restore the balance. I hope that Russian artistes will soon come with a return tour, where they'll perform to very grateful audiences.



## Conversation with author

# Theatre should praise the land it stands on



**Playwright Alexey Dudarev tells us about writing the libretto and explains why historic events are so popular in contemporary theatre:**

*Mr. Dudarev, the libretto is based on your play, 'Duke Vytautas'. What is this story about?*

To me, all stories primarily examine love's endurance in the face of adversity. In this case, it's the love story of Vytautas and Anna. A patriot of Belarus, I find it important that our legendary heroes are kept alive — in literature, drama and on the screen. Theatre should praise the land it stands on.

*How can historical inaccuracies be avoided?*

By studying primary sources. Real, genuine history is in our archives and academies. Artistic people shouldn't infringe on it.

*Did you help at rehearsals?*

I only listened to the music. I made some comments, but I didn't insist on changes, as I'm a playwright and don't understand ballet staging.

*Are you pleased with the result?*

Of course! And so is the public — I know that it was hard to buy tickets for the performance. Historical themes are hugely popular in drama nowadays.



VITALIY GIL

## National Art Museum's wonderful tradition of single painting exhibitions currently features one by the Belarusian folk artist Mai Dantsig



Single painting exhibition

# Common heroes

**O**f all Mai Dantsig's pictures kept at the National Art Museum, this one perhaps radiates the most optimism and warmth. It shows a couple, most likely spouses, sitting on the freshly painted floor of an empty home, with their suitcases, newly moved in: a simple formula for happiness. The picture was painted in 1962, when city-planning reforms were in full sway, but the theme continues to resonate today.

The 'new tenants' theme was popular in post-war art, with fine art often reflecting happy moments relating to Soviet families' obtaining a home. Artworks reflected the state's mission of

addressing the housing problem, when apartments were urgent needed, and the process of accelerated urbanisation and, consequently, housing construction growth.

Mai Dantsig's *New Tenants* was created during this time, in 1962. The young painter, fresh from Moscow Institute named after Surikov, found an absolutely original approach to conveying the theme, avoiding details typical of sentimental painting in the 1950s, such as fig plants, wardrobes, and bookshelves. Rather, Mai opted for simple plots and compositions.

A young couple are sitting in their new flat, still empty, on a floor freshly painted in red. There is no furniture — no table, no chairs, just bare walls. The newly weds' only company is their suit-

cases, modestly standing in the opposite corner of the room. The empty space and two persons make the painting timeless: all that is depicted has always existed and will always exist. We see the emotions of joy for those first entering their new, beautiful, well-built home.

The painting, resembling a film scene, has a simple plot. However, the attentive viewer will be able to imagine the coming days, of hopes for a future life. You can almost hear tired steps on the staircase, the sound of hammer and drill (so irritating for neighbours), the clink of celebratory glasses at the housewarming party, the laughter and cries of growing children, or maybe even grandchildren... A whole existential rainbow can be sensed in the picture — since life, youth and love lie ahead.



New Tenants by Mai Dantsig

A monumental and expressive artist, Mai Dantsig chose an unusual and ultramodern composition for a simple, routine scene. The characters are placed off-centre, in the upper right corner, with the floor occupying the major part of the painting. Thus, the figures (painted almost to full size) are perceived as being on the verge of reality, looking in at what lies ahead. May conveys a vivid, captured moment, in part thanks to choosing red (a traditional favourite of the artist) as the dominating colour, while blinding white and bright yellow spots add to the resonance of the painting.

Notably, the artist's innovative minimalism was not well-received at the time. He recalls, "When representatives of the exhibition committee saw my painting, they had it immediately removed from the exhibition. I was accused of libeling Soviet reality. They asked, 'Where have you seen barefoot people with no belongings who look upset?' They wanted to withdraw my work."

The artist's talent showed itself not only through art, but in his ability to quickly solve challenging tasks. Within a night, Mr. Dantsig had 'polished up' his picture, adding a pair of women's patent-leather shoes; the next day, his artwork passed censorship. However,

### ***Presentation of Mai Dantsig's album 'Mai Dantsig. Painting. Graphics' is a highlight of the Year of Culture. The album features the Belarusian master's artworks, created from 1949 to 2015***

later, the artist painted out the shoes, restoring the initial version. Still, the painting received positive reviews. *New Tenants* made Mai famous for many years, as the canvas was displayed at the All-Union Art Exhibition, in Moscow, immediately after being created.

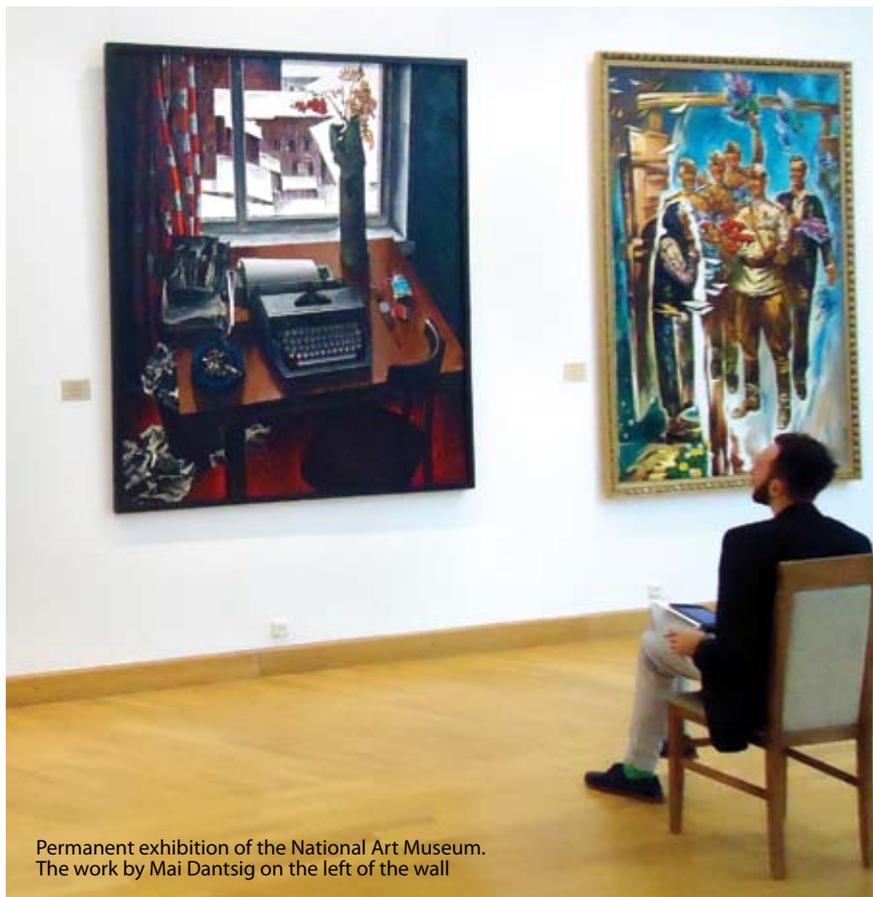
Mr. Dantsig's creative path then took another interesting turn in portraying a frank vision of the time and its people. In the *Plant Canteen* synthesised his impression of the virgin lands. "What I saw there, in the virgin lands, enthralled me so much that I thought it was absolutely impossible to stay for just one month, as I'd initially intended. I stayed for three months, but even that term still seemed insufficient for serious, real work," he recollected.

The painting was displayed at an exhibition in Minsk, in 1963. It reflected his interest in people who 'build' their future. It was a major theme for many years in Dantsig's art, bringing forth *Towards a New Life* (1958, a diploma work), *New Blocks Growing* (1960), *Old and New Minsk* (1960), and *Minsk Awakening* (1960). Incredibly poetic, they reflect hope for the future, as was typical of that time and the author's desire to depict the 'common hero'. Created at the same time as *New Tenants*, these are self-portraits in their essence and, in combination with other documents, offer a complete 'portrait of the artist in his time'.

Mr. Dantsig launched onto the art scene at the cusp of the 1950s and 1960s, during Khrushchev Thaw. This brought young artists, founders of the 'harsh style' into vogue, defying pseudo-ideological works, and opposing official canons and traditions of Socialist Realism.

They aimed to portray uncompromising 'truths', in minimal style. Mai Dantsig was one of its devotees.

May was born in Minsk in 1930. His father, a physical training teacher, attended the art studio of the famous Belarusian artist Yakov Kruger, and was



Permanent exhibition of the National Art Museum. The work by Mai Dantsig on the left of the wall

bright page and marked phenomenon in Belarusian painting. His expressive, huge, multi-charactered compositions (he creates mainly large-format pictures intended for museum display) feature his dear Minsk, and portraits of cultural figures. They characterise an entire artistic epoch and never cease to arouse interest among art fans.

The permanent exhibition at the National Art Museum has his famous still-life *About the Great Patriotic War*, and last October a large retrospective showcase of Mai Dantsig took place at the museum.

Today, collectors are ready to pay a great deal for paintings by Mai Dantsig. His artworks are sold at auction, with many online bidders. Meanwhile, the internationally known Saatchi Gallery recently displayed Dantsig's monumental *Saved World Remembers*, as part of its 'WWII Legacy in Russian Art' exhibition. The painter depicted Soviet soldiers saving masterpieces from the Dresden Gallery collection, in epic, allegorical form. The saved artworks included Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*; the picture shows the moment of its 'rescue' from the tunnel vault. The *Sistine Madonna*, placed at the centre, allegorically represents all global culture and civilization, while the wounded, exhausted soldiers symbolise the high price that was paid to stop Fascism.

By Veniamin **Mikheyev**

eager to see his son enter a creative profession. Before the war, his father had attended music school for several years but, of course, the Great Patriotic War intervened. The Dantsig family managed to evacuate miraculously, as the artist recalls. He tells us, "The city was burning, and we were bombed all the time. My parents decided that we should leave. Father put on his best woolen suit but we didn't take any belongings with us. However, when my father, mother, myself and my sister came to the freight station, the crowds were huge and there were no trains, and no hope. Suddenly, a locomotive with four, heated freight cars appeared in the distance. It was approaching at full speed. People lay on the railway tracks and it stopped. The doors opened and we could see wounded soldiers inside. Suddenly, we heard a cry from one of the cars: 'Da-a-antsig!' It was my father's former student. We managed to climb

the step of the train as it was already accelerating."

After the war, Mai Dantsig undertook profound professional training at Minsk Art School, under Vitaly Tsvirka; in 1958, he graduated from Moscow Surikov Institute. Mr. Dantsig's art became a





A fragment of Mai Dantsig's painting "My Ancient and Young City", 1972. Canvas, oil