

Penetrating glance at children's fairy-tales

Bright and colourful world of childhood presented at exhibition by artist Oksana Arakcheeva, hosted by Minsk's University of Culture Gallery

By Yekaterina Medvedskaya

Illustrations from children's books and magazines are on show, alongside theatrical playbills and cartoons — all lively, sincere and spiritual. They remind us of the fables of Ivan Krylov, the fairy-tales of Iza Zaslouva and Samuil Marshak's verse. "First acquaintance with a book begins with its illustrations," noted Natalia Barsukova, the Director of the University of Culture Gallery, during the opening ceremony. "It's vital that drawings are emotional, kind, funny and educational."

Educational drawings neighbour fairy-tale illustrations at the show. "The younger generation should be raised looking at such pictures," believes Oksana Arakcheeva. "I still remember the books I enjoyed in my childhood. At art school, I didn't just draw; I invented stories, inspired by fairy-tale images from the past. My characters are, of course, different today."

She believes that children are more discerning than adults when

it comes to illustrations; this may be why her illustrations are so warm, lively and



Illustrations by Oksana Arakcheeva

multi-faceted, sometimes expressing more than words. For example, the drawings in *I Grow* and *What Gifts There May Be*, can inspire children to invent their own stories. Children tend to look at their favourite illustrations over and

again, each time finding something interesting and new.

Oksana Arakcheeva's talent is obvious, as seen in her meticulous attention to detail; her falling leaves and wet traces on asphalt are truly convincing.

She has illustrated works by Ivan Bursov, Samuil Marshak and Ivan Krylov. Her illustrations for Belarusian Zmitrok Byadulya's *Silver Tobacco Box* fairy-tale earned her diploma. She still illustrates folk and fairy-tales with pleasure, liaising with various children's publishing houses. She even illustrates textbooks for schoolchildren these days.

The artist has co-operated with famous fairy-tale writer Iza Zaslouva for over two decades now. The writer's works are known for their interesting plots and humour while also containing informative facts relating to history, geography, biology and mythology. Ms. Arakcheeva supplements these with wonderful artistic images.



Oksana Arakcheeva (left) attends opening of her exhibition at Minsk's University of Culture Gallery

"When I'm working on a new book, I always worry about bringing characters alive," admits Ms. Arakcheeva. "Moreover, on finishing, I feel sad."

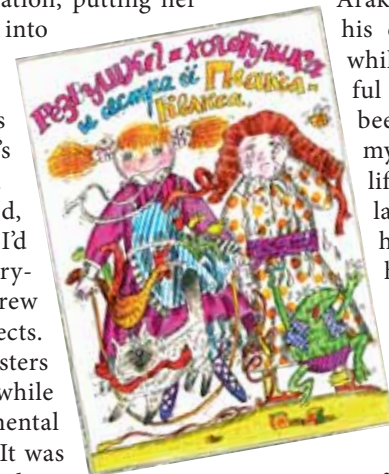
She devotes all her time to her favourite occupation, putting her heart and soul into each work. Being an illustrator of children's books is Oksana's life-long dream.

"In childhood, I decided that I'd illustrate fairy-tales when I grew up," she recollects. "I created posters for some time while learning monumental art techniques. It was my teacher, Vladimir Savich, who encouraged me to return to illustrating children's books, which I've done with great pleasure."

The *Country of Wonders* exhibition launch was also attended by Ms. Arakcheeva's pupils (she teaches pictorial art at a Minsk school). They examined their teacher's works with interest and some were surprised to recognise illustrations from books read to them by their mothers. Their eyes shone with delight. Her friends and colleagues also attended, alongside representatives from

the Culture Ministry and Minsk publishing houses. Undoubtedly, Ms. Arakcheeva's relatives were the most important guests. Famous painter and Honoured Figure of Arts of Belarus, Boris Arakcheev, is proud of his daughter's success, while she is very grateful to her father. "I've been learning from my father my whole life. I remember how late he used to come home, spending all his time at his studio. I spent most of my childhood there, creating my first works."

Her father encouraged her painting of course. Today, she creates works for children and adults, including portraits and still-life paintings. Her *Minsk Windows* series has been ongoing for over twenty years, depicting various aspects of the Belarusian capital from a height of seven floors up. She also travels a great deal and is especially allured by Europe. Recently, Minsk's House of Friendship hosted an exhibition of her works, created during a summer open-air workshop in Slovakia. According to Ms. Arakcheeva, fairy-tales remain her major source of inspiration.



Dance traditions won't be forgotten

By Kristina Kurlovicheva

Database of intangible historical and cultural treasures being created in Belarus

Belarus was one of the first countries to sign the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Since 2005, huge efforts have been made to record precious customs country-wide. Among the first to be entered on the list were the 'Kolyady Tsars' customs, performed over Christmas and New Year in the Minsk Region's Semezhevo village. At a UNESCO Committee session, hosted by Indonesia, Belarus submitted its traditional felt-making crafts and the unique language used by felt hat masters from the Mogilev Region's Dribin District: 'Katrushnitski Lemezen'.

Belarus has a single State List of



'Kolyady Tsars' customs still recreated

Protected Historical and Cultural Treasures, which covers both tangible and intangible sites. The list already boasts 65 cultural customs; this year, our country received support from the UNESCO Intangible

Cultural Heritage Fund to set up its National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Belarus.

The protection and preservation of our heritage is impossible without the local community being encour-

aged in its traditions. Meanwhile, these can be used to generate tourist income, if businesses can be persuaded of potential profitability. In 2010, an international cultural conference was organised in Belarus, attended by Belagroprombank and the Agro and Eco-Tourism Association, discussing how best to attract tourists. Already, a brochure dedicated to Belarusian customs is being prepared, for use in enticing visitors.

Belarus has good experience of looking after its intangible cultural heritage, with traditional dance given particular attention. The *Bereginya* Festival, organised for the past decade, embraces every region, encouraging youngsters in enjoying dance and nurturing the traditions of the past. In 2013, the Festival is to be submitted to UNESCO for inclusion on the intangible cultural heritage list.

Perfect singing in good company brings award

By Eduard Pivovarov

Belarusian tenor Vladimir Dmitruk wins International St. Petersburg Contest

Minsker Vladimir Dmitruk is 24 but is already a laureate of international competitions. The 4th year student at the St. Petersburg Conservatoire shared first place with Russia's Darya Terekhova, beating almost 170 singers from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Moldova, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. The jury — headed by People's Artist of the USSR, Irina Bogacheva — also featured Galina Vishnevskaya.