

THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIC BOLSHOI OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

The National Opera and Ballet Theatre was opened on May 25 1933 with the performance “Carmen”. But its history began in 1920s on the stage of the National Drama theatre that had the opera and ballet troupe and a small symphonic orchestra in its structure. Already then musical-drama performances, parts of operas and ballets were staged and national music was played.

In 1920s the future stars of Belarusian opera and ballet were trained in Minsk, Vitebsk, Gomel technical schools. And also in the National Studio of opera and ballet, founded in 1930, that was headed by a famous singer Anton Bonachich, who had worked as Shalyapin’s partner in Mariinsky Theatre St Petersburg. Three years later the operas “Golden Cockerel”, “Carmen” and “Eugeny Onegin” were staged.

The theatre building on the Trinity Hill was opened on May 10, 1939 with the night of the opera “Mihas Podgorny” by a Belarusian composer Eugene Tsikotsky. The new building was constructed by the project of a famous Belarusian architect Iosif Langbard. The first ballet performance, shown in 1939 on stage of a new building, was “the Swan Lake” in production of Muller, who graduated from St. Petersburg’s choreographic college and danced the leading parts in the biggest theatres of the country.

The young ballet group set themselves a task to create a national ballet repertoire. The production of the first national ballet “Nightingale” (from a book written by Žmitrok Biadula) 1940, was a meaningful event for the theatre. The success of the theatre depended on a successful integration of a classical dance and a national Belarusian folk dance.

Of course, classical ballets and works and, above all, the immortal creations by Peter Tchaikovsky, never leave the stage; they are an excellent school of mastery for the dancers of all generations.

During World War II (1941-1945) many actors of theatre left to fight on the front or have joined guerrilla movement. The theatre was evacuated to the Volga region Russia. Actors of different genres created front concert brigades and acted before the soldiers of the Soviet Army. Right after the liberation of the capital the team returned to Minsk and in December, 1944 a new season was opened with a premiere of an opera by Evgenie Tikotsky "Alesya". This event marked the revival of the Theatre. After the renovation and reconstruction of the building damaged by bombs, theatre activity has renewed.

The theatre repeatedly went on tour on the most prestigious stage of the former USSR – in the Bolshoi theatre in Moscow. Successful tours of 1940 have brought to theatre an honorary title "Big", 1964 – "academic".

In 50th years considerable achievements of the Belarusian ballet are connected, basically, with an embodiment of ballet classics – performances "Esmeralda" on Caesar Puni, "Giselle" and "Corsair" music by Adolf Adana's, "La Bayadere" by Ludwig Minkus. All ballets by Peter Tchaikovsky ("Swan lake", "the Sleeping beauty", "Nutcracker") were also staged at that time. Since that time the repertoire was greatly enriched. The most famous operas staged in this theatre include Boris Godunov by Modest Mussorgsky, Otello and Don Carlo by Giuseppe Verdi, Jacques Offenbach's The Tales of Hoffmann, Sadko and The Golden Cockerel by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov.

The development of national tendencies in ballet is connected with the works of Evgenie Glebov. Three ballets by this talented composer have been staged in the theatre: "Dream", "the Alpine ballad" and "the Chosen one".

The national operas created by the Belarus composers, are devoted to the pages of history of Belarus: "the Star Venus" and "New land" by Jury Semenjako, "Grey legend" by Dmitry Smolsky, "the Way of a life" by Henry Wagner, "Visit of the lady" and "Anniversary" by Sergey Cortess, "The wild hunt of king Stah" by Vladimir Soltan, "the Master and Margarita" by Evgenie Glebov, and a number of others.

The basic theatre repertoire also includes operas from the treasury of the European and Russian classics, and first of all – Italian masterpieces belcanto: "Nabukko", "Masquerade", "Aida", "Othello" by Juseppe Verdi, "Madam Butterfly", "Melancholy", "Bohemia" and "Turandot" by Dzhakomo Puccini. The most favourite performances of the Belarusian audience are an opera by Alexander Borodin "Prince Igor", George Bizet's "Carmen", "Traviata" by Juseppe Verdi and, certainly, Russian opera smash hit "Evgenie Onegin" of Peter Tchaikovsky.

The theatre building, which is a historical monument today, was renovated and it reopened in 2009. Many sculptures were added around the theatre, its stage was slightly moved and audience space expanded. The latest lighting and motion equipment was added still sticking to the original design.

For the last 15 years the theatre troupe has visited more than 30 countries of the world: from Portugal and Spain to Japan and China, from Norway and Great Britain to Turkey and Thailand – everywhere the theatre has found the keen admirers.