

Culture

Fin de siècle

By Daniel Kozin

The St. Petersburg Times

City concert-goers will have a chance to experience a genre quite unlike the usual classical music that characterizes the White Nights season at the revamped Sixth International New Music Festival that starts Saturday.

Titled “The Time of Music: Fin de Siècle,” the festival comprises six consecutive concerts of diverse contemporary music from around Europe and Russia, to be held from May 26 to May 31 at several venues around St. Petersburg.

In accordance with its name, the festival aims to promote the music of famous Western composers of music from the latter part of the 20th century, and young Russian composers of the same genre.

“Contemporary music is a genre that has been lost to the average Russian listener, and trends that have long taken hold in the West are largely off the radar here [in Russia],” Iranian composer Mehdi Hosseini, the director of the festival’s organizing committee, told The St. Petersburg Times.

“It is with this idea in mind that we decided to present the Russian public with works of contemporary music that are famous in Europe, and to introduce young Russian composers who, unfortunately, don’t receive the attention that they deserve.”

The first two concerts of the weekend will be held at the Sheremetyev Palace, with the first dedicated to new music influenced by folklore, and the second, titled “France: Three Generations,” to include music from three generations of contemporary French composers, including Roger Tessier and Bruno Mantovani.

The May 29 concert, due to be held at the Mikhail Shemyakin Art Gallery and Foundation, will include an interesting program comprised exclusively of Belgian and Dutch compositions. The Belgian trio Mangalam will perform works including those of Henri Pousseur, a leading composer of avant-garde music, and Ton de Leeuw, who combined exotic Eastern musical instruments with experimental European techniques.

The last two nights will be based on the “quiet music” genre, and will present Italian, Chilean, Dutch, Greek and Russian composers at the Erarta contemporary art museum and the Mikhail Shemyakin gallery.

The festival is being hosted by the St. Petersburg Contemporary Music Center, an organization dedicated to promoting contemporary music in Russia. The center hosts a number of music events throughout the year, including the International Sergei Slonimsky Composition Competition for young musicians, which will take place later this year.

Apart from the two opening nights of the festival, concerts are free of charge for members of the public.

The Sixth International New Music Festival runs from May 26 through May 31 at various venues around the city. For more information and a full schedule, visit www.remusik.org.