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Big Cartoon Festival Aims for Children, Adults

By Ingrid Nevenchannaya

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The festival will show a series of Aardman Animations, including a 30-minute film of Wallace and Gromit's escapades, "A Matter of Loaf and Death."

The Big Cartoon Festival runs in cinemas all over Moscow this week to coincide with school half-term holidays. More than 300 films from all over the world will be shown at the festival, including a series of cartoons by Academy Award-winning studio Aardman Animations, featuring their Wallace and Gromit film "A Matter of Loaf and Death."

The festival started Thursday with the Russian premiere of "The Illusionist," the latest film by Sylvain Chomet, creator of "The Triplets of Belleville." The film is based on a script by French comedian Jacques Tati about an illusionist who meets a young woman who is convinced that he is a real magician.

"His daughter for a long time didn't want to give the script to anybody," said Dina Goder, program director for the festival. "Then she met Chomet."

Chomet moved the film's setting to Edinburgh — where his studio is based — in the 1950s. The film will go on release in Russia in February.

The festival is not just aimed at children, with a mix of films and a series of exhibitions also on show.

Organizers have set up a cartoon factory in Oktyabr, a former paper factory, where children can follow the process from start to end trying their hand at voicing characters from their favorite animated movies or at stop motion animation.

Three Russian animators — Igor Kovalyov, most famous for "Rugrats"; Dmitry Malanichev, artistic director of "The Simpsons Movie"; and Alexei Alexeyev, known for the rather wonderful forest animal musicians in the "Logjam" series — will be honored in an exhibit and talks at the Gallery Na Solyanke. Kovalyov and Malanichev now work in Los Angeles and Alexeyev in Budapest.

Visitors can watch a selection of cartoons at the gallery as well as look at stills as part of the exhibit.

Alexeyev was set to talk late Sunday night at the gallery with Malanichev speaking at 7 p.m. on Tuesday and all three on Friday at 10 p.m.

Visitors can also see an exhibit dedicated to Pyotr Sapegin, a Russian emigre who is said to have created Norwegian animation, at the Pioner cinema. The festival quotes Sapegin as saying, "I always say that I am a Norwegian filmmaker and a

Russian artist."

Another highlight at the festival is three different versions of "Fantasia," the Walt Disney classic from 1940 set to classical music. The festival will show the original, the remastered 2000 version and "Allegro Non Troppo" by Italian filmmaker Bruno Bozetto, a parody of "Fantasia."

In keeping with its emphasis on viewer participation, the festival does without a jury.

"Our viewers are the jury. They choose the winner," Goder said. Viewers decide by filling out a special form after each showing.

The Big Cartoon Festival runs till Nov. 7 at cinemas all over the city. www.multfest.ru

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