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Daughter of Gagarin Denounces Musical

By Galina Stolyarova

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The St. Pete musical “Gagarin” celebrates man’s first journey into space.

ST. PETERSBURG — The daughter of the first man in space, Yury Gagarin, denounced a St. Petersburg musical production that uses her father’s name as its title.

“Gagarin” premiered at the St. Petersburg Music Hall on April 10 and was well received by young audiences. Ahead of the premiere, Gagarina faxed a sobering letter to the company suggesting that the venue remove the cosmonaut’s name from the posters and give the production a different title.

Yelena Gagarina, who works as general director of the Kremlin Museums in Moscow, alleges that Music Hall’s “Gagarin” may create a distorted or incorrect image of her father. To prevent that, she is insisting that the show be renamed.

In her letter she stressed that “Gagarin” is an officially registered trademark owned by the pilot’s descendants, who therefore have control over the use of his name in commercial projects. St. Petersburg’s Music Hall is a state enterprise and is funded by the local

administration.

Gagarina previously complained about the 2007 film Gagarin's Grandson, a well received film about a black Russian orphan who believes he is a relative of the cosmonaut. The film changed its name to "A Cosmonaut's Grandson" after Gagarina's complaints.

The 50th anniversary of Gagarin's historic flight was widely celebrated around the world this week with an enormous range of exhibitions, documentaries, publications and other events marking the anniversary.

The musical "Gagarin" has been widely advertised as a musical fairy tale. The plot, which revolves around the first journey into space in human history, tells the story of a professor who is training pilots for that very special flight. The staging is set to the music of local composer Dmitry Saratsky.

The next show is scheduled for April 24 and organizers have informed Yelena Gagarina that Music Hall has no intention of redesigning the posters.

"Our production is harmless; it does not even feature Yury Gagarin as a character — the main character is simply called Cosmonaut," said Ilya Moshchitsky, the production's director. "We have produced a show that is very friendly and adventurous in its spirit, so really there is nothing to worry about."

"The name of Yury Gagarin only serves to declare and encapsulate the space theme," said Alexander Zakrzhevsky, the venue's spokesman. "But it is not a show about the life of the Russian cosmonaut."

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