

# Kolyada-Plays Festival Under Way in Yekaterinburg

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Yekaterinburg, a city of 1.3 million residents nestled into the land east of the Ural Mountains, might seem to some an unlikely place for a hotbed of contemporary drama.

However, anyone who has ever crossed paths with Nikolai Kolyada will tell you that is just what Yekaterinburg is. Kolyada can't take personal credit for that entirely. But he might be able to bargain for 80% of it.

The fifth annual running of the Kolyada-Plays festival began in Yekaterinburg on Thursday. It will run through Wednesday, and will feature countless performances and readings of new plays.

Countless, you ask? Well, almost. That is how Kolyada does things. He likes big numbers. As a playwright, he has penned over 90 plays. As a teacher he has turned out dozens of working playwrights through a course at the Yekaterinburg Theater Institute.

The Kolyada-Plays festival will feature works by Vasily Sigarev, Anna Baturina, Yaroslava Pulinovich, Oleg Bogayev and Vladimir Zuyev. All are former students and, with the possible exception of the 26 year-old Baturina, all have been produced not only in Russia, but in numerous countries abroad. Kolyada's reach is both qualitative and quantitative.

The fact of the matter is that if you were to pull Kolyada out of the equation, contemporary Russian drama just might topple over on its side. It wouldn't cave in altogether; there's a lot of good writing going on from St. Petersburg down to Togliatti and back to Khabarovsk. But it would definitely walk off into the sunset with a marked limp.

Kolyada-Plays will present 23 productions during its seven days and will conclude with a "theatrical marathon," in which the plays of emerging writers from the Urals region will be read non-stop, back-to-back over the course of several intense hours.

According to an account [published](#) on the site of RIA Novosti, the grand prize of the festival has already been decided. It will go to a production of "Lady Macbeth of the Mstensk District," as adapted from the 19th-century novella of Nikolai Leskov by Kolyada's former student Pulinovich. It is a production of the Kurgan Drama Theater.

Also during the festival, Kolyada will announce the winners of the annual Eurasia play competition. Now in its ninth year running, the competition attracts entries of plays written in Russian from all over the world. This year Kolyada and his readers took 641 plays into consideration.

The day before the festival began there was a gathering held at the Tinkoff restaurant in Yekaterinburg. It's purpose was, in part, to fete Kolyada, and, in part, to provide a kick-off for his festival.

His student, the playwright Alexandra Chichkanova, who also happens to be a stage manager, a props manager and the executive director at the Kolyada Theater, [wrote](#) an announcement of the evening on Facebook that I thought was brilliant. In one single sentence it captured the essence of the irrepressible and passionate Kolyada like few I have ever seen:

"Charismatic pride of the Urals, famous playwright, author of over 90 plays, actor, director, manager and owner of the Kolyada Theater, founder of the Urals school of playwriting, one of Yekaterinburg's most popular bloggers on LiveJournal, and quite simply the Light of Russian Drama, [Kolyada] will talk about himself, about theater, about money, about fame, will lash wounds, admonish enemies and praise friends."

Sounds like the kind of guy who can turn a whole city into a theater factory.

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