The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin in Gogol's 'Nose' Remake at Erotic Museum

By Chloe Cranston

February 28, 2012



Yekaterina Kostrova trying on the naked Putin puppet for the first time Tuesday. The play premieres on Saturday. **Chloe Cranston**

Everyone knows the classic Russian tale of the official who woke up to find a vital piece of his body missing, but a day before the presidential election Sunday, Gogol's "The Nose" will be retold with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in the role of the unhappy official. He loses a different body part though.

Guessing which part he finds missing in the play called "Putin and Anti-Putin" is a lot easier once you know the venue — Moscow's erotic museum G-Spot.

The 55-minute play will premiere Saturday and tells the tale of two Putins, said author Oleg Vorontsov, 19, a good Putin and a bad one battling each other in what he says is a political allegory of the upcoming election. The former, just like the Gogol functionary, wakes up to discover something has been cut off.

“He wakes up, and there is only a ‘flat patch of skin,’” said Vorontsov, quoting Gogol but talking about the distraught Putin character’s discovery the morning after.

When the owner of an erotic museum claims that he is putting on a play for political reasons, most would be skeptical, but G-Spot owner Alexander Donskoi does have some credentials.

Donskoi was once mayor of Arkhangelsk, until he was jailed for three years on charges he claims were invented to stop him running for president.

“It is not erotica, it is an expression of freedom to provoke thoughts, discussion,” Donskoi said.

He attacked Russian television as propaganda and said the play would allow people “to look at the election and understand what is going on.”

The rest of the play, which seems to be a work in progress, sees the good Putin searching for his missing part and enlisting the help of the CIA, U.S. President Barack Obama and intelligence agencies. Eventually he discovers it sitting casually in a cafe drinking tea, but just like in Gogol, the appendage is less than eager to return to its owner. Central Elections Commission chief Vladimir Churov also makes an appearance.

“The outcome of the presidential election is predetermined,” Vorontsov said. “Putin will rule, but we do not know which Putin, the alpha-male tyrant, or the democrat without his member.”

The museum, which opened last year just off Novy Arbat, already has a reputation for provocative displays, including a painting of an erotic battle between Putin and Obama, which brought in city officials to investigate, according to Donskoi. Visitors can even pose as Obama by putting their head in a large-scale version of the painting at the back of the museum.

Donskoi said he persuaded officials by showing them that the painting was more complimentary to Putin than to Obama. And Putin is, indeed, twice the man that Obama is in the painting.

There are only a few days left before the premiere, but the museum only began rehearsals Tuesday after the first Putin puppet was delivered.

Diminutive puppeteer Yekaterina Kostrova stood in front of a mirror trying on the even smaller naked Putin puppet.

“I just met up with this comrade, I hope everything will work out with him,” said Kostrova, whose last puppeteer job had been in a Pushkin fairy-tale show in Podolsk, “Russian puppetry is mainly children’s works, I wanted to do something more real.”

With her feet in his feet and one hand in his head, the diminutive Kostrova began to move further into the museum past a table where four museum visitors were sitting looking at a collection of erotic books.

As she passed, she bowed to the guests and pressed a button located in the bottom of the puppet that raises the part at the front that will go missing in the play. The four guests started

applauding.

The second of the puppets, which cost 42,000 rubles ($1,500) each, is still being made and a desktop lamp with a white shirt on it was used as a replacement Tuesday.

“Putin and Anti-Putin” will be on every Fri., Sat. and Sun. at 7 p.m. starting March 9. Tables for two cost 2,000 rubles ($70), tables for six are 5,000 rubles. To book call 695-4430, 695-3054 or info@tochkag.net. G-Spot Museum of Erotic Art. 15 Novy Arbat. www.tochkag.net

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/02/28/putin-in-gogols-nose-remake-at-erotic-museum-a12939