

Putin Praises Cellist Rostropovich at Monument Opening

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Rostropovich in 2006 **Sergei Nikolayev**

President-elect Vladimir Putin on Thursday took part in the unveiling of a new monument to cellist and human rights advocate Mstislav Rostropovich, calling him an outstanding musician and humanist, Interfax reported.

Culture Minister Alexander Avdeyev, former President Boris Yeltsin's wife Naina and Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin also took part in the ceremony. Putin recalled celebrating Rostropovich's 80th birthday with him in the Kremlin in 2007, the year the musician passed away.

"I'm proud that I knew Rostropovich," Putin said. "Such people, without a doubt, made up and make up the pride of our country."

The bronze and granite statue of Rostropovich with a cello in his hands is located at the intersection of Bryusov Pereulok and Yeliseyevsky Pereulok in central Moscow, near where Rostropovich lived with his wife, famous opera singer Galina Vishnevskaya, RIA-Novosti

reported.

Rostropovich was born in Baku on March 27, 1927, and studied at the Moscow Conservatory from 1943 to 1948. He became a professor of cello at the conservatory in 1956. A vocal supporter of artistic freedom and democratic values, Rostropovich emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1974 under intense pressure from authorities. Three years later, he became music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington.

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