

Soviet Crooner Khil Dead at 77

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Brezhnev-era crooner Eduard Khil, a People's Artist of Russia who rose to international acclaim in recent years as the "Trololo Man" after footage of his jolly yodeling became an Internet sensation, died early Monday in St. Petersburg.

The 77-year-old had been hospitalized after suffering a massive stroke in early April that left him in a coma and clinging to life.

His death stemmed from complications from the stroke, said Tatyana Mamedova of Petersburg-Kontsert, which organized Khil's concerts.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev expressed his condolences for the performer Monday.

"The death of this outstanding singer, Eduard Khil, is an irreplaceable loss for our culture," he said in a statement on the White House website. Khil's songs were "dear to people of different generations, loved not only in our country, but also abroad," he wrote.

President Vladimir Putin also expressed his condolences to Khil's wife and son.

Born Sept. 4, 1934, in Smolensk, Khil became famous as a singer in the Soviet Union, performing the songs “Loggers,” “The Moonstone” and “Blue City,” among others.

He also performed “From Where the Motherland Begins,” a song from the 1968 cult spy thriller “The Sword and the Shield,” which regained notoriety recently when Putin said he had sung it when he met the 10 Russian spies expelled from the United States in 2010.

Khil’s popularity faded after the fall of the Soviet Union, but he shot back into the spotlight in 2010 when footage of him performing his wordless 1966 song “I’m Very Glad That I’m Finally Coming Home” appeared on YouTube and immediately went viral.

The song’s joyous “la la la” vocalizations earned Khil the name “Trololo Man” among Western audiences. Several versions of the video have since been posted, with many having received millions of views.

Numerous spoof versions — including one stitched-together video appearing to show Khil unleashing a 10-hour stream of vocal acrobatics and another laid over scenes from “Star Trek” — have also appeared.

The song originally included lyrics about a cowboy riding a mustang in the United States, but the words were deemed anti-Soviet, and it was performed with Khil just humming the melody, he told LifeNews in a 2010 interview.

Khil said he only learned about the newfound popularity of the song after hearing his grandson humming the decades-old tune.

“I asked him, ‘Why [are] you singing it?’” Khil said. “He told me, ‘Grandpa, you’re home drinking tea here, [and] in the meantime, everyone’s singing your song on the Internet.’”

Khil was quick to embrace his return to the spotlight.

“I love it,” Khil said. “People [are] doing parodies, having fun. It unites them.”

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