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# Gorky Park's 85th Anniversary Carnival Blowout

By Simone Peek

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A member of Dutch street-theater group “Pavana” spreading enormous butterfly-like wings from atop her stilts.

This Saturday, Aug. 24, Gorky Park celebrates its 85-year anniversary. It is only two years ago that its 121 hectare area was rapidly transformed from a neglected Soviet relic into the center of all Moscow’s outdoor leisure-time activities.

By now, the city’s inhabitants have already become so accustomed to the park’s transformation, that the park’s management decided that the time had come to start reminiscing about its progress.

The park will host a “Total Carnival,” starting at 12 p.m. Guests are invited to become active participants in the events — to sing, dance, arrange processions and try on costumes, masks or colorful wigs.

At 4 p.m. and 8 p.m., there will be parades along Pushkinskaya Naberezhnaya starring the festival's main entertainment: street theater artists.

"We invite everybody to come in costume for this celebration," said Yelena Khatrusova, co-owner of the organizing company "Sounds Good." "But we realize that many Russian people can't or won't go out on the streets in carnival clothes by themselves, so we offer them the option to make their own costumes together with us."

The park will be divided in four "carnival zones": retro, pop, ethno and cosplay, all of which are fittingly decorated and accommodate entertainment and music according to their supposed genre.

The activities are in remembrance of the Park's first ever director in the mid 1930s, Betty Glan, who started the forgotten tradition of a yearly carnival. Glan would invite famous Soviet and foreign artists to come celebrate in the park.

"Betty Glan was an extraordinary woman. She was only 25 years old when she became the director of Gorky Park. Then she and her husband were arrested during Stalin's purges, because of which she spent 16 years in jail. After she was released and rehabilitated, she dedicated her life to theater and composing," Khatrusova said.

The main activities of the night will therefore be theater. Three street theater collectives from different European countries are going to perform.

Dutch theater Pavana will play three shows on stilts on Pushkinskaya Naberezhnaya, which will feature dancers, musicians and acrobats. All their shows are in Venetian carnival style with masks made by craftsmen from Venice.

An unusual and promising presentation will be given by the English acrobatic group, "Acrojou."

Their show takes place in a fully-equipped, 2 1/2-meter-high rolling "Wheel House."

The performance is described as "a story which unfolds inside and around the circular set as it rolls along at a gentle pace, with the audience walking alongside," according to their

website. Acrojou performed with its "Wheel House" at the 2012 cultural Olympiad in London.

However, headliner of the evening is the French theater "Ilotopie." At 9 p.m., they will start their act on the waters of one of the park's pond, Golitsynskiye Prudy. "Ilotopie" places a platform just under the water's surface, and with help of other floating objects, the pond will become their stage.

Ilotopie was the opening act of the Venice Carnival this year, and travels the world with its fantastical, imaginative show, presenting some beautiful imagery to its visitors.

Gorky Park already attracts a lot of visitors on a normal weekend, but for the anniversary celebrations, about 100,000 people are expected to turn up to the city green. It might be advisable to occupy a spot well in advance.

The day's overall goal is to fully mirror Gorky Park as it looked 80 years ago when the idea was first conceived.

"We want people to return to the last carnival in Gorky Park, return to the tradition," Khatrusova concluded.

Festivities start at 12 p.m. The entry is free. Address: Gorky Park, 9 Ulitsa Krymsky Val. Metro Park Kultury.

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