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Ivan the Terrible Has a New Son, Four Centuries Later

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German Vinogradov played Tsar Ivan with his new son in a performance by the Mitki art group on Saturday. **D. Garrison Golubock**

More than four centuries after his death, Tsar Ivan the Terrible — or an actor impersonating him — was given a new son in a performance by the Mitki art collective last weekend at the Central House of Artists in Moscow.

All Russians know the sad story of Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich, the son of Ivan the Terrible: In a fit of rage, the stern tsar beat his own son to death after he dared to disagree with his father. Immortalized in a painting by Ilya Repin, the image of the aged tsar remorsefully holding his son's bloody corpse can be found in many history textbooks.

Historically, Ivan the Terrible had no further sons and died without an heir, plunging Russia into the decades-long "Time of Troubles." However, the Mitki art group decided to give the tyrannical ruler a second chance on the anniversary of what Repin considered to be

the date of his son's death.

The performance commenced with German Vinogradov, the actor impersonating Ivan the Terrible, rolling around on the floor in grief in a scene similar to that depicted in Repin's painting. The tsar's grief was then interrupted by members of the Mitki group, who moved the tsar and mopped the stage, as if to symbolically cleanse it of his son's blood.

After the tsar was seated in his throne, the group then presented him with his "son," an actual baby. The tsar then requested to know the name of his son — Mitki organizers had previously collected suggestions for the name from the crowd, and they tallied the results and announced the totals.

The eventual winner was revealed to be Vsevolod, though other suggestions included somewhat more unusual names such as Vladimirvladimirovich, Ramzan, and Zaika, or "little rabbit." The group then unveiled a new version of Repin's painting that showed the tsar happily seated with his new son.

The Mitki group had originally hoped to hold their performance in the State Tretyakov Gallery, where Repin's original painting is on display, yet were denied permission. They were similarly unable to get space at the Winzavod Contemporary Art Center and eventually settled on the Central House of Artists, which allowed them to hold the event in the foyer.

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