The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

'Gay' Pillow Gets Russian Children's Play Censored

June 10, 2014



Culture Ministry demands the organizers of the festival to pull "The Soul of a Pillow" from their program.

A children's puppet show has been banned from Russia's prime book festival over accusations it "promotes homosexuality," a news report said.

Colta.ru culture news website on late Monday published an open letter from the Culture Ministry, demanding the organizers of the festival to pull "The Soul of a Pillow" by Olzhas Zhanaidarov from their program.

The play — set to run at the Moscow Open International Book Festival until Saturday — tells the story of a friendship between a pillow, and a boy in a kindergarten.

The pillow starring in the play is named Grechik, from the Russian word "grechka," or buckwheat — a made-up, albeit, male name.

The ministry also condemned the adult play "Herbivores" by Maxim Kurochkin, citing its use of expletives.

"The content of both plays goes against the traditional moral values of Russian culture," said the letter signed by First Deputy Minister Vladimir Aristarkhov, dated Monday.

The ministry has no formal authority to ban the works, but said it would pull its name from the festival if the plays remain listed.

Both plays will be rebooked to run at an independent venue, said Colta.ru, organizer of the showings.

Ministry newspaper Kultura has also blasted "Herbivores" and "The Soul of the Pillow," both staged by directors lauded at the Golden Mask, Russia's top theater awards.

An article in April described the two and a handful of other modern plays as "sickening" and "a health hazard."

The Russian Culture Ministry has amped up ideological activity under minister Vladimir Medinsky — a PR expert and ardent patriot — most notably by banning from distribution a number of films and several works by artist Avdei Ter-Oganian set to exhibit at France's Louvre.

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Prosecutors Investigate Children's Books for 'Gay Propaganda'

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