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Russia's Beloved Comedian Arkanov Dead at 81

By Peter Spinella

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Arkanov trained as a doctor before getting into the Soviet comedy scene.

Widely adored stand-up comedian and satirist Arkady Arkanov, who delighted Russian audiences for decades, died on Sunday in Moscow at the age of 81.

Russia's president and prime minister, as well as the speaker of the upper house of parliament, expressed their respect for Arkanov in separate statements on Sunday, state media reported.

Arkanov, a medical doctor by education, was born in Kiev but spent most of his life in Russia. He was revered for his numerous satires, which used lighthearted comedy to critique Russian life and officialdom.

"The heroes of his books, plays and monologues taught more than one generation to easily and sincerely laugh at oneself and one's setbacks, and to just as easily, with a smile on one's

face, forgive others," Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev wrote on Facebook.

Arkanov graduated from a Moscow medical college in the mid-1950s and worked as a family doctor before becoming a satirist for the literary journal Yunost ("youth").

He changed his last name from the Jewish-sounding Shteinbok in the mid-1960s and two years later became a member of the prestigious Union of Soviet Writers.

His numerous works include the plays "The Little Comedies of a Big House" and "Solo for a Duet," as well as the book "The Jackpot Snuck Up Unnoticed."

Arkanov was reportedly admitted to a Moscow hospital last week while suffering from chest pains. The cause of death has not been officially disclosed. His funeral is scheduled for Wednesday at Moscow's Vvedenskoye Cemetery.

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