The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Oleg Popov, Russia's 'Sunshine Clown,' Dies at Age 87

November 03, 2016



Oleg Popov **Dijk, Hans van / Anefo**

Oleg Popov, one of Russia's most beloved clowns, died at the age of 87 last night in Rostov-on-Don, Russian media reported on Thursday. Popov was on tour at the time of his death.

Popov, dubbed the "Sunshine Clown" by a French journalist, began his career in the post-war years, first in Saratov and then in Moscow. After a stint with the Youth Circus under the celebrated clown Pencil (Karandash), Popov primarily performed at the New Circus. He was one of the first performers to tour with the Soviet circus abroad and quickly became one of the most famous Soviet circus performers in Europe.

Although Popov was an acrobat, juggler and wire walker, he was most famous for his mime. Dressed in baggy pants with yellow straw hair sticking out from under a tatty hat, he performed simple but joyful sketches in the circus ring, in concert halls and in films. One circus goer in Moscow, Marina Golovchenko, said, "He brought a kind of pure joy to the audience. It was a time when there were few pleasures in life, and his acts were just unadulterated joy — very pure and innocent."

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and economic woes of the late Soviet and early post-Soviet period, Popov left the country for Germany, where he lived as a Russian citizen in Egloffstein. His first trip back to Russia in 24 years was at the end of 2015 to inaugurate the newly restored Chinezelli Circus in St. Petersburg.

A ceremony to pay respects to the performer will be held at the Rostov State Circus on Nov. 7. He will be buried in Germany, the Russian State Circus Company reported on their Facebook page.

Embed:

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/11/03/oleg-popov-the-sunshine-clown-dies-at-age-87-a55996