The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

What's On in Moscow May 21-24

Our picks for the weekend in and around the capital.

May 21, 2021



Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

A walk in a lilac park

This weekend is the first peak of lilac season in Moscow's most famous park for lovers of these sweet-smelling and beautiful bushes. Founded in 1954 by Leonid Kolesnikov, the country's most accomplished lilac breeder, the Lilac Garden began with 2,000 bushes of 32 sorts of lilacs. Today you can wander through scented pathways past lilacs of every color, from pure white to darkest purple, among lilac flowers that have red buds and white flowers, taking in scents that range from barely there to so strong you feel faint. Don't miss the season! It's not far from Izmailovo (metros Cherkizovskaya or Shchelkovskaya) and is open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

For more information see the site here.

Chekhov Theater Festival

Every summer since 1992 — except, of course, last pandemic summer — Russia is a theater-goers' paradise when the Chekhov Theater Festival begins. This year in Moscow there will be a dozen foreign theaters and 20 theaters from around the country performing their best productions from May to July. A few foreign troupes will arrive and performing through November. Get your tickets now for showstoppers like "Tango After Dark" by German Cornejo's Dance Company from Argentina, which will perform at the Mossoviet Theater June 1-5. Later that month (Jun 13-18) don't miss "Folio" by Pôle en Scènes from France, choreographed by Mourad Merzouki, which in some magical way blends baroque music and hip-hop. To see some familiar in unfamiliar surroundings and language, don't miss "They Shoot Horses, Don't They," performed at the Center for Drama and Directing (June 12-13), directed by Vladimir Pankov.

For some splendid Chekhov, you have to wait until August. "Three Sisters" is being performed by two companies from Israel Aug. 16-17 at the Pushkin Theater, and "The Cherry Orchard" will be performed by the Umberto Orsini Company Aug. 22-23, also at the Pushkin Theater.

On this Sunday and Monday at the Theater of Nations you can see "The Iran Conference," a play by the celebrated young playwright Ivan Vyrypayev, where a staid academic conference dissolves into a passionate debate about the state of the world.

For more information in English and Russian, as well as ticket purchases, see the festival site here.

Celebrate the life of Andrei Sakharov

Andrei Sakharov, a physicist, human rights activist, writer and political figure, was born on May 21, 1921. On what would be his 100th birthday, Moscow is celebrating his life and works with a number of events. You can see an exhibition at the Ground Solyanka Gallery that opens this Friday and runs through June 20. The Sakharov Center is honoring him with a festival from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday evening. Musicians such as Yuri Shevchuk and Alexei Kornev; poet Lev Rubinshtein; actor and activist Alexander Filippenko and many other prominent cultural figures will perform and speak. It can be viewed online here.

Tonight at 1:10 a.m. a documentary film by Yelena Yakovich will air on Channel One. It can be seen here online.

Another film is also premiering today. Called "Andrei Sakharov: Two Lives," it stars Alexei Usoltsev and Chulpan Khamatova and was directed by Roman Super. It is being shown online in Russia on Kion, but may be available abroad at a later date.

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On Monday and Tuesday (May 24-25) the Sakharov Center is holding a remarkable online conference. Called "Alarm and Hope. 21 st Century International Conference," it will be a forum for political figures, scholars, journalists and diplomats to discuss how the world —

and especially Russia — looks today through the triad of sustainable peace, progress and human rights cited by Andrei Sakharov in his 1975 Nobel Lecture. Among the many illustrious speakers are Mikhail Gorbachev, Svetlana Alexievich, Francis Fukuyama, Dunja Mijatović, Maina Kiai, and Natan Sharansky.

All the sessions can be watched online here.

At the movies

This weekend Moscow movie theaters have a plenty of films to keep everyone happy. The kids in the family might enjoy the animated film "Soul," playing Friday, Saturday and Sunday at Illyuzon. "Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway" is playing at the Art Theater. And for older kids and their parents (and grandparents), the last film of the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, "The Return of the King," is playing all weekend at 5 Zvyozd near the Novokuznetskaya metro station. Spanish speakers might want to check out "La Piel Que Habito" (The Skin I Live In) with Antonio Banderas at the Vympel Theater this Friday night. Or how about stretching the weekend out for an Italian comedy, "Ricchi di Fantasia"? It's playing at the movie theater inside the House of Journalists on Arbat Square Mon., May 24.

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El Dorado for kids

The Traveler's Palace of Ivan III has a spectacular exhibition of gold and other artifacts from the Americas. Among the hundreds of items from the Mayan, Aztec and other ancient civilizations on display are the crown of the first leader of the ancient civilization in Lambayeque (now Peru), a knife used for Aztec sacrifices, and an enormous, magnificent totem pole brought to Moscow from Vancouver, Canada — the first time it has ever traveled so far. There is a quest for the kids and plenty of hands-on exploration.

One ticket covers both the El Dorado show and Dali and Picasso. For more information and tickets, see the site here.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/05/21/whats-on-in-moscow-may-21-24-a73976