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Clowns Celebrate Russian Master Comic Nikulin

By AFP

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Yuri Nikulin. **Anastasiya Fedorenko (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

Award-winning comics on Sunday showcased the art of clowning and tomfoolery as they honored Russia's brightest circus star Yuri Nikulin who would have turned 100 at the weekend.

During a gala in the second city St. Petersburg entertainers from a variety of countries including Russia, Italy, Brazil and Mexico delighted the audience with skits and animal acts involving poodles and a goose.

The performance wrapped up a four-day festival dubbed "The world's best clowns" which was dedicated to Russia's beloved clown and actor Nikulin, who would have turned 100 on Saturday.

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David Larible, a prominent Italian performer who took part in the festival, said clowns all over the world knew and remembered Nikulin.

"He is a master, he is our father, he is a magnificent artist," Larible told AFP.

Under the Soviet Union, the circus was one of the country's most cherished institutions.

Known for his signature sailor cap, cropped trousers and warmth, Nikulin became a cultural icon entertaining Russians for decades.

He starred in iconic Soviet comedies but was also known for his dramatic talent.

When the legendary comic died in 1997, Boris Yeltsin, Russia's president at the time, addressed the nation in a televised address, saying the country was grieving.

"We've all become orphans today," Yeltsin said at the time.

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