

Moscow Theater Cancels Plays With Kremlin Critic Liya Akhedzhakova

The actress had performed at the Sovremenik Theater for 46 years.

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Actress Liya Akhedzhakova. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

On Wednesday Moscow's Sovremenik Theater [announced](#) that "The Gin Game," which starred award-winning actress Liya Akhedzhakova, would not be performed.

This effectively ended the actress's career at the theater, which she joined in 1977.

Akhedzhakova is a celebrated Soviet and Russian actress of film and stage, who has performed in more than 50 films, including her famous role of the secretary Verochka in "Office Romance."

Her career at The Sovremenik Theater and other venues was equally illustrious. Over the years she has received dozens of awards including Theater Star, People's Artist of the Russia, Order "For Merit to the Homeland," and two Nika Awards.

She has been equally celebrated as a human rights activist who has consistently spoken out against abuses of civil and human rights, including against the law forbidding adoption of Russian children by American citizens. She has defended independent media, such as the original NTV television channel and TV Rain. In 2013, she was awarded a prize from the Moscow Helsinki Group for "the protection of human rights by means of culture and arts."

She has been a strong and vocal critic of the Russian annexation of Crimea and the war waged by Russia against Ukraine.

In early February of last year she [joined](#) with other theatrical colleagues to protest against the imposition of "traditional values" in Russian theaters. Her role in Rinat Tashimov's play "First Bread" in 2021 was strongly [criticized](#) by Russian military and veteran organizations for "literally spitting into the souls of all generations of Russian veterans."

Lidiya Fomina, the head of the Moscow branch of the Russian Cultural Workers Union, told the platform [news.ru](#) that although Akhedzhakova was no longer performing, she hadn't been fired; she would still receive a monthly base salary of 50,000 rubles (about \$675). In another [article](#) on the same platform, Fomina was quoted saying that she supported the decision of the Sovremenik Theater, since "in life you have to pay for everything."

"The [theater] director warned me that I wouldn't be performing in the repertory," the 84-year-old actress [said](#). "This was the demand of some angry letter-writers... I'm sitting here weeping. I get it. I know who wrote and who organized it. But nothing can be done."

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