**WHOLE RUSSIA CELEBRATES THE YEAR OF THEATER**Dmitry Kuzmin (the city of Yaroslavl)

The official opening ceremony of the Year of Theater in Russia took place on Thursday in the city of Yaroslavl. During the ceremony dozens of events will be held throughout the whole country. On the eve of the ceremony, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin met with leading theatre workers. Among other things, Vladimir Putin spoke about the development of regional theaters, problems related to theater degree, as well as the financing of the industry.

On Thursday, events across the country were held to coincide with the Year of Theater. This initiative was made last year by the chairman of the Union of Theater Workers of the Russian Federation, Alexander Kalyagin. President Vladimir Putin supported the idea. *The purpose of the Year of Theater is the development of theatrical art and its further popularization.*

One of the main events will be the Moscow Theater Olympics, during which the world leading theater groups will visit Russia. A notable event will be the All-Russian Theater Marathon New Theater – XXI Century, which will be held in all federal districts. There recognized masters of theatrical art will lecture and teach workshops.

As part of the celebration, Budushee Teatralnoy Rossii (The Future of Theatre Russia) will also take place in Yaroslavl. There the latest innovative solutions used by directors in modern theater business will be presented. In contrast, amateur theaters will be able to take part in the show Main Role. The results of the thematic Year will be summed up by the All-Russian Theater Forum, scheduled for the end of 2019. *On Thursday, the grand opening took place at the Russia’s oldest professional company, Volkov Drama Theatre, the city of Yaroslavl.*

Before the event, there was a lengthy conversation between Russian President Vladimir Putin and the country's leading theatre workers, including Alexander Kalyagin, Yuri Solomin, Alexander Shirvindt, Vladimir Mashkov, Oleg Menshikov and many others. The Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky also was there.

«It should be especially pleasant for everyone to meet here in Yaroslavl, the city where Russian theatre was formed. I would like to congratulate everyone with the Year of Theater in Russia», – the President said. «We love and appreciate theater, we are proud of Russian actors, playwrights and directors, who have made a great contribution to its development. *And even now, in digital era, theater has not lost its relevance, because it always responds to the topic of the day.*

In conclusion, I would like to note that theater hugely influences on society. Let's think about how it should be organized in such a way that it doesn’t become an empty sound and would serve the benefit of society and the country. Art should nevertheless unite, not disunite. The fact that we managed to keep art outside politics is very good», – the President added.

Then Vladimir Putin proposed to complete the formal part and inquired from artists, what problems and concerns they currently care about most.

The first who spoke was Alexander Kalyagin, who recognized the Year of Theater as a landmark event. Then he yields the floor to other participants in the conversation.

They also spoke about cooperation with foreign colleagues. Vladimir Putin added that theatre workers from abroad will always come to Russia even despite the foreign policy situation. This is because «Russia is a recognized leader in the field of theater all over the world».

Theaters from Japan, China, Vietnam, India, Great Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Romania and Hungary will take part at the International Theater Olympiad in Russia.

Theatre financing in Russia was also discussed. The President suggested that today there may be a somewhat «archaic financing system» in the country». *He said he would consider the possibility of reform of the allocation of budget funds.*

He noted that almost 650 budgetary theaters function in Russia in comparison with other countries, where, as a rule, theaters are private. Vladimir Putin also reminded of the need to create new theaters very «carefully» in order to avoid situation where «we will produce new ones, forgetting the old ones».

At the same time, the President supported the creation of theater centers in the Far East: «But we should think everything over in advance, we don’t need more than necessary», Vladimir Putin said.

*The guests also touched on the topic of live broadcasts of theater performances in cinemas. Today, in 107 cities, cinemas are broadcasting performances on large screens, and such broadcasts are in high demand.*

In addition, a proposal was made to create an actor's house in Yaroslavl, because Volkov Drama Theater is officially recognized as the first professional theater in Russia. Vladimir Putin supported this idea and instructed the governor of the Yaroslavl region, Dmitry Mironov, to select the appropriate room.

They also spoke about the law on patronage, but the President assures of what it wouldn’t be a panacea for all problems. «This is a good addition to dinner», said the President. «But we need to work out optimal financing options for institutions of this kind».

The artistic director of Maly Theater (Moscow), Yury Solomin, spoke very emotional. He complained that there are successful theaters only in large cities of Russia, but not in small towns. Putin supported Yury Solomin. He noted then that «The Year of Theater is celebrated not only in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but across the whole country».

This’s also supported by the fact that during the All-Russian Theater Marathon New Theater – XXI Century. A New Look visitors will be able to see the best performances-laureates of the Golden Mask award, and the All-Russian Theater Festival Federatsia (Federation) will take place in the city of Grozny with the participation of theaters operating in the languages ​​spoken by different nations found in Russia. *The main issue of the conversation was theatre degree.*

Vladimir Putin agreed with all theatre workers that the presence of acting courses at universities that don’t specialize on acting badly affects the reputation of the profession itself. Some also noted the fact that commercial acting programs at acting schools should be prohibited.

The last to speak was the artistic director of the Vakhtangov Theater Rimas Tuminas. On behalf of all those present he made a proposal to build a monument to People’s Artist of the USSR, recognized actor Mikhail Ulyanov, who died in 2007. Putin took it into consideration.

After the dialogue with representatives of theatrical art, Putin took part in the opening ceremony of the Year of Theater.

«I very much hope that the Year of Theater in Russia will not only give impetus to the theater development, but also help theatre workers to strengthen their positions, declare them again around the world and, of course, will enable theater art lovers in Russia to enjoy performances that theaters are ready to present to us», the President said.

During the celebration of the Year of Theater in Russia, 32 regular theater events will be held annually, including the Museum Night on May 18-19, the Cinema Night on the last weekend of August, and the Art Night on November 2-3. The total budget of the Year of the Theater will be about 1.5 billion rubles.