

Yakov Smirnoff – Biography.

Since his 1992 arrival in Branson, Missouri, famous Russian comedian Yakov Smirnoff has played host to over three million visitors. At his own 1,400-seat theater, operated personally by Yakov, the entire show and venue reflects this inspirational comedian's unique insights into life, family, and these United States.

Yakov's comedic style is firmly grounded within his mission statement "to experience happiness and teach it with passion through comedy and sensitivity". Nowhere are these principles more evident than in his two children, Natasha and Alexander. Yakov continues to develop his comedy to reflect the dynamics between men and women, the happiness that can be found inside oneself, and a celebration of the spirit of life. The depths of Yakov's development from naive young immigrant to gentle, loving patriot can be found throughout his show. When Branson's Two-Time Comedian of the Year isn't performing for sold out shows at his own theater in the heartland of America, Yakov likes to travel and appears at select venues across the United States.

In addition to his comedy, Yakov is also an accomplished artist. While he holds a degree from a prestigious Russian institute and has taught the subject professionally, Yakov (whose work can be seen throughout the theater) uses his paintbrush now as a means of furthering his philosophy. His work was featured in a New York art expo in early 2001 and is further evidence of the breadth of his creative talent. The painting that Yakov completed just after 9/11 has been displayed at Ground Zero in New York City.

Recently, Yakov was a featured speaker during NASA's salute to astronaut and Senator, John Glenn; performed at the Library of Congress for the inauguration of President George W. Bush; and regularly assists in philanthropic causes. Yakov continues to be featured in print and on television shows such as Home & Garden, E! Channel, NBC, WGN, Lifestyles, Comedy Central specials, USA Today, the New York Daily News and other.

In addition to the comedian's three videos and CDs ("Just off the Boat," "What a Country," and "I Bet You Never Looked at it That Way"), Yakov has also authored "America on Six Rubles a Day" and is in the process of writing a new book to share this funny philosopher's compilation of short stories from the heart. It's Borscht for the Soul!

Yakov's movie credits include "Moscow on the Hudson" with Robin Williams, "Brewster's Millions" with Richard Pryor, "The Money Pit" with Tom Hanks and "Heartburn" with Jack Nicholson and Meryl Streep. His many television credits include Showtime's ACE Award nominee "Yakov Smirnoff from Moscow...Idaho," as well as his own 1986 syndicated series "What a Country." In the early months of 2003, Yakov appeared in his one-man Broadway Show, "As Long As We Both Shall Laugh" at the American Airlines Theatre in New York City. During the show Yakov invites everyone to celebrate the differences between the genders.

It has been quite a journey for the man who became an American citizen on July 4, 1986, when he was sworn in (by Chief Justice Warren Burger) at the Statue of Liberty. The immigrant who, in 1977, landed in this country with his parents and less than \$100 in his pocket has grown to become a command performer at the White House, a respected comedic voice, cultural observer, and family man. As Yakov says, "What A Country"! Since his rebirth in the United States, the comedian maintains his topical edge, traveling the world of comedy, and sharing his insightful discoveries.