



## RUSSIA

# Popular Russian-American Singer Willi Tokarev Dies At 84

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Russian-American singer and composer Willi (Vilen) Tokarev has died at the age of 84.

Media reports in Russia quoted Tokarev's relatives and friends as saying that the well-known performer and songwriter died in a Moscow clinic on August 4. The cause of death was not made public.

Tokarev was born in the North Caucasus in 1934. His parents, who were of Cossack origin, named him Vilen after the founder of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. He later changed the name to Willi.

He emigrated to the United States from the Soviet Union in 1974.

Tokarev performed his songs in the musical genre known as Russian chanson, which includes city romance songs, song performed by singer-songwriters, and songs based on the themes of the urban underclass and the criminal underworld.

He became extremely popular in the 1980s after tapes with his songs about the life of Russian-speaking Americans in New York City's Brighton Beach area started being smuggled to the Soviet Union.

Tokarev's 1981 album *V Shumnom Balagane* (In a Raucous Show-Booth) made him famous among Soviet immigrants in the United States and later in the Soviet Union.

His songs -- Skyscrapers, Cranes, and A Curly Forelock -- became extremely popular across the Soviet Union in the 1980s. In total, Tokarev released 50 albums.

In the wake of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms, Tokarev started visiting the Soviet Union in 1989-1990. He later moved to Moscow permanently.

Based on reporting by Ekho Moskvyy and RIA Novosti

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