

A GIRL WHO CAN SING **From Russia with Love—for Jazz**

A version of this essay was published in the Jazz Buff newsletter, Palo Alto, California, August-September 2005

There is a famous Russian pop singer, Alla Pugachova, about whom a popular movie was made during the Soviet period entitled "A Woman Who Sings." There is another Russian—not yet famous—who is an even better singer than Ms. Pugachova. Her name is Juliana (Yuliana) Rogachova. She is from the provincial city of Vladimir, which was once the capital of ancient Rus.

Juliana could probably become a famous Russian pop star—if she wanted to. She is blessed with a beautiful voice with an uncommon range—and the physical beauty of a pop star, including a dazzling smile. But at age 8—she's just 17 now—she was introduced to jazz by a Russian singer, Svetlana Rubinina.

Juliana simply fell in love with jazz. And despite a growing number of financially tempting offers to perform popular Russian music, she has never wavered from her chosen goal—to become a successful professional international jazz singer.

In route to her goal, at age 14—several years younger than the official minimum age—Juliana managed to enroll in the Variety and Jazz College in Moscow, the only school in Russia that teaches jazz, and she and her mother moved the 120 miles to the Russian capital. Juliana will finish the College's program next year.

Along the way she has performed on national Russian TV, participated in a number of major concerts and, to date, 14 Russian and international competitions, all of which she has won. In 2003, for example, she took part in the international competition "Italian Magic" in Cesenatico. The morning after the competition, when she and her mother went to breakfast at the hotel where all the participants were staying, Juliana received a standing ovation from the other performers and their families. The results of the competition had not yet been announced—but the other participants assumed that Juliana had won. She in fact received the Grand Prix.

Juliana and her parents understood that, notwithstanding her successes in Russia and Europe, to achieve her ultimate goal she needed to find a way to study in the U.S. In pursuit of this goal, they approached the staff at the American Home in Vladimir. Juliana became a regular performer at various American Home events, including the Home's 10th anniversary celebration on July 4, 2002. Dr. Ron Pope, founder and president of the organization that built and operates the American Home, promised to do his best to put Juliana in touch with American jazz educators and to find a way to get her to the States for training.

To make a long story short, Dr. Pope was able to put Juliana in touch with Dr. Katharine (Katchie) Cartwright in New York. Katchie, a noted jazz performer and music educator

and Chair of the International Association for Jazz Education's Sisters in Jazz mentoring program, was immediately attracted to Juliana's exceptional talent and potential. She began providing advice long distance. And a search was begun for a summer program Juliana could participate in here in the States. Michael Zisman of the Stanford Jazz Workshop offered Juliana a generous scholarship, and Dr. Pope was able to raise the rest of the funds needed from several jazz enthusiasts who were also acquainted with the American Home project. As a result, last summer Juliana made her first trip to America—and her first trip without her mother. On her way to California Juliana spent several days with Katchie Cartwright and her family in New York. After working directly with Juliana, Katchie concluded that the young Russian not only has "an uncommonly beautiful and flexible voice, she is extraordinarily musical and disciplined."

At last summer's Stanford Jazz Workshop Juliana worked with another well known jazz artist and educator, Dena DeRose. Dena noted that she—and others—"were amazed at how much Juliana felt for the music...."

In response to her first opportunity to study in the U.S., Juliana commented, "One of the first jazz songs I performed when I was just nine years old was 'A Letter to Ella.' It's a Russian song about a little girl who dreams of flying to the US to tell Ella Fitzgerald that Russia loves jazz too. At that time I couldn't imagine that seven years later I would be this girl!"

Both Katchie and Dena are very much looking forward to working with Juliana again this year. This time Juliana will fly directly to California from Russia. She'll then stop in New York on her way home—where she will once again stay with Katchie's family and where she will visit Juilliard. (It is hoped that Juilliard will soon initiate a long anticipated vocal jazz program.)

In California, thanks to another scholarship and more generous donations, Juliana will attend the second and third weeks of the Stanford Jazz Workshop. She will then be a featured performer on the youth stage of the San Jose Jazz Festival. She will be performing Sunday, August 14 at 4 p.m.

Last summer, Jan DeCarli, a board member of the San Jose Jazz Society, heard Juliana perform at Stanford and invited her to attend a jam session at Pete Escovedo's newly opened Jazz Club. She sang "Cry Me a River" and then, at the musicians' request, "All of Me." She received a standing ovation for both songs. This led to this year's Festival invitation.

Juliana Rogachova is definitely a girl who can sing!

Note: For information on the American Home, go to www.serendipity-russia.com.