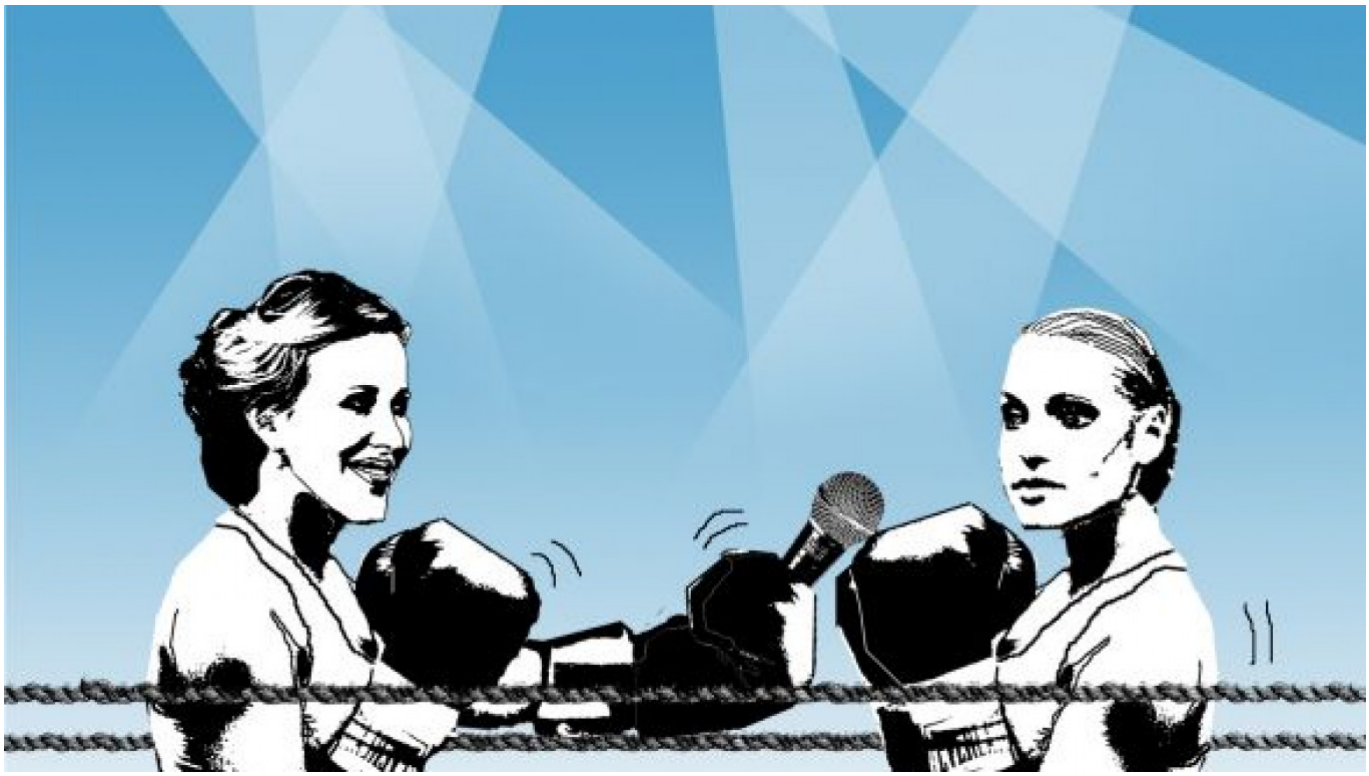
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In the Spotlight

By Anna Malpas

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This week, the former Bolshoi ballerina Anastasia Volochkova, sacked for being too "fat," is interviewed by OK! magazine. She is a pretty entertaining character, what with her plastered-on makeup, her decision to wear three dresses at her wedding (pink, white and pistachio), and her ambition to be mayor of the Olympic town of Sochi — sadly foiled when she forgot to put her date of birth on the application form.

The interviewer here is the outspoken it-girl Ksenia Sobchak. The pair had previously not spoken to each other for 10 years, the magazine writes, after they quarreled over a man. The women pose in boxing gloves for photos for an interview billed as "provocative, open and emotional."

Sobchak pulls no punches in her questions, which concentrate on Volochkova's love life and the size of her boyfriends' wallets. She frankly admits that she "does not understand" anything about ballet.

The only problem is that Sobchak's insults bounce off Volochkova, whose brain seems to be as fluffy as her tutus.

Volochkova was laid off by the Bolshoi in 2003 amid rumors that she was too tall and heavy to be lifted by partners. The "fat ballerina" angle was irresistible to journalists, though she was never remotely overweight. Since then she has carved out a career doing limited ballet runs and solo shows. With a soppy, pastel image, she appeals to people who like ballet's frillier side.

In a much more colorful love life, Volochkova has been married once but was previously linked to a string of oligarchs including playboy billionaire

Suleiman Kerimov, best known for crashing his Ferrari in the south of France in 2006 with a nubile television presenter inside.

Sobchak zooms in on this apparent anomaly. "You've created a contradictory image. On the one hand, the 'white swan' that always makes me laugh and on the other hand a love affair with Kerimov," she says. "You knew he was married, after all, but you had a relationship with him for years."

"Yes, Suleiman Kerimov was in my life," Volochkova confesses. She says Kerimov's being married "did not stop him" and they had a "wonderful" time.

Sobchak hints at Volochkova's popularity among the moneyed class of men.

"Is it true that you used to have the Forbes rich list before you married and that beside each name was a tick, a minus sign or a question mark?" Sobchak asks. Volochkova just laughs and calls it a good idea.

Digging in the knife, Sobchak asks: "Why don't you admit ... that rich men helped you in your career and that sex wasn't always for love?"

"That's all in the past," Volochkova responds, asking why Sobchak doesn't want to know about her concerts for children.

In the worst insult, Sobchak, who has written a book of style tips, attacks Volochkova's fashion sense. Why did she team a poncho with jeans decorated with crystals, she asks.

"They're Roberto Cavalli," Volochkova parries. "So much the worse," Sobchak says. "No one wears Cavalli jeans any more."

Only at the end does Sobchak explain why she hates Volochkova so much — that Volochkova stole her boyfriend, Vyacheslav Leibman, who is in construction. Sobchak says she found their text messages — which she quotes word for word — and train tickets for a trip. "I still keep them," she adds menacingly.

Volochkova denies that she slept with Leibman, arguing that she did not fancy him and only went to dinner with him on Sobchak's mother's suggestion.

After letting off steam, Sobchak turns nicer. "I think you were sincere at some point," she says. "And I think that one day you will throw off your white swan tutu and become a normal person."

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