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In the Spotlight

By Anna Malpas

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This week, actor Ivan Okhlobystin, who plays an irascible doctor in TNT's medical comedy "Interns," announced his plans to run for president. If that wasn't ridiculous enough, pop diva Alla Pugachyova spoke out on her political views, backing billionaire turned politician Mikhail Prokhorov, whom she praised as a "real man."

Okhlobystin's role in "Interns" is a doctor with a hair-trigger temper who likes to spring unexpected night shifts on his students. The series has become really popular, thanks to an appealing cast of oddball characters.

"After long thought, we have decided that I will run for president," Okhlobystin said at a news conference at Interfax.

Okhlobystin, 45, is a pretty colorful character, a biker who used to serve as a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church, until he was temporarily banned from wearing a cassock or holding services last year after he requested to return to acting. Slightly oddly, priests are not allowed to take part in "mummery."

I'm wary of actors becoming politicians, unless they have great speechwriters, and Okhlobystin seems to have some pretty wacky ideas. He told Komsomolskaya Pravda that his first act would be to dissolve the Duma and invest all the money saved in the arms industry. He also called for the president to hold office for 14 years and admitted that "I don't like democracy." He has spoken out against gay marriage and called for a union of Slavic nations. Worst of all, he writes incessantly on Twitter.

He told KP that he needs 1.5 billion rubles ($50.7 million) for his presidential campaign. He has already released an incomprehensible election video where he is dressed as a circus ringmaster and intones things about storms and ruby-colored comets.

Posters around Mosow advertise his show on Sept. 10 at Luzhniki Stadium, called "Doctrine 77," where he will apparently stand on top of a white pyramid. He told KP that he planned to lecture the audience in the stadium for 77 minutes and described it as a "literary evening."

Vsevolod Chaplin, a spokesman for the Russian Orthodox Church, said Tuesday that Okhlobystin would only be able to run while a priest with the blessing of Patriarch Kirill — implying strongly that he would get nothing of the kind. He said there is a ban on priests running for official posts, although it seems that no one has tested this rule with a presidential campaign yet.

Patriarch Kirill responded by cautioning that priests could alienate people from the church by their actions and even by what car they drive (although he himself has a car with flashing blue lights), and saying priests had a different role.

Meanwhile, Pugachyova told KP that she had not taken an interest in politics for a long time but had been tempted back by Prokhorov.

"Finally a real man has appeared who is prepared to do something for the country," she said.

Kommersant wrote that Pugachyova has never formally joined any political party, although in 1996 she took part in Boris Yeltsin's election campaign and in the last State Duma elections backed the ruling United Russia party.

Prokhorov said he was delighted and offered her a post dealing with women's affairs for his Right Cause movement, calling her "strong, independent and unusually gifted."

"She understands the problems of our women very well," he gushed.

Prokhorov gave an online interview to KP readers, too, where he was asked the vital question: Why is a fine, up-standing billionaire still single? "I really believe in love, but I just haven't met my other half yet," he said. "I hope I will meet her, and I'm sure that if I do, it will be at first sight."

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