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White House Fave To Sing in Moscow

By Nosheen Shakil

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Monheit makes her Russian debut.

Moscow audiences will get to hear what U.S. President Barack Obama's favorite musician sounds like Thursday as jazz singer Jane Monheit performs for the first time in Russia at Crocus City Hall.

Monheit has performed in the White House, been nominated for Grammys and released eight albums already, even though she is only in her early 30s.

"I always knew I would sing, since I was a little kid," she said in a Skype interview from New York. "When other kids waitressed at local restaurants, I did gigs to make some cash."

She grew up listening to her parent's records of Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, whom she counts among her main influences. "I like singers who pay a lot of attention to lyrics," she said.

Professionally, she started singing while at school before going on to attend the prestigious

Manhattan School of Music, where she studied voice under Peter Eldrige. “Peter means everything to me, he made my life. He was my teacher, became my manager. I met my husband at school, also thanks to him.” She and her husband, drummer Rick Montalbano in her band, live in New York and have one child.

At the age of 20, Monheit won first prize at the Thelonious Monk Institute and was invited onto the “David Letterman Show,” which shot her to fame. Her latest album, “Home,” attempts to capturing the jazz you can hear Thursday.

“Jazz is meant to be played live, it is difficult to transfer onto a CD. With the album ‘Home,’ however, we try to give an idea of what we do on stage,” she said.

Monheit herself, though, does not listen to jazz at home: “I have a 3-year-old son who really is into “Superman” and “Star Wars,” so we listen to this. My inspiration comes from everyday life.”

Jane Monheit plays Thursday, Oct. 6, at 8 p.m. Crocus City Hall, 66 kilometer mark of the Moscow Ring Road, Crocus City, Pavilion 3. Metro Myakinino. Tel. (499) 550-0055.

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