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Inthe Spotlight

By Anna Malpas

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This week, media personality and reality-show-host-turned-opposition-activist Ksenia Sobchak very publicly lost her job hosting the MUZ-TV music awards, the competitor to MTV Russia on the local music scene. She made the announcement when the posters were all over town featuring her photo, and a television ad was already rolling.

"They've removed me from MUZ-TV. I asked why: 'You know very well. We didn't want to, but we got a phone call.' This is rubbish," she wrote on Twitter.

She also said that she had been deinvited as a host for the Tefi TV awards, where she was due to hand out a prize.

It is pretty clear that Sobchak knocked noses out of joint with her speaking at mass opposition rallies and with her impromptu use of a previous prize ceremony to grill actress Chulpan Khamatova about why she agreed to do a cheesy campaign video for President Vladimir Putin. Not to mention her later detention and symbolic 1,000 ruble ($30) fine for a public order offence at a protest.

Sobchak joked on Twitter that MUZ-TV probably feared she was going to surprise much-tattoed rapper Timati with a question about why he went to the presidential inauguration. (He also recorded a Putin campaign video.)

Losing the music-prize gig must be a real financial blow for Sobchak, as MUZ-TV is one of the year's biggest music events. It is held in Olimpiisky stadium, and the performances then get repeated to death on the channel.

In a selfless act of solidarity, metrosexual presenter Andrei Malakhov in turn snubbed the ceremony, saying he was going to visit a children's home instead. That will grate with MUZ-TV, since he is pretty A-list, and at this late stage (the event is June 1), the only person they could find to replace him was a little-known television host named Vyacheslav Manucharov.

"Isn't it cool not to be wrong about people? I always went against the opinion of many other people, saying that Andrei Malakhov is a real person. He refused to host the show in solidarity," Sobchak wrote.

Malakhov even interviewed Sobchak for his Starhit magazine, headlining the article "Ksenia the Decembrist" after the tsarist-era plotters against the regime.

I liked one of his questions: "So much is going on: Cannes, Eurovision, your friend Ulyana Sergeyenko has opened a boutique in Almaty, ... and you are going to demos?"

Sadly, she denied the hotly rumored romance with activist Ilya Yashin, saying that he is just a "good friend."

But there was good news for Sobchak, too, as she got offered the job of chief editor at SNC magazine, formerly known as Sex and the City. Apparently it had to change its name because of copyright.

It used to be an enjoyable, slightly racier read than its glossy rivals. Once, it did a rating of Russia's most attractive politicians, entirely fairly picked by the staff. Putin trailed, while liberal Boris Nemtsov took first place.

And before you get too sad for Ksenia, it's worth remembering that she is still busy. Her Dom-2 reality show is still running, even if she rarely appears, and she also presents "Russia's Top Model," not to mention her interview show on Dozhd TV, "Sobchak Live," and her political talk show, "GosDep 2," which now airs on Snob.ru after it was dropped by Russian MTV.

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