The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Stars Dazzle With Absurdities Over Holiday Break

By Lena Smirnova

January 12, 2013



Verka Serdyuchka plays the lead role in the new “Little Red Riding Hood.”

No New Year’s celebration in Russia is complete without its most important guest: the television set. Although this year’s holiday shows and music concerts left much to be desired in terms of quality, Russians still got plenty of entertainment courtesy of the nation’s most flamboyant singers, dancers and politicians. The top 10 moments from the holiday lineup are presented below.

1. Prima donna of the Russian stage returns with a makeover.

Legendary singer Alla Pugachyova revived her annual Rozhdestvenskiye Vstrechi (Christmas Meetings) concerts after a 10-year pause. Her fourth ex-husband, crooner Filipp Kirkorov, described the concert as the most important event to have happened to Russia in 2012. He may have been subjective in this opinion, but Pugachyova’s return did offer her fans what they were waiting for. The noticeably leaner and younger-looking stage veteran sang several new

songs and amplified the audience's excitement in the second half of the show by dancing on stage in a short skirt. The audience also got a glimpse of Pugachyova's current husband, 36-year-old comedian Maxim Galkin, who was applauding his wife, her ex-husband, daughter and ex-son-in-law from the front row.

2. Top producer kills woman in a road crash.

Konstantin Meladze's crash in Ukraine came just before New Year's Day and sent shock waves through the entertainment world. Meladze is recognized as one of Russia's most successful producers and composers, currently managing the female band Via Gra and his brother Valery Meladze, among others. His compositions regularly float to the top of the music charts. Now questions swirl as to who can take over Meladze's role if he is tried by the Ukrainian courts, where his potential imprisonment could last up to eight years.

3. Russian singers get a voice.

Having a good voice became trendy among singers this year thanks to the growing popularity of the television show Golos. The Russian version of a Dutch reality talent show has been broadcast to leading ratings on Channel One since October and became a good conversation starter with strangers. Tatarstan native Dina Garipova took the first spot in the Dec. 29 finale and reappeared on the channel's New Year's shows with other top competitors — a vocal invasion that seemed to have made some of Russia's pop singers in the audience slightly anxious.

4. Putin scares boy during Christmas service.

President Vladimir Putin attended the nighttime Christmas service at a Sochi convent this year. The live television broadcast of Putin praying among the common folk went off without a hitch, but the photos from the event sent foreign bloggers into a laughing frenzy. One photo published on the RIA-Novosti website shows Putin leaning down to talk to a young boy sitting on the floor near his feet. In the following shot, the boy is looking forward with a scared expression and uptight body language. Bloggers continue to speculate as to what the president said to the child with, guesses ranging from gulag to "Star Wars" references.

5. Channels face off in fairy-tale battle.

The country's top channels, Channel One and Rossia, brought out their ammunition for the annual battle of New Year's concerts and movies. This year, each of the channels offered up a fairy tale movie. Channel One's "Zolushka" tells the story of a young housekeeper who goes to a Moscow society bash to meet her prince, the son of an oligarch. Meanwhile, Rossia collected the most overexposed pop stars to film its annual musical movie. This year, the channel presented its adaptation of "Little Red Riding Hood." The main character, played by a Ukrainian cross-dresser, abandons her pirozhki business to pursue the dream of becoming a pop singer.

6. Yolka's love song named top hit of 2012.

R&B artist Yolka followed up last year's breakout hit "Provence" by securing the winning spot in the cross-national music chart, as presented by the online portal Krasnaya Zvezda (Red

Star). Her song "Okolo Tebya" (Near You) topped the list of the 20 Best Songs of 2012, which were selected based on audience ratings, paid downloads and music video popularity. Other finalists included Ivan Dorn, Polina Gagarina, Serebro, Gradusy and a tipsy Grigory Leps.

7. Russian tenor puts on Roman robes to serenade Anastasia Volochkova.

Never one to disappoint his fans with a mundane performance, the self-proclaimed Golden Voice of Russia, Nikolai Baskov, dressed up as an ancient Roman for his appearance on the award show "Zolotoi Grammofon" (Golden Phonograph). Midway through the song, ballerina Anastasia Volochkova, now, most famous for United Russia's denunciation of her naked beach shots, was lifted from beneath the stage dressed in a nude-body outfit with glitter applique to perform a short and awkward dance number.

8. Lovers quarrel at Pesnya Goda.

Just as the annual Pesnya Goda festival was getting increasingly dull, the audience's attention turned to a search for signs of tension between the former lovers tasked to co-host the Soviet time relic. Pop singer Sergei Lazarev and TV personality Lera Kudryavtseva hosted the festival in the past, but had a much-publicized breakup earlier this year. Kudryavtseva, 41, reportedly left Lazarev, 29, for a younger hockey player. Not to be outdone, Lazarev quickly sparked rumors about a relationship of his own by featuring a 19-year-old model in a wedding dress in one of his music videos.

9. Ousted hip-hop singer attempts crooning.

The usually upbeat hip-hop singer Nikolai Timofeyev was uncharacteristically subdued this year, switching from dance-inspiring melodies to boy-band-worthy ballads. Timofeyev left the popular Diskoteka Avaria band in the summer after he gave solo performances of their songs without permission. Meanwhile, Timofeyev's former colleagues released a new song, "Nogi-Nogi," a euphoric tribute to female legs.

10. "Rasputin" gets Russian citizenship.

Though neither Sting nor Elton John was invited to the New Year's concerts as they were several years ago, the local entertainment scene still got a dose of the foreign in the form of new Russian citizen Gerard Depardieu. Regular news broadcasts allowed Russians to monitor the progress of the former Frenchman, honored all the more for once having played Rasputin, through the regions as he was welcomed into his new homeland.

Related articles:

- Magnitsky Play at Teatr.doc Hits Harder Than Ever
- Julia Lezhneva: A Rising Star in European Opera
- Church Holds Service After Century of Silence

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/01/12/stars-dazzle-with-absurdities-over-holiday-break-a20574