

Viktoriya Belova Teaches American Singing for Slavs

By [Alexander Bratersky](#)

September 23, 2013



Russian singer Viktoriya Belova standing by Russian actor Lev Prygunov.

A former actress turned singer, Viktoriya Belova is known to many in Russia as a voice coach who teaches Russian beginners to sing better. Her secret is her own schooling by American voice coach Seth Riggs.

"It has turned so, that I have interpreted Riggs technique for Slavic-speaking people," said Belova, who adds that even the position of a voice box of Russian-speaking singers differs from the English ones.

A vocal teacher of 120 Grammy winners, Riggs, who resides in Los Angeles has taught the likes of Madonna, Michael Jackson and Tina Turner. Riggs' method, which he calls "Speech Level Singing" claims to repair abusive voice coaching, "allowing you to sing safely with greater range," Riggs site states.

As a vocal coach, Riggs spent many years with Jackson, and his rehearsal with the late pop king in 1994 over the phone is still popular among YouTube audiences.

Yet it was Belova who impressed Riggs with her singing in 2005 while he was looking for talent in Russia. It was Lisa Minnelli's song from Bob Fosse's musical, "Cabaret" that touched Riggs' heart, Belova said.

A graduate of VGIK Russian film school and a part-time actress, Belova was invited to Hollywood to learn Riggs' techniques.

'It seems I've wound up interpreting the Riggs technique for Slavic-speaking people.'

Viktoria Belova

After several years of training and singing in the U.S. in both Russian and English, Belova said she adapted her American lessons to the Russian soul.

"I have my own school now, which is based on Seth Riggs' method," Belova told The Moscow Times on the eve of her own concert in Moscow. "While teaching Russians, I see their inner power come out."

Belova, who sings both in English and in Russian, has also performed a duet in studio with U.S. Grammy-winning singer Josh Groban, who was also Riggs' student. Their song of choice was Groban's popular hit, "You Raise Me Up".

Belova's clients in Russia include both amateurs and established singers like pop stars Vera Brezhneva and Angelika Agurbash, who want to master their technique. While U.S. show host Conan O'Brien took classes from Riggs, Russian actor Lev Prygunov became one of Belova's students: "He had a singer inside of him, developing his voice and freeing himself," Belova said of Prygunov.

But without naming names and trying to be polite, Belova calls it a "tendency of a time," watching many singers who perform with the help of backing track, in Russian called simply a *fanera* or plywood.

New legislation that would introduce huge fines for musicians who fail to inform viewers about lip-syncing is currently pending in the Duma.

Maria Maksakova-Igenbers, an opera singer turned United Russia party deputy said the legislation would punish singers who present "a pre-recorded album and not a solo concert."

"You don't go to a doctor for him to imitate healing," said Maksakova-Igenbers, one of the legislation's authors.

Voice coach Belova, who knows singers must master English and avoid lip-syncing in order

to succeed in the West, said her main goal was to "bring the singer to a level where he can sing abroad," she said.

Viktoria Belova performs Tuesday, Sept. 24 at 8:30 p.m in Visotka club. 1 Kudrinskaya Ploshchad.

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Original url:

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