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Hollywood Searches for Fresh Talents in Russia

By Eradzh Nidoev

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Russians actors hope to break into the big-budget movies of Hollywood studios. **Rupert Ganzer**

If you can't go to Hollywood, Hollywood will come to you.

The AstraFilm studio and Kultburo education center with support from the Ministry of Culture, earlier this week held the first training program for actors, agents and casting-directors in Russia with experts from Hollywood.

The idea of the program came from Yulia Kim, a managing partner of AstraFilm. In June, Yulia suggested giving Russian actors an opportunity to train with a famous American acting coach, Ivanna Chubbuck, who worked with Brad Pitt and Halle Berry.

Yulia understood that Russian actors were interested in Hollywood training and disliked the idea that Russians were frequently represented onscreen by other ethnicities. So she decided to hold a training program to explain to Russian actors the differences between

American and Russian filmmaking and give them advice on how to break into Hollywood.

She called Darren Boghosian, an acting agent with the United Talent Agency, who decided to make the training more practical by finding scripts with Russian characters and bringing two coaches and a casting director to do a real casting for two Hollywood movies.

During the four-day training session, Hollywood professionals told the audience about the essentials of the Hollywood movie industry, and the difference between agents and casting directors.

Boghosian said that nowadays, modern technologies make it easier to get into Hollywood than ever before. "The Internet and your ability to send your information and showreels across the Atlantic ocean just in a second, that changed everything," Boghosian said.

Boghosian wants international actors to know that speaking English is an issue. You need to be able to speak naturally, he says, and advises actors to work on their demo reels and resumé.

Kate Lacey, a Hollywood coach and casting director, spent two days coaching students in person.

Most of the actors at the training sessions were young and had not yet gotten their first big roles, but Russian actor Yevgeny Stychkin also visited the training program.

"I feel great being a student," Stychkin confessed. "Being a student is a greatest thing in the world, so you have to do anything to make it last forever."

On the last days of the training session, 50 lucky actors had auditions for real roles in two Hollywood movies. The Americans said they were amazed by the quantity of talented Russian actors, saying that even if they did not get a role, their tapes would go to one of the Hollywood casting agencies.

Boghosian said that after being in Russia, his goal was to make producers hire actual Russians for Russian roles. Yulia Kim in her turn promised to invite more professionals from the American and European film industries to help Russian actors make their dreams come true.

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