

Wainwright Vibrates, Plays Piano in Town

By [Sam Skove](#)

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Rufus Wainwright will play his first gig in Russia on Thursday in Moscow.

Singer Rufus Wainwright, known for his lush, operatic and vocally complex songs, will bring his "Vibrate" tour to Moscow for his first show in Russia. The concert, featuring only Wainwright and a grand piano, will take place at Dom Muzyki on Thursday.

A potent mixture of his most well-known songs and a few new ones, the tour has so far won rave reviews.

"He pulls it off because his charged, exuberant songs stand up, even shorn of their rococo frills and trills and their baroque musical flourishes," The Guardian wrote earlier this year.

Wainwright has carved out a unique niche in the West with music, which, while borrowing from the intricacies of music far from the pop world, sing of modern life, be they tales of his native New York or of love lost and won. One of his first hits, "Vibrate" was a slow, elegant

tango charting how he promised to keep his "phone on vibrate for you."

Local fan Pavel Oboyantsev praises him for the bold quality of songs and for Wainwright's edgily ironic style, giving his performances a "tongue-in-cheek, fresh" style. Although Oboyantsev notes that Wainwright isn't widely known in Russia, he chalks this up to Wainwright's choice to focus on the "quality of his work" rather than adapting to current musical trends.

Despite Wainwright's classical inspirations though — he has written and staged his own opera and often works in the theater — his persona and music hold a rock and roll past. After recording his second album, Wainwright became addicted for a time to crystal meth (even briefly going blind) before entering rehab.

Perhaps more controversially for Russia though is that the Wainwright's phone is undoubtedly kept on vibrate not for a girlfriend or wife, but for his husband, arts administrator Jorn Weisbrodt. Wainwright is one of the first Western musicians to be out from the very start of his career. He once even said that his career might have taken off faster if he had gone with an "asexual or bisexual persona."

Russia has been increasingly hostile to gay men and women in recent years. In June 2013, the federal parliament unanimously passed a law that prohibited citizens from distributing "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" to minors. The law, widely condemned in the West, was later defended by President Vladimir Putin, who pointed to the popularity of singer Elton John in an attempt to show that gays were not victimized in Russia.

Elton John, a Wainwright fan who has called him "the greatest songwriter on the planet," said at the start of the year that he was "deeply troubled by the current attitude toward and treatment of gay men and women by the Russian government."

Local fan Oboyantsev wasn't worried though, saying that homophobia is an issue in many countries, not just Russia. He was just glad that the concert is taking place in one of the better concert halls.

Rufus Wainwrights performs on Thursday at Dom Muzyki. 52 Kosmodamianskaya Naberezhnaya, Bldg. 8. Metro Paveletskaya. 495-730-1011. At 8 p.m. Tickets start at 850 rubles.

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