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Free Spirit

French-Russian actress, ice skater and DJ Cecile Plaige revels in unpredictability

By Emily Erken

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Cecile Plaige /Personal Archive

Born to a French father and Russian mother, Cecile Plaige grew up in Paris. after pursuing competitive figureskating in Moscow as a teenager, she made an acting career as a "foreigner" in Russian cinema. Her current project is "Cecile in Wonderland," a documentary television series that presents the people of "deep Russia" through the eyes of a foreigner.

My father was really, really into Russia, he had a phase when he was young.
He found a year
study [abroad program] in Moscow, and he met my mother, fell in love, and the rest was history.

I moved to Moscow to pursue my ice-skating career. I began to ice skate when I was 11, and things went well. My mother proposed that I go to Moscow to train. When my father began to work with the European Council of Something-ish, and to work with the former USSR countries, we thought, why not just move?

I'm not a competitive person at all. I like ice skating, but I didn't like the competition. I love people watching me, and that's all. So I told my parents: "I want to try acting."

I like to be funny. It's my thing. One of my favorites is comedy. When I moved to Moscow and went to GITIS [the Russian University of Theater Arts], I had a language barrier. Being funny was a step-by-step goal for me. I love to make people laugh. I wanted to show people that I can be funny. For me it's a full-time job, exploring humor. For me it's a joy.

Do I consider myself French or Russian? That's the major question of my life. I consider myself both. Depending on the situation I see my Russian side coming out, and then my French side. When I'm in Moscow I miss Paris; when I'm in Paris, I miss Russia.

People say that I have an accent, but it's not an accent. In Russian, it's a "melodiya rechi," the melody that's in the phrase, the intonation. Which I don't mind.

I don't call myself a DJ, I call myself a selector, because I just select music that I like.
I do it
for [bars and restaurants] LaBoule, Café Tazhin, Noor Bar, 3205. I've done a lot of events, private events, but these four places are my "carte generale," my base.

The idea for ["Cecile in Wonderland"] was to show a foreigner traveling in Russia. My favorite thing about the project is that I can go to places I could never go. I have a chance to really see Russia. In Nizhny Tagil, I was in a metal factory. I would never have seen that in my whole life. I see really, really nice people in their own way.

[The thing about] living in Moscow for me is that you don't know [what comes next]. I have no idea what to expect, [it's] the element of surprise. My friend Asya Dolina called me one day and said: "You know what, Cecile? TV Planeta wants to make a new show." And in one day, my life changed. And that's the thing about Moscow that I love. In Moscow you have that sense, for good or bad. The crises are coming like hurricanes, but it keeps your life [interesting].

Telekanal Moya Planeta's series "Cecile in Wonderland" will premiere in September.

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