

Big Hair Show Promises 'Mystique' to Fight Cancer

By [Max de Haldevang](#)

September 26, 2011



Above, works by two of the 25 finalists of the Visionary Award Russia competition held May 28 in St. Petersburg.

On Wednesday, Muscovites will witness an entirely new spectacle: The Alternative Hair Show.

Appearing for the first time in Russia but celebrating its 29th year, the London-based event is bringing together the biggest names in the hairstyling industry to the Kremlin Palace for a “charged atmosphere of inspiration and mystique,” the web site says, to raise money for charity.

Half of the ticket proceeds will go to Britain’s Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research charity, and the other 50 percent to Russia’s Gift of Life.

It’s “the biggest hairstyling event in the world,” said Tony Rizzo, who organizes the show. It “started way back in 1983, when I lost my son to leukemia. In those days, the research for

leukemia was just starting off. There wasn't any research into rare forms of the disease."

"Our aim is to make a difference, to show that beauty can cure," Rizzo said. "We have some of the biggest names in the industry coming to show their collections in Moscow for the first time. It's like the Eurovision song contest for hair — only bigger because we have the best designers from the whole world."

Rizzo hopes that Wednesday's show proves a step to improving leukemia treatment in Russia.

"Going to a hospital here is like going back to the '60s," Rizzo said. "They give the best treatment they can, but it is all Soviet. It hasn't changed."

But while new equipment is needed, Rizzo believes that more effective training is key.

"Great Ormond Street Hospital in London has agreed for an exchange program to come here and meet doctors and staff," Rizzo said. "Then doctors from here will go to London and learn there. We will also send nurses to London to be trained. This is incredibly important, as better nursing procedures represent 80 percent of the cure for the child."

"I would not say the treatment in Moscow is very good, but I think it is decent," said Dr. Mikhail Maschan, medical director at Gift of Life. "There are no good statistics for the whole country, but we know what is going on for 60-70 percent of patients and the results for those are that around 70-75 percent of patients are cured.

"These are slightly worse than those in the West, where it is normally 80-85 percent. But for more severe forms, the situation is not as good because there are some forms which only transportation to other countries can help."

Rizzo denounced bureaucracy and corruption as the main problems in improving treatment in Russia.

"I first tried to do this event here in Russia 12-14 years ago and at that time the corruption was very much a problem. You could not set up a charity. When I did an exchange program a long time ago for the then U.S.S.R., we brought a lot of medical people to London.

"That was way back in the early '90s," he said. "Instead of nurses and doctors coming, ministers came for a holiday. ... Since Gift of Life and other charities have been set up, you can trust that things are going to be channeled well."

Rizzo, whose own company Sanrizz, is a major force in the hairstyling industry, hopes that the event, featuring five Russian designers, will raise at least 200,000 euros (\$270,000).

"We have 17 shows of three minutes, 260 models, nine-10 countries are represented. The theme is 'illusion,'" Rizzo said. "The idea is that everything is an illusion until it becomes reality. It is an illusion for us to cure cancer, and it will become a reality. Most important is that the artists are doing it for free, it could cost a team up to £40,000 [\$60,000] to come here."

"Tickets are selling good, but I hear that Russians like to do things at the last minute, so I hope they will log on so that they don't miss out. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to go to

this show.”

The Alternative Hair Show will take place on Wednesday, Sept. 28, at 7 p.m. at the Kremlin Palace, inside the Kremlin. Metro Borovitskaya, Okhotny Ryad. Phone: 628-5232, 917-2336. For more information about the event, see www.alternativehair.ru.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/09/26/big-hair-show-promises-mystique-to-fight-cancer-a978>

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