

# celebrity singer

becomes parenting ambassador

*Musical celebrity Yulia has just been appointed as an ambassador to Parents Centres New Zealand and will be sharing her pregnancy and early parenting journey with us, through coming issues of Kiwiparent.*

Yulia became a household name in New Zealand in 2004 when her first CD "Into the West" went straight to number one on the music charts and remained there for several weeks. Now this music icon is embarking on a new stage in her life and she and her husband, Glyn, are excitedly looking forward to the arrival of their first baby in spring.

Like a fairytale come to life, Yulia was discovered at age 18 quite by accident, while filling in for local performers on a TV show in Christchurch. She left the presenters stunned and silent after performing her original song "Russia" live on air.

Yulia went on to sign with Sony Music NZ when the show's producers passed her tape to music industry contacts. "Into the West" also resulted in two top 40 radio hits, as well as two NZ Music Awards for "Best Female Vocalist" and "Highest Selling Album of the Year", achieving platinum sales. Her second album "Montage" was released two years later – it also went straight to number one, resulting in another commercial radio hit and platinum sales.

Since then, Yulia has continued to train hard and has achieved acclaim both locally and overseas winning prestigious competitions and awards in Europe and at home.

While in London late last year, Yulia caught the attention of producer Craig Leon, who has worked with a variety of artists including Blondie, The Bangles, The Ramones, and the late Pavarotti.

Doting husband, Glyn, who also manages Yulia's career, is confident that they will be able to keep working through her pregnancy. "Typically the music industry does not progress the music career of a pregnant woman as the industry is very visual and is orientated towards young, attractive, slim 18 year olds. It says a lot about positive changes to the music industry and is a credit to Craig Leon that he wanted to continue with recording the live TV show in June at Abbey Rd despite



Photo courtesy of John McCombe photosouth@xtra.co.nz

the fact Yulia would be several months pregnant." However, as Abbey Rd has no space available in June, the recording has been postponed until after the baby is born. "But Yulia intends to perform throughout her pregnancy, right up until the due date!" laughs Glyn.

Yulia has recently been appointed as an ambassador to Parents Centres New Zealand (see page 71) - she and Glyn have joined Parents Centre and are looking forward to starting childbirth education classes. Yulia shares her story with Kiwiparent as she reflects on her life so far as she and Glyn plan for the future of their growing family.

## In Yulias own words...

In order to look forward as a parent, we are suddenly put in a position as adults to look back to the example of the parenting we received for cues about how to be a good parent. For those of us who have had more 'challenging beginnings' we can seek support and education to become the parents we always wanted for ourselves and that our innermost loving desires would have for our own new born child.

Growing up in a working class family in the post-war industrial Russian city of Volgograd resulted in a childhood where I had to learn from a very young age to look after myself.

My mother and father had been together for 10 years before they divorced, when I was around seven years of age. For many kids their parents' divorce can be a traumatic experience. For me, living with both my parents was. My father drank himself into a state of delusion and quite frequently assaulted my mother. With all of us living in the confined space of a tiny one-room apartment on the third floor of a nine-storey building, I saw everything that happened day in and day out, but never got to see an example of the love and nurturing I wanted and needed.

One night my father got so drunk that he picked up an axe and threatened to kill my mother and myself. I guess as kids, most of us have very little fear, but even then I knew that this behavior wasn't good parenting. I looked into my father's eyes and said calmly, 'father, you are such a fool'. I guess I thought I had nothing to lose. I lost nothing but gained a sense of bravery so close to life and death. From that point on, I was afraid of nothing.

After the divorce I was bounced from one school to another, following my mother from job to job, while she taught drama to school children. It was not easy for me to make friends and more importantly; keep them. I developed a strong sense self-preservation which is not unusual for children who come from broken families.

I also felt increasingly insecure about my looks, particularly as a teenager. When I was five years old I fell off a swing and broke my nose and my top lip, which caused both external and internal scars. Children can be very cruel and I certainly received my share of teasing in the first few years of school. I later learned to fight the bullies off by striving to be the best at most school disciplines.

Every summer holiday I would be sent over to the Russian capital Moscow to live with my grandparents for three months. Both my grandmother and grandfather are very good singers, however, it was my grandmother who strove to become a professional. She has always had perfect pitch and could make up harmonies on the first hearing of a song. Before she met my grandfather she dreamt of becoming an Operetta star! When she was still a teenager she traveled by train for many days from the city of Murmansk in Siberia where she was born, to meet my future grandfather for a blind date set up by my grandfather's then best mate! They decided to get married and had two children six years apart from each other. During the 1960s and 70s, my grandmother had very little choice but become a full-time housewife, giving up on her dreams.

During each summer holiday, my grandmother would teach me her favorite Russian folk songs and play music to me and my cousins on her vinyl player. She worked at the local kindergarten as an early childhood carer, but the rest of her days were devoted to making time available to her family as well as preparing gorgeous Russian food.

*Continued overleaf...*



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It was my grandmother who 'pruned' me and taught me to love music. She showed me a new way to express myself.

Back in Volgograd I was also taught to play the guitar by a Military Colonel, who was my mothers boyfriend. I cultivated new musical skills and just before leaving Russia for New Zealand, I honed my newly founded songwriting ability preparing the song which later became one of my most popular numbers among fans, 'Russia'.

With our new baby on the way, I am not planning to base my parenting skills on my own past experiences as a child, although these same experiences now act as a kind of boundary in relation to what I don't want my child to experience. So it's now up to me to take ownership of becoming the kind of parent that I want for my child and to be the change that I want in my life.

It is very important to me to have a happy and loving home environment. Glyn and I have very honest and loving relationship. We work and play together 24/7 and, although we have only been married three and half years, we believe we have had more than 10 years of real time hours together! We have learned to work through all of life's trials and tribulations as a family.

The journey of motherhood for me begins with taking each day as it comes. Most days for me now are full of discoveries through which I find out something new about myself, learn more about my body and how it is adjusting to one of the greatest miracles of all - to foster a human life.

I also see little changes in my behavior, I have become more protective and cautious when it come to making decisions around my family. I love the saying that friends are Gods apology for family and I have found great refuge in friendships.

Another interesting transition for me has been going from being a single, self reliant and self serving person to working to nurture a marriage which includes a young child from a prior relationship. Glyn and I have worked hard to nurture Aiden and create a loving home and cultivate a sense of belonging for him. As we move forward, we are working hard to involve seven year old Aiden in family decisions and the journey of our new baby.

We're excited to be a part of Parents Centres NZ and to provide a foundation for parenting which we can use to nurture our whole family. Glyn and I look forward to sharing our journey of discovery with KIWIPARENT readers over the months to come.



Photo courtesy of  
John McCombe  
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## 2010

was a busy year for the Russian born singer. She won the Grand Prix in the European Song Competition in Riga, Latvia and the national award for Best Nationwide Entertainment in the Corporate Events Guide 2010 People's Choice Awards while in the United Kingdom she was also an International Classical Crossover Album of the Year finalist.

Yulia sees singing as an extension of herself and when she connects with a piece of music – whether be it be something she has written or a piece from another composer – she knows she can 'really deliver'.

While in London in November 2010, Yulia 'delivered' for producer Craig Leon. Leon, who has worked with a variety of artists including Blondie, The Bangles, The Ramones, and the late Pavarotti, heard Yulia's music online and requested a meeting.

Yulia has already raised over a million dollars for New Zealand charities and would like to set up her own charitable organisation to educate, empower, assist and inspire others – with a special focus on orphans.

**"My grandmother was given up for adoption during the war so orphans are close to my heart."**