

entertainment

Rising piano star to shine in the Heymann

Moscow native Katya Grineva seems poised for Met-scale greatness

Walter Pierce
Entertainment Editor

There's more than a handful of folks — musicians, composers, benefactors, admirers — who believe Katya Grineva is a half interval away from international renown. Until that fame fills her calendar with the penciled abbreviations for the world's great music halls, the Moscow-born pianist will move through our outer orbit — thanks to a series of happy accidents.

"I came to New York nine years ago from Russia," said the 28-year-old. "Actually, I was invited by some scientists in Buffalo to come for vacation for a month — they were doing some work with my father. I went there with the intention to go to Buffalo, but some people convinced me to stay in New York (City). I ended up staying."

At the time, Grineva was fresh out of the prestigious Moscow Conservatory. She had won the competitions and played the recitals, but the grueling road to concert pianist in Russia, which was in the throes of democratic revolution, was a long one.

"In Russia everything was so confused," she said. "In Moscow, you had to go to the conservatory and then win competitions and then get some engagements. When I came here and played for some musicians, they said, 'You have a good chance to make a career here.' In Russia it's only one way and a lot about who you know and if your parents are rich."

She considers herself lucky to have gotten out of Russia when she did. Travel was still restricted, especially for young single people in whom the state had made investments.

In New York, Grineva applied to a number of music schools, all of which offered her creative scholarships based on the quality of her playing. She chose the Mannes School of Music, completed her three-year study

program in two years and is now rising through the ranks of concert pianists.

Her American debut came with the Baltimore Choral Arts Society in 1993. The Baltimore Sun raved about the "luminous but distinct tone she gets from the instrument." Last year, Grineva made her Carnegie Hall debut, fulfilling a dream she had had since first arriving in the states.

A couple of years ago, Grineva accompanied Morgan City grocery consultant Guy Cannata, who had met the pianist on a business trip to New York, to the Grevemburg House in Franklin where she performed a solo recital as a fund-raiser for the historic home.

It was there that Maestro Xiao Lu Li of the Acadiana Symphony first heard her.

"At the Grevemburg House fund-raiser," Grineva said, "(Li) was touched by the fact that I had a really bad piano — it was an 1800s Steinway — but I didn't make faces and even played an encore."

The conductor invited Grineva to perform with the orchestra in Lafayette, which she will do Saturday in the Heymann Performing Arts Center.

Grineva's main selection for the concert is Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, one of many Romantic piano works that has become Grineva's forte.

"In Russia the specialty was Romantic playing," she said. "My dream actually is to have a concert tour of old

mansions and bring Romantic piano music back; to play Chopin and Schubert. People who know nothing about music love it — they love Romantic composers."

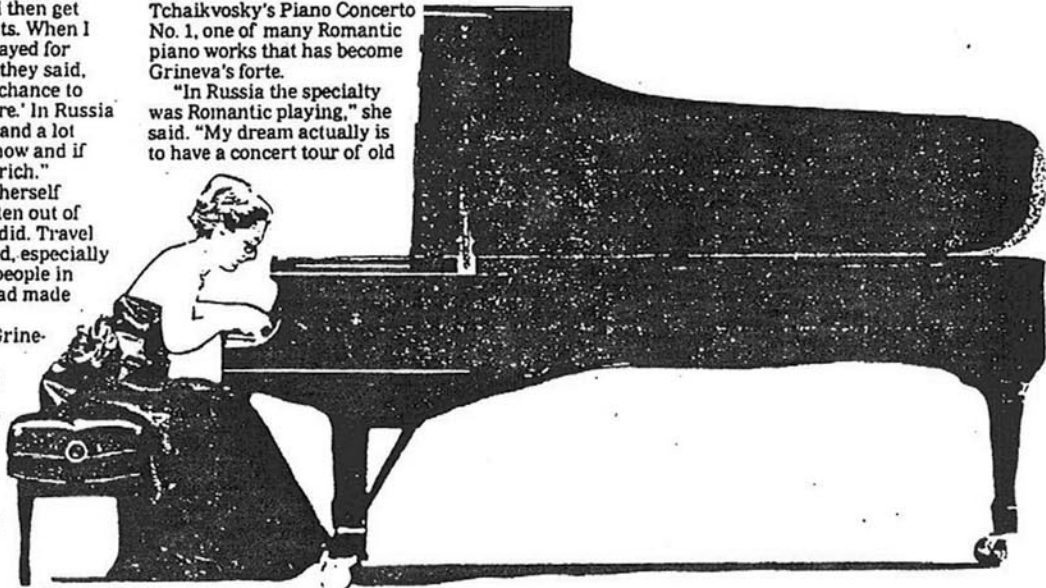
Grineva said she believes her Russian background and music training is partly responsible for her love of the Romantics.

"In Russia," she noted, "the specialty was Romantic playing. Not maybe now but in the beginning and middle of the century. The Moscow Conservatory was filled with the most amazing professors. People were not afraid to express themselves and try their own stuff. In the West, I think, they want you to play some (specific) way — to focus on technique. I'm against it. I think music is a living thing and you feel it differently one day just like you wake up feeling in one mood. Music is an expression of your feelings."

Who: Pianist Katya Grineva with the ASO
Where: Heymann Performing Arts Center
When: 8 p.m. Saturday
Individual tickets are \$12 and \$17 and are available through the Heymann box office (291-5555)



Submitted Photo



At left, Katya Grineva performs during her Carnegie Hall debut.