

A woman with wet hair, wearing a blue and grey yoga top, is floating in a swimming pool. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The water is clear blue, and the pool tiles are visible at the bottom.

Georgina

– the Barefoot Blondie

Georgina Bouzova, star of TV's *Casualty*, keeps pulses racing in her range of new designer yoga gear at the Stoke Park Club, in Berkshire. Terri Fleeman-Hardwick tracks down the busy actress at the resort's Spa SPC



Viewers of TV's *Casualty* may be wondering what happened to the beautiful Georgina Bouzova, the bubbly blonde actress who played nurse Ellen Zitek, after her dramatic exit from the popular TV series and dancing success on *Strictly Come Dancing*.

It seems our cover girl has been busy! *Spa World* met up with the hard-working actress at the **Stoke Park Club** in the Berkshire countryside, where Georgina was enjoying a relaxing day at the resort's superb **Spa SPC**.

Georgina, you're looking content and chilled at Spa SPC – is this your favourite type of spa?

It's absolutely breathtaking! I was so impressed when I drove up the drive. It's been a beautiful sunny day and the spa is filled with natural light, it's out of this world! I have been to a few spas in my time and this is by far the most high-tech, with TV screens on the running machines, its own brand of skincare products and a huge variety of spa treatments. It's absolutely amazing.

Are you a spa lover?

Yes, I am. It's very rare that I can take time out, so to spend a few days quality time just nurturing myself is very relaxing. At a spa I can really get my stress into perspective, and come away with a whole new positive attitude.

What are your favourite types of spa treatments?

I love facials, especially Elemis. I love aromatherapy massages too and I am a big fan of reflexology. When I was filming *Casualty*, it was a stressful, hectic schedule, so I had reflexology every week to keep me grounded. I enjoy Eastern therapies too – I am actually a reiki healer myself!

Really? Tell me more!

I am a big yoga fan and had a reiki treatment at a yoga retreat with a reiki master, which made me feel so clear and rebalanced – it was really amazing. I had never understood, or believed in, the concept of energy flow, but during my reiki treatment I felt the heat coming

through my body and afterwards I felt so energised. I decided that this was something I wanted to explore, so I went back to the reiki master at Simon Lowe's three-day yoga retreat at Ampleforth Abbey, Yorkshire, and asked if he was able to 'attune me'. Simon is one of the founders of Try Yoga in London and is like my guru.

And now you practice reiki?

I started doing reiki on friends and family, and I now have a client list, so alongside my acting, it's something I feel very strongly about. It's also something I enjoy. I feel good after the session, because the healing energy has travelled through me and heals me too. Bringing reiki into my life has made me respect my body more and has made me feel more balanced.

Do you get recognised?

It's funny because some of my new clients ask me "Aren't you that girl from *Casualty*?" But to me it's such a separate thing – I don't think that just because you've been in a TV series you should limit yourself to one thing.

Is it true that you're also interested in crystal healing?

I use crystals as part of a reiki treatment. When I left *Casualty*, the cast clubbed together and bought me a massive rose quartz candle holder – rose quartz is



a very nurturing, healing crystal which works on love and emotions, it's very calming. I have a huge bowl of crystals at home, which all have different qualities. So, for example, if I am going to an audition and I need confidence, I will take a certain crystal with me, or if I am feeling unfocussed when I am writing I will stick some amethyst on my desk, which helps me to concentrate.

You list sport amongst your hobbies and interests. Has keeping fit and active always been important to you?

Funnily enough, I was never very sporty at school, but in my adult years I find it a great way to switch off. But it's hard to drag myself to the gym when I am feeling lazy – I am not a naturally sporty person, but once I get into it I love it. I am especially keen on yoga because even though it's not a calorie burner it makes a whole difference to my outlook, and tones me up – it reaches parts that other exercises can't!

Do you work out every day?

I try to. I did a play out in China and I saw older women – some in their 80s-going to a park in their hundreds at five in the morning to exercise. It made me think that you can still be healthy and agile at that age if you make it part of your daily routine. In the UK old people have ailments that perhaps they wouldn't have had if they had adopted an Eastern philosophy. Obviously you can't prevent everything, but at least you can take measures to improve it.

You've designed your own range of yoga clothing, Barefoot Blondie. What inspired you to do that?

I had the idea for a line of clothing when I was filming *Casualty* – I bought some t-shirts, designed slogans for them and gave them out to cast members – a couple of them are really into yoga too and they loved them. Unfortunately I didn't have time to pursue it. However, now that I have left the series, I've had more time to think, and decided to go for it! There's lots of yoga clothing around that's functional, but nothing really funky, so I have designed t-shirts and hoodies to create a beach surfer look that people can wear even if they are not into yoga, and called it Barefoot Blondie, which I sell on my website. www.barefootblondie.com

Are you planning to extend the range?

The hoodies are flying out; they are funky and fun and people really seem to love them. You can put them on after your yoga class and they have a really cute logo on the back of a meditating blonde 'Barbie' type girl – the Barefoot Blondie! We are also launching a pregnancy yoga range in spring, which is very exciting! Eventually I would like to get a designer on board to create a whole beach-baby style yoga clothing range, including skirts, tops etc.

How would you describe your own personal style? Are you a beach babe?

I am quite scruffy (laughs) but I do scrub up well for special occasions! I am much happier dressed like I am now, in tracksuit bottoms and a hoodie. I am a bit grungy to be honest – boho chic!

I hear you did a half-marathon in Bristol. You must be very fit.

I don't really know how I did that! I was recently asked to do a full marathon by the Rainforest Foundation, one of the charities that I work for, but I told them, I will do anything for you except run a marathon! I still run though – I do the D-Tread class at my gym – it's like doing an exercise class while you are on a running machine.

You've got a great figure. Do you need to diet?

I am not too bothered about the quantity of food I eat, but I try to eat at least two or three servings of vegetables or fruit a day. I love a large glass of red wine, like a Shiraz, and pizza, pasta and curry. I think I would be depressed if I watched what I ate all the time, and I don't aspire to be stick thin or skinny.

You're best-known for your acting roles, but not many know that you trained as a barrister. Why didn't you pursue that as a career?

I did an English law degree at Kings College, London and a French law degree at the Sorbonne, Paris – they were the hardest years of my life, because I wasn't doing what I wanted to do. However, if I did it again now I would get so much more out of it. I am not sure that 18 is the best age to make a career decision – you know your mind so much more in your late twenties.

In *Casualty* you played Nurse Ellen Zitek, who was diagnosed with cancer. Was it hard to portray such a tragic storyline?

It was very emotional. I wanted to do the role justice, so that viewers in a similar situation could feel they were sharing their journey with the character. I met many great people during the research, especially at Bristol Cancer Help Centre, and I got many letters from viewers thanking me for an honest portrayal of someone going through cancer. To make it realistic, the director asked me to cut my hair off, so I did – it was a tribute to those who have had to do it for real.

The next big thing you did was dancing in *Strictly Come Dancing*. How hard did you train?

Strictly was, for me, a real challenge and took me out of my comfort zone. I'd never done any type of dancing before and had no idea what I was letting myself in for. I went straight from a gruelling schedule filming my last episodes in *Casualty*, to dance training for a rigorous eight-hour day, six days a week – in three-inch high heels! I was exhausted and under no illusion that I was going to be the next Ginger Rogers. I have never been so nervous in my life as I was in those few minutes before each live performance, but it has helped me tremendously in my work as an actress.



“ At a spa I can really get my stress into perspective ”



Your work then took you to Uganda to meet the orphans of HIV. Did this moving experience change your way of thinking?

I was invited to Uganda to film the BBC Lifeline Appeal on behalf of Interact Worldwide, (www.interactworldwide.org) a charity which supports sexual and reproductive health in women in third world countries. It involved filming families orphaned by AIDS. One time, we went to the slums of Kampala and met a family of six who lived in a concrete block the size of a small bathroom. It was really shocking. Back at my hotel I felt overwhelmingly guilty that I could have a hot bath and eat a good meal, when they had nothing. That image stayed with me and every time I feel like complaining it reminds me that I am very lucky to have the life I do and to be grateful.

Would you like to do more charity work overseas, or documentary type programmes?

I'd like to do more documentary and journalistic work on issues such as these, to raise awareness amongst young people. I have been asked to get involved with the Rainforest Foundation and Save the Children this year so I look forward to working with both charities as well as continuing to support Interact Worldwide.

So what's next?

I'm really excited about 2008. I am writing a novel and want to expand the Barefoot Blondie yoga clothing business and build up my reiki practice. I have also got a British-based film project lined up. My sister lives and works out in LA, so my ambition would be to get a regular part in *ER* to be near her. Well, I've got the nursing experience haven't I? Maybe they would even promote me to Doctor!!!



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www.stokeparkclub.com

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www.tlcsport.co.uk and Barefoot Blondie
www.barefootblondie.com

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