

# Duato Swaps Spain For St. Pete Theater

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The internationally renowned Spanish choreographer Nacho Duato has been appointed artistic director of the Mikhailovsky Theater ballet troupe in St. Petersburg. He was previously at the helm of the National Dance Company of Spain.

“Engaging an internationally known choreographer at the peak of his strength and talent is incredibly significant, not only for the Mikhailovsky Theater, but for Russian ballet as a whole,” said Vladimir Kekhman, general director of the Mikhailovsky Theater.

The choreographer is due to start at the Mikhailovsky on Jan. 1.

“I will start working in St. Petersburg with energy and enthusiasm. It is a challenge for me,” Duato was quoted by the Agence France Presse news agency as saying.

Duato started out as a ballet dancer before moving on to choreography in 1988. He has choreographed ballet productions at the most prominent theaters around the world.

He had been invited to take charge of four or five ballet companies around the world, RIA Novosti reported.

Duato's contract will last for five years, with the possibility of extending its duration. However, Duato said at a news conference in Moscow that he had an open-ended contract.

Duato also nurtures plans to hold a modern dance festival at the Mikhailovsky Theater in the spring of 2011.

Duato was born on Jan. 8, 1957, in Valencia. He began his dancing career at Stockholm's Cullberg Ballet in 1980, and the following year, Jiri Kylian invited Duato to the Netherlands Dance Theater, where he was promoted to the position of choreographer in 1988. Duato's works have been staged across the globe by some of the finest companies, including the American Ballet Theater, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Deutsche Oper, the Finnish National Opera, Stuttgart Ballet and the Australian Ballet.

"Today you can count on the fingers of one hand the number of the world's master choreographers — meaning choreographers with their own, fresh dance idiom who think in choreographic images. The opportunity to work under such a master is both a privilege and a responsibility: Our troupe will take on the style, idiom and choreographic vision of a great artist whose work is set to shape the future of international ballet," said Kekhman.

Kekhman said he hopes that Duato's work in St. Petersburg will serve as a catalyst for fostering home-grown young choreographic talent in Russia.

"It is no secret that as things stand, we have, to all intents and purposes, no new big names," he said.

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