

Real Organizer of Acid Attack Still Unknown, Bolshoi Director Says

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Pavel Dmitrichenko

The Bolshoi Theater's general director said he believes that dancer Pavel Dmitrichenko, who last week confessed to ordering an attack on the theater's ballet director, Sergei Filin, was only an "executor and a pawn in someone else's hands."

In an interview Sunday night on Rossia 1 television, Anatoly Iksanov said the recent hacking of email accounts at the theater, threats against artists and the Jan. 17 acid attack on Filin are all part of an orchestrated campaign against the Bolshoi Theater.

In recent days, dancers in the ballet troupe and even Filin himself have also expressed skepticism regarding Dmitrichenko's role in the attack, which has become a black eye for the world-renowned theater.

Filin's lawyer Tatiana Stukalova said Monday that they would push for the "harshest

punishment" for Dmitrichenko and the other two men accused in the attack. But, she said, Filin thought it was possible that Dmitrichenko was hiding the name of the "real puppeteer" who ordered it.

The three suspects in the attack, who include a driver and a man accused of throwing sulfuric acid on Filin's face, face up to 12 years in prison.

Dmitrichenko said in court last week that one of his co-defendants, Yury Zarutsky, had volunteered to beat up Filin, and Dmitrichenko agreed. He denied ordering Zarutsky to throw acid on Filin's face.

Other dancers at the Bolshoi have expressed doubts that Dmitrichenko could have organized such an attack and have implied they think the police pressured him into confessing.

They spoke out to investigators at a meeting after the arrests, but investigators told them that they had "solid proof of Dmitrichenko's complicity in the attack," according to Interfax.

Confirmation of the meeting was given to the news agency by Bolshoi soloist Nikolai Tsiskaridze, one of the key figures in the unfolding drama who was a rival of Filin and a mentor to Dmitrichenko's girlfriend, Angelina Vorontsova.

In an interview to Ekho Mosvkiy radio last week, another Bolshoi soloist, Andrei Bolotin, said that "all members of the troupe disbelieve that Dmitrichenko could have done this."

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