

Court Annuls Reprimand Against Bolshoi Dancer

By [The Moscow Times](#)

April 13, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

A Moscow court on Friday annulled one of two reprimands given to a top ballet dancer by the Bolshoi Theater after he accused it of using an acid attack on its artistic director as a pretext for a "witch hunt" against him.

The late-night attack that almost blinded Sergei Filin on Jan. 17 has exposed a seething ferment of rivalries at the ballet, perhaps Russia's best-known cultural symbol. Bolshoi dancer Pavel Dmitrichenko and two alleged accomplices are in jail awaiting trial, and the investigation is continuing.

But immediately after the attack, the spotlight fell on 39-year-old Georgian-born Nikolai Tsiskaridze, a principal dancer and teacher who has been at the Bolshoi since 1992 and had clashed with the theater's leadership.

Bolshoi director Anatoly Iksanov was quoted as saying in February that he saw the attack

on Filin as "a logical result of the excesses created above all by ... Tsiskaridze" and accusing the dancer of "mudslinging." He and many performers said they suspected a wider conspiracy.

"How could I be linked to a criminal case in which I have taken no part," Tsiskaridze said in court on Friday. "I have an iron-clad alibi since at that time I was [acting] in front of a thousand people."

The theater filed two reprimands against Tsiskaridze for giving unauthorized interviews in the wake of the attack. In one interview he said he had nothing to do with the attack, and the court annulled the reprimand in that case. In the other interview, he accused management of conducting a public campaign to discredit him, and the court left that reprimand in force.

Multiple reprimands can be grounds for dismissal under Russian labor law. Tsiskaridze said he would appeal the decision.

The Georgian-born dancer told the BBC in an interview that he felt he had been the main target of the attack. He said the management was using it as a pretext for a "witch hunt" against him, and compared the atmosphere at the theater to 1937, the height of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's deadly purges.

The attack on Filin stunned Russians, who are used to violence in the world of commerce, but less so in culture, and exposed bitter rivalries inside the Bolshoi over roles, power and pay. Filin is being treated for severe burns to his face and eyes in Germany.

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