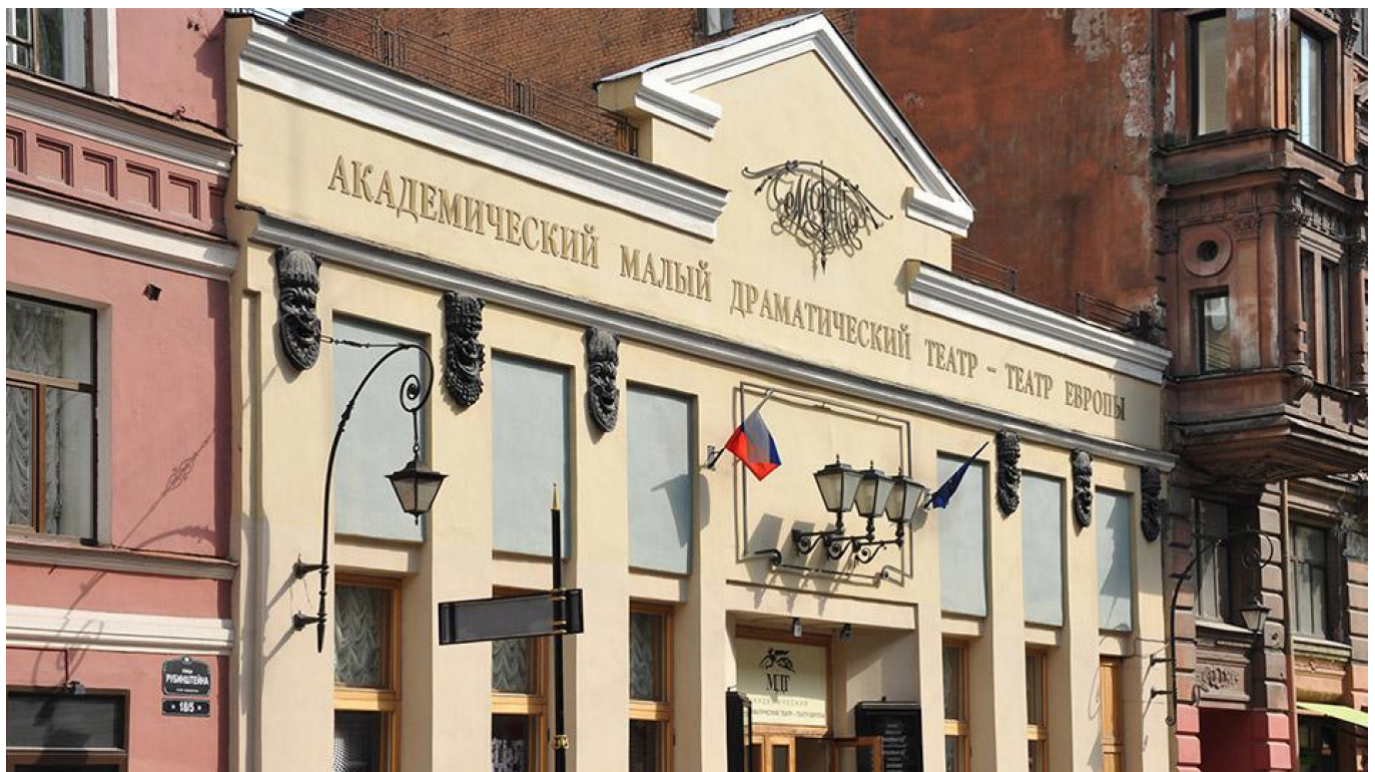


FSB Investigates Fraud Linked to St. Petersburg Maly Drama Theater's New Stage

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St. Petersburg Maly Drama Theater **Yuri Bekinsky / TASS**

Russian authorities have launched an investigation into the embezzlement of state funds that were earmarked for the construction of a new stage at St. Petersburg's Maly Drama Theater (MDT).

Last year, Moscow director Kirill Serebrennikov was placed under house arrest on charges of embezzling state funds in a case his supporters dismiss as politically motivated. Authorities [denied](#) Serebrennikov's requests to see his mother on her deathbed this week.

Related article: [Mother of Jailed Theater Director Serebrennikov Dies](#)

Russia's Federal Security Services (FSB) detained a number of unnamed individuals on suspicion of embezzling more than 45 million rubles (\$793,000) allocated for a new stage

design at the theater, Interfax [reported](#) on Wednesday. _

According to Russia's Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky, the embezzlement charges were not directed at employees of the theater.

"Thank God the theater is not involved, the responsibility lies entirely on the contractors," Medinsky was cited as saying.

According to a source familiar with the investigation, the money may have gone towards purchasing and leasing luxury cars, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency [reported](#).

Construction of the seven-floor 675-capacity stage with underground parking and a budget of 2 billion rubles (\$35.3 million) was set to wrap up by late 2019, according to Interfax.

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