

Nureyev Costumes On Show in St. Pete

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July 26, 2010



Forty-eight costumes are on display.

A new exhibit in St. Petersburg allows ballet lovers a unique look at the career of Rudolf Nureyev.

“Rudolf Nureyev. Threads of Times” at Sheremetyev Palace showcases 48 original costumes worn by Nureyev and his stage partners, provided by the National Theater Costume Center in Moulin, France, the Vaganova Academy of Russian Ballet in St. Petersburg, the Paris National Opera and some private owners.

Each costume is worth about 50,000 euros (\$65,000) and needs to be transported in a special wooden box — the fabric is so delicate that it can be spoiled even by moonlight.

One of the most impressive parts of the exhibition is the Black Room, designed to match a scene from Nureyev’s final and probably best-known ballet “La Bayadere.” Sparkling tutus glitter against a huge screen depicting the ballet’s “The Kingdom of the Shades.”

Remarkably, some of the exhibited costumes, including the Mouse King costume from the ballet “The Nutcracker” are still used in performances. They are due to be delivered back to the Paris National Opera before the beginning of the new season.

Nureyev trained at the Choreographic School in Leningrad, as St. Petersburg was then known. He defected in 1961 at a Paris airport with the help of French police. He was not permitted to return to the Soviet Union until 1989, when Mikhail Gorbachev allowed the dancer to visit his dying mother.

This is the first time that Russians can look at a detailed overview of Nureyev’s international career, organizers say.

Nureyev was ignored by the Soviet authorities, although fans would smuggle in film of his dancing from abroad, said Natalya Metelitsa, director of the State Museum of Theatrical and Musical Art in St. Petersburg and one of the exhibition’s curators.

Nureyev died in Paris in 1993 at the age of 54.

“Rudolf Nureyev. Threads of Time” runs through Sept. 12 at Sheremetyev Palace, 34 Naberezhnaya Reki Fontanki. Metro Gostiny Dvor, Mayakovskaya. St. Petersburg. Tel. (812) 272 4441, www.theatremuseum.ru.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/07/26/nureyev-costumes-on-show-in-st-pete-a144>