

'Cinderella' Retold In Blitz-era London

By [Jonathan Earle](#)

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Bourne takes on Prokofiev's ballet.

Muscovites have a few more chances to catch award-winning British choreographer Matthew Bourne's adaptation of Sergei Prokofiev's classic ballet "Cinderella," which plays through Sunday at the Mossoviet Theater as part of the International Chekhov Festival.

Bourne re-imagines the ballet in World War II-era London, a city traumatized and hollowed-out by constant German bombardment.

This is not a "Cinderella" of pumpkins, lavish balls and fairy godmothers but one of air-raid sirens, ambulances and bombs. Bourne captures the euphoria and terror of life under bombardment, backed by Lez Brotherston's haunting sets.

Cinderella, played by Kerry Biggin, is a mousy, working-class girl; the prince, played by Sam Archer, a wounded Royal Air Force pilot. Cinderella's family is as unbearable as ever with the addition of a trio of stepbrothers, including one with a foot fetish who pursues her sparkling slipper with Gollum-like zeal.

Bourne has suggested that Prokofiev, who wrote the ballet during World War II, imbued it with the spirit of one of modern history's darkest hours. "There was a feeling that life was precarious and fear made people impulsive," he told The Daily Mail by way of explaining a notable departure from the original — Cinderella and the pilot's one-night stand — but it could just as easily apply to the whole piece.

Bourne, a five-time Olivier Award winner, is famous for re-imagining classic Russian ballets, including the all-male "Swan Lake" dance that featured at the end of the film "Billy Elliot."

His decision to take on "Cinderella" was inspired by his family history — his relatives lived through the Blitz. "I first fell in love with Prokofiev's score through watching Frederick Ashton's version of the ballet for The Royal Ballet," Bourne said on his web site. "[The score] has grand waltzes, fairy variations, mazurkas and 'national' dances, in the manner of Tchaikovsky's most famous ballet works, but lurking beneath the fairy-tale magic, there beats a darker heart with real emotions and dramatic longing."

"Cinderella" plays Thursday through Sunday Mossoviet Theater. 16 Bolshaya Sadovaya Ulitsa. M. Mayakovskaya. 699-2035.

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