

With New Home, Mariinsky Builds Russian Roots

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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LONDON — With the imminent opening of its third home venue, St. Petersburg's Mariinsky opera and ballet will ramp up an already prodigious output but may ease back on hectic foreign touring, director Valery Gergiev said.

World audiences have come to know Gergiev and his company well as they crisscrossed the globe after the collapse of Soviet state funding. But with Russians now pouring the kind of money into the arts that has just built the \$700 million Mariinsky II theater, he wants to concentrate on domestic performances.

"It's important for us to continue to go to London, Berlin or Chicago," Gergiev said Tuesday after a presentation of plans in London. "But now we are more comfortable at home."

Touring remains important, not for commercial gain but for "national pride" in promoting Russian music, he said. Some 300 of 1,000 performances in 2014 would be on the road, but

many of these would be not abroad but in distant Russian regions where Gergiev sees it his mission to bring music to the provinces.

For those unable to visit St. Petersburg, where the 2,000-seat new venue is set to open on May 2 to complement the 150-year-old opera house and a concert hall opened in 2006, the company, known as the Kirov in Soviet times, is expanding its recordings and video broadcasts to theaters worldwide, including in 3D.

A 3D recording of Christmas ballet "The Nutcracker" is in cinemas this winter and Gergiev will go a step further in what he acknowledged is not a risk-free experiment with a live 3D broadcast from St. Petersburg of "Swan Lake" on Feb. 14, St. Valentine's Day. It is being produced in partnership with the Hollywood 3D studio of "Avatar" director James Cameron.

Turning 60 next year, Gergiev shows little sign of slowing down. He plans to direct all three of the orchestras that will play under the Mariinsky name once the new venue opens, will begin new recordings of Wagner's "Ring" cycle and plans to complete his series of discs of all Shostakovich's symphonies.

While working the company hard, he denied there have been serious rumblings of discontent in the ballet troupe over pay and conditions. Responding to a letter of complaint from dancers that was widely publicized in Russian media last month, he said: "There's nothing terrible happening in the Mariinsky. No way."

In a move to address concerns, however, he announced a plan to build 50 or more apartments to house performers. "They will be relatively cheap apartments, basically a gift to them from the company," he said. "But then they have to perform."

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