

'Banana Emperor's' Theater Searched in \$332M Fraud Case

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 24, 2013

The  Moscow Times

St. Petersburg's Mikhailovsky Theater has been searched in connection with a 10-billion ruble (\$332 million) fraud case concerning the director's former company, a statement on the Interior Ministry's website said Thursday.

Apart from the office of the theater's director, Vladimir Kekhman, searches are also being carried out in apartments of other former representatives of JFC, or the Joint Fruit Company, a firm founded and run by Kekhman. JFC was Russia's largest fruits importer until it went bankrupt in early 2012. Kekhman once described himself as the banana emperor of Russia.

The searches stem from several instances in 2010–2012 in which former managers of JFC used phony contracts to obtain loans from banks including Sberbank, Uralsib, Raiffaisenbank and Bank of Moscow. Police believe the businessmen, who have not been named, never had any intentions of paying the loans back.

Kekhman has served as the Mikhailovsky Theater's director since 2007.

He is reportedly not a suspect in any criminal case at this time and is fully cooperating with investigators, Interfax reported.

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