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Dmitrichenko Was 'Coerced,' Source Says

By Natalya Krainova

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Angelina Vorontsova and Nikolai Tsiskaridze dancing in a Bolshoi Theater production of “Paquita” in 2010. **Damir Yusupov**

Bolshoi Ballet dancer Pavel Dmitrichenko could have been "physically coerced" into confessing that he ordered the acid attack on the theater's artistic director, Sergei Filin, a colleague said Sunday, days after Dmitrichenko was accused of paying $1,600 for an acquaintance to do the deed.

Dmitrichenko, 28, made his confession Wednesday in the absence of his lawyer, after 48 hours in police custody, without having a meal, a Bolshoi artist, who spoke on condition of anonymity because investigators warned him against talking to journalists, said in comments carried by Moskovsky Komsomolets on Sunday.

Asked by a reporter whether the troupe feared that investigators "applied measures of physical coercion" on Dmitrichenko, the source answered in the affirmative. Neither

investigators nor Dmitrichenko's lawyers were available for comment Sunday.

Dmitrichenko told Moscow's Tagansky District Court on Thursday that his associate Yury Zarutsky, a former convict, had volunteered to beat up Filin, to which Dmitrichenko agreed, Interfax reported.

Dmitrichenko allegedly paid Zarutsky 50,000 rubles ($1,600) to carry out the beating, a police spokesperson told Interfax on Thursday. Dmitrichenko denied in court that he ordered Zarutsky to fling sulfuric acid at Filin, damaging his eyesight and disfiguring his face.

The court on Thursday charged Dmitrichenko, Zarutsky and Andrei Lipatov, an unemployed Moscow region resident, of carrying out the Jan. 17 attack on Filin and ordered them officially arrested until at least April 18. They face up to 12 years in prison on charges of causing grave bodily harm.

Dmitrichenko had accused Filin of distributing bonuses to dancers "unfairly," Zarutsky told the court on Thursday.

In another development reported Sunday, Dmitrichenko's friend and Bolshoi dancer Batyr Annadurdiyev, who is a witness in the criminal case in the attack on Filin, resigned from the troupe, allegedly under pressure from Filin, the same source told Moskovsky Komsomolets.

Annadurdiyev and Dmitrichenko spied on Filin from a car in a parking lot not far from the Bolshoi Theater on the night of the acid attack, shortly before it was carried out, Dmitrichenko told investigators, Life News, an online tabloid with links to police, reported Friday.

Police said Dmitrichenko's motive was "personal enmity ... linked to work activities" at the Bolshoi, where he had recently played the lead role of Ivan the Terrible in the eponymous ballet.

Dmitrichenko despised Filin for the artistic director's refusal to give a lead role to Dmitrichenko's girlfriend, another Bolshoi dancer, Angelina Vorontsova, Izvestia reported. Her mentor, prominent Bolshoi dancer Nikolai Tsiskaridze, is rumored to have disliked Filin.

The three suspects were detained Tuesday and wrote confessions.

Filin was attacked outside his apartment building in downtown Moscow on the night of Jan. 17. He has undergone several surgeries, and it is unclear whether his eyesight will be fully restored. Last week, his right eye was successfully operated in Germany, Interfax reported.

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