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Dmitrichenko Elected Chairman of Bolshoi's Trade Union, Replacing Filin

By Anya Aseeva

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Bolshoi Theater artists recently elected Pavel Dmitrichenko, the dancer accused of ordering an attack on Bolshoi Ballet artistic director Sergei Filin, to replace Filin as the chairman of the theater's trade union, a Bolshoi soloist said.

Nikolai Tsiskaridze said on NTV television that Dmitrichenko's candidacy was approved unanimously at a trade union meeting last week, in an apparent show of support for the dancer, who many in the troupe believe was not involved in the assault on Filin.

But the theater said Dmitrichenko was elected union chairman long before the acid attack.

Katerina Novikova, a spokeswoman for the Bolshoi Theater, told RIA-Novosti that Filin was unable to hold the post as chairman because legislation prohibits the ballet's director from occupying that position. She also said someone else had already been elected in Dmitrichenko's place, since he is in jail awaiting trial.

The report represents the latest twist in the intrigue at the theater following the Jan. 17 acid attack that caused severe burns to Filin's eyes and face.

Filin has undergone several surgeries, and doctors in Germany, where he is being treated, say they are confident that his vision will be restored.

Police say Pavel Dmitrichenko paid 50,000 rubles ($1,600) to accomplices Yury Zarutsky and Andrei Lipatov to carry out the attack. The three suspects partially confessed after their arrest on March 5.

Later, however, Dmitrichenko said he did not order the attack, and Zarutsky came forward to say he had been the sole organizer and executor.

Investigators say they have proof that the attack was a coordinated effort. Each of the three suspects faces up to 12 years in prison on charges of inflicting grievous bodily harm.

Tsiskaridze, who has also been questioned as part of the ongoing investigation into the attack, said Dmitrichenko was probably pressured into confessing.

In the NTV program aired Sunday, Tsiskaridze said that from the very beginning investigators were certain of his innocence, despite media reports implicating him in the attack.

"The investigator who interrogated me said he didn't understand why he was questioning me," Tsiskaridze said.

Tsiskaridze also expressed doubts that Filin sustained such serious injuries as had been reported.

"Everyone has suspicions. We would like experts to explain where this third-degree burn is that is being talked about," he said. “There is also talk of a large number of surgeries."

Contact the author at newsreporter@imedia.ru

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