

American Ballerina Says Bolshoi Wanted Her to Pay \$10,000 for Solo

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Joy Womack was the first American to graduate from the Bolshoi's prestigious academy. **Deborah Hoehner**

Correction appended:

Joy Womack, one of the few Americans to graduate from the Bolshoi Ballet Academy, was asked to pay \$10,000 to perform at Moscow's prestigious Bolshoi Theater, the dancer said.

Despite having a soloist's contract and constant praise from the theater's leadership, the 18-year-old Texas native told Izvestia that she wasn't allowed to perform at all and was told to find a patron or pay her own way.

"I found out that I should pay \$10,000 for variations, to be in one performance, to do a part," Womack said, adding that she would not name the person who voiced this sum "because I really respect him."

The ballerina said that she approached artistic director Sergei Filin and tried to assure him that she could prove her talent if put on stage.

"He said: 'No, understand, I already know all that. I don't care that you studied in a Moscow school, think for yourself, you should be more astute,'" Womack said.

Many dancers at the theater find wealthy backers to help advance their careers, but as an American, the management assumed that she had the finances.

The dancer has now left the internationally-renowned theater for the Kremlin Ballet and does not intend to go to the police.

"I want to forget all of this, like a bad dream," Womack said.

Her teacher Marina Kondratyeva said that the young dancer had difficulty memorizing the Bolshoi's extensive repertoire.

In 2012 Womack became the first American ballerina to graduate from the Bolshoi Ballet's Moscow State Academy of Choreography and also the first to sign a contract with the affiliated Bolshoi Theater.

Correction: An earlier version of this article stated that Womack was the first American to graduate from the Bolshoi Academy. Fellow American Michael Shannon graduated from the academy in 1989.

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