The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Tsiskaridze Defends Suspect in Bolshoi Acid Attack in Court

By Natalya Krainova

November 25, 2013

Nikolai Tsiskaridze arriving at court Monday for a hearing in the case against Bolshoi dancer Pavel Dmitrichenko. **Maxim Shemetov / REUTERS**

Prominent ballet dancer Nikolai Tsiskaridze on Monday defended the suspected mastermind of the acid attack on the Bolshoi Ballet's artistic director, testifying in court that he could not have been responsible for the attack that left Sergei Filin nearly blind.

At a hearing at Moscow's Meshchansky District Court, Tsiskaridze said Pavel Dmitrichenko, a leading Bolshoi Ballet dancer who stands accused of orchestrating the attack, could not have been behind the attack because he was neither "conflictive" nor "aggressive."

According to Tsiskaridze, while Dmitrichenko disagreed with many of Filin's policies at the theater, so did many other people.

"Artists are often very emotional, and I had often conflicted with Sergei [Filin] but on the level

of an artistic dispute," Tsiskaridze told the courtroom.

"We all signed a letter to the president and prime minister, saying we did not believe in [Dmitrichenko's guilt]," Tsiskaridze said, referring to an open letter to President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev signed by more than 300 Bolshoi artists, days after Dmitrichenko's arrest in March. The letter called for the creation of an independent commission to investigate the attack on Filin.

Tsiskaridze also testified that Filin had been hindering Dmitrichenko's professional advancement as a dancer by blocking him from getting good roles.

He described an "ugly scene" he had witnessed after Dmitrichenko had been selected for a role against Filin's wishes.

"Dmitrichenko was summoned to Filin's office and he came running out of there, with curse words resounding after him. Sergei said some very nasty words, 'I'll show you!'" Tsiskaridze said.

In a strange twist, Dmitrichenko said the lead investigator in his case had "pressured" him to name Tsiskaridze as the mastermind of the attack.

According to him, Dmitry Altynov, an Interior Ministry official, had put pressure on him to point the finger at either Tsiskaridze, Bolshoi Deputy Director Anton Getman, or former Bolshoi artistic director Ruslan Pronin.

"I was asked while at Butyrka, by the investigator himself, to name Tsiskaridze [as the organizer], and later Getman ... and then Pronin," Dmitrichenko said, referring to the time he spent at Moscow's Butyrka pretrial detention center.

Filin was attacked outside of his apartment building in downtown Moscow on the evening of Jan. 17 when a male assailant splashed sulfuric acid in his face, damaging his skin and eyes. He has since undergone a number of surgeries on his face and 23 eye surgeries, most of them in Germany. His vision has been only partly restored.

In early March, police arrested Dmitrichenko and his two suspected associates, unemployed Moscow region residents Yury Zarutsky and Andrei Lipatov, on charges of being behind the attack.

Later, Zarutsky pleaded guilty to splashing the acid in Filin's face, while both Dmitichenko and Lipatov, accused of driving Zarutsky to the crime scene, pleaded not guilty.

Dmitrichenko initially admitted to investigators that he had paid Zarutsky 50,000 rubles ($1,520) to beat Filin, but he said he knew nothing of Zarutsky's intention to splash acid in Filin's face.

He later went back on his words, however, and denied that testimony.

Lipatov admitted having driven Zarutsky to the crime scene but said he did not know what Zarutsky was going to do there.

Contact the author at n.krainova@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/11/25/tsiskaridze-defends-suspect-in-bolshoi-acid-attack-in-court-a29912