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Abramovich Personally Intervened for 'Nureyev' Ballet to Be Performed This Year — Report

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Yury Belinsky / TASS

A ballet based on the life of legendary ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev which was postponed for what some have said were political reasons, might still premiere this year after billionaire Roman Abramovich intervened, the Kommersant newspaper reports.

"As far as I know, the premiere will take place before the New Year, even though initially it was said it would be held next May, since the [team] has a lot of other work," the Bolshoi Theater's chief conductor Tugan Sokhiyev told the Finnish outlet Helsingin Sanomat.

The "Nureyev" ballet was set to open earlier this month, but the Bolshoi Theater canceled it last-minute, arguing it was not ready to show. The new premiere was expected to take place in May 2018, but many wondered whether it would premiere at all.

The cancellation triggered a wave of condemnation, especially after some media reported Russia's Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky might have been behind the decision. The ballet dancer Nureyev was openly gay and many speculated the cancellation might be connected to Russia's so-called anti-gay propaganda law or the ministry's conservative views.

Adding to the suspicions, the ballet's prominent director Kirill Serebrennikov is a witness in a corruption case that many consider to be politically motivated.

In his interview, conductor Sokhiyev echoed the official explanation. "As far as I know, the project had been rehearsed in a studio and it was complicated to move it to the big stage" he said. "Probably they needed more time."

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According to an unidentified source cited by the Kommersant newspaper, the new premiere might take place as soon as mid December, and rehearsals will start earlier that same month.

The unnamed source attributed it to the personal intervention of tycoon Roman Abramovich, a member of the Bolshoi's Board of Trustees who is also a close ally of President Vladimir Putin and reportedly attended the ballet's final rehearsal.

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