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Russian Theater Director Serebrennikov Accused of Masterminding Embezzlement Scheme

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Kirill Serebrennikov **Zykov Kirill / Moskva News Agency**

Kirill Serebrennikov, one of Russia's most prominent theater directors, set up a company with the aim of embezzling government arts subsidies, the company's accountant said in court on Wednesday, the RBC news agency reports.

Serebrennikov was briefly detained in May as his theater, the Gogol Center in Moscow, was raided by law enforcement. Investigators now say subsidies worth 68 million rubles ($1.1 million) were stolen through a non-profit organization linked to the theater called Seventh Studio, RBC reports.

Three former employees of the Gogol Center and Seventh Studio are on trial, including Seventh Studio's accountant, Nina Maslyayeva. Serebrennikov is so far a witness in the case.

According to RBC, Maslyayeva's said her co-defendants and Serebrennikov had "created

Seventh Studio for the realization of criminal schemes." Her job, she said, had been to cash the subsidies for them.

The corruption case has caused outcry in artistic circles where it is seen as intimidation and an attempt to muzzle the theater — which is among the most progressive in Russia.

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