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Gogol Theater's Serebrennikov Deterred From Traveling Abroad by Russian Authorities

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Kirill Serebrennikov **British Council Russia / Flickr**

Theater director Kirill Serebrennikov, who has been embroiled in a corruption investigation and whose ballet "Nureyev" was abruptly pulled from the stage in July, has had his travel passport confiscated by authorities, he says.

"I am stripped of my passport. I can't leave anymore," Serebrennikov told the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung in an interview published last week, after being asked whether he considered his life to be in danger.

Serebrennikov said this meant he may not be able to attend a staging of "Hansel and Gretel" he is directing in the German city of Stuttgart next month.

"I hope I will be able to fulfill the terms of my contract," he told Süddeutsche Zeitung.

Serebrennikov gave no further details about his passport. A request from the RBC news

agency to the Russian Interior Ministry asking for clarification went unanswered.

On Friday, the Interfax news agency cited an unidentified source close to Serebrennikov as saying investigators confiscated his passport in May during searches of his home and the Gogol Center theater, which he directs, as part of a corruption probe.

Investigators were scrutinizing the passport to establish its authenticity, the source was quoted as saying. “These investigative measures are just a pretense to keep the director from traveling abroad," the source added.

Serebrennikov is a witness in a trial over the alleged embezzlement of government arts subsidies through a company connected to the Gogol Center, a theater in central Moscow renowned for its non-traditional performances.

In July, a ballet directed by Serebrennikov based on the life of the legendary, openly gay dancer Rudolf Nureyev was abruptly postponed three days before its premier at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. The official reason was that it was not yet ready to show.

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