

Russia's Bolshoi Scraps Performances by Critical Directors

By [AFP](#)

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A charity performance of a production of Aram Khachaturian's ballet *Spartacus* at the State Academic Bolshoi Theater to collect funds for the families of servicemen killed in Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. **Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS**

Russia's Bolshoi Theater has announced it is canceling the performances directed by Kirill Serebrennikov and Timofey Kulyabin who have spoken out against Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine.

Late Sunday, Russia's top theater announced that instead of the three performances of "Nureev," a ballet directed by Serebrennikov, the audiences this week will see a production of Aram Khachaturian's ballet, "Spartacus."

The prestigious theater also said that instead of "Don Pasquale," a comic opera by Gaetano Donizetti directed by Timofey Kulyabin, audiences this week will see a production of Gioachino Rossini's "The Barber of Seville."

The Bolshoi did not give any reason for the cancellations and spokeswoman Katerina Novikova told AFP on Monday that she had no "official" comment.

The Bolshoi performed "Spartacus" in early April, saying that proceeds would be used to help the families of Russian troops who died in Ukraine.

Serebrennikov, 52, was allowed in March to leave Russia, where he had been found guilty in 2020 of embezzling funds at Moscow's Gogol Center theater.

His supporters say the conviction was revenge for his criticism of authoritarianism and homophobia under President Vladimir Putin.

Speaking to AFP in Berlin last month, Serebrennikov said he felt "just horror, sadness, shame, pain" about Russia's military campaign in pro-Western Ukraine.

"Nureev" is based on the life of Russian dance legend Rudolf Nureyev, and its use of onstage nudity and profane language outraged Russian conservatives.

Kulyabin, 37, who is also believed to be now based in Europe, has spoken out against Putin's decision to send troops to Ukraine.

Several dancers have in recent weeks quit the Bolshoi including prima ballerina Olga Smirnova.

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