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Composer Philip Glass Accuses Theatre in Annexed Crimea of 'Piracy'

By AFP

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Philip Glass. **imago / TASS**

American composer Philip Glass has accused a theatre in Russian-annexed Crimea of planning to stage a ballet premiere that uses his music without permission.

Glass, an 87-year-old composer famed for his minimalist works, took to X (formerly Twitter) to complain about what he said was an act of "piracy" by a theatre in the Black Sea port city of Sevastopol.

"It has come to my attention that a ballet entitled Wuthering Heights featuring my music and using my name in its advertising and promotion is to premiere" at the Sevastopol Opera and Ballet Theatre, Glass wrote.

"The use of my music and the use of my name without my consent... is an act of piracy," he added.

The theatre's website says that the staging, set to premiere Monday and Tuesday, will feature music by the composer.

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The Wuthering Heights ballet, based on the novel by Emily Bronte, was choreographed by British dancer Jonah Cook, according to the theatre. The dancer told local media that the ballet mainly uses "string music by Philip Glass and Hildur Guthnadohtir," an Icelandic composer.

Sergei Polunin, a Ukrainian-born former Royal Ballet star who is also director of the theatre, will perform a leading role. Artists who have performed in illegally occupied areas have been sanctioned by Kyiv, lost prestigious roles abroad and been removed from online platforms.

Glass wrote that he was "well aware that the current circumstances in occupied Crimea leave me powerless to assert my right under international law to prohibit this act of piracy." But he added: "I shall make my vehement objection to it known should you proceed."

The Sevastopol theatre's director, Polunin, 34, was appointed in 2019 and is also acting head of a dance academy in the city. The dancer shot to international fame early in his career at the Royal Ballet, becoming known as the "bad boy of ballet."

Polunin strongly supports President Vladimir Putin, whose face is tattooed on his chest, backs Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and says he has donated money to buy weapons. Russia is building new premises for his opera and ballet theatre and dance academy in Sevastopol on Putin's orders.

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