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In Photos: 250 Years of the Bolshoi Theatre

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The Bolshoi Theatre marked its 250th anniversary over the weekend. Founded as a private troupe on March 28, 1776, by Catherine the Great, the Bolshoi Theatre has since grown into one of the world's most celebrated opera and ballet stages, surviving fire, revolution, world wars, the Soviet collapse and the rise of Vladimir Putin along the way. "Without it," the Kommersant business daily wrote in 2025, "Russia as a country (and therefore Russia as an economy) would be different — a step below the rest, let's say. A country that is home to the Bolshoi Theatre is perceived as an economic partner of a somewhat different caliber." Today, the Bolshoi Ballet and Opera remain largely cut off from their Western counterparts following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. These photos trace the theater's history from the 19th century to the present day.



Alexei Zotov / TASS

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