



## ARTS & CULTURE

# Russia's Bolshoi Ballet Aims to Perform again in the West

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The artistic director of Moscow's state-owned Bolshoi Ballet has promised the group will one day perform in the West again.

The famous ballet company performed last week in China at Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts. It was the company's first performance outside of Russia since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. The company has faced boycotts from many countries because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Artistic director Mahkar Vaziev said the Bolshoi was "not suffering" from being unable to perform in the West.

"I have no doubt that one day everything will go back to how it should be because culture is a wave that is very hard to **suppress**," Vaziev said.

For many people, the Bolshoi represents the highest level of Russian culture. The ballet company was founded in 1776 by Empress Catherine the Great. The company performed around the world even during the most difficult times of the Cold War.

Bolshoi's dancers hope their performance in China is a sign that they will return to performing around the world.

However, only two other performances are currently on the company's schedule. The dancers are set to perform in the Belarusian capital Minsk in November and Oman next January.

The Bolshoi's time in Beijing includes two performances that will show parts of its best-known ballets. It will then give a three-day **staging** of the 19th-century ballet "Don Quixote".

The Bolshoi still receives around 70 percent of its financial support from the Russian government, a company official said. No current performers have spoken out against the Russian invasion. The United Nations reports the war has injured or killed about 8,500 civilians.

In February 2022, the day after Moscow sent thousands of troops into Ukraine, London's Royal Opera House canceled Bolshoi performances planned for the summer of that year.

Cancellations in other Western cities soon followed. Creative work with Western artists and theaters came to a stop.

Several Russian and foreign dancers also quit the company to show their strong disapproval of the Ukraine war. Former principal ballerina Olga Smirnova was among those who quit.

Elizaveta Kokoreva joined the company at the beginning of the pandemic. She is now its principal ballerina. She said, "I would really like to visit other countries, see the world, and get to know different **venues**, theatres, teachers and **choreographers**."

She added, "But it is what it is right now."

I'm Andrew Smith.

*Andrew Smith adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on reporting from Reuters.*

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## Words in This Story

**suppress** -*v.* to prevent something by using force or making it illegal

**staging** -*n.* a presentation or series of presentations of theater performances such as plays, ballets, and music concerts.

**venue** -*n.* a place where public events, especially performances, take place, such as a theater or stadium

**choreographer** -*n.* a person who creates or directs dance performances

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