



RICHARD JOHNSON



Attacked Bolshoi dancer on his way to NYC

By Richard Johnson

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Artistic director of the Bolshoi ballet Sergei Filin

Photo: AP



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The bravest man in ballet — Bolshoi director Sergei Filin — is preparing for April 10, when he'll take the stage at Lincoln Center and the audience may give him a standing ovation.

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his estate's executor

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This is Filin's first visit to the US since a disgruntled male dancer was found guilty of having two goons throw sulfuric acid in his face last year in Moscow.

"Coming to New York and especially having the honor of being again in the jury of YAGP [Youth America Grand Prix] is very special and emotional," Filin told me through an organizer of the four-day competition.

"Following the attack on me, I felt great support [from YAGP founder] Larissa Saveliev and other people from the ballet community of New York. Thus, having a chance of being together, of meeting these wonderful people again is really very special."

The shy ballet master, who underwent 23 surgeries and nearly went blind, was hesitant because he wears dark glasses to protect his eyes. But an organizer told him, the shades enhance his image: "In America, they'll make you look like Jack Nicholson."

Arriving in New York on April 6, Filin will be judging dancers all week, culminating in performances of the winners with world-class stars, including his own protégée, the Bolshoi's Olga Smirnova.

Hilaria Baldwin will emcee on April 10 when ABT's Misty Copeland dances a piece choreographed by "Dancing With the Stars" pro Derek Hough, as well as a dance choreographed by Gemma Bond with an original score by Karen LeFrak and costumes by Ralph Rucci.

The gala dinner afterward is chaired by Stephanie Foster, Heather Georges, Kamie Lightburn and Christina Lyon.