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# Actor Killed During Performance at Bolshoi Theater

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**Damir Yusupov / Bolshoi Theater**

On Saturday night at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater, a performer died when he was struck by and apparently crushed by a backdrop that was being slowly lowered during a performance of the opera "Sadko." According to media reports, Yevgeny Kulesh, a 37-year-old actor who had performed at the Bolshoi since 2002, died before the ambulance crew arrived.

A video surreptitiously shot from the audience shows the backdrop descending and then a number of performers waving their arms. An audience member told a reporter that she suddenly heard shouts "Get a doctor! Call an ambulance, someone got hit by the backdrop!" She said that the orchestra stopped playing, and in less than a minute the curtain closed and the audience was asked to leave.

Nikolai Tsiskardze, once a principal dancer at the Bolshoi, told the newspaper Komsomolkaya Pravda that he was certain the fault lay not with the performer, but with the technical staff of the theater. "Backstage is hell. Dancers damage their legs when sets and staircases fall over. There are no windows or ventilation."

The Moscow Investigative Committee began an inquiry Sunday morning.

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