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# Soho Theatre fined over fall that paralysed stage manager

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Rachael Presdee fell through a balcony being used in a production of Romeo and Juliet, the court heard

**A theatre where a stage manager was paralysed in a fall through an unmarked balcony door on to the stage below has been fined £20,000.**

Rachael Presdee, 38, spent six months in hospital and was left paraplegic as a result of the accident at Soho Theatre in central London in 2012.

The theatre admitted health and safety breaches, at Southwark Crown Court.

Compensation of £3.7m had already been agreed for Miss Presdee, an Australian national.

**'Searching for light'**

The court heard the Juliet balcony was "an obvious and high risk" and there was "an entirely foreseeable danger of death or serious injury".

Miss Presdee, who has since returned to Australia, was working on a production of Boys for the Headlong theatre company when the accident happened on 9 June 2012.



Rachael Presdee said 'tiny little actions' would have saved her mobility

She had arrived at the theatre to find the lights off and the auditorium shrouded in darkness. She climbed a spiral staircase

looking for the light switch when she found an unmarked and unlocked door.

Hidden behind it was the balcony, which had been used in the balcony scene in a production of Romeo And Juliet. She opened the door and plummeted 10ft (3m) on to the stage below.

Alastair Smith, prosecuting, said: "Behind the black curtain that hung behind the door was the entrance into a Juliet balcony.

"In the darkness Miss Presdee, still searching for a light switch, walked through the curtain and three metres on to the stage below."

### 'Devastating consequences'

Judge Alistair McCreath said the harm caused to Miss Presdee was "high indeed".

He said: "Her injuries are described, accurately, as catastrophic.

"One only has to read her two victim impact statements to see the way in which, and the extent to which, her life has been turned upside down.



The theatre said it had "co-operated fully with the investigation"

"She is now a wheelchair user. She has suffered devastating life-changing consequences which have had a fundamental effect on her whole way of life.

"She has met that challenge with great courage and very strong determination."

In a statement, the theatre said: "The board, directors and staff of Soho Theatre deeply regret the accident involving Rachael Presdee in June 2012.

"We have done as much as we can to ensure that Rachael received the best possible care after the accident and we are relieved for her that her civil claim has now been settled."

The theatre said it had "co-operated fully with the investigation" and reviewed all internal processes.

The statement added: "We have done everything we can to ensure that this never happens again and are committed to ensuring the safety of all those working at and visiting the theatre."

The £3.7m compensation was paid by Soho Theatre and Headlong Theatre.

Soho Theatre was ordered to pay £10,000 in costs.

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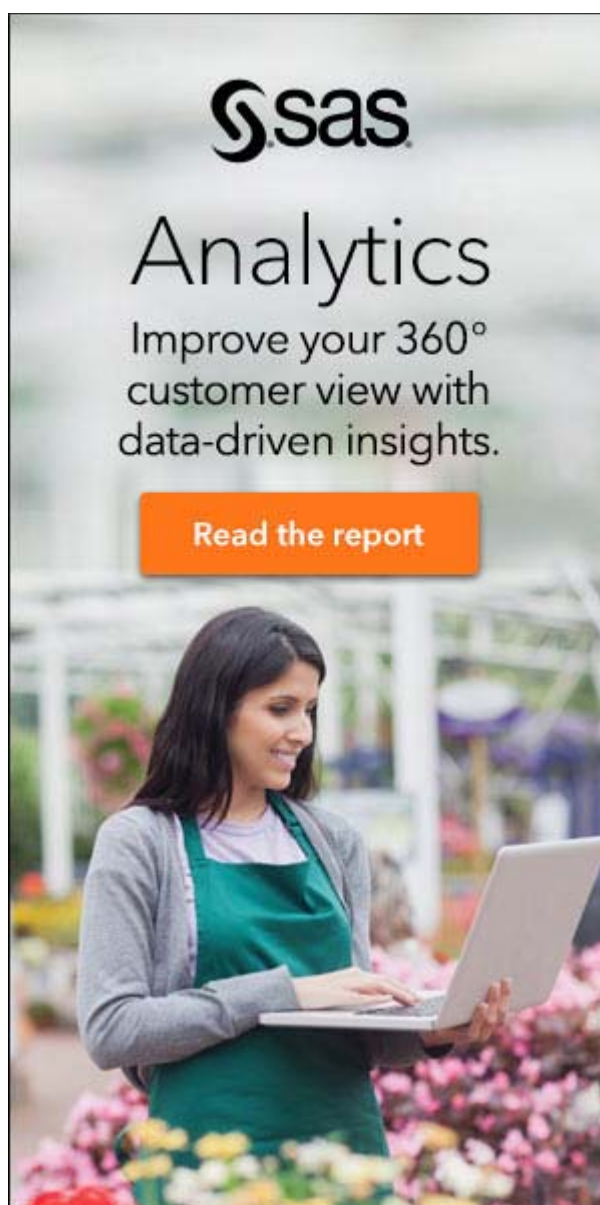
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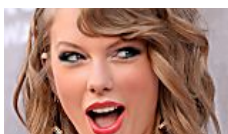


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