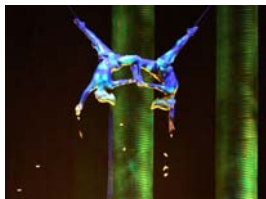


# Cirque du Soleil performer dies after 50-foot fall

Hadley Malcolm hosts USA NOW for July 1, 2013, covering the death of Sarah Guyard-Guillot, being the first in Cirque du Soleil's 30-year history.

Bryan Alexander and Kimberly Railey, USA TODAY 4:34 p.m. EDT July 1, 2013

*Sarah Guyard-Guillot was a veteran acrobat and a mother of two.*



(Photo: Leila Navidi, Las Vegas Sun, via AP)

Sarah Guyard-Guillot, a performer in the Las Vegas Cirque du Soleil show *Ka* who was killed Saturday night in a 50-foot fall during the show, was a "great, great person -- a great mom," says James Wong of Las Vegas.

Guyard-Guillot operated a circus school for kids, Cirquefit, in gym space rented from Wong.

She would be remembered for her "kindness and dedication," he says.

Julie Garrick's 8-year-old daughter, Dakota, learned trapeze, tumbling and handstand skills from Guyard-Guillot last year.

"She had a huge love for what she did," Garrick says. "She would spend whatever time with the kids that they needed."

"What hits most for me -- being a mother -- is the loss that her kids have because she was very loving and dedicated to her children," Garrick says.

Guyard-Guillot, 31, a mother of children ages 8 and 5, spent more than 22 years as an acrobatic performer.

The *Las Vegas Sun* quoted audience members who said that Guyard-Guillot fell during the show's dramatic final battle scene, in which many of the artists are suspended from wires along the massive, vertical stage.

Guyard-Guillot, who was nicknamed Sassoon, "was being hoisted up the side of the stage and then just plummeted down," audience member Dan Mosqueda told the paper. "Initially, a lot of people in the audience thought it was part of the choreographed fight. But you could hear screaming, then groaning, and we could hear a female artist crying from the stage."

Mosqueda's wife, Annie, tweeted: "Wire snapped. Performer on far stage left side of stage. He/she fell fast & awkwardly at LEAST 50 feet into pit."

The *Sun* said that after the artist's fall, a recorded announcement was played on the theater's sound system informing ticket-buyers that refunds or vouchers to future shows would be offered. The crowd was then dismissed.

Performances of *Ka* have been suspended.



The Cirque du Soleil show 'Ka' plays at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. (Photo: Tim Loehrke, USA TODAY)

It is the first stage death in Cirque du Soleil's 30-year history.

"I am heartbroken," Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberte told the *Sun*. "I wish to extend my sincerest sympathies to the family. We are all completely devastated with this news. Sassoon was an artist with the original cast of *Ka* since 2006 and has been an integral part of our Cirque du Soleil tight family.

"We are reminded, with great humility and respect, how extraordinary our artists are each and every night. Our focus now is to support each other as a family."

*Ka* performances began Nov. 26, 2004, at the MGM Grand. The show features 86 performers on a 360 degree rotating stage.