



# MEL STEVENS

By 18, Mel Stevens was working as a professional dancer, opening department stores in Oxford Street, on TV commercials and Breakfast TV, music videos and touring with top bands worldwide. By 20, she was working for a major record company and continuing to dance professionally the world over. Her momentum was halted in 2003 by the tragedy of breaking her back while giving birth. The incident forced her to relearn everything she had known, physically and emotionally. While coming to terms with her altered physical state, declining health and the effects of pain medication, Mel had to adjust to the trappings of life with paralysis.

Then came an offer to a disabled day centre 2008 which happened to be next to Newbury College. Deciding she'd much rather go to college, Mel studied sports, coaching and working with children in her quest to understand her own body and find life again. A chance invitation to a West End show in 2012 thanks to her old agent allowed her to meet her past modelling booker who was working with a disabled theatre company. Next, Mel was in contact with the producer.

The project was inspired by the run up to the Paralympic ceremonies, where Mel first performed with Graeae in aerial show 'Prometheus Awakes' for the Greenwich and Docklands Festival June 2012. The Paralympic aerial legacy intensive gave Mel the opportunity to experiment, play and fly. The experience was transformative, with the aerial harnesses and trapeze allowing Mel to use her powerful upper body no longer supported by her legs.

In 2013 an aerial teacher from the Paralympic project ran a week long workshop which marked a turning point. In response Mel self-funded 'Aim to Fly'. A project in which Mel and other performers and instructors and continues to do so, while juggling the day to day practicalities and physical challenges of living with chronic pain and other conditions. Mel seeks to perform and use the profits with a team of volunteer instructors and performers and donate free or low cost circus activities, support and training to help those with disability and depression (across all ages and abilities) overcome their barriers as Mel had to, and acknowledge that "none of us are born with wings, but we can all Aim to Fly"

## Goal

"To create an aerial dance studio and performance company specifically for dancers with physical disabilities, so they can be productive and inspiring members of the national community through performance and conversations."

## Social media



## Contact

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