



THE CIRCUS is coming to Newport next week - with one particularly unique member of the cast who defies gravity and expectations.

Get ready to be spellbound as an Italian circus extravaganza makes its debut in the UK and soon showing in Wales for the very first time, brought to you by the produces of Circus Extreme and promising an electrifying fusion of water, light, and breath-taking acrobatics.

The Gravity Circus Company is embarking on an exhilarating tour across the UK with their sensational new show, which features Silke Pan, an award-winning paraplegic artist and acrobat who's determination is an inspiration.



Silke Pan is now a star performer with Gravity Circus (*Image: Gravity Circus*)



After suffering an injury in 2007 she has turned her pain into triumph and is now also a coach and a motivational speaker as well as exceptional performer.

From 1992 to 2007 Silke has performed in theatres all over Europe as well as on cruise ships, amusement parks, and gala events.

Her life as a circus performer came to an abrupt stop in September 2007 when she fell from a trapeze breaking her back at 10th and 11th dorsal vertebrae and ended up in hospital for a gruelling period of seven months. Silke explained: "During rehab in Nottwil, I had to learn to accept this completely 'new body'."

She can't feel anything any more from her belly button down, however, she kept trying to form trapeze figures in physiotherapy.

She continued: "But it was impossible to turn my paralyzed pelvis. Floor exercises, headstand, handstand – none of it worked."

She became paraplegic and started using a wheelchair, but this would not stop her!

Silke was determined to not give up athletic activities, she began training on a hand bike from the first day she left the hospital.



She said: "Sports allowed me to better accept my disability."

In 2012 she began competing professionally, and became a champion at hand biking and at the end of 2016 Silke switched to alpine ultra-paracycling with the ascent of more than 80 mythical passes in the Swiss Alps, the Maritime Alps and the Pyrenees.

In 2018 she crossed the Pyrenees, a total of 28 alpine passes in 10 days, using the strength of her arms, and just a year later in 2019, she competed in the Tour des Lacs - 1,000km and 30 Swiss lakes crossings in para-triathlon mode which consisted of hand bike, **racing** chair, swimming, and bellyak (a



modified kayak).

In 2017 she competed in international races as part of the Italian team but in 2019 after being naturalized as a Swiss citizen, she started competing on the Swiss team.

In 2016, after being a paraplegic for nine years, Silke was able to stand up and walk thanks to an exoskeleton and now for the first time it is being adapted for children.



**Silke was a champion hand biker before she joined Gravity Circus (Image: Gravity Circus)**

Silke won a 4th place and a qualification for the final in the first competition, an obstacle race, the Cybathlon, a competition for disabled athletes authorized to use bionic assistance technologies.

But then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. At first, races were postponed, then cancelled, and training sessions could not take place, so Silke set up a home exercise studio so she could continue to work on exercises

Her first impression was marked by a certain heaviness. However, after only ten minutes, "it was as if my body and muscle memory kicked in and remembered the positions from the past," commented Silke.

Her hands and shoulders automatically took the correct positions to perform an acrobatic exercise.





**Silke now defies gravity and expectations in her own special show (*Image: Gravity Circus*)**

On her fourth try, strapped to the snowboard, she got into a handstand all by herself, which left both of them crying for joy.

She invented a unique technique to balance on her hands again, an acrobatic discipline that she used to practice before the accident, which she says looks "great with stretched legs", but she is still working on "making everything look more graceful".

After 14 years of sitting in her wheelchair, she is back on stage as a circus performer and touring the UK with Gravity Circus, with Didier by her side as her assistant.

The stage fright before the first performance was enormous. And one question was on her mind:

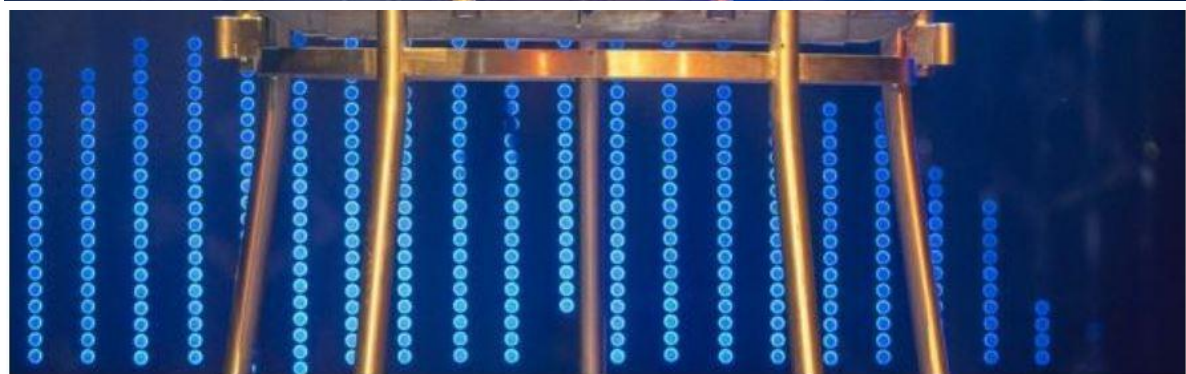
"I was just about to live my dream again. However, I was scared that my performance would not be a success but that I would only be pitied instead."

The standing ovation convinced her of the opposite.

By choosing this path she became the first professional hand balancer with complete paraplegia below the 10th thoracic vertebra.

"Although I have never dwelled in the past, being an acrobat again is like a huge gift to me."





**Silke is an example of the sheer power of the human spirit (*Image: Gravity Circus*)**

Anthony Anderson director of Circus Extreme and organiser of the UK portion of the Gravity Circus tour commented: "Silke defies gravity and expectations, showcasing the sheer power of the human spirit.

"Their brand new show 'Equilibrium' promises to challenge the very laws of physics with incredible feats performed by some of the world's most talented circus artists."

You can catch Silke in action with Gravity Circus in Newport, Tredegar Park from September 25 to 29, before the show continues touring across the UK, with tickets available [\*\*here\*\*](#).

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