



Young Cinderella WILL go to ball despite spinal condition

HEALTH

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DANCING IS more than just a hobby for 14-year-old Frankie Ball – it's a passion that helped her overcome a severe spinal condition which threatened to leave her with lifelong deformities.

The teenager's scoliosis went unnoticed until the age of 11, when her tutor at the Maillot Rose School of Dance and Theatre, in Harewood, noticed something was wrong during one of her routines.

After a slight unevenness of her rib cage was spotted, Frankie, from Pool-in-Wharfedale, was sent to see a specialist who confirmed she had the potentially debilitating genetic condition where the spine bends to the side abnormally.

It became apparent that the disease had grown progressively worse over the years, to the

point where her organs were coming under pressure and her breathing was affected.

This summer she was taken to Great Ormond Street Hospital, in London, for a pioneering new surgery, where her spine was screwed into place with rods.

The diagnosis came as a severe blow to Frankie, who had

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been a dancer with the school since the age of four, when it was founded.

But one thing that kept her going throughout the months of recovery and physio after the operation was her dream of playing the lead role in the production of *Cinderella* at the dance school.

Her friends rallied around



DANCE FEVER: Frankie Ball with her friend Clarrie Box. The pair will be playing Cinderella in a new production later this month.

her to help turn that dream into a reality. By visiting Frankie in hospital, bringing gifts, teaching her some of the routines, keeping her up to date and showing her videos of the rehearsals, the team of close-knit friends at Maillot Rose, helped to ensure that this Cinderella did indeed go to the ball.

One of Frankie's close friends,

Clarrie Box, 14, even learned the entire *Cinderella* routine, with the aim of teaching it all to Frankie while she was in hospital.

She has now made a full recovery and will play the part of Cinderella on Sunday while Clarrie will play the role of Cinderella on Saturday at the

Stanley and Audrey Burton Theatre in Quarry Hill, Leeds.

Frankie explained that their help and support helped to speed up her recovery.

She said: "I'd auditioned for the role before I had my operation done. It was just so important to me because I hadn't had such a big part before and because I really wanted not to let my school down.

"I'd had solos but I'd never had such a big part in a dance show. The fact that I knew *Cinderella* was at the end of it gave me a push to recover quicker as it was my goal to be part of it."

Dance school founder Alison Moore said: "We are all very proud of her. It is a shocking thing to happen to her and we are all really pleased she has made it."

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Has Frankie's story inspired you? Have your say on the YEP website.

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FAMILY

Mum's tribute to dance school

FRANKIE'S MUM Sam said the thought of playing Cinderella gave her something to work towards.

She said: "The thing about Frankie and her ballet dancing is that it kept her incredibly strong, so the fact that she continued to dance was probably the best thing that she could do. It has been quite a journey, and the dance school has been amazing.

"When she was in hospital the day after her operation and the physiotherapists came around to get her out of bed to do exercises, she actually said to me 'Mum, if I ever don't want to do physiotherapy, just say 'Cinderella'."