

Voler dances in the air with poise, grace

By CORY STREETER

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There's probably only one group in Kansas City that spends hours a week with yards of fabric, but never sews a single stitch.

Voler (Thieves of Flight), a local aerial fabrics performance team, accented the Fringe Festival performances with a dazzling spectacle of athletic poise and grace. With the live band Monta at Odds providing the rhythms and VJDN8 providing the unique video color, Voler enchanted the audience at Crosstown Station, 1522 McGee. The group will have one more performance 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the same location.

Rachel McMeachin, 38, started the group last October in her loft in the West Bottoms. Sixteen people responded to the fliers she placed around town to receive professional lessons from an aerial fabrics teacher McMeachin flew in from Colorado. Out of 16, only six hung around with the group to continue training on the high-strength polyester fabrics.

"There were a lot of dropouts because it was so much harder than anybody thought," McMeachin said. "You get yourself up there and you're aching for a week later. You're trying to train muscles that you're never used before in your life."

After getting the basics down following three visits from the Colorado instructor, Voler required a higher ceiling to practice up high. Crosstown Station was the perfect venue. So McMeachin and Crosstown Station struck a deal: She and the team would be able to practice once a week in exchange for performing once a month when a DJ comes to play at the Station. "It's a nice little trade," she said.

As for fear of falling from about 20 feet, McMeachin said it's a non-issue. "Stage fright, yes, but as far as fear of what we're doing, not so much."

After all, their high-strength fabrics are supported by repelling and helicopter rescue equipment, McMeachin said. And it helps to have the confidence of proper instruction.

"Our teacher is really awesome about teaching us the safety of it," she said. "Everything we've learned we've practiced very low to the ground. Once we have the strength and the trick of it, then we can take it up high and work into the danger spots." And the performance from such a height is the ultimate high, according to McMeachin.

Admission to the Voler performance at Crosstown Station at 7:30 p.m. Saturday is \$10.

Read more: <http://www.kansascity.com/2008/07/26/721334/voler-dances-in-the-air-with-poise.html#ixzz0zWPuSekg>