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## Pilates For Ballet

Audra C. Simmon

*Loyola Marymount University*

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**DANC 461: Senior Thesis Project**

**PILATES FOR BALLET**

Audra C. Simmon

Mentors:  
Judy Scalin  
Dr. Teresa Heiland

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In partial fulfillment of  
The Bachelor of Arts Degree in Dance  
Loyola Marymount University  
May 9, 2015

# PILATES FOR BALLET

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## PILATES FOR BALLET

By: Audra C. Simmon

Mentors:  
Judy Scalin  
Dr. Teresa Heiland

*Pilates For Ballet* is a certification thesis. I started with an interest in the connection between Pilates exercises and ballet technique. I set out to investigate the difference in my ballet training while I explored deeper into the Pilates curriculum. I was interested in its influence on the proper ballet technical alignment and the activation of the correct muscle groups to achieve it.

I chose the BASI Pilates Certification Program to pursue my investigation. During each of the 12 seven hour lessons I not only learned how to execute and teach the exercises, but I received a great amount of information concerning anatomy and kinesiology as well. I had previously taken an anatomy and kinesiology for dancers course at LMU, so I came to BASI knowing most of the information. Even so, BASI explained it in a different way, which reinforced it in my mind, and with relevance to Pilates vs. dance. I was able to compare the two aspects,

which strengthened my understanding of the correct ways to use the body in each activity. My thesis describes how Pilates informs the student of their anatomy and gives them the awareness to control it pertaining to specific goals. Finally, the student can apply this awareness and control to their body in a ballet classroom to maximize their technique and training.

# PILATES FOR BALLET

## Establishment of Goals

### COGNITIVE - INTELLECTUAL

1. To learn the differences in teaching Pilates for injuries, various ages, and various athletic pursuits.
2. To learn how Pilates affects different muscle groups, tendons, and ligaments. How it can be helpful or detrimental.
3. To learn how Pilates affects overall coordination in a humanly aspect and in a dance aspect.

### ARTISTIC

1. To discover how Pilates can inform my body in order to better control it in different forms of dance, specifically ballet.
2. To discover new muscles and ways to use them in order to develop my own technical training.
3. To improve my communication skills to student so they are clear and flow to the practice at hand.

### WORKING STYLE

1. To be able to stay focused on taking the course as serious as possible even though I already know much of the information given.
2. To stay 100 percent committed even though the sessions are widely spread out amidst my senior year in college.
3. To be completely engaged the entire time in order to absorb as much as I can, to be the best instructor that I can be in the future.

### INTERPERSONAL

1. To be able to effectively convey how to execute exercises and how to contract the pertaining muscles.
2. To develop confidence and determination in my students own work, and confidence in me as their teacher.

### INTRAPERSONAL

1. To feel confident in my knowledge of Pilates and my ability to convey it's use to others in effort to improve their physical life.

# PILATES FOR BALLET

## TIMELINE

### BASI Foundation Apparatus Program- Standard Syllabus 10.4.14 - 11.9.14

#### **Module 1:** The Fundamentals (6 hours)

- Concepts the 10 movement principles of the Pilates Method; overview of the pelvic region; Pilate breathing.
- Discussion The BASI approach to Pilates; the importance of safety when teaching Pilates.

#### **Module 2:** Anatomy Overview, Part 1 (6 hours)

- Concepts Anatomy and terminology overview: anatomical terminology for movement, types of joints and center of gravity.
- Discussion The importance and practice of cueing.

#### **Module 3:** Anatomy Overview, Part 2 (6 hours)

- Concepts Anatomy overview: bones, boney landmarks, muscles, muscle actions, and types of muscle contraction.
- Discussion The BASI method of teaching; introduction to the BASI Block System.

#### **Module 4:** Posture Assessment (6 hours)

- Concepts Principles of alignment and posture assessment.
- Discussion Exercise as a tool for assessment.

#### **Module 5:** Core Strength: Back and Abdominals (6 hours)

- Concepts Core strength: the relationship of the various muscle groups that make up the core, with particular focus on the abdominals and the back extensors.
- Discussion Contraindications: effective exercises and the importance of understanding your client's needs and body type; the role of the teacher and the importance of flow in a session.

#### **Module 6:** Exercise Adaptation (6 hours)

- Concepts Exercise adaptation and the use of assists and modifications.
- Discussion Constructing a complete and comprehensive program.

# PILATES FOR BALLET

## TIMELINE CONT.

### Comprehensive Apparatus Program Syllabus 1.17.15 - 2.22.15

#### **Module 1:** Muscle Balance and Imbalance (6 hours)

- The Meaning of Balance
- Imbalance in Strength and Flexibility as a Case of Injury
- Functional Versus Isolation Exercises
- Muscle Testing and Function

#### **Module 2:** The Lower Limbs (6 hours)

- The Hip Joint, The Knee Joint, The Ankle-Foot Complex
- The Gait Cycle

#### Module 3: The Shoulder (6 hours)

- The Shoulder Region
- Working with Clients with Shoulder Problems
- The Shoulder Region in the Pilates Repertoire

#### Module 4: Program Design

- Principles of Training
- Components of Health-Related Physical Fitness
- Dividing the Repertoire into Levels
- Working with a Broad Range of Clientele

#### Module 5: Select Populations Part 1

- Select Populations
- Athletic Populations
- Teaching Methodology

#### Module 6: Select Populations Part 2

- Select Populations
- Teaching Men and Women
- Body Type
- Different Objectives
- Different Approaches
- Final Written Exam

**PILATES FOR BALLET  
BASI WEBSITE INFORMATION**

**MY CLASSES**

<b>Course / Location</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>
Foundation Apparatus Program- Standard Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles, CA United States	Oct 4 2014 - Nov 9 2014
Comprehensive Apparatus Program- Standard South Pasadena, CA United States	Jan 17 2015 - Feb 22 2015

**FOUNDATION STANDARD MODULES**

The Foundation Standard program consists of the following six modules, which include lectures, discussion and exercise analysis and practice. In addition to the academic study, it is recommended that students complete observation, self-practice and student teaching hours.

\*Hours required for those students seeking a Mat Teaching Credential: 15 observation, 40 self-practice and 30 student teaching.\*Students planning to continue to the Comprehensive Apparatus Program are encouraged to begin their hours during the Foundation Apparatus Program.

The hours required should be completed during the program, or up to three years following the completion of the final module. If the requirements are not completed within three years, the student will need to repeat 50% of the modules prior to submitting hours and receiving a BASI Teaching Credential. Hours must be logged and submitted on BASI Pilates' downloadable forms.

# PILATES FOR BALLET

## COMPREHENSIVE STANDARD MODULES

The Comprehensive Standard Program consists of the following six modules, which include lectures, discussion and exercise analysis and practice. In addition to the academic study, students complete observation (100 hours), self practice (200 hours) and student teaching (200 hours). *Additional fees may apply.*

This program is geared for students who have completed the Foundation Apparatus Program and wish to gain comprehensive knowledge of Pilates on all the Pilates apparatus (including BASI's proprietary Avalon System).

To become BASI qualified, students will be required to complete and/or pass the following requirements:

- Pass Final Written Exam
  - Pass Final Teaching Evaluation
  - Pass Final Practical Examination
  - Pass Student Paper
  - Complete a minimum of 500 hours (observation, self practice and student teaching)
- Students who complete the Comprehensive Apparatus Program may test for a BASI Pilates teaching credential qualifying them as a teacher of BASI Pilates Advanced Principles equipping them to teach on the full compliment of Pilates apparatus (including the Avalon System). The Final Teaching Evaluation and Final Practical Examination is administered at a Centralized Testing location. *Additional fees apply.*

The hours required should be completed during the program, or up to three years following the completion of the final module. If the requirements are not completed within three years, the student will need to repeat 50% of the modules prior to submitting hours and receiving a BASI Teaching Credential. Hours must be logged and submitted on BASI Pilates' Tracking Forms.

# PILATE FOR BALLET

## VERIFICATION OF SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION

BASI Pilates - Completion  Inbox x



Liane Robertson <lianer@basipilates.com>

Feb 25

to me -

Hi Audra,

We are pleased to inform you that you have successfully completed the following components of the Body Arts and Science International® (BASI Pilates®) Comprehensive Teacher Training Program:

Final Exam Written

In order to receive your Pilates certificate from the BASI Pilates® Program the following components must be fulfilled or retaken. All examinations and evaluations reflected below must be passed with a 70% or greater:

- Modules 1-2
- Final Teaching Evaluation
- Final Practical Exam
- Student Paper
- Observation Hours (100 minimum)
- Student Teaching Hours (200 minimum)
- Practical Hours (200 minimum)

## PILATES FOR BALLET

### ANALYSIS OF CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The Pilates certification process is used to inform students of the specific exercises and teaching methods for each course, in order to prepare them to be instructors on their own. The two standard courses I took were broken down into three weekends each, six hours per Saturday and Sunday. This means there was a great amount of material given each weekend, and a lot of time in between them to remember it. Throughout the 12 total weekends, I had three different BASI instructors. They all have their own styles of teaching, but usually the days broke down fairly similarly. Usually they started with a reading from our course books discussing the parts of the body being used in that day's exercises. Next there was an overview of the new mat exercises, where we learned their proper technique. As a class, we then performed all of the mat exercises we had learned, which built up over time. Before our break we had practice time to work with partners taking turns teaching one another. After the break we basically repeated the series of events that happened earlier in the day, except the exercises were on various machines. There are a large number of apparatuses and each of them has their own set of repertoire, which includes various categories determined by the muscle groups working, and within each category are beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. Each exercise also has a specific set up depending on the apparatus. So one on a reformer for example, would have a set number of springs put on and most likely a foot bar and head rest position. The reformer is even one of the simpler machines with less settings. So needless to say it is a lot to fit in and remember in those few weekends. Not everything is required to memorize because they admit it is nearly impossible, but they hope through repetition and experience it all

becomes very familiar. By the end we were only learning new material on machines because we had gotten through all of the mat work. The first three weekends were the foundational course lessons, which meant it only included the mat and reformer exercises that fall into the category of foundation. These can be translated onto many different apparatuses so it is important to confidently know them in your own body and how to teach them on another.

People take this course for many reasons. Most want to obtain a career as an instructor. Many already have a specific path they want to go down, such as teaching Pilates for dancers, other athletes, rehabilitation, or mature clients. I found some people not even wanting to teach, but taking the course to better inform themselves and be their own teacher in a sense. The course offers a great deal of information on the human body's various ailments and how to work around or correct them, so I can see how it would be helpful for someone just looking to better their own physical lives.

The second main focus of the courses, besides learning the material, is learning how to teach it. It takes a very long period of practice and experience to be a good Pilates teacher. There are so many things to convey to the client for each exercise, that the teacher has to know how to prioritize the most important things. For example, in Pilates, breathing is essential to the execution of each exercise. It even has its own technique called intercostal breathing. Each exercise has a set time when the client should inhale and exhale. So while watching them, the teacher is not only watching for technique errors, the also have to cue the correct breathing pattern. There also has to be a consistent flow throughout the class, so unlike in ballet, there is no stopping to talk about alignment and really get the feeling into the body. Usually classes are only 50 minutes and mildly expensive, so the

client wants to get all the physical exercise they can out of it. However in cases like rehabilitation, more time would be spent making sure everything is done correctly. The pace would be slower and they would get through less material, but they are usually focusing on only a select area of muscles anyway.

Every studio, client, and group class is always very different. Most of the time every studio has their own demographic of regular clients. For example, one of the studios I studied in had mostly mature clients and those who were also working with a physical therapist, but the studio I work at now sees mostly middle-aged clients with physical ailments they are working around instead of trying to improve. The certification process teaches you about each of these scenarios and how to modify a class to each person. Most of the clients I have been teaching privates to do the exact same class every time because they are mostly limited physically to those exercises, but also because they don't like to be out of their comfort zone. On the other hand, the group classes I teach always want something new and different. Some always want a challenge and some come to class wishing they were at home on the couch. When you get some of each of those people in one class, it is hard to make everyone happy and keep cohesion within the group. It is hard work to get someone motivated and connected who doesn't particularly want to be.

BASI prepared us for all kinds of clients and situations so that once we have the experience we can become an instructor at the studio and in the alley of our choosing. The courses I took were the most general, so that someone can come out of it with a wide variety of options. They could find a studio similar to the one I have which accepts any type of client, or they could research more to find a smaller subset they want to pursue. An example of this is my first Pilates teacher at LMU who leads our course only for dancer

majors. This allows us to work on things that will directly help us with dance technique. She has taken courses and workshops specifically about Pilates for dancers to allow her to do this, extremely well I might add. But she also teaches the general LMU student body mat classes, teaches at studio off campus, and teaches privates out of clients' homes. She is an ideal example of using the Pilates instructor certification to have a career, which is involved in multiple venues and affecting as many lives as possible.

Outside of the actual course classes, before one can graduate the program and be an officially certified instructor, they must complete a few things on their own. There is a final practical exam where the student is tested on random exercises and gives a mock class to a volunteer. There is also a final paper due which offers what that student plans to use Pilates for beyond exercise. Finally, they must complete 100 observation hours, 200 self-practice hours, and 200 student teaching hours before they can take the exam. This period of time between the end of the course and the exam is crucial for the student to become as familiar with the material and as comfortable teaching it as possible. The course gives the student everything they need to continue down their own path to passing the exam and becoming a successful instructor.

## PILATES FOR BALLET

### LMU MISSION AND REFLECTION

The mission of LMU promotes academic-artistic excellence; education of the whole person (body, mind, and spirit); and service that does justice (being a human being with values that lead to the giving of the gifts of talent, knowledge, and creative expression in such a way as to a model of authentic compassion and a citizen who contributes to the well-being of others – especially the less fortunate – and the planet)

I have never felt a more full sense of awareness than I have since transferring to LMU. I have always felt challenged to explore and utilize both the academic and artistic sides of my brain in all my work. In dance classes we are challenged to use our minds as articulating, memorizing, quick-firing devices beyond the artistic creation and expression. And in academic classes we are encouraged to explore our own paths to understanding and learning instead of simply hearing a lecture and accepting the information. Especially through the dance major however, I have been able to enrich not only my body's knowledge but my mind and soul's as well. Dancing is something that can fulfill a person's entire being, but sometimes it is hard to tap into it or channel it. This was especially the case with me. I could never seem to experience productive or enjoyable movement creation, whether it was

improvisation or composition. Even though I was too old by the time I transferred here to take the fundamental dance courses to really explore these subjects, I still got great pieces of experience with it in each of the classes I did take. Here I learned to connect my body and mind for the purpose of feeding my soul instead of making something that looks cool. This is the difference that changes everything.

My thesis started with the very idea of connecting the mind to the body to produce a happier soul. This is at least true for me when I connect my knowledge of the body to my ballet technique, I feel more confident and accomplished. Pilates, along with studying kinesiology, were the windows that allowed this to happen. I fell so in love with this idea and the pure activity of Pilates that I immediately wanted to share it with everyone I knew. I told everyone how enlightened I felt after every single Pilates class and how it introduced me to new muscles and ways to activate them that I had never heard of before. It took me very little time to see and feel a difference in my ballet class, which motivated me even more to share my excitement. My ultimate goal would be that my thesis helps me establish a starting point to instruct Pilates in multiple venues, particularly to young teen dancers who are developing control of their bodies and technique. I want to spread the seemingly

obvious however widely unknown connection between Pilates and ballet. The two work so well together that it hurts me to think of how much faster my training and others training could have developed if we had utilized it from the beginning. I hope that someday this knowledge will be so common that dancers everywhere will cross train with Pilates.

Even without the connection to ballet and dance, Pilates is an incredible form of exercise and outlet to connect ones mind, body, and soul. I have never heard of a client leaving a successful Pilates class unhappy, and happy people multiply. It is cliché to say a smile is contagious because happiness isn't that simple. But I do believe that people who are truly happy deep in their soul bring others to want to achieve that same fulfillment. Pilates definitely leads me down this road, and even if it doesn't work for everyone, I hope others find their own thing that does.

# PILATES FOR BALLET

## COURSE SUMMARIES

### **Improv- CSU**

- Improvisation with cues/themes
- Group/contact improv
- Site specific improv
- Stylistic/different tempo improv

### **Choreography I- CSU**

- Choreographic devices
- Group choreography
- Solo choreography
- Silent choreography
- Musical choreography (instrumental)
- Choreographic manipulation

### **Dance Styles and Forms**

- Music composition (meter, rhythm, quality..)
- Solo choreography and study of specific musical pieces
- Choreographic devices (repetition, retrograde, diminution..)
- Group choreography
- Sight specific study

### **Laban Movement Analysis**

- LMA symbols
- LMA language, categories, and meanings (arc, spoke, wall, ball)
- Physical application of language
- Choreographic composition from language
- History of Rudolph Laban

### **Drumming for Dance- (current)**

- Proper use and technique for drums
- Knowledge of drum composition
- History of drums and songs
- Drumming from different cultures
- Songs from different cultures

### **I am, Therefore I Dance- (current)**

- Dance across cultures
- Dance in daily life
- Applications of dance

- How to use dance while not dancing
- History of uses of dance
- History on culture dance originations

### **Dance History**

- History of dance from courts, to ballet, to jazz, to modern, to contemporary
- Specifics of dancers, choreographers, innovators, companies
- Specifics of time periods, places, movements, costume
- Individual development of specific topics concerning dance history

### **Careers in Dance**

- Careers available for dancers
- How to use dancing in other careers
- How to be a dancer in daily life
- Resume and footage creation and application
- Proper professionalism and etiquette
- Preparation for life after graduation

### **Kinesiology I/II**

- Biology of the body (cells, organisms, muscles, bones, skin)
- Chemistry of the body (lactin, oxygen, digestion, cell reproduction)
- Body health (diet, activity)
- Bone, muscle, ligament, tendon make up
- Names of all relevant bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments
- Origins, insertions, technical movements of all relevant muscles
- Stretching and strength building
- Uses for dancing of all of the above

### **Careers in Dance- (current)**

- Proper resume compilation
- Proper biography compilation
- Headshots and reels
- Using dance in any career
- Etiquette with prospective companies/ choreographers
- Budgeting and financing
- Finding your path

### **Ballet**

- Foundational technique
- Alignment
- Performance
- Muscle development
- Agility
- Grace

- Traveling
- French word definitions and ballet repertoire
- Goal making
- Strengthening and stretching

### **Modern Dance**

- Groundedness
- Being in the space
- Filling the space
- Dancing with those around you
- Modern repertoire
- Counter technique
- Traveling
- Control

### **Jazz**

- History of steps (dancers, time periods, stories)
- Progressions
- Strengthening
- Mental agility
- Confidence
- Being genuine, versatile, and accurate
- Jazz terminology
- Famous jazz contributors
- Various techniques

### **World Dance- Capoeira**

- Technical steps
- Brazilian terminology
- History of capoeira
- Etiquette of participation
- Studio visit
- Inversions
- Fighting techniques
- Strengthening
- Cardio

### **Pilates/Dance Conditioning**

- Strengthening and flexibility
- How to use reformer and other tools
- Development of alignment and muscles uses for dance
- Breathing techniques
- Core engaging techniques
- Teaching/ development of knowledge and understanding

PILATES FOR BALLET

Audra Simmon  
Loyola Marymount University

Ballet has been the most popular and widespread form of dance since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. I myself have been dancing it for 17 years. Not quite as long but almost my entire existence has been accompanied by the influence of ballet. One would think that spending almost your whole life involved in one activity would leave you with all the knowledge required to be the best he or she could be. But since ballet is one of the activities you can master but never perfect, this isn't the case. There were always certain things in the ballet repertoire I couldn't figure out how to conquer, no matter how many ways I tried. And it wasn't until my junior year of college that I took Pilates for the first time, and it literally flipped my world upside down. The Pilates Method Alliance describes Pilates as "a method of exercise and physical movement designed to stretch, strengthen, and balance the body."<sup>1</sup> Once I began this new form of training I immediately started feeling muscles activate in my body that I had never felt before, and I started actually understanding proper body alignment that I could transfer to my ballet classes. Once I realized how in sync the two forms of movement are with each other, it became hard to imagine one without the other. Elizabeth Lowe Ahearn says in her book, *The Pilates Method and Ballet Technique: Applications in the Dance Studio*, that Pilates "maximizes muscle efficiency (strength, flexibility, control, and stamina), improves technical ability, and enhances dynamic posture and alignment."<sup>2</sup> In this paper I will be explaining just how Pilates develops a dancer's body to perform better alignment and technique as well as improve his or her strength in the desired way.

In ballet, one of the most important areas of muscle that control alignment, turnout, and stability are the inner thighs. In anatomical terminology, the muscle

groups present here are called hip adductors and hip external rotators. Even though they are so important, they are a hard group to target and activate; especially in the beginning of training when they aren't very strong. Little did I know, there are exercises in Pilates that are designed to specifically emphasize and strengthen such small weak groups. One example has the person lay on their back while their legs are raised 45 degree off the ground, moving horizontally opening and closing from each other. This forces the core and the rest of the body to work stability in an isometric contraction, while the hip adductors and abductors, inner thighs, work to move the legs in concentric contraction. Hip abductors pull the legs away from the centerline of the body, while hip adductors pull the legs back to the centerline of the body. In *Dance Anatomy and Kinesiology* by Karen Clippinger, she defines an isometric contraction as involving "a partial or complete contraction of a muscle where no visible joint movement occurs."<sup>3</sup> And a concentric contraction as "a shortening of the muscle and resultant visible joint movement."<sup>4</sup> Targeting these muscles in Pilates can help a dancer find them during ballet exercises, so that he or she can utilize the proper technique in proper alignment.

Another group of muscles that Pilates teaches you about are the spine flexors, also known as the abdominals. The muscle rectus abdominis is the one most people commonly refer to as their "abs" because that is the "6 pack" muscle which pulls your back over into a contraction. However there are many other abdominal muscles around and under it that contribute or produce different motions. Utilizing all these muscles correctly will bring the pelvis into proper alignment, which is a position where both the ASIS (anterior superior iliac spine) or 'hip bones' are in the

same plane as the PS (pubic symphysis). The Pilates neutral pelvis, used in almost every exercise, is also the correct placement for ballet. It corrects the pelvis from being over anteriorly or posteriorly tilted. This means it keeps a dancer from arching the lower back or tucking the behind too much. Since most of the Pilates exercises are done while working to maintain the position, it builds the strength to easier maintain it in ballet as well. Another example of enhancements Pilates creates for ballet is flexibility. There are exercises to increase a stretch in the arches of the feet, plantar flexion or pointing of the ankles, mobility in the hips, and extension of the back. All of these are essential in ballet technique, from standing on releve to a proper arabesque position.

Pilates develops a dancer's body for ballet with strength in all the areas necessary. There are many forms of cross training available, but not many produce the lean muscle ideal for ballet while maintaining maximum flexibility. Pilates does just this through its unique style of the exercises as well as the flow they are done in. It is rare to see a person put so much weight on for an exercise in Pilates that they max out in 3 repetitions. In a *Dance Magazine* article by Lizzie Feidelson about Gabrielle Salvatto, Feidelson talks about cross training. "Instead of going full-out with cardio, Salvatto does reps on her in-home Pilates reformer, using her own body and the resistance of the machine instead of weights to create a slow burn."<sup>5</sup> The lower weight and slower movement through each part, utilizes smaller and more intrinsic or deep muscles that other activities don't get to. It keeps the muscles from becoming bulky and tight. Pilates focuses a lot on isometric contraction, or stability, as I mentioned before, so that each exercise is including the whole body to complete

it. This makes it possible in ballet to hold the body's proper alignment together while completing such movement as petite allegro, fouette turns, grande allegro, or anything else. This stability in the core is controlled by all of the spine extensors, flexors, and lateral flexors. Stability leads to balance, and balance is one of the most important aspects in dance.

One of the other essential aspects of ballet is the footwork. It requires a person's feet to be much more flexible and strong than average. Conveniently, Pilates has an entire section of work dedicated to enhancing these qualities. The exercises stretch the arches of the feet and the mobility in the ankles, while also building strength in the intrinsic muscles, which produce that beautiful pointe. It is important that these muscles are strong enough to support the flexibility in joints or injuries are likely to occur. The feet were not naturally meant to take all of the body's weight on only its toes. If the muscles don't control the flexibility, things can easily overstretch and tear. This is one of the largest reasons that dancers turn to Pilates for their extra conditioning, because it allows the body to have control in moving through extreme levels of flexibility and movement.

Most athletes of any kind would agree that cross training is very important to maintain a balanced body and mind. Since dance requires the body to be mended into positions it wasn't built for, it is hard to find proper ways to support itself outside of actual dance training. Most fitness styles create bulky muscle or only work with superficial, surface muscle groups that inhibit flexibility. Using large amounts of weight while doing a low amount of repetitions, for example, exhausts the muscles so quickly that it requires immediate intense repair that build on top of

one another forming bulk. None of this is good for a dancer's technique or aesthetic. Pilates however, works to build these large muscle groups, as well as the smaller deeper ones, in a lean way that actually enhances flexibility and stability. It allows them to have this extreme level of flexibility but practice it safely because they have developed the strength to support it. Not only does it make a dancer stronger, it teaches them about alignment and how to target and activate the proper muscles in ballet class. In *Somatics in Dance—Dance in Somatics*, Elin Lobel explains how important it is for students to have “a working knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and kinesiology in order to achieve a greater depth of understanding of the moving body.”<sup>6</sup> Knowing all of this helps them apply in to themselves. Pilates is the outlet in which they can learn all of this information from personal experience and put it into their bodies immediately. Pilates and ballet help each other and work together so well it is hard to imagine the time before they had one another. They should be utilized to assist each other more often and in more places. It is astonishing to me that I did not make this discovery until college, and I hope that the future brings a more universalized combination of Pilates and Ballet.

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<sup>1</sup> Pilates Method Alliance. "About Pilates." Accessed October 9, 2014.

<http://www.pilatesmethodalliance.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3277>

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Lowe Ahearn. "The Pilates Method and Ballet Technique," *Journal of Dance Education* 6:3 (2006): 92-99, accessed October 9, 2014, doi: 10.1080/15290824.2006.10387321

<sup>3</sup> Karen Clippinger. *Dance Anatomy and Kinesiology*. (Sheridan Books, 2007) 52.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>5</sup> Lizzie Feidelson, "Gabrielle Salvatto." *Dance Magazine* 88, no. 7 (July 2014): 48-58. *International Bibliography of Theatre & Dance with Full Text*, accessed December 11, 2014.

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<sup>6</sup> Elin Lobel & Julie Brodie. "Somatics in Dance—Dance in Somatics." *Journal of Dance Education* 6:3 (2006): 69-71, accessed October 9, 2014. doi: 10.1080/15290824.2006.10387317

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## PILATES FOR BALLET

### ARTISTIC STATEMENT

Dance is the only thing that I have ever experienced a yearning for besides that of another human being. I am speaking about the feeling a person gets deep in their bones when they have been without a person and all they can do is think about being with them again. This is how I feel when I haven't danced for too long a period of time. I can feel a physical ache and discomfort in my body like it just cannot put up with its pedestrian life any longer. As if it is being imprisoned and controlled to move with only a small set of monotonous bonds, waiting for the moment its legs will travel farther apart from one another and its arms will reach out of its joints. I have these withdrawals because it is my drug. Life is a different journey on dance. The feelings, sounds, and sights a person experiences are more vivid. Emotions become more fluid and revealing. If given into, dance can allow someone to find his or her truest self even just for a moment. I often wonder, since many others and myself feel so strongly about dance and hold it so highly, that if it is actually the nature of only dance. Is it one of the very few things we have in life that can affect someone in this intense way, or does everyone feel that same way about their own passions? I have played

many sports and instruments, but when I got too frustrated I just quit and never looked back. I draw and I have particular enjoyment from studying certain subjects, but I get bored of them fairly quickly. Ballet for example, can make me more frustrated than anything else in life but I keep trying. It can be one of the most monotonous physical activities but I crave it endlessly. Nothing else does what dance does for me.

I like to give ballet partial credit for raising me. When I wasn't under the influence of my parents, I was being taught how to behave by ballet. Yes, of course there is a strict set of rules as to the technique of the body, which take more than a lifetime to perfect, but it is so much more than physical work. Ballet is a discipline. It teaches someone all the etiquette he or she will ever need to be a successful and respectable person in society. I always told my mom I didn't need cotillion because I had ballet, and after receiving compliments from various other parents to my manners, she had to agree. I learned how to hold myself, how to respect my elders and superiors. I learned to be aware and conscious of others space, about appropriate actions for the appropriate situations. It taught me how to work hard to achieve a goal and be confident that I could do anything anyone else could if I tried hard enough. These things are the reasons why I appreciate dance, for they have built the person

that I am and that I can be proud of. These however, are not the only reasons why I love and choose dance over everything else.

Dance in all styles requires a strenuous physical and mental regiment if taken seriously. This is why a performance career isn't expected to last very long at all. Ballet is most often known as the most difficult to perfect. In that case I should say it is technically considered impossible to perfect, but we all have our prima ballerina Russian idols. For some reason, even though we know this, millions of girls sign up to attempt to achieve something we know we will never achieve. Why do we do this? It is the same kind of addicting to me as drawing a picture and finding one tiny thing that is wrong, then trying to fix it until I have ruined the entire thing. It wasn't even that noticeable in the first place, but I just can't stop. In ballet, I could do a combination in class and feel so accomplished and proud of myself that I should leave it and move in. But instead I think, well if I did it that well I bet I can push it further next time. It is an endless but wonderful cycle. Feeling achievement that came directly from something I did with my body is near indescribable. This technique is extremely important to me and always has been. In today's world however, it is becoming less important as abstractness and improvisation is gaining more value. Some say ballet is just a

physical repetition of moves that means nothing and gets a person nowhere artistically because it has no substance and historical value. I feel completely opposite. The movement may not have grown from struggle or community, but a good day in ballet can overcome even the most straining burdens happening in the real world. That is how I know it means something and how I know it is important. Which is why dance draws me in and keeps me coming.

The reason I choose dance every day, even on days I am not technically dancing, is because it is an escape. For me dancing creates a world, even for a couple hours, where bills don't exist. The ten-page paper I have to write doesn't exist. It is a place where I may not be able to do everything now, but it promises that it is at least possible. Dance connects my body to my mind and my soul. I feel physically full of life, my intelligence feels fully awakened, and my soul becomes fully consumed and expanded at the same time. It is the greatest duo life has to offer, combining physicality and art, offering fulfillment and enlightenment from moving my own body. I want to pursue dance as for as long as I can so I can continue to improve my skill, which will endlessly deepen the exploration and findings of my life and myself. The farther I take it, the more enlightened and connected with the world

around me I will feel. This is why I love dance. I say love with the strength of the love I have for my family, because it is my family. It has assisted me throughout my entire life. It has affected my life choices and everything I consider myself to be. My confidences, my drive, my understanding in all respects of my life are direct results from growing up in this world. I would give up anything and everything just to experience it all again. I hope that dance is not the only thing that makes people feel as intensely as I do about it. Because if it is, more people dancing would make our world of humans a much happier community, and it would make me sad to know it is that easy but not a reality. I hope that other people are finding this kind of passion in the things they choose to dedicate and spend their lives doing. And I hope that I will be one of the lucky ones who can keep allowing dance to guide me into old age.

## PILATES FOR BALLET

### MOVING TO LA AND FINDING A CAREER

#### Housing:

- <http://www.carmelapartments.com/eighth-and-grand-los-angeles-ca/residences>
- [http://www.related.com/apartment-rentals/los-angeles/downtown/the-emerson?ctd\\_ac=3399705&LOC=RR117\\_DIGSEM\\_GOD00.1000&ctx\\_name=DNI\\_RR117\\_DIGSEM\\_GOD00.1000&gclid=CMOS7MSGsMUCFQqEfgodvioA0A](http://www.related.com/apartment-rentals/los-angeles/downtown/the-emerson?ctd_ac=3399705&LOC=RR117_DIGSEM_GOD00.1000&ctx_name=DNI_RR117_DIGSEM_GOD00.1000&gclid=CMOS7MSGsMUCFQqEfgodvioA0A)
- [http://essexapartmenthomes.com/california/los-angeles-area/los-angeles/pe-lofts?refer=google&gclid=CIDxxNCGsMUCFZGTfgod\\_XkA7Q](http://essexapartmenthomes.com/california/los-angeles-area/los-angeles/pe-lofts?refer=google&gclid=CIDxxNCGsMUCFZGTfgod_XkA7Q)

#### Contemporary Ballet Companies:

- <http://www.acbdances.com/history>
- <http://calballet.com>
- <http://www.lacontemporarydance.org>