

Pilates exercise regimen gains foothold

By Patricia Bathurst
Special for The Republic

The late Joe Pilates called his program "exercise for a lifetime."

The German exercise guru, who came to America in 1926, had no problem describing the benefits of his regimen of stretching, exercise and breathing.

"You will feel better in 10 sessions, look better in 20 sessions, and have a completely new body in 30 sessions," he said.

Unlike other exercise programs, most people who begin a Pilates (puh-LAH-teez) program stick with it, local instructors say, noting that many other exercises can become boring and repetitive.

Each Pilates session can be different, they said, tailored to the current body needs of an individual. Each exercise is performed for only a few repetitions, then it's on to the next.

When Pilates opened his first exercise studio in New York he predicted: "People won't understand the brilliance of my work for 50 years." He died at age 87 in 1967, still fit but not famous.

That appears to be changing. Several East Valley instructors offer classes in Pilates techniques. While Pilates can be done at home, it's usually performed in studios with trained instructors. The exercises include a lot of stretching and more than 500 movements.

An hour session will include movements performed on a mat, and also typically on two pieces of weird-looking equipment. One is called the Reformer, a platform with a mat, springs, a bar and two loops for control and precision; and the Cadillac, a sort of contemporary version of the rack with springs to help people stretch.

Pilates draws upon yoga and calisthenics, but relies greatly on breathing and working to develop what Pilates called "the powerhouse" — the abdomen, lower back and buttocks.



Mike Rynearson/The Arizona Republic

Pilates instructor Virginia Nicholas helps Lauren Van Assche with an exercise in Nicholas' studio in Tempe.

Originally, he worked almost exclusively with dancers at his New York studios, and the techniques remained known mostly to the dance world until recently.

"I couldn't believe how it changed the shape of my body," said Rita Spears, 48, a lawyer in Tempe. Spears, a self-described "avid exerciser and weight trainer," began Pilates classes after a back injury forced her to cut back on other activities.

"I've had no back problems, and I even have a friend who hadn't seen me in a year who couldn't believe how much weight I seem to have lost. I haven't — and I'm as strong as I ever was."

Fran Bevington, 51, of Mesa, takes Pilates classes with her daughter, Ashley. Both are dancers.

"It looked like so much fun when I saw Ashley doing it," Bevington said. "I found out it wasn't just fun, it really felt

good. I think it's something you really need as you get older, because it develops your flexibility and strengthens your muscles.

"It's really helped Ashley, too. It's showed her the center of her body, she's injury free, and she's really strengthened her back."

Intel engineer Patricia Ramirez, 30, of Ahwatukee, said Pilates has helped her regain strength and flexibility she lost after the birth of her daughter, who's now 4.

"I had been doing high impact aerobics before she was born, as often as six times a week. And then I got pregnant, my metabolism changed completely, and I stopped aerobics. And felt awful. Pilates has definitely helped," she said.

Virginia Nicholas began training in the Pilates technique in 1988, as a professional dancer. She has been certified to offer training since 1995, and teaches at her studio in Tempe and with Arizona State University's dance classes, Ballet Arizona and at the Phoenician Resort in Scottsdale.

Pilates-style training in the East Valley is also offered by Danielle Johnson, 30, of Mesa, at a mat class she teaches at the Naturally Fit for Women center in Tempe.

"I've incorporated a lot of the Pilates techniques I learned when I studied dance at ASU," she said. "I've also

worked with Virginia (Nicholas), and have done other mat classes. I don't do the sequencing that Pilates uses, but I do use the exercise ball and resistance tubing.

"Most people taking the classes here or at Mountain-side in Gilbert (where she also teaches) hear about it from other people. It really affects your posture.

"Pilates movements are much more about form than repetition — it's a whole way of being aware of your body."

Liza Allen, 34, of Gilbert, is another dancer turned certified instructor. She teaches at Mountainside Gym, too, both in Chandler and Gilbert, as well as offering private instruction in her home. "Pilates really isn't anything mysterious," she said. She trained at the Physicalmind

Institute in northern California and maintains her certification through training there and at other sites in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

"I feel that Pilates is highly anatomical. You really have to learn to focus on your body, and various parts of your body, and your breathing. For me, the really exciting moments are when suddenly, someone can do a movement they've been unable to accomplish before. It's sometimes a real breakthrough.

"The whole idea is to take them along a path of discipline to get there. I like to ease people in and really help them along until, suddenly, they can do things they didn't know they could do. For me, the key is to make people enjoy the process until they 'get it.'"

EAST VALLEY STOCK REPORT

MARKETS: N - NYSE, O - NASDAQ, A - AMEX

CLOSE	STOCK	TICKER	MKT	CHANGE	VOLUME	HIGH	LOW
4.19	Action Performance	ACTN	O	+0.69	8224	31.13	3.19
16.19	America West Air	AWA	N	+0.13	721	21.75	12.50
12.88	Cerprobe Corp	CRPB	O	-0.13	576	21.00	4.44
2.50	Fst American Health	FAH	A	...	17	4.38	2.13
3.44	Fst American Health	FAHC	O
40.50	Insight	NSIT	O	+2.50	3999	74.38	22.75
14.00	Inter-Tel	INTL	O	+1.13	3007	46.38	12.00
67.00	Microchip Tech	MCHP	O	-3.06	21094	77.38	33.00
18.50	Mobile Mini	MINI	O	-0.25	158	28.00	15.50
25.88	Three-Five Systems	TFS	N	-0.88	3235	82.50	8.38

Regional interest

48.88	Boeing	BA	N	+1.13	25447	50.25	32.00
35.50	HoneyWell	HON	N	-0.31	33385	67.19	32.13
62.00	Intel Corp	INTC	O	-1.56	162810	73.75	32.50
56.25	Medtronic Inc	MDT	N	...	22102	57.88	29.94
33.88	Motorola Inc	MOT	N	-0.75	79814	61.50	27.38
11.13	Orbital Sciences	ORB	N	...	2723	24.19	10.63
1.75	Simula Inc	SMU	N	...	110	7.38	1.63
49.31	TRW	TRW	N	+0.31	5483	65.00	39.75
49.88	UAL	UAL	N	-1.25	9091	79.00	45.75

CANADIAN STOCK REPORT

STOCK	VOLUME	CLOSE	CHANGE	STOCK	VOLUME	CLOSE	CHANGE
Alcan	3274	49.70	-0.10	Nortel Net	48736	115.85	-1.45
BCE Inc	45403	34.30	+1.65	PetroCCV	3518	29.70	-0.15
Bank Mtl	4968	64.60	-0.30	Powr Fin	1037	28.10	+0.10
Bank N S	6059	38.00	+0.20	Royal Bnk	2975	81.80	-0.70
Barick gld	4358	23.70	-0.05	Seagram	2134	81.60	+0.10
BombdrBf	23752	24.90	-1.40	Shell Can	99	34.50	+0.10
CLBCom	6401	42.35	-0.65	ThomCor	2198	58.00	-0.20
CP Ltd	5523	40.40	+0.15	TorDmBk	6626	35.60	-0.10
ImperialOil	3363	35.30	+0.25				
Laidlaw	6684	.53	-0.03				

BUSINESS CALENDAR

WEEKLY MEETINGS

AHWATUKEE FOOTHILLS NETWORKING GROUP

Meets 7 a.m. Tuesdays at Le Peep Grill of Chandler, 6245 W. Chandler Blvd. Networking for business professionals. Information: Fred Krafczyk, (480) 831-6002 or (480) 831-8089.

ALI LASSEN'S LEADS CLUB
Meets Thursdays at Marie Calender's Restaurant, 7455 W. Chandler Blvd., Chandler. Chandler chapter of national networking organization. Call Ruth Maranto, Arizona executive director. (623) 581-9133.

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ALI LASSEN'S LEADS CLUB
Meets Tuesdays at Egg'Sceptional Cafe, 3821 E. Baseline, Gilbert. Gilbert chapter of national networking organization. Call Ruth Maranto, Arizona executive director. (623) 581-9133.

ALI LASSEN'S LEADS CLUB
Meets 7:15 a.m. Wednesdays at Mimi's Cafe, 1250 S. Alma School Road, Mesa. Mesa chapter of national networking organization. Call Ruth Maranto, Arizona executive director. (623) 581-9133.

ARIZONA BUSINESS

CONNECTION

At 7 a.m. every Wednesday at the Ranch House Restaurant, 2155 S. Dobson Road, Mesa. Networking for business professionals. Information: (480) 649-5303.

ARIZONA SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION

Meets first Saturdays at National Speakers Association, 1500 S. Priest Drive, Tempe. Location and times change for August and December. Educates and inspires speaking professionals toward excellence. Includes breakfast. \$25 members, \$35 non-members. (480) 966-0442.