

# Pilates system not just another workout

■ Joseph Pilates designed his workout plan while imprisoned in England during World War I

By Sara Jarrett  
Oregon Daily Emerald

"In 10 sessions, you'll feel a difference; in 20 sessions, you'll see a difference, and in 30 sessions, you'll have a whole new body."

Joseph Pilates definitely believed in his body refining system.

The Pilates Method of Body Conditioning has been around for nearly 80 years, but it has just recently become one of the highest-fashion movie star fitness trends around. Such glamour magazines as *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue* run how-to articles on the technique.

Fully developed during WWII, Pilates blends both East and West philosophies of staying fit by providing a complete body/mind experience. Born in Germany in 1880, Pilates had serious health problems as a child. But instead of succumbing to a frail life, he grew determined to improve his health. It was either that or get repeatedly beat up in numerous schoolyard fights.

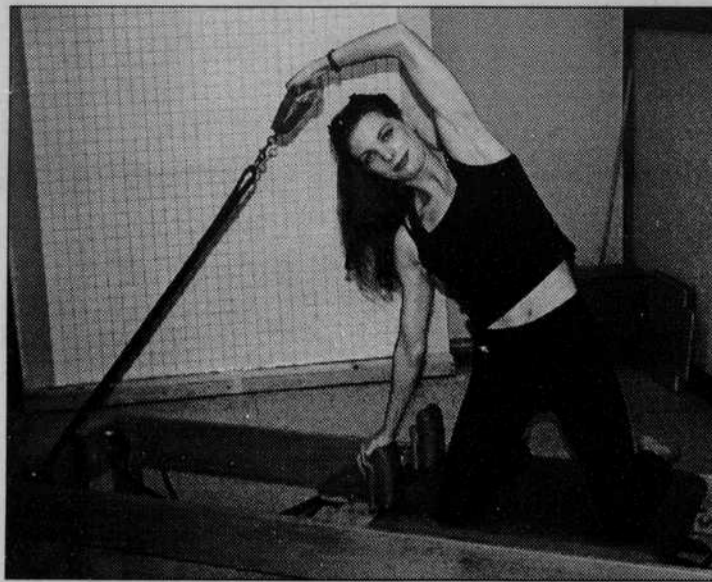
As an adult, he studied almost every type of movement he could get his hands on, including gymnastics, boxing, skiing, diving and circus performing, as well as yoga and karate. The knowledge he culminated from the total of these experiences directed the formation of Pilates' theories.

Then, after he left Germany in 1912 to train as a professional boxer in England, World War I broke

out; Pilates was imprisoned as an "enemy alien." But this surprise internment period worked to his advantage when "Pilates further evolved his theories ... to instruct fellow internees in self defense and body building. Later, transferred to the Isle of Man, he worked as a nurse, applying his knowledge to help rehabilitate war-injured and diseased internees," Maria Junco wrote in *Dance Teacher Now* in 1998.

After the war, Pilates moved back to Germany to train the Hamburg police force but soon grew to distrust the political climate of his country. In 1923, Pilates moved to America and founded the Pilates studio in New York, where the headquarters remain to this day. Upon his death in 1967, Pilates left the studio to Ramona Kryzanowski who still oversees the certification process.

Careful preservation of the theoretical base of Pilates' work is one of the reasons the system is not well known, Junco writes. But because of an influx of celebrity endorsements, Pilates seems to be



Graduate student Laura Wren works up a sweat while practicing pilates.

moving into the mainstream. Jamie Lee Curtis says, "The Pilates workout is the only program that has truly changed my body and made me feel great." While Vanessa Williams claims "Pilates is the best workout for me because it's non-stressful on the back. You don't build bulk; you streamline your muscles in a way you can't with any other form of exercise."

Part of this mainstream success has to be credited to Mari Winsor, who is a certified Pilates instructor, professional dancer and teacher who owns and operates two Pilates studios in the Los Angeles area. Winsor has worked with such stars as Patrick Swayze, Danny Glover and Courtney

Thorne-Smith to name a few.

However, Laura Wren, a graduate student in dance at the University and the only certified Pilates instructor from Oklahoma, warns that though Pilates is extremely popular right now, many who claim to be teaching Pilates are actually modifying the technique.

"Make sure [your teacher] is a certified instructor or you could end up getting hurt," she says.

What makes Pilates different from aerobics and weight lifting is that it works from the inside out; every sequence treats the body as a complete unit rather than separated parts. The mover is forced to use his or her deepest muscles. Your muscles become lean and long, which are three times stronger than short muscles, Wren says.

"Pilates made me so incredibly strong," Wren raves. "Before, I'd lift weights, but I wasn't defined. Pilates has increased the strength in my upper body and abdominals. It has also increased my awareness of what my body is doing: alignment and control."

There are more than 600 exercises in the technique with basic, intermediate and advanced levels. Even asthma sufferers are benefited because Pilates wrings out the lungs, Wren explains. Every movement has a corresponding breathing pattern. Because it's more controlled — percussive inhaling and exhaling — it's very beneficial to constricted breathers.

Joseph Pilates devised the method as a series of movements on a mat, but Pilates can also be done on a machine called a reformer. Designed from scraps of material he found in prison, the machine was first a crude assembly of bed springs and chair legs. The mat work, however, is the core of the technique, Wren concedes. The benefits of the reformer, though, is that it has spring resistance to act as a strength builder, she says.

Wren is so committed to Pilates she is devoting her master's thesis to the subject.

"There is not enough literature on the effects of Pilates," she says.

Specifically as a rehabilitation technique, it is remarkable in that there is not a lot of compression on the body. Because you lie in a supine position, there is not a lot of weight bearing or incorrect alignment, and when using the reformer, you can adjust and adapt the springs to your injury.

Only those experienced in the technique should do it alone, because one-on-one instruction ensures proper technique. There are no private studios in Eugene, but the University offers a Pilates class through the dance department.

## Tone up: How to make that New Year's resolution a reality

■ The University offers a wide range of options for students to become physically active

Bennett Lacy  
for the Emerald

So how is your annual New Year's resolution going? You know, the one where you proclaim that this is the year you finally get toned enough to parade around your boardwalk of choice during spring break like you're the latest "Baywatch" cast member.

Although Eugene's climate may not be comparable to that of Venice Beach, numbers this term have shown that thousands of University students are fighting the dreadful winter with tread-

mills and weight machines.

"I try to run outside as much as possible," says Brian Niles, a junior environmental studies major. "When the weather is bad, I go to the Recreation Center to lift some weights or run the treadmill and do what I can."

When Ducks decide they are ready to bite the bullet and begin an exercise regiment instead of biting another slice of pizza, winter term seems to be the time when turnstiles begin to spin a little faster at the Student Recreation Center at Esslinger Hall.

Whether students at the University ski, run or swim, the renovation of Esslinger Hall this past year has instigated hundreds of students to exercise indoors.

Molly Kennedy, assistant direc-

tor of Physical Activity and Recreational Services, reports that the average number of people working out at Esslinger has skyrocketed between 140 and 162 percent since winter term 1999.

Kennedy also reports that the number of students who frequent the recreation center has seen an increase between 22 and 43 percent, dependent on the week, since last term. Brent Harrison, recreational sports director at the center, states, "On average, 1,500 to 2,500 people come through [the center] daily."

Students have also taken advantage of several classes and intramural sports offered by the recently renovated and nearly completed Student Recreation Center.

"We currently have 200 to 250

people in our rec sports aerobic workout programs," Harrison says.

If aerobics is not your cup of tea, the Student Recreation Center has many intramural sports available this term and throughout the year.

"We have anything from indoor soccer and badminton to floor hockey and flag football," Harrison says. "We also have over 100 teams for intramural basketball."

The eclectic mix of options for student fitness that the University has to offer is what makes students such as Niles pleased with the different ways to burn fat.

"I have also looked into the Outdoor Program," he says. "I ski competitively and also teach [skiing]. It's nice to see schools that offer a ski team and things other than the basics of football

and basketball."

If the threat of being graded based on how well you feel the burn is something you need to jumpstart your exercise program, a physical education class may do the trick.

"We also offer over 100 P.E. classes ranging from traditional activities such as basketball and swimming to things such as trampoline and juggling," Harrison says.

Regardless of your excuse this time around, there is no denying that the University is trying to meet the needs of students who are fitness-minded.

So until you get that "Baywatch" role, keep in mind that the resources to finally keep your resolution are right here on campus.

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