

Spreading the Pilates **passion**



YOU REFER TO PILATES AS AN INTELLIGENT FORM OF EXERCISE. WHY IS THIS? Pilates shares with yoga a thoughtful approach to exercise. Both disciplines require you to be aware of how you are moving. Joseph Pilates wrote that Pilates is both mental and physical training. In his book *Your Health* (1934) he talks about 'balance of mind and body' and stressed that it is 'not mind or body but mind and body.' By learning new exercises and new movement patterns, you can train the brain alongside the body. Pilates requires you to move with precision, which means you have to constantly be aware of what you are doing.

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE BEFORE PILATES? A lot less hectic. Having trained and worked in secondary schools as a history teacher, I had given up teaching to raise my daughters. My husband's job meant that we lived in Holland for five years. It was here that I injured my back, although I think the damage was done during my pregnancy and just after I had the girls. As a result, when I tried to play golf I injured my back. I tried everything but in the end learned to live with the pain. When we moved to Sydney, I turned up to a yoga class at the wrong time and walked into a Pilates class instead. I wondered what Pilates was but tried it and was hooked, so much so that I couldn't bear the thought of living without it. I decided to train to teach. I didn't intend to write books or to present DVDs, they were just a natural way to tell people how wonderful Pilates is. I could never have dreamed that, nearly 20 years on, we would be training Pilates teachers across the world.

HOW IS PILATES DIFFERENT FROM OTHER FITNESS FORMS? The main difference between Pilates and the majority of fitness techniques is in the emphasis we put on being aware of your alignment and controlling your movements. The key is in controlling every aspect of an exercise – the precision of each

Dubbed the Queen of Pilates, **Lynne Robinson has been credited with popularising the practice in the UK.** She speaks with Kamini Ghose ahead of her upcoming visit to Six Senses Zighy Bay in Oman

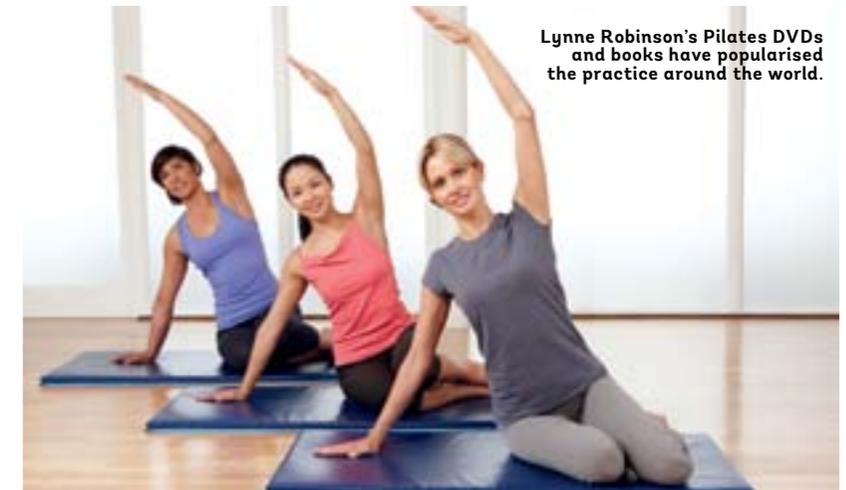
starting position and each movement. I remember my first Pilates teacher in Sydney correcting my posture and I felt so strange. Initially I felt unbalanced as this lengthened posture was new to me. It takes time for the body – and mind – to adjust.

HOW ARE YOGA AND PILATES COMPATIBLE? Yoga and Pilates are very compatible. They are both mind-body disciplines and they require you to be 'present' in the moment while you exercise. The focus on breathing well is just one common theme. Joseph Pilates studied yoga and drew inspiration from it. I love the double meaning of that word 'inspiration' – to breathe in, to find motivation.

The main difference lies in the fact that Pilates is not really a spiritual discipline. Joseph Pilates wrote about mind, body and spirit but we do not have the same spiritual heritage as yoga. Also, and please correct me if I have misunderstood this, I believe yoga is about achieving stillness. Pilates is about movement. We use repetition of movement to train the body to move better. »

LEARN FROM THE *Queen of Pilates*

LYNNE ROBINSON will hold a Pilates retreat at Six Senses Zighy Bay, Musandam Peninsula, Oman, from November 7 to 10. Intimate group mat-work classes, including a nightly starlight session at the spa's open-air pavilion, are open to resort guests. Limited private sessions are also available and will focus on either Pilates for motherhood, Pilates for sports performance or Pilates for relaxation. Group lessons cost OMR30 (AED286), while private classes cost OMR90 (AED860). Villa accommodation at Six Senses Zighy Bay starts at US\$1,039 (AED3,816) per night, including breakfast. **For information, visit www.sixsenses.com/resorts/zighy-bay/destination**



Lynne Robinson's Pilates DVDs and books have popularised the practice around the world.

WORDS: KAMINI GHOSE. IMAGES: SUPPLIED



Bahrain, Dubai and the incredible Six Senses Zighy Bay resort with the goal of inspiring – that word again – people to not just practise Pilates, but also train to teach so that we can spread the word.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR ANYONE WHO IS IN TWO MINDS ABOUT PILATES?

Find a properly qualified teacher, preferably Body Control Pilates trained – I'm biased – who modifies every exercise to each individual in the room, even in a group class. That way everyone is working at their own level of fitness. My other advice is to take time to do the exercises properly. Pilates cannot be rushed. Too many people want to do the advanced work before they are ready and this is when injuries can happen.



Lynne Robinson's clients have included Hugh Grant, Liz Hurley, Sophie Dahl and Pat Cash as well as top sports teams, including Chelsea Football Club."

WHAT SHOULD MY INSTRUCTOR BE TELLING ME OR MAKING ME AWARE OF?

The most common mistake that people make when doing Pilates is that they over use their core muscles. You only need to engage them as, when, or even if, you need to control your alignment and movements. When I travel I meet so many Pilates fans who can hardly breathe they are pulling their navel to spine so hard. Less is more.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BACKGROUND OF AN INSTRUCTOR TO INSTRUCTION? IS IT ENOUGH TO JUST BE A PASSIONATE BELIEVER IN PILATES?

I feel very, very strongly about the importance of thorough teacher training. This is why I set up Body Control Pilates teacher training 20 years ago, as I was horrified with the standard of some

teacher training. I believe that anyone can become a teacher. Dancers make wonderful performers of Pilates but they do not always make the best teachers. Yes, they can demonstrate the exercises well but they often lack the teaching skills and empathy needed to be good teachers. Being passionate is essential if you are going to teach, but it is only one part of the job. You need to be knowledgeable about the body and about the method, to be good at motivating and helping people to learn. Your background is less important than your willingness to learn. However, you should be aware that if you come from a non-teaching, non-bodywork background it may take you longer to qualify. We started teacher training in Doha last year and we are about to start in Bahrain. This November I'll be visiting Qatar,

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY TO THE SCEPTICS?

On a very basic level you are less likely to injure yourself if you are aware of what you are doing. If I walk through the average gym I have to hold myself back. The lack of body awareness is quite scary. People are so busy counting the number of repetitions or going for the burn that they are not at all aware of how they are moving. It is the mind that controls our movements. From the moment we are born, our bodies are a tool of learning. You just have to listen to them. ✨

For more information on Lynne Robinson and her Body Control Pilates teacher training programmes, Pilates retreats, books and DVDs visit her website and online store at www.bodycontrolpilates.com