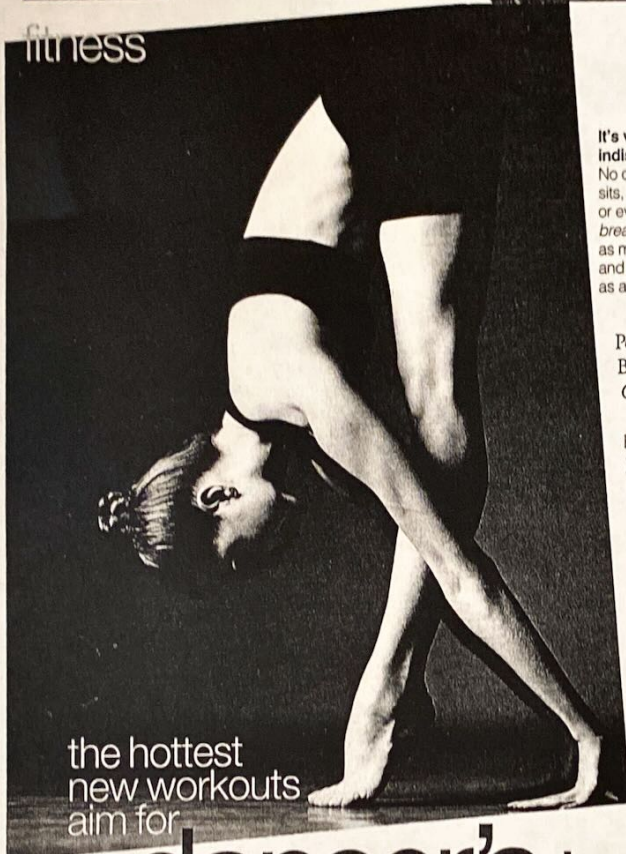


# ELLE®

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fitness



the hottest  
new workouts  
aim for

## a dancer's body

Sarah Brown on how to get tall, thin, and tight

**N**aomi Campbell, Daryl Hannah, and Vanessa Williams may have been blessed with some of the best bodies on the planet, but even they owe an inch or two of their Amazonian stature and swan-like posture to the lengthening principles of ballet.

For anyone who has ever coveted the long, lithe lines of a dancer's body, pirouetted out of a theater lobby after a dance performance, or reluctantly hung up their pink slippers and wooly leg warmers after the third grade, the new wave of ballet-inspired, "no-bulk" workouts offers a second chance. Dance—ballet especially—develops elongated muscles, as opposed to the tight, compact physique of a weight trainer or step-class junkie.

When Stephanie Herman, a former principal ballerina who has danced with Baryshnikov, Nureyev, Balanchine, Alvin Ailey, and Martha Graham, felt overdeveloped from aerobics, she went back to her roots: Muscle Ballet and Esprit de Danse (available on video: 800-775-1580) are dance-derived workouts that incorporate ballet's muscle-elongating principles, Pilates's muscle-isolation elements, and yoga's mental focus.

Herman, who teaches classes at the Lodge at Skylonda and

**It's virtually indisputable:** No one walks, sits, moves, or even breathes with as much poise and grace as a dancer.

Bay Area REACH Fitness Club, encourages students to "make your legs longer" by pointing and fully extending each foot and toe. "Ballet lengthens muscles as they're being stretched," she explains. The fluid, gentle movements prevent overdeveloped muscles, building them progressively instead.

"Ballet doesn't bulk up your body—it refines it," says Peter Martins, ballet master in chief of the New York City Ballet, in *New York City Ballet Workout: Fifty Stretches Anyone Can Do for a Strong, Graceful, and Sculpted Body* (Morrow).

### resculpting the body

Dance and Pilates do appear to deliver miracles: They make bodies look not only leaner, but taller. "It's unbelievable—if you learn to hold your body correctly, you can really change it," says Elisabeth Halfpapp, an instructor and eighteen-year veteran of the Lotte Berk Method, a fitness technique based on modern dance, yoga, and orthopedic back exercises. "Looking better isn't always about losing weight," agrees Linda Farrell, a personal trainer who teaches her blend of ballet, Pilates, and yoga at New York's Equinox Fitness Clubs. "Slouching shortens the spine," she says. "Sometimes people will want to lose ten pounds, but after they learn to support their posture with their muscles, they may only need to lose three or five. One client added half an inch to her height."

### building strength

In one groundbreaking 1970s study, James A. Nicholas, MD, considered the strength, speed, and agility required by sixty-one different professional sports. Ballet was rated the second most demanding activity, right after football.

"Dancers have always been cross-trainers out of necessity," says Peter Frame, a former principal dancer with the New York City Ballet. "In ballet, a choreographer might give the dancers a series of steps requiring different muscle groups and body parts all at once. You don't get that on a treadmill," he says.

Like Lotte Berk and Stephanie Herman, Jennifer Kries, a former New York City Ballet choreographer and Balanchine disciple, developed her own take on dance fitness, called the Method (available on video: 800-272-4214), in an effort to become injury-resistant. Taught at the Balanced Body Center at New York's World Gym, it draws celebs like Candice Bergen, Geena Davis, and Jessica Lange, along with athletes who use the postural exercises and strengthening techniques to eliminate backaches, flatten tummies, and rehabilitate injuries.

For those not gifted with the natural coordination and grace of a professional dancer, each of these workouts is designed to be unintimidating. Herman's Esprit de Danse workshops introduce basic steps one plié at a time, so that "before long," she says, "without realizing it, you're dancing!" □



# Health & Fitness

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## Dancing through life



Shalece Haas

Former ballerina Stephanie Herman has integrated ballet into a graceful new form of exercise she calls "Esprit de Danse."

### Former ballerina's unique approach helps others get fit

by Jennifer Deitz

While many people in Silicon Valley have made the 12-hour workday a habit, architect Kim Steinjen found that long hours stuck behind a desk took a toll

on her body.

Muscle strains in her neck and back became so bad she had to take time off from work to help herself heal. She tried taking medication and visited bone doctors and neurosurgeons, but short of

surgery, they couldn't recommend a cure.

Not ready to go under the knife, Steinjen looked around her health club for a physical therapy program, and to her good fortune found Stephanie Herman, a former prima ballerina turned fitness trainer.

For the last five years, the Menlo Park resident has taught dance classes and offered fitness training at Redwood City's Pacific Athletic Club. All of her fitness programs are based on the principles of Joseph Pilates, which emphasize muscle isolation and body alignment, and are enhanced by her wide-ranging knowledge of other forms of exercise and dance, including ballet, jazz, yoga, tai chi and aerobics.

Although Herman offers biweekly group fitness lessons at the club, she says clients like Steinjen who are overcoming specific injuries may benefit most by working with her individually, at least at the outset.

Some weeks Herman has Steinjen work with weights, but this time she's focusing on exercises that can be done on a floor mat in the gym's dance stu-



Shalece Haas

Herman (right) coaches Anne Emry (center) on the right moves.

over





MEAN TO A BEND? Instructor Stephanie Herman (front center) teaches "Esprit de Danse" class.

"You feel like you are really working your body but you don't feel overworked."

Nabilah Yisrael, 31, Manhattan

# Called to the Barre

*Our readers find dance-based workout fit to be tried*

By **RUTH BASHINSKY**

Daily News Staff Writer

**B**ored with aerobics? Fed up with step classes? Maybe it's time to hit the bar. Make that the barre.

Last week we asked a group of Thersday readers to check out an alternative fitness workshop called *Esprit de Danse*. Founded by native New Yorker and former principal ballerina for the Geneva and Zurich ballet companies, Stephanie Herman (who has danced with such greats as Baryshnikov and Nureyev), the class incorporates principles from ballet, jazz, modern, yoga, tai chi, karate and pilates.

Unlike an aerobic workout or weight training, Herman says her technique offers a "no-bulk" workout that leads to better muscle control — stronger, leaner and longer muscles — and an elongated look.

"I want to teach people the process of understanding their body and mind through my workouts — since the most important muscle in exercise is the brain."

Sounds great, but does it work?

"It was great. I walked in the class feeling 5-foot-1 and walked out feeling 5-foot-5," says Karen Ventura, 23, a dancer from Manhattan who takes aerobic classes four to five times a week. This workout, she says, was better. "I was more motivated because I really felt like I was working every muscle in my body."

Nabilah Yisrael, 31, a flight attendant from Manhattan, says: "I noticed that my muscles were starting to overdevelop from taking too many step classes. Because I am petite, the last thing I wanted to do

was bulk up. This form of exercise suits me much better. You feel like you are really working your body but you don't feel overworked. Afterwards, my body felt toned and well defined."

Ophelia Rawles, 35, a timekeeper from Manhattan, admitted feeling awkward at the start of the class but got into the groove in no time. She was so energized by the workout, when she got home she blasted the stereo and practiced leg kicks out of her bathroom door.

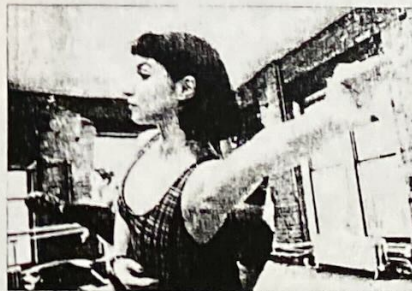
"I liked the way this incorporates ballet and some funk with modern and jazz," she said. "Also, you start out so gradually it's easy to attune yourself to the pace."

"The steps were challenging but not impossible for someone like me who is a little out of shape," said Marilyn Dawkins, 26, a legal secretary from Brooklyn.

Participants are encouraged to wear any type of exercise gear they feel comfortable in — Herman recommends jazz shoes, ballet slippers or dance sneakers — but if you do not have them then a comfortable pair of sneakers is fine. She also recommends wearing light clothing, preferably a leotard and tights, so that when you look in the mirror you can actually see how your muscles are working.

Novice should start out with three workouts a week, with a day of rest in between.

On Sept. 28, Stephanie Herman will be teaching her *Esprit de Danse* workshop at the Studio Maestro, 48 W. 68 St., NYC from 4-5:30 p.m. prices are \$15. To reserve a spot call (212) 787-1178. For more information on upcoming workshops or to order a video, call 1-800-775-1580.



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- Karen Ventura, 23, Manhattan