

## ABSTRACT

### *The Benefits of Pilates for Ballet Dancers and Its Application in Higher Education*

This session examines the positive effects of The Pilates Method for ballet dancers and provides practical examples of how it can be incorporated into postsecondary curriculum. This innovative approach to ballet pedagogy takes advantage of recent research and can be practically administered and designed, creating a multi-faceted method for teaching ballet while moving curriculum into the future.

**Research Methodology:** Evidence suggests that Pilates increases the ability of dancers to move with proper use of their centers, increased awareness of personal imbalances and enhanced anatomical integrity. The neuromuscular patterning resulting from the precise movement patterns and coordinated practice of Pilates produces heightened balance and muscular control, increased awareness of the body's capabilities and limitations, greater muscle efficiency, enhanced dynamic posture and alignment, and overall improved technique, affirming the effectiveness of Pilates integration into dance curriculum. Many books and scientific articles were reviewed and analyzed using a variety of databases in order to demonstrate the positive effects of Pilates, and new curriculum was incorporated into a BA dance program and positively assessed.

**Purpose/Approach:** Via DVD observation, demonstration, and participation, this workshop will introduce Pilates as a means to re-educate, re-train and prepare dancers for ballet class by introducing the six principles of Pilates and dissecting Pilates mat work ideally suited to prepare dancers for ballet class. Upon completion of supine and prone mat exercises, participants will transition to standing barre work where sensations and knowledge gained will be assimilated. At the conclusion of the session, participants will not only have an understanding of how Pilates serves ballet dancers, but also how it allows teachers to perceive alignment inconsistencies, technical faults, and areas of weakness in their dancers, allowing them to detect inefficient movement patterns, increase awareness of the body, and develop dancers who are less prone to injury and better able to engage in dance activities for years to come. Practical methods for incorporating The Pilates Method into college and university curriculum will be shared and discussed.

**Relevance:** Dancers frequently come to class without preparing the body or the mind. This session invites participants to experience a short Pilates warm-up in preparation for the mental and physical demands needed to perform. Regular technique class by itself does not provide a sufficient conditioning program for the prevention of injuries, nor does it address skeletal imbalances often associated with

performance and rehearsal leading to injury. Pilates supports the movement objectives of a ballet technique class using all the planes of movement exclusively and concurrently in flexion, extension, rotation, adduction, and abduction, bringing the dancers body to a physical state of balance and, therefore, eliminating the tendencies which lead to inefficient and harmful movement allowing the dancer to safely move more effectively.

Conclusion: Pilates is an effective strengthening and stretching regimen that can be incorporated into ballet technique classes and/or postsecondary curriculum in order to assist teachers develop students' skills and capacities, preparing them for 21st Century dance careers while enhancing performance.