

## Goucher College Pilates Center Hosts Master Teacher *Romana Kryzanowska*

By Lindsey Puclowski

*"Pull up those ribs before I bite you!"* says Romana Kryzanowska, president of the Pilates Guild™, as she guides Goucher student and certified Pilates instructor Alden LaPaglia '03 through an advanced set of exercises. *"If I don't threaten them, you see, they won't do it,"* the master teacher continues during her lecture-demonstration in the Todd Dance Studio.

On February 27, Kryzanowska stepped onto Goucher's campus for the first time. During the next few days, members of the Dance Department and area residents had an opportunity to take or observe her master classes and attend the lecture and reception presented in her honor—and, in the process, learn a great deal about the Pilates method and Kryzanowska's remarkable life.

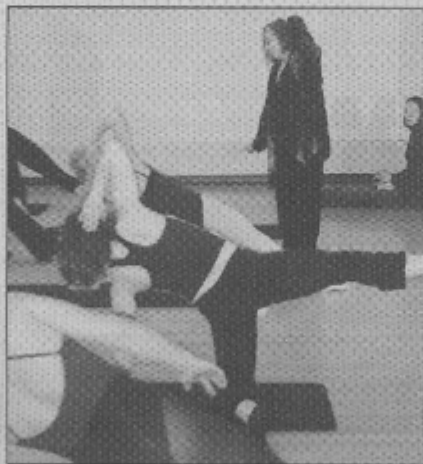
Kryzanowska began her training with the Pilates method in 1941. She was studying with George Balanchine at the School of American Ballet in New York, and when she chipped a small bone in her foot, Balanchine suggested that she work with Joseph Pilates to rehabilitate her foot and build strength. Surprisingly, she acknowledged that she really did not care for the method at first.

"I thought he was a crazy old man," she remarked affectionately. "I just loved dancing, but I didn't care for all this exercise. I remember being very snobbish."

However, Pilates told her to try five sessions and said that if, at the end of that time, she still did not like his method, he would refund her money, five cents per class.

After those five sessions, Kryzanowska said, she noticed that her body was different. "I had better balance. I had speed on my pirouettes. I've been with Pilates ever since."

She continued to study Pilates seriously, and in the 1970s she was chosen by Joseph Pilates and his wife, Clara, to carry on his work and take over the Pilates teacher-training program. Since then, she has lectured, demonstrated, and taught Pilates diligently, doing everything she can to carry out Mr. Pilates's vision. Her passion for Pilates is evident when one observes her at work.



During her visit to Goucher, Romana Kryzanowska taught a number of Pilates classes to students and members of the Baltimore community. Here, she works with students in the intermediate/advanced ballet class. Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Lowe Ahearn.

Joseph Pilates's ill health in childhood—he had suffered from rickets, asthma, and rheumatic fever—led him to create this system. He studied various forms of exercise and, incorporating ancient Greek traditions and the movements of animals, he developed a system to create strength and flexibility. His method is designed to work the entire body instead of focusing on specific muscle groups. Kryzanowska quoted Joseph Pilates several times during her lecture, reminding the audience that, when asked what the Pilates method is good for, he always replied, "Good for the body."

The Pilates system is sometimes called *contrology* because every movement is based on using the mind to control the body. "Use your mind," Kryzanowska advised during the demonstration. "Your mind tells your body what to do. You're studying the art of *contrology*, so remember control runs everything." Although Pilates might seem complex, it breaks down to basic theories. "I can describe Pilates in three words," Kryzanowska added: "Stretch, strength, control."

The lecture included demonstrations by three instructors to show the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels; the regimen of exercises were shown side by side to emphasize the differences among them. The advanced order of exercises is

remarkably long and impressive—it demands tremendous athleticism from the student. Kryzanowska emphasized the deliberateness of every movement in Pilates: "I'd be here all night if I were to tell you what all these things are for, but everything has a specific reason," she said.

Given the complexity of these movements, the audience was amazed when Kryzanowska stepped onto a piece of apparatus and performed a complicated exercise called the grasshopper. "I was told, 'Don't teach what you can't do,' so I have to prove to you I can do at least one of them," she said.

Participants were impressed not only by her dedication and impressive physical abilities but also by her sense of humor and lighthearted approach. For example, she serves champagne at her studio in New York every Friday afternoon, "and sometimes on Thursday—it's kind of the elixir of life," she added a little mischievously.

Kryzanowska came across as a person who enjoys life and tries to make the most of every moment. This exceptional and accomplished woman is likely to have a lasting impact on the Goucher community.

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