

Oh, the Places You'll Go: The Pilates Method

By A. Michelle Mulreaney '07

My experience with the Pilates Method began here at Goucher College. As a dance major, I was fortunate enough to be able to take the academic class with Elizabeth Lowe Ahearn. I learned how Pilates could improve my dancing and physique. I fell in love with Pilates because of the technique, mental focus, and workout that it requires. But I also had another love: the French language. With graduation nearing, I had to decide what to do after college. I thought to myself, why can't I do Pilates and French?

In April of 2008, one year after graduation, I had packed my life in a suitcase and was on a flight to France. Le Studio Pilates d'Aix-en-Provence was waiting for me. I had contacted a Pilates teacher-trainer who is certified through the Romana's Pilates Teacher Certification Program and who said I was welcome to do my training at her studio. I found a nice apartment building, circa 1200-something, that was close to the studio and in the center of town. My life became a wonderful *mélange* of Pilates, French, good food, good wine, outdoor markets, and beautiful scenery. It was truly a dream.



Pilates studio

I did not realize what I had gotten myself into. Not only was I enrolled in a physically vigorous training program, but it was also a mentally tough challenge to become fluent in another language. I had to answer the phone at the studio, greet new customers and try to explain to them what exactly Pilates is, which is difficult even in English. I observed the way my instructor trainer taught the Pilates exercises, and I listened to her vocabulary choices. For example, in English we can say to someone, "Peel your back off the wall," as an image to help him or her understand how to

articulate the spine. If I used that phrase in French, clients would look at me as if I were crazy. I realized I was not only learning French words, but also the language and usage of their words. After a couple of months, I was teaching Pilates classes of two or three people entirely in French. I picked up a couple "Franglais" words along the way too such as, "Scooppez-vous!" and used them to my advantage.

Currently, I am teaching the new Goucher faculty/staff/student Pilates mat class in our satellite location, in the Julia Rogers building. Teaching at Goucher feels like I have completed a circle, and I can see how valuable my experience in France has been to my understanding of Pilates. If it were not for the strong Pilates training I received here at Goucher, I would not have been able to travel across the world to train with people under the same renowned Pilates school.

I encourage all faculty, staff, and students alike to try out Pilates at our Julia Rogers location; you may fall in love with Pilates, like I did. You never know where Pilates might take you in the future.

A Tribute to Merce

By Courtney Colarik '11

On the second day of early arrival for the Fall 2009 semester, the Todd Dance Studio was packed with dancers auditioning to be in a piece set by Washington Ballet Artistic Director Septime Webre. We dancers learned that Webre was resetting a piece he had choreographed 10 years before—"D-Construction"—a piece that was conceived for and performed by four men. As Goucher's Dance Department lacks four men, Webre decided to adapt the choreography for women, who would wear pointe shoes, no less. Despite some modifications for double tours and the addition of pointe shoes, the piece did not change drastically.

Webre's time dancing for the recently passed Merce Cunningham inspired him to reset this

dance. "D-Construction" is a tribute to Cunningham; even the music, a John Cage piece, is an added tribute to Cunningham.

Working with Webre was an intense experience. I have never been through something quite like it. "D-Construction" is very athletic and filled with jumps, turns, and runs. It feels like the antithesis to the lightness we have come to expect from ballet; though, instead, it is grounded and designed to show off the pure physicality of the dancer. Webre focused on specific details, having us rehearse small sections ad nauseam, it seemed. We did not spend a lot of time listening to the actual music until the end of the week.

Working with someone with such an extensive background as a dancer, performer, choreographer, and director is something to be appreciated. Webre has worked with many numerous prominent American artists, including Merce Cunningham, Alvin Ailey, and Paul Taylor, and his works are performed by many companies in North America. Knowing his history and his importance to the dance world may have been intimidating, but it also inspired me and the other dancers to work extremely hard in his presence. Hopefully, in performing "D-Construction," we can do the piece justice, not only for Webre, but also in honor of the late Merce Cunningham.