

# magic circle

BY AMY LEIBROCK

## centering

Whether it's called the core, the powerhouse or the gut, every move starts from your center. More than just the abs, it also includes muscles in the buttocks, hips and back. Strengthening from the center enhances your whole body and transforms how you move.

## breath

Pilates is a workout for the lungs as well as the muscles. Deep breathing releases tension and creates a rhythm that pulls you through the exercises. Inhale to prepare and exhale as you perform each movement.

## control

Originally called "Contrology," Pilates should be performed with the control of a gymnast or dancer. This precision will help you get more from each move, as well as prevent injuries.

## concentration

Pilates is really a meeting of the mind and the body. Focus your mind on an exercise, and you'll master it in no time.

# principled practice

DISCOVER THE SIX  
GUIDING PRINCIPLES  
ON WHICH JOSEPH  
PILATES FOUNDED  
HIS METHOD

## precision

One precise Pilates move brings more benefit than 10 sloppy ones. That's why the reps are small: the point is to perform them perfectly, not just power through from one to the next.

## flow

As you master the moves, Pilates becomes more like a fluid dance than a collection of exercises. This rhythm encourages grace and flexibility and can have meditative effects.

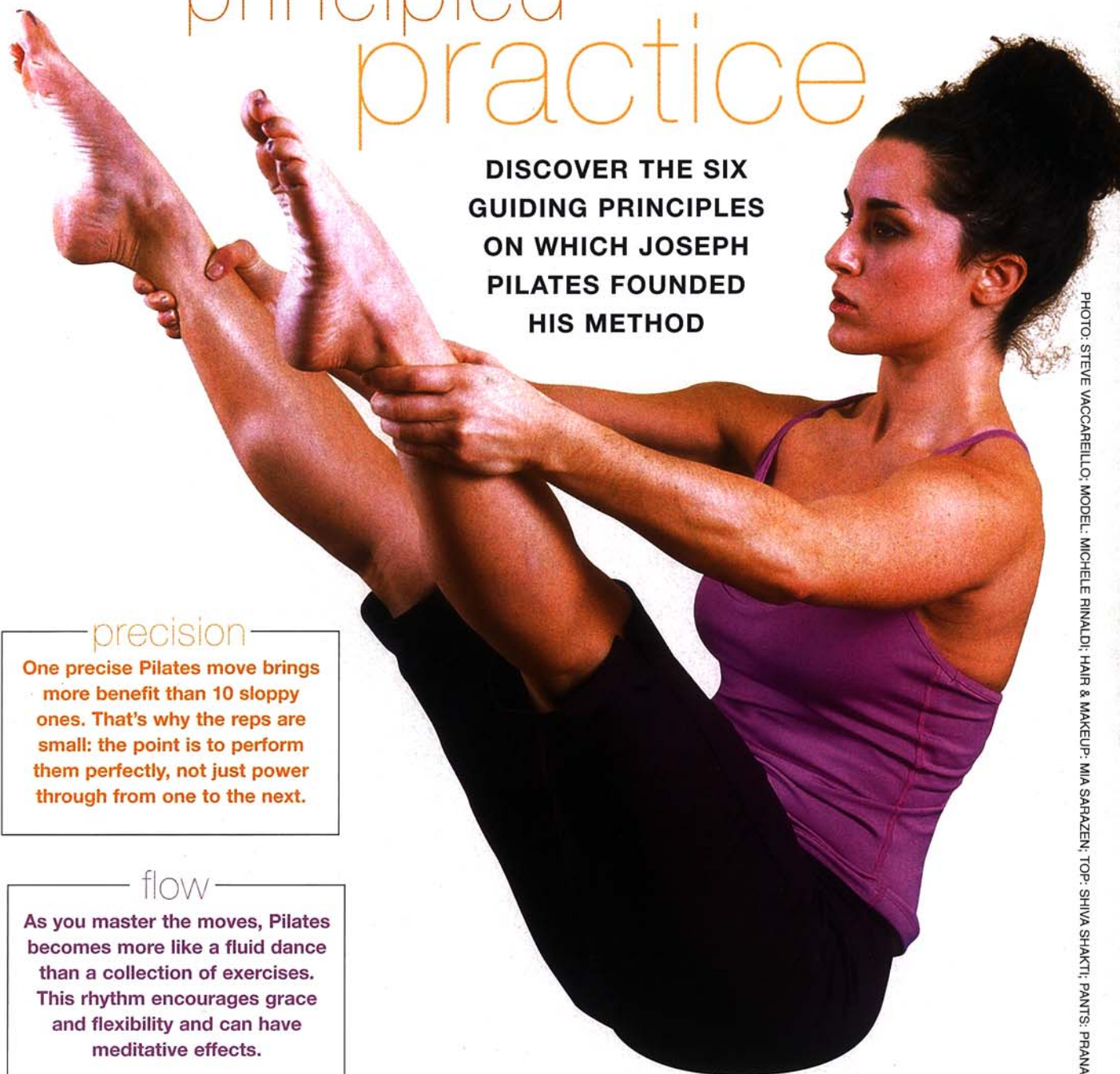


PHOTO: STEVE VACCARELLO; MODEL: MICHELE RINALDI; HAIR & MAKEUP: MIA SARAZEN; TOP: SHIVA SHAKTI; PANTS: PRANA



# high healing

An injured gymnast stands tall with Pilates



I began studying tap, ballet and gymnastics at the age of four. By my elementary and high school years, gymnastics had become somewhat of a part-time job, and I practiced 10 to 20 hours per week.

After college, I was doing gymnastics and yoga regularly and traveling internationally for fun, when all of a sudden, my hips gave out. Chronic hip and knee pain forced me to put an indefinite hold on my physical activities. I became depressed and frustrated; I went from shopping for stiletto heels in Italy to clogs and anti-inflammatory medication at home in New York. I could barely walk, let alone do handstands.

After several visits to the orthopedist, I had a diagnosis: sacroiliac joint dysfunction.

Years of saving myself from dangerous gymnastic falls by using only one side of my body had taken its toll on my spine.

I began physical therapy twice a week. My therapists manually manipulated my joints in an effort to realign them. I knew I had to strengthen the muscles in the surrounding area to maintain such manipulation, and one of my therapists suggested Pilates. My first thought: "What's a Pilate?"

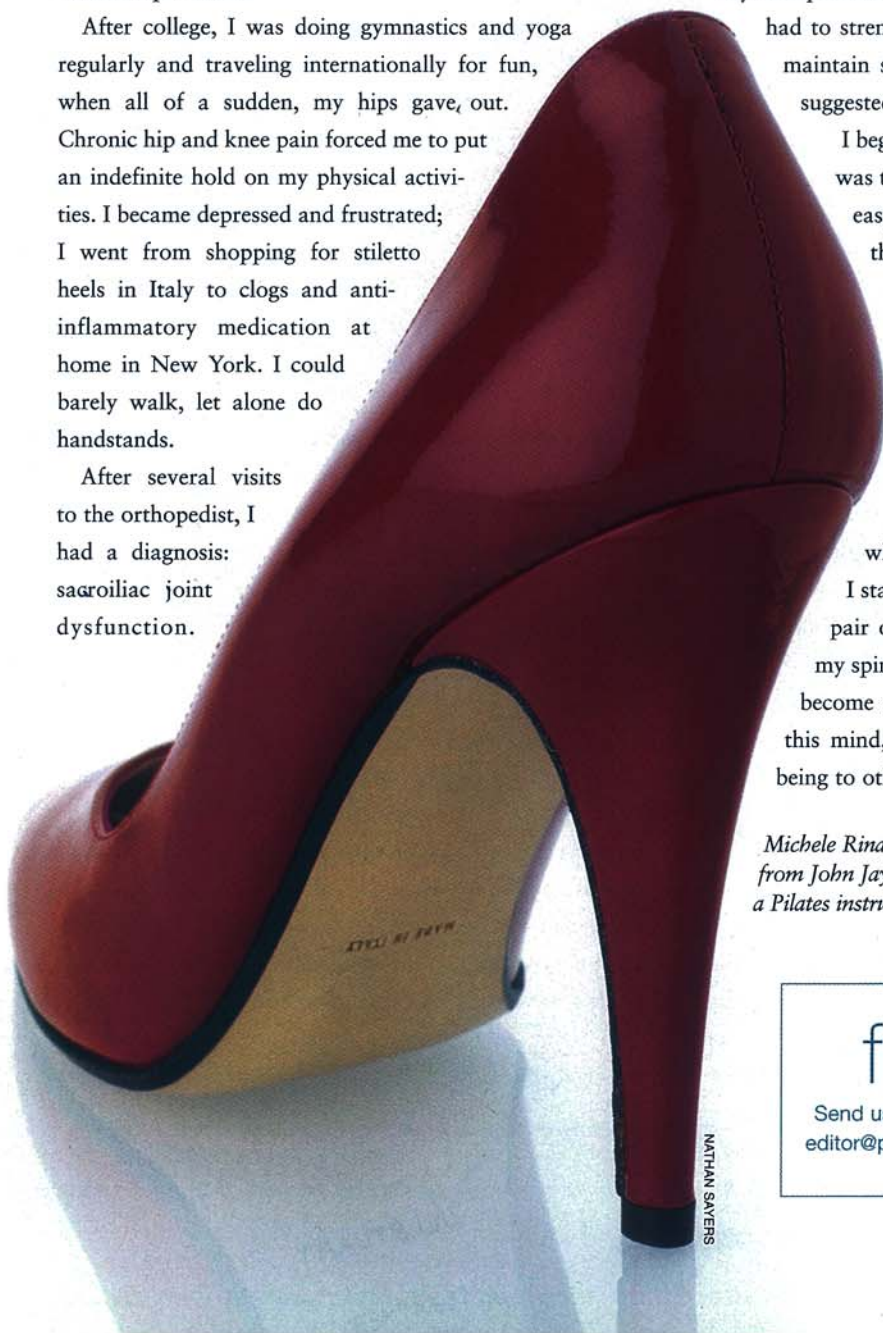
I began the discipline with little enthusiasm. Where was the sweat, the soreness? The exercises were too easy, too boring. But after a few months of two to three sessions a week, I could stand more upright than ever. People began to notice the difference. Initially I thought my stars must be aligned. Something was indeed aligned, but it had nothing to do with astrology. My body was free of muscle tension, and I lost three inches around my waist.

Pilates has given me confidence and poise, which have spilled over to other areas of my life. I stand taller not because I am wearing a beautiful pair of Italian heels, but because I have elongated my spine. Because of my own experience, I decided to become a certified Pilates instructor in order to bring this mind, body and spirit fusion and feeling of well-being to others. **PS**

*Michele Rinaldi holds an MA degree in Psychology from John Jay College (CUNY) and is certified as a Pilates instructor by Power Pilates.*

We want to hear  
from you!

Send us your personal stories about Pilates to  
editor@pilatesstyle.com or fax to 646-459-4900,  
attn: My Pilates.



NATHAN SAVERS