

THE PLAIN DEALER

Cleveland Plain Dealer, Cleveland Ohio

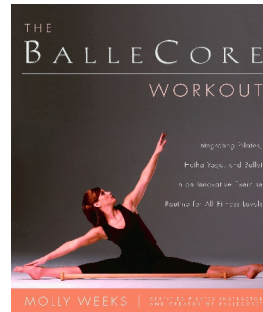
FROM THE SELF-HELP SHELF

Addition of ballet makes workout a more graceful affair

Wednesday, March 16, 2005

The BalleCore Workout

(Ballantine Books, \$17.95) by Molly Weeks.



Admit it. Who hasn't sat through a ballet and somewhere between the dancers' plies and piques secretly thought, boy, I'd like to have a body like that.

OK, that wasn't exactly what inspired Weeks, but the idea is to make you similarly strong and limber.

A dancer herself, although not professional, Weeks trained to be a Pilates instructor. Then she took a calisthenics class at a dance conservatory and discovered that working out can have an aesthetic element.

"It was my first glimpse of what a truly beautiful workout class could feel like, and it motivated me to find a way to bring that beauty into a more accessible workout," she writes.

Logically, it makes sense to add Pilates for strength and yoga for flexibility to the gracefulness of ballet. They flow together easily, and the combination lets you feel like you're doing something more than just grunting and straining on a mat.

Weeks divides the workout into two portions. During the first half (about 30 minutes), she concentrates on mat work. Part of this is fairly basic Pilates moves. She then incorporates ballet into strengthening moves done seated. For example, she does something called a rond de jambes seated and holding her Ballecore Barre, which is basically something that looks like a broomstick used for stability. (And obviously, a stick or dowel will do just as well.)

Next comes the floor ballet, which is just what it sounds like: simple ballet positions done on the floor. Oddly, it's fun.

The second part of the workout (about 20 minutes) incorporates, again, simple ballet moves while standing and using the stick for balance. She ends with several very simple, and perhaps too simple, yoga moves.

Granted, the likelihood of getting that dancer's physique doing this workout, even daily, is, well, zero. But Weeks at least provides an interesting alternative to the growing roster of Pilates and yoga variations.

Jenny Staletovich Special to The Plain Dealer