

pilatesstyle®

POWERHOUSE



UNION STRONG

The brainchild of nine method masters, the Authentic Pilates Union wants to make the industry stronger through education, community and understanding.

by Anne Marie O'Connor

A few months ago, nine renowned Pilates teachers—**Pedro Ferreira** of Wabi Sabi Pilates Studio in Oporto, Portugal, **Peter Fiasca** of ClassicalPilates.net in Philadelphia, **Chris Robinson** of Core Coach Center in LaJolla, CA, **Kathryn Ross-Nash** of American Body Tech Studio in Allendale, NJ, **Dana Santi** of The Pilates Core in LaGrange, IL, **Brooke Siler** of re:AB in New York, **Rad Slough** of Urban Body Studios in Atlanta, **Colleen Naughton Strong** of The Pilates Core in LaGrange, IL, **Mari Winsor** of Winsor Pilates in Santa Monica and West Hollywood, CA—decided to establish an organization to welcome all Pilates pros, whatever their background. *Pilates Style* talked to six of the co-founders about the inspiration for the Authentic Pilates Union (APU), their goals and their hopes for the future of the method.

Pilates Style: HOW DID THIS ALL GET STARTED?

Kathryn Ross-Nash: The Authentic Pilates Union was conceived out of love for the method and our desire to change the way things are. When the nine of us got together, we were so thrilled to be together, to share ideas, passion and motivation. We looked around and said, what's out there is not working; something has to be different. Why can't it be like this for everyone? There are lines and divisions throughout the Pilates community. People are closed off from each other. The work was meant to balance the body and the mind; we needed to create this in the community. We need to create a community that reflected the brilliance of this work.

Peter Fiasca: After years of not having a place to call "home" in our profession, the Authentic Pilates Union will provide an invaluable educational resource, networking nexus and true community for individuals who are interested in learning about, or who have an appreciation for, traditional Pilates techniques and principles.

Dana Santi: Each member will be listed in a directory on the website along with their training, including continuing education. The more continuing education one does, the higher their listing.

Ross-Nash: We want to give instructors control of their destiny, with listings based on their efforts, not politics or preference. Instructors get credit for every continuing-education class they attend that is hosted by another member. For instance, if you attend one event a year, you get a bronze star; if you

attend two, you get a silver; three, a gold; four, a platinum; five or more, a diamond.

So if I'm a client looking for an instructor, I can see how many continuing education classes the person has done over the years. Clients will be able to see that this instructor really wants to learn and be the best instructor that they can be. They can tell if he or she is trained in a specific area that may better suit their needs. And even if a teacher doesn't attend any classes, he or she can still be a member. We'll also list all the workshops being offered by members and members will get credit for attending those workshops.

Also, the membership supports the membership. If you are a member and host a workshop—we are there to support you.

Membership will include people with all certifications and affiliations. We felt it necessary to have an organization that was not a certification organization, that was not a manufacturer, that was really just about education. Education and the desire to learn

are what will bring the Pilates community together, keep us together and help create a fertile garden where everyone can grow.

Fiasca: The Authentic Pilates Union is founded upon positive regard for individuals from diverse training and education backgrounds; it is a strictly nonprofit membership organization and no board member draws

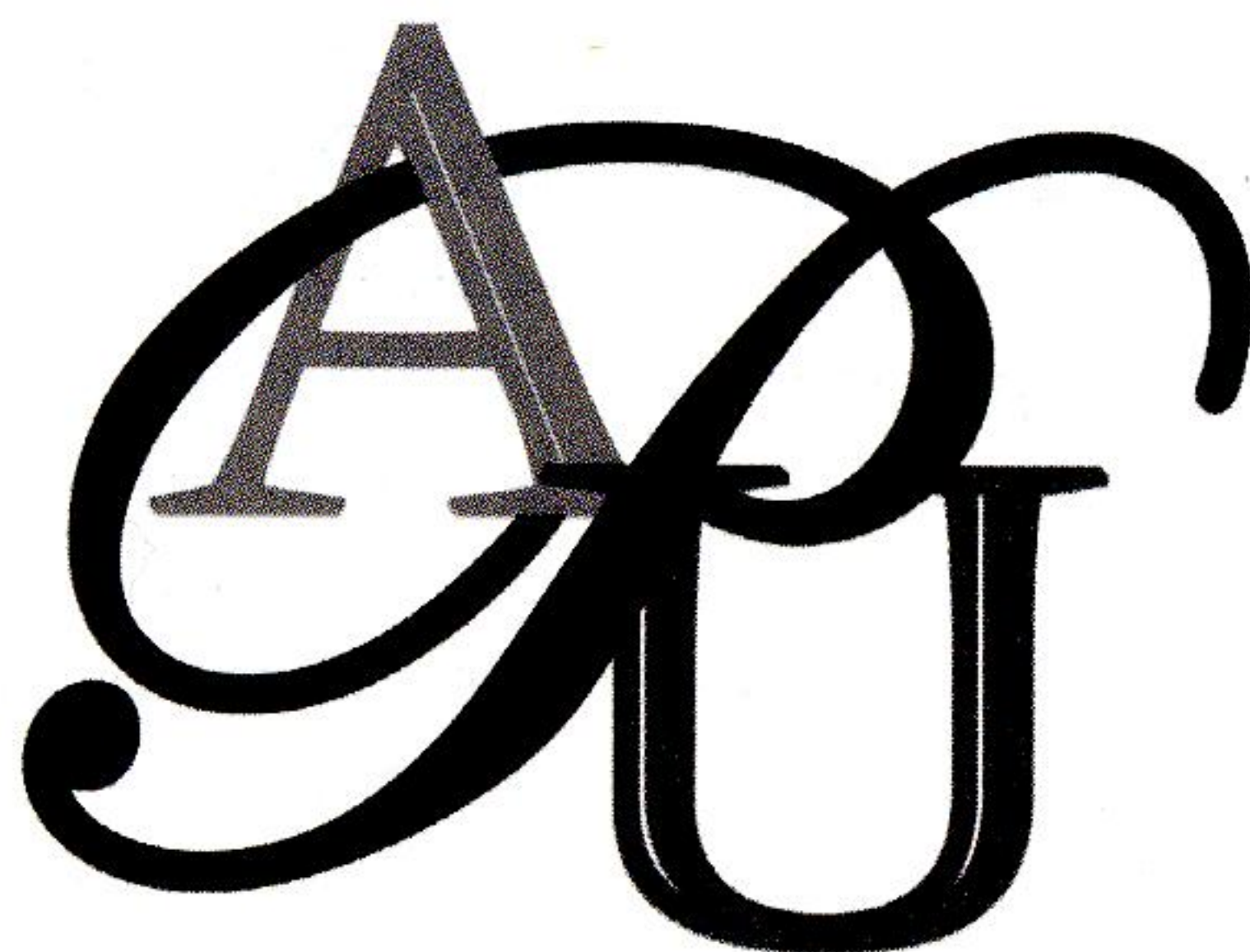
a salary. Through its membership, the Union will offer standard benefits such as discounts on professional liability insurance, workshops, lessons, conferences, continuing education and Gratz apparatus.

PS: DO YOU THINK THIS MAY HELP QUELL SOME OF THE RANCOR THAT HAS PLAGUED THE PILATES COMMUNITY? IF SO, HOW?

Mari Winsor: Pilates is a beautiful form of exercise. It is joyous and beneficial, but some people have lost sight of everything Pilates has to offer. Hopefully, this organization can create more community and take us all back to why we love this work.

Ross-Nash: Romana [Kryzanowska] never said anything negative about Yogalates or Boxilates, or any other work, and I think that is really where the inspiration comes from for us. She just taught what she taught, and because what she taught was so brilliant people wanted to learn more.

Fiasca: I believe the Pilates profession is entering a new era of awareness, acceptance



AUTHENTIC
PILATES UNION



OPPOSITE PAGE: SIX OF THE CO-FOUNDERS OF THE AUTHENTIC PILATES UNION STRIKE A POSE ON THE CADILLAC. CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: CHRIS ROBINSON, KATHRYN ROSS-NASH, PETER FIASCA, BROOKE SILER, MARI WINSOR AND DANA SANTI.

We want to create a home for learning, for passion, for Pilates.

and transformation. The time is right for instructors, apprentices and students to come together to learn and collaborate. Because the initial "gold rush" has passed, more individuals are focusing upon high-quality instruction, education and training. As we look forward to a more positive future, here are a few thoughts to consider: sustaining a principle of love with regard to the roots of our Pilates family; welcoming everyone from different training backgrounds; continuing to study "the work" with experienced teachers; understanding that humility and seeking knowledge are essential ingredients for professional growth and personal evolution.

PS: DO YOU THINK IT WILL ENHANCE THE PROFESSIONALISM OF PILATES TEACHERS AND THE PILATES FIELD IN GENERAL?

Brooke Siler: Without a doubt! Those who believe there are limits to their Pilates learning curve are in for a surprise. This is a living history that is only enriched by sharing our knowledge. Each of us has been trained and has grown in unique ways, and as we share these ways within the community our common knowledge grows exponentially.

Santi: If an instructor focuses on their education, there is only gain. They learn more, they get to teach their students more and everyone achieves a higher knowledge of Pilates.

Chris Robinson: You hear all these people saying, this is authentic, this is not authentic. Now you have all these resources so you can learn where a certain exercise came from, and then if it was changed, you know the reason why. Otherwise I would have no idea if I was teaching something that Joe Pilates taught, or teaching something that someone modified for some reason.

Winsor: Any organization that breeds professionalism, acceptance and information is going to be an amazing draw for people who want more education and community.

PS: CAN YOU THINK OF ANY PAST SITUATIONS WHERE YOU WOULD HAVE REALLY BENEFITTED FROM THE EXISTENCE OF THE APU?

Santi: Continuing education was (and still is) very important to me. I attended a lot of it because I understood it was going to make me a better instructor. It would have been nice to be recognized or rewarded for all the extra continuing education that I attended...and that is what the APU is doing.

Fiasca: In 1998, when I first began developing my small studio, I had countless questions about customer service, scheduling, marketing, training, networking, staffing, professional growth, insurance, developing conferences, building a clientele as well as continued studies in traditional Pilates technique and principles. Although I would ask knowledgeable friends or colleagues about these questions, at the time there was no membership organization that offered educational resources or sense of "belonging" to a community of professionals with shared values. Had the Authentic Pilates Union existed during those years, I would have had a centralized educational and membership resource with experienced professionals from whom I could seek guidance.

Robinson: I think that it would have given me more exposure, so that people who were looking for the type of Pilates that Joe taught, as opposed to something that was maybe changed or altered for whatever reason, could find it.

Siler: When I began my Pilates journey, I was taken by the sense of belonging to a large, wonderful family. But as the Pilates name grew, so did the negativity, politics and infighting and I no longer knew where to turn for community and continuing education within the Pilates world. I developed my own training program and continuing education center within my studio re:AB just so that I might create internally what I was looking for from the outside.

When Dana Santi and Gratz Pilates began inviting me to present at their conferences, I rediscovered the joy of being surrounded by esteemed colleagues and all the life and vitality of the Pilates community came rushing back to me. It renewed my belief in our common goals and heritage. It really takes a village and with the APU we are creating that village once again.

Winsor: When I first opened up my business in 1990, there were no certification programs. I had very limited knowledge and resources and I knew it. It was a thorn in my side; I wanted to give my clients more but I could

Those who believe there are limits to their Pilates learning curve are in for a surprise. This is a living history that is only enriched by sharing our knowledge.

The time is right for instructors, apprentices and students to come together to learn and collaborate.

not. Then Romana came along and offered amazing information and a certification program. I quickly joined and it filled my soul with joy and knowledge. I know there are instructors who would love more information but do not know where to go or what to do and feel no sense of community. We want to empower and inspire in a positive loving environment. We've been long overdue for an organization that offers participants tangible benefits, such as liability insurance, marketing skills and continuing education.

PS: WHAT ADVANTAGES DOES IT HAVE FOR PILATES TEACHERS?

Winsor: When teachers are getting their certification, they have to do what makes sense for them financially and logistically. It's not always feasible for them to give up their jobs and move to another city for six months or a year. So this is an alternative for them to be able to come to a conference and study with people who are classically trained. All of us involved in APU love and respect one another. It's that kind of energy that is going to enhance learning and be more inspiring for the membership.

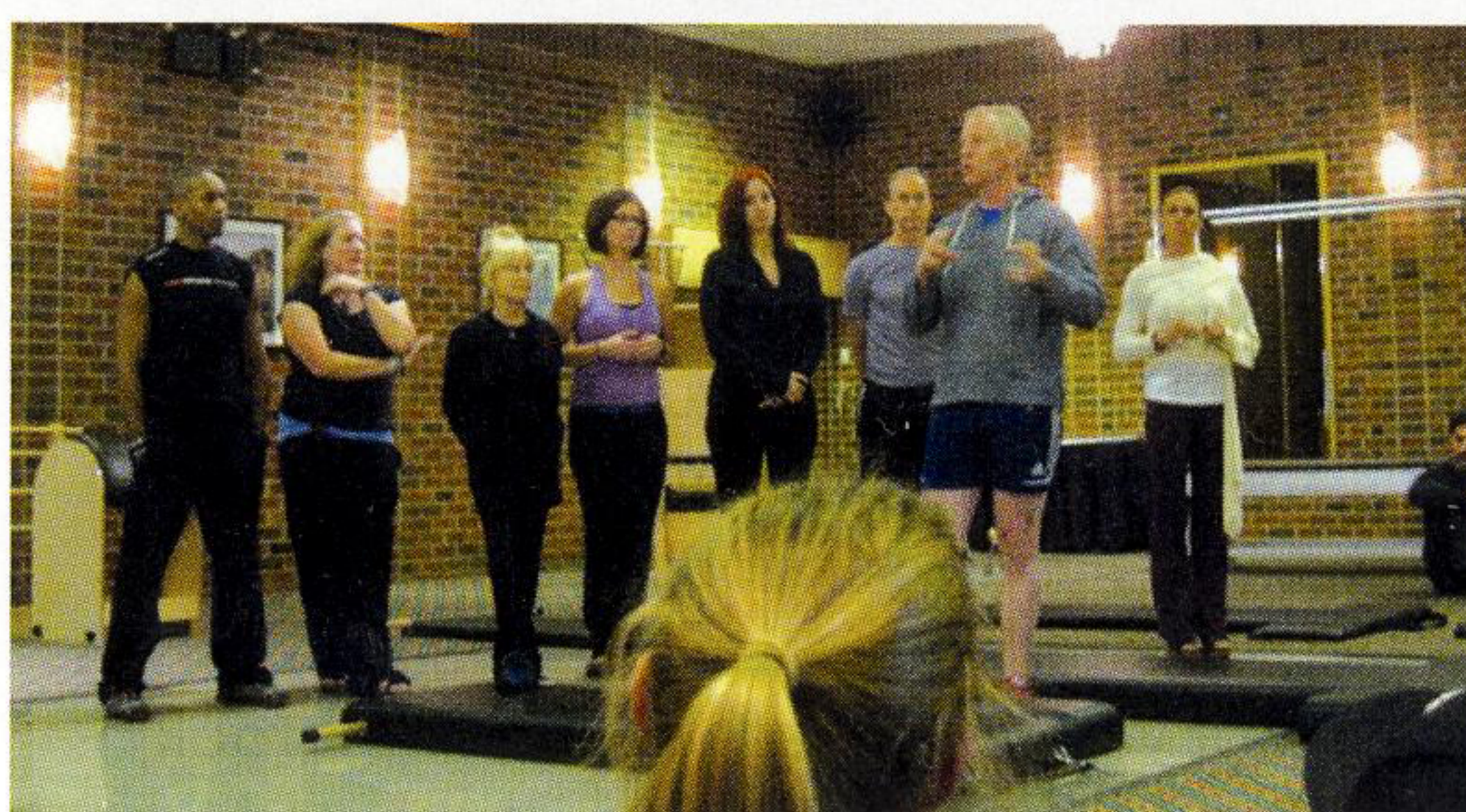
It's important that people realize that any education they have received is valid and will open up doors for them to want more. For me, classical Pilates has an extraordinary vocabulary and it's through this that we as teachers thrive with our clients and ourselves. This vocabulary is important to share with anyone who wants further education.

Ross-Nash: We're not saying you can only do this, you can only do that; we are not saying this is Pilates and that is not. We want to give instructors a place where they are free to learn and free to choose what works for them. I have tried many other things in my life, but authentic Pilates is what works for me as a teacher and as a person. That is not to say that something else doesn't work better for someone else. In this organization, all are welcome and all are welcome to share what they have learned. When I first described what we wanted to create to my husband, he said, "You want to create a home." He was dead-on. We want to create a home for learning, for passion, for Pilates.

We want to make a place where someone who has never done the authentic is able to



ABOVE: THE BOARD MEMBERS HELD AN INFORMAL PLANNING MEETING IN KATHRYN ROSS-NASH'S KITCHEN IN JANUARY, 2012. FROM RIGHT TO LEFT: PEDRO FERREIRA, PETER FIASCA, BROOKE SILER, CHRIS ROBINSON, KATHRYN ROSS-NASH, COLLEEN NAUGHTON STRONG AND DANA SANTI.



BELOW: THE BOARD MEMBERS WELCOME PARTICIPANTS AT THE 2012 CLASSICAL PILATES CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO IN MAY. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, CHRIS ROBINSON, COLLEEN NAUGHTON STRONG, MARI WINSOR, DANA SANTI, BROOKE SILER, PETER FIASCA, RAD SLOUGH AND KATHRYN ROSS-NASH.

take a look at it, try it, they either hate it or love it. We don't want it to be a place where they feel like they are being looked down on or being held down by politics.

Siler: The better the quality of teacher that's out there, the better the clients' understanding and appreciation of the art of Pilates, and the better the longstanding results of the work for them will be.

PS: HOW DOES SOMEBODY JOIN?

Ross-Nash: They can go to [our website] www.authenticpilatesunion.com and sign up. Prices range from \$50 for associates, apprentices and students, to \$75 for an instructor, to \$100 for a studio and \$150 for a non-studio business. We already offer discounted liability insurance for studios and studio owners.

PS: HOW DO YOU THINK OVERALL IT'S GOING TO AFFECT THE FUTURE OF PILATES?

Siler: I believe the APU will restore faith that the possibility of a positive, supportive community of intelligent, passionate, successful individuals need not be a pipedream. Also, we plan to give back to the community through annual charity events for special populations.

Ross-Nash: My dream is that as we unite, Pilates will go headlong, headstrong into the future and doesn't die out. Because the APU is about education, it's not about creating divisions; it's about breaking them down. I believe this desire is in all of our hearts: to live, to learn and to share what unites us—a passion for the work of Joe Pilates! **PS**