

pole-ates?

“teaser” takes on new meaning in this sexy new twist on the method

dancing has gone hand in hand with Pilates ever since Joseph and Clara shared an address with the New York City Ballet. Yet I don't think the esteemed Mr. and Mrs. Pilates could quite have imagined their system performed in seven-inch platform heels around a steel pole.

Yet that's exactly what I find myself doing on this Thursday night at Balboa Pilates in Newport Beach, CA. Mother-daughter team Karen and Nicole Leto, the studio's founders, joined forces with instructor Sharon Polsky (her real name) to develop their program, which combines the core strengthening and stretching of a Pilates mat class with the aerobic workout and resistance exercise inherent in the seductive art of pole dancing. Yes, pole dancing—as in a stripper's stock in trade.

I wrote a book about salsa dancing, so I'm no stranger to sexy moves. I found, however, that strapping on the requisite platform heels (provided by the studio if you don't happen to own seven-inch platforms), stalking around the pole like a caged tiger and learning a brief routine in this beginner's class required me to shed whatever remained of my inhibitions and call upon my feminine power.

And my sense of humor. And the almighty power of my glutes. Plus some major quadriceps action.

“All you hear is laughter for the whole hour coming from the class,”

says Karen Leto, “and that's what it's all about.”

Let me add that you hear plenty of grunting and breathing too. For all the fun it is to role-play the naughty girl, Pilates on the Pole is also a very serious workout that demands strict attention to alignment, core strength and coordination.

Those platform heels are no joke, either. They're akin to ankle weights, making even simple walking more

challenging—let alone the many forms of leg lifts done during class. Polsky notes, too, that the heels passively force the muscles into isometric contraction. “You're working your legs without even realizing it,” she says.

But trust me, you'll realize it the next day—the moves hit places on your muscles the usual workouts don't touch. I was so sore I winced when I walked. Joe and Clara would be proud. —Samantha Dunn-Camp



© 2005 ESTHER FREEMAN (A TRUE BODY ALUM)

For information on Pilates on the Pole Instructor Training Program, call 949-675-5888 or visit balboaislandpilates.com or pilatesonthepole.com.