



EXTENDING ITS POPULARITY
Geri Kok does gyrotonic with Billy Macagnone at his studio.

The new Pilates

Gyrotonic, an exercise regimen that makes muscles long and lean, is the latest fitness craze

By **SARI BOTTON**
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

Now that you have learned how to pronounce Pilates (pil-LAH-tees) and discovered its toning, strengthening and lengthening benefits, get ready for the latest exercise craze: Gyrotonic and its mat version, Gyrokinesis.

Already popular with dancers, actors and athletes like Liv Tyler, Wesley Snipes, Toni Colette and Bernadette Peters, they are also becoming a hit with regular folks.

Men and women of all ages are flocking to classes and one-on-one sessions at studios around Manhattan, creating a demand for more. There are 17 studios offering Gyrotonic in New York City — 12 of which opened in the last two years.

Combining elements of yoga, ballet, swimming and t'ai chi, Gyrotonic is said to provide a greater range of motion for nearly all the body's muscles and joints than any one of those disciplines. And once you have become familiar with the exercise routines, doing more rapid repetitions adds a heart-strengthening cardiovascular component.

"I used to train with weights," said Lara Anasaze, a nutritionist. "I've been doing Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis now for about six months, and I love this so

much more.

"It works all my major muscle groups, it lengthens my muscles so I look longer and leaner, and it feels good. It's so much less bulk-building than other workouts."

Like Pilates, Gyrotonic is done on an apparatus called an expander — specifically, a Gyrotonic Expander System (GXS), which is a \$4,500 wooden tower-and-bench apparatus with pulleys and weights.

As you turn the two hand wheels in opposite directions, you curve, arch and twist your spine. With your feet suspended in weighted pulleys, you rotate your legs in wide spirals that begin at the spine.

Also like Pilates, there is a mat version, Gyrokinesis, which is cheaper and can be done in classes. (One-on-one Gyrotonic training on a GXS expander costs \$55 to \$65 per session, while Gyrokinesis mat classes usually cost \$10 to \$13.)

"It's unlike any other form of exercise, in that it's gentle yet it's strengthening to the whole body," said Billy Macagnone, the owner of Body Evolution, a studio on Second Ave. in the East Village that offers Gyrotonic. "It's something you can do at any age."

Gyrotonic had its beginnings in dance, and Gyrokinesis, which came first, was originally called "dancer's

yoga" and "spinal gymnastics."

The founder, Juliu Horvath, a former ballet dancer, developed Gyrokinesis when he was studying yoga and trying to heal a torn achilles tendon.

"It all begins and ends with the spine," said Horvath, who lives in Manhattan and trains people in Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis.

His Web site, www.gyrotonic.com, helps people locate studios around the world where his exercise program is offered. He is about to begin offering a Gyrokinesis video for \$24.95.

One of the advantages of Gyrotonic and Gyrokinesis is that there is little risk of injury.

Just ask Peter Rose, 69, who has been practicing both for about three years as a student at Leda Franklin's Studio Riverside on the upper West Side.

"I'm an escapee of the Reebok gym," Rose said. "I felt the machines at the gym were dangerous, even though I worked with a trainer."

"This keeps me young and in great shape for hiking and all the other things I love to do," continued Rose. "I just went on a 10-day trip hiking in the Grand Canyon and oaring down the Colorado River, and Gyrotonic definitely helped keep me strong and loose."

"I think it's why I was able to keep up with all the 40-year-olds."