



Band-ITS For Dancers

With Sally Harrison & Lisa Howell

From Perfect Form Physio

Introduction

Congratulations on receiving your Band-ITS training kit! This fabulous training tool is a great way to take your dancing to the next level. While there is a DVD included in your package with some wonderful functional cross-training exercises, we have created this additional PDF guide, especially for dancers, to show you some unique ways to implement the device into your conditioning program.

Your Band-ITS kit includes:

- Two Leg Straps
- Two Medium Density Red Cables
- Two Light Density Yellow Cables
- A Quick Start Card
- A Handy Travel Pouch
- A DVD with exercises for general use



Working against resistance will help improve the motor recruitment and therefore the overall strength of the muscle of the movement trained. If we repeat our repetitions against resistance we can improve the connection through the pelvis and core to the legs, strengthen turnout and improve leg height. These improvements will be felt immediately after the bands are removed. All of the exercises in this PDF may be used as a specific home conditioning session or as part of a pre-class or competition warm up.

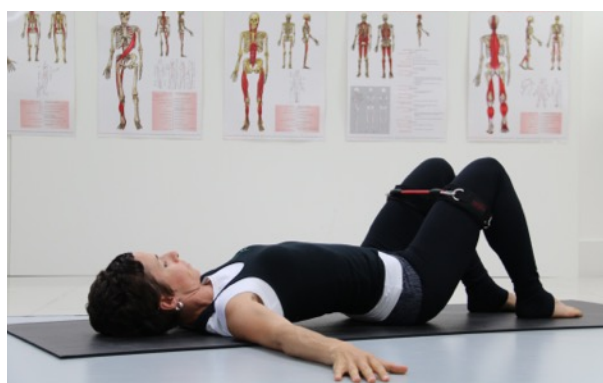
Instructions of how to correctly attach the leg straps and bands are on the enclosed Quick Start Card and at the start of the DVD.

Supine Series

Starting the program on your back allows you to identify and activate all of the essential deep stabilising muscles in your trunk and hips before moving onto the more technically challenging exercises. Take some time to go through all of these exercises slowly. You may also like to try doing them with your eyes closed to really get an internal awareness of the difference it makes doing these exercises with the Band-ITS on.

Tucks and Tilts

Starting in neutral, slowly roll the pelvis back and forward into flexion and extension to test your range of movement. Try to use as little muscular effort as possible and especially avoid gripping with the buttocks or the outer abdominals. In the beginning, do very small movements so as not to move your upper body, then as the movements gradually get bigger, feel the relationship of the movement between your low back and the upper back and neck. As your low back arches, the chest should lift and the chin should nod slightly. When you flatten the lower back the chest should drop and chin will lift a little.



Basic Set Up

After oscillating forward and backward several times with the above exercise, find a resting point in the middle where the front of the pelvis is horizontal to the floor. There should be a natural lift under the lowest part of the back, but take care to keep the big back muscles relaxed. This is your Neutral Spine or Centre.



Collecting The Core/Inner Unit

Take a gentle breath in and feel the belly and side ribs expand. On the exhale imagine the two front hip bones drawing together, feeling a mild sinking and tension in the low tummy. Ensure the outer tummy muscles are not active. You may also want to try cuing with a mild pelvic floor lift; thinking “slow the flow”.



Knee Fall-Outs

Start with the knees in parallel and collect the core/inner unit as above. With your next natural exhale allow one knee to move out to the side and then return again on the inhale. Ensure the pelvis remains still and there is no gripping of the outer abdominals. Repeat with the other leg. Alternate 6-8 times per side.



Knee Floats

Keeping a stable pelvis and with the inner unit activated, float the knee to rest above the hip. Lower again and repeat on the other side. Try to float and lower the knee with your exhale with a pause at the top for an inhale. Avoid gripping of the outer abdominals. Feel the hip deepening and becoming centred in the hip socket. Make sure not to grip the gluteals of the supporting side.



Double Knee Floats

Set up as for the previous exercise. After the first leg is raised and in place, deepen your core connection and float the other leg up to join it. Ensure that the spine does not lift, arch or flatten and the tummy does not bulge. Keep the pelvis steady. If this is difficult initially, you may use your finger tips on the lifted knee for support.



Toe Taps

From the table top position (with two knees up) try lowering one leg towards the floor on an exhale and then return. Initially tap the feet close to the hips and as you get stronger you can tap the feet further away. Alternate the toe taps and keep the breathing rhythmic; exhale and tap, inhale return. Keep tension on the bands and avoid the legs drifting in towards each other.



Single Leg Stretch

Instead of toe taps, extend the leg away from you and imagine reaching for a button on the far wall. Keep the flexed knee in place against the band. The working leg can also be extended and then slowly rotated into turnout for an added challenge. You can monitor the position of the low back with your hands as in the photo.



Hip Circles

Start with both legs extended and the spine in neutral. Keeping the pelvis level, still and with a neutral spine alignment, draw one knee up to 90 degrees. Then slowly make a circle with the knee in an outward direction. Again, feel the hip joint deepening at the front and keep the opposite side of the pelvis flat to the floor.

Attempt 6-8 circles, both clockwise and anti-clockwise, and then swap legs. Ensure that the circle comes from the hip and not from the knee! For advanced students, this may be done with the knee extended. This exercise is very challenging, but delivers amazing results when pelvic stability is achieved.



Bridge (+/- Transfer)

When working into a bridge position you can articulate through the spine or lift with a straight spine and focus on driving from the hips. Ensure the spinal muscles are not overworking and the ribs remain heavy and not 'flaring'. Use the bands to keep the thighs parallel and 'fire up' the lateral hip muscles.

To add more challenge while the hips remain lifted, float one knee up above the hip and then lower. Aim to push down through the supporting heel and opposite shoulder feeling a strong cross connection across the back of the body. Keep the pelvis level and lifted.



Side Series

Side lying is a wonderful position to start working on your turnout. These exercises are especially helpful to continue strengthening all of the muscles that you use in Adage when you are not able to bear weight through an injured foot or knee. Take care to isolate your deepest turnout muscles and avoid gripping with the hip flexors.

Clams

Start by lying on one side with the hips stacked and the heels resting upon one another. Position the feet slightly behind you. Place your finger tips into your deep turnout muscles (QF) and your thumb gently resting on the front of the hip to test for any excessive contraction in TFL.

Connect your core and then gently engage your deep turnout muscles by pressing the heels together. Raise the top knee up against the band resistance, yet check that the front of the hip does not grab. Focus on the movement of the hip in the socket rather than the height of the leg for maximal results. Repeat this 20 times keeping the pelvis still, hips stacked and waist long.



Double Leg Lift / Side Lifts

Rest your head on your arm, and use the other hand lightly resting on the floor for gentle support. Maintaining a lift underneath the side waist, lift both feet off the floor. Hold for 5 breaths, then lower and repeat 5 times. Feel your upper waist working. Keep lengthening the legs away from you throughout.



Retiré In Side Lying

Starting with both legs extended, work slowly into a side retiré position. Focus on keeping the thigh bone rotated from the hip throughout the movement. In the final position check that the hips are stacked, core activated and deep turnout muscles are working. Keep your underneath side waist gently lifted. Aim for 8-10 good quality repetitions per side.



Hip Fold

This is the preparation for taking the leg into a développé. At full retiré height aim to deepen in the hip socket and draw the thigh up towards the waist. Allow the pelvis to go into a slight tuck to optimally engage Psoas Major as a hip flexor deep in the front of the hip, whilst maintaining a sense of turn out from underneath the hip. Discontinue if any pinching or pain is felt in the hip.



Développé a la Seconde

Continuing from the previous hip fold position, unfold the working leg up and lengthen out of the hip socket. Make sure to keep the thigh bone fully rotated and deep in the socket. The full développé series can be repeated in one fluid motion 5-6 times each side. Do not to press too heavily through the supporting hand.



Hip Flexor Mobilisations

After doing all of the work in side lying it is nice to unlink the bands and gently mobilise the hips. Do not sink into a deep stretch, but instead encourage fluid transfer into the tissues, and restore mobility in the whole hip complex with some gentle oscillating movements.

Start off in a kneeling position with the front of the pelvis vertical. Place a soft pillow or towel under the knee if you have had any knee issues.

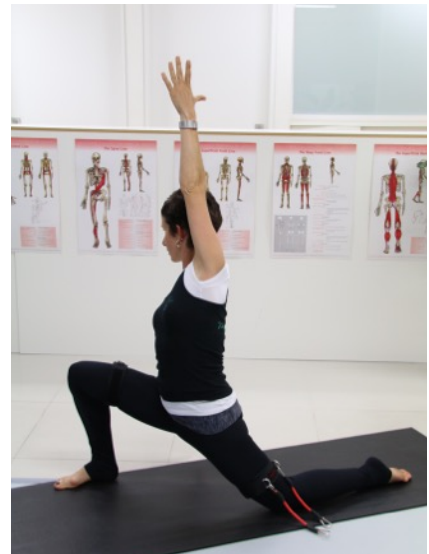
Variations:

- Gently lunge forward, with the pelvis vertical
- Try a wider step, gliding the pelvis to the side
- Reach up high with the arm (same as back leg)
- Add a rotation of the upper back
- Try side bending away from the back leg



For detailed instructions please watch our **[“Safe Stretches For Tight Hips”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6QRjk1biJd8)** video

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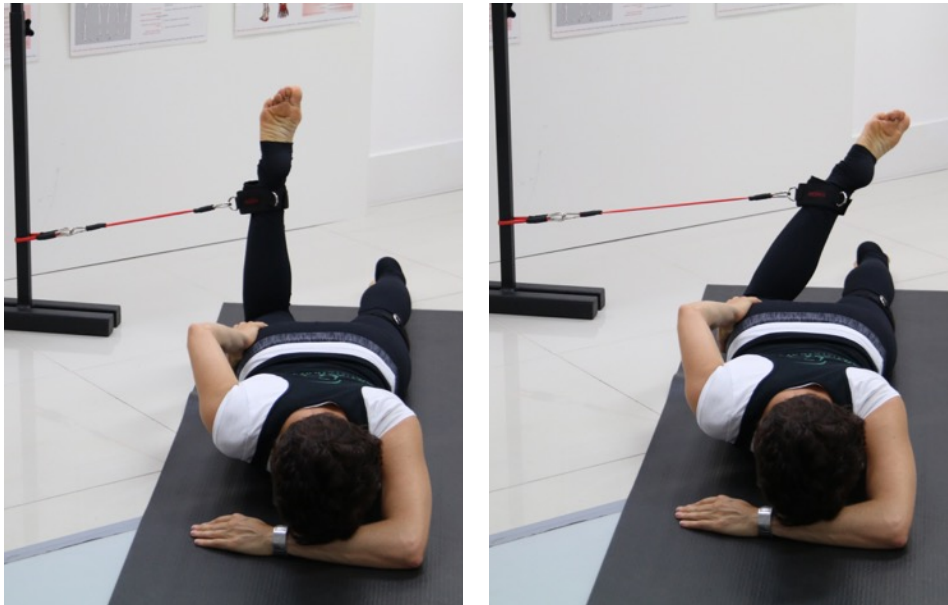


Prone Series

Prone Turn Out

Before starting to work on your turnout on your stomach it is nice to do a specific activation exercise. This requires uncoupling the bands and repositioning them, but it is well worth it.

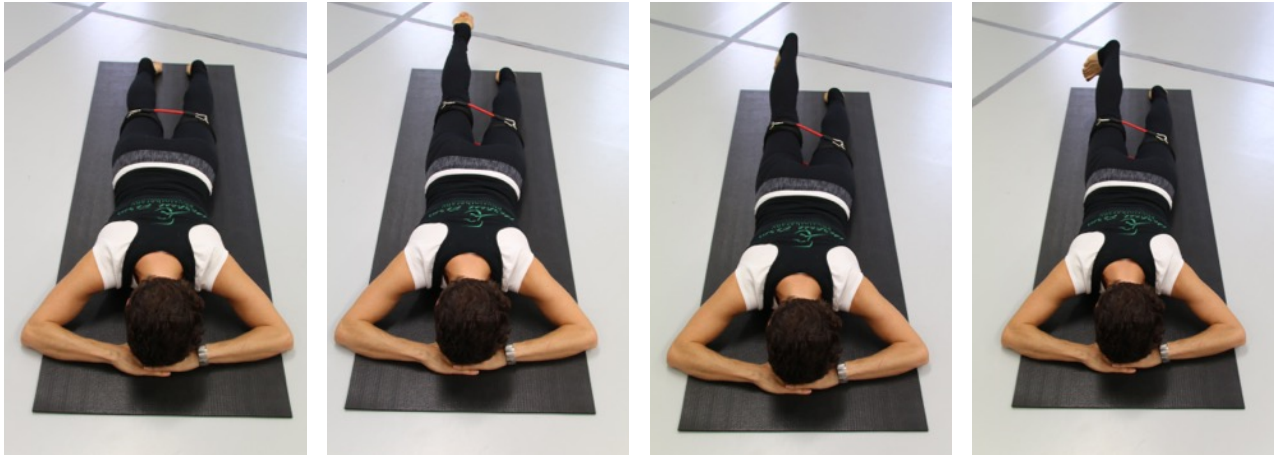
Set Up: Attach the leg strap to the ankle. Loop one band around a fixed point and then back on itself. Attach the second band to the first and then clip onto the leg strap.



Start with the legs in parallel with the working leg bent to 90 degrees. Maintaining good core activation and a centred pelvis, rotate the thigh bone and move the foot against the resistance of the band towards the other leg. Isolate into the deep rotator group and don't grip with your gluteals. Ensure that the front of the hip does not lift from the floor. An isolated, small movement is much better than a bigger uncontrolled one. Move slowly against the resistance of the band in both directions. Repeat at least 10 times on each leg. This can also be done before the side lying series to help activate the deepest turnout muscles.

Parallel To Turnout Exercise

This is a great exercise to feel the isolation of the hip in the socket, with or without resistance, and the Band-ITS add a great new dimension. Start by lying on your stomach with both legs in parallel. Gently stabilise your core, then lift one leg in parallel. Flex the foot and then use your deep rotators to turn that leg out in the socket. Focus on keeping the hips square and shoulders relaxed. Slowly point the foot, then lower the leg to the floor in turnout.



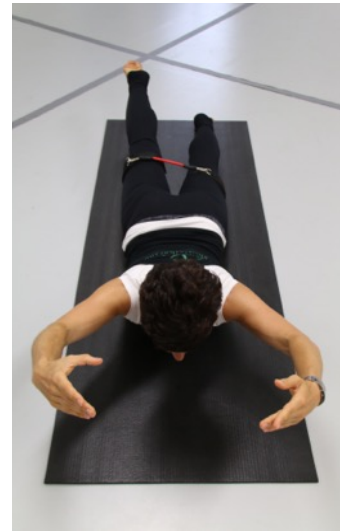
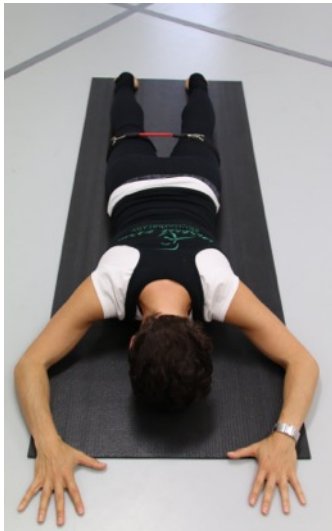
Prone Leg Extension

This exercise is designed to strengthen end range hip extension with turnout. Ensure that you stabilise through the pelvis so it remains flat and core muscles are activated. Keep the upper body relaxed, bend at the knee and then float the leg into hip extension using the gluts. After a couple of good quality repetitions, start to rotate the pelvis off the floor and reach the leg up and across. Keep the shoulders firmly planted and the head in neutral. This works to improve controlled extension and rotation of the spine and hips together.



Prone Leg and Arm Lift

A second variation of leg lift is to add some upper back extension. Slowly lengthen through the thorax and float the upper back off the floor, do not hinge in the low back. Raise the upper body and either one or both arms to 5th. This elevation can be maintained as the legs are lifted or the chest can raise and lower with each leg elevation. Ensure the shoulders are drawing down towards the hips.



Floor Barre

Tendu En Avant and a la Seconde

Set Up: Find a lengthened spinal position with the pelvis in neutral, deep turnout activated and heels slightly elevated off the floor. For added ease on the structures at the front of the hip, you can lightly rest the ankles on a foam roller as shown. Practise rotating the thigh bones in the sockets with the most minimal muscle activity possible. Aim to rotate from deep in the back of the hips with no gripping of the gluteals.



Slowly work one foot into a tendu en avant whilst maintaining a still and level pelvis, soft ribs, long neck and broad relaxed shoulders. Remember to articulate smoothly through the foot and keep the toes long. Ensure that turnout of the 'standing leg' is maintained throughout. Slowly return the foot to first position, keeping maximal turnout control with minimal effort. Repeat four times with each foot en avant and a la seconde.

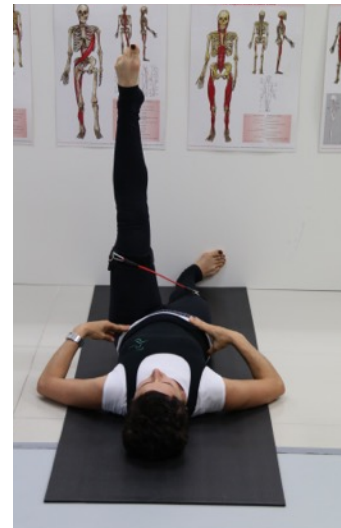


Retiré and Développé Devant

Start as with the previous exercise with the heels slightly elevated off the floor with the soles of the feet against the wall and the feet in either first, third or fifth position. Use your inner unit and deep turnout on both sides to maintain the pelvis in a stable position as you draw one leg up into a retiré position. Ensure you are able to keep full range and good technique against the resistance of the band. Slowly replace the foot, repeat four times before trying with the other leg.



You can then continue the exercise with a développé devant, again ensuring maintenance of good form and control against the bands. Focus on fully rotating the thighbone while keeping a feeling of it being heavy and deep in the socket. You may also like to try rotating the extended leg in and out while lifted to 90 degrees to master control of turnout in this position. Lower the leg either directly back to the floor or by folding back through the retiré position.



NB: The développé devant should not be attempted against resistance unless the dancer has easy range above 90 degrees with the back in neutral.

Grand Battement

The Band-ITS can also be used to enhance flexibility whilst learning to control the pelvis and strengthen the muscles used for kicks. It is wise to do a good warm up and some gentle hamstring mobilisers before attempting this exercise.

1. To strengthen the ‘down’ or closing part of the kicking movement, attach one leg strap to a stable barre and the other to the ankle of the leg to be used. Interlink the two bands by the clips and attach to the front of one leg strap. Keep the hips and pelvis level and activate both turnout muscles. Slowly draw the working leg down against the resistance of the band, maintaining stability of the pelvis and spine. Slowly release the leg back up, maintaining the position of the spine.
2. Once stability of the pelvis has been achieved in this position, start increasing the speed of the movement to make it more dynamic. Kick the working leg into leg a grand battement devant ensuring that the bottom leg remains on the ground. Return with control against the resistance of the band.
3. To strengthen the ‘up’ phase of the kick simply wear the bands as normal, attached to both legs. Make sure to maintain turnout throughout in order to train the deeper hip flexors rather than the superficial ones.
4. This exercise can also be performed in side lying to strengthen side kicks/battement.



4 Point Series

Many dancers are very weak in a 4 point position however this is a very important area to develop for any contemporary work, and also to allow the dancer to work on functional and dynamic training of the core in the more advanced levels.

Set Up

Make sure to spend some time setting up a good 4 point position, and ensure that you have enough endurance to stay for the duration of the exercise. Place the hands under the shoulders, the knees under the hips and the spine in neutral. Keep the neck long and make sure not to collapse between the shoulder blades. Maintain regular breathing.



Leg Raise and Turnout

Starting with good alignment in 4 point kneeling, slide one leg backwards and then elevate off the floor. Keep the pelvis and shoulders level and weight bear evenly through the arms. The spine should remain in neutral with no sinking into the lower back. Once the leg is horizontal with the floor and in alignment with the body, turn the leg out using the deep rotator muscles. Maintain constant pressure against the bands. Repeat 8-10 times each side.



Preparation for Arabesque

Continue to extend and lengthen the leg upwards into a high arabesque. Continue to draw the shoulder blades back and down towards the hips and anchor into the supporting arms. Have a sense of elongating the leg away from you and gently extending the upper back. Avoid sinking into the low back.



Preparation for Attitude

Prepare as above and then rotate and open the hip into an attitude position. Focus on keeping the chest square to the floor and developing a smooth rotation through the spine rather than hinging in the low back. Once again, keep a sense of the leg 'lengthening' out of the hip socket. Extend the leg in turnout, turn back into parallel and then return to the 4 point position. Repeat on the other leg, and aim for 8-10 repetitions on each side.



Arabesque with Arm in 5th

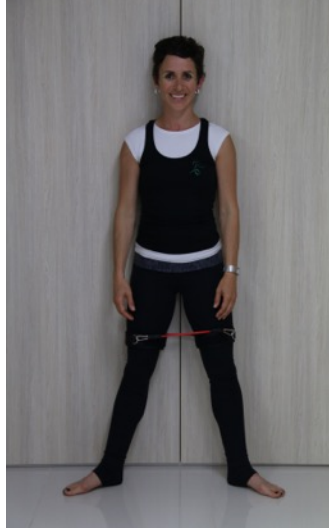
This exercise is similar to the arabesque preparation but is much more challenging. Once the leg is elevated, float the opposite arm to 5th position maintaining scapula control on both the lifted and supporting arms. Have a sense of gently connecting the scapula to the opposite gluteal muscle. This exercise can be done with the leg in line with the body or in a higher arabesque position.



Standing Series

Wall Plié

This exercise strengthens turnout and pelvic control whilst in standing. Start in 1st or 2nd position against the wall with the feet slightly forward. Keep spine in neutral and activate core and deep turnout. As you move into the plié work against the resistance of the bands to get a deeper awareness of turnout. Maintain this focus both when lowering into the plié and returning to standing. Ensure the early use of deep turnout is in place and you are not just pressing the knees backwards. Check the spine and pelvis remain in neutral throughout and the gluts aren't gripping. Repeat this exercise 8-10 times in total.



Plié in the Centre

Once you have an awareness of how to correctly work the hip in the socket, both demi and grand plié can then be practiced in the centre. Maintain the pelvis in neutral, lengthen though the spine and don't grip with the gluts. Do work against the resistance of the band to activate the deep turnout muscles more effectively. Control needs to be maintained both on the way down and on the way up again for maximum strength gains.



Tendu en Croix

Standing side on to the barre, starting in first or fifth position. Slowly work the foot into Tendu en Croix, with four Tendu in each direction. Maintain constant focus on maintaining deep turnout connection on both sides and work smoothly against the resistance of the bands on both the outward and return movements. Feel the connection to your centre in order to work both legs off a stable base. Tendu en Croix can also be practiced in the centre, however this is advisable only for advanced students.



Summary

We hope that you have enjoyed working through this special PDF for dancers and now have some useful exercises to build into your conditioning program. Always remember to do a thorough warm up before starting any resistance training, and keep in mind that maintaining excellent technique at all times is essential. Working against resistance will improve strength of whatever you are doing, so make sure to do the exercises slowly and carefully to ensure that you are training all of the correct muscles!

Keep an eye out on the [Members Area](#) for bonus exercises and new ideas of to work with your Band-ITS!

About Us

This project was a collaboration between Band-ITS and Perfect Form Physiotherapy. Both companies are committed to providing the safest and most up-to-date training products and resources for dancers.

Sally Harrison (BscHons Physiotherapy)

Sally was born and educated in the UK where she began her career as a professional dancer which she pursued for over seven years, most notably in the UK, Europe and the US. Sally takes an holistic, total body approach to injury prevention and treatment, allowing her to work with dancers and athletes alike at a level which helps them to achieve and maintain their greatest potential. Sally is also a qualified Personal Trainer, Pilates Instructor and Health and Lifestyle Coach and maintains a keen interest in rehabilitative exercise training and health coaching. Outside of Perfect Form Physiotherapy Sally manages **Band-ITS** and '**Pro-align**', a company dedicated to exercise rehab and functional Pilates. She continues to dance regularly and perform in the Sydney Cuban Salsa scene.



Lisa Howell (B.Phty)

Lisa is the owner and creator of **Perfect Form Physiotherapy** and **The Ballet Blog**. Lisa has a strong history in classical dance and is well respected both nationally and internationally for her work with young dancers, professional dancers and dance teachers. Lisa's focus is on education to prevent injury and maximise performance rather than waiting for injury to occur. Method and has had extensive personal involvement in various forms of Dance and Yoga. Throughout her professional studies and career she has continued her involvement with dance and uses her personal experience as a constant learning tool to advance her knowledge.

