



# PROGRESSING BALLET TECHNIQUE

## BROCHURE



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# WHAT IS PBT?

Progressing Ballet Technique (PBT) is an innovative body-conditioning and strengthening program that has been designed to enhance students' technique in all forms of dance by focussing on training the muscle memory required in each exercise in all forms of dance.

PBT helps teachers around the world prepare their students to receive the strength they need to achieve their personal best. It is an innovative program that helps students with core strength, weight placement and alignment.

The program helps with injury prevention and rehabilitation and enhances the ability of athletes to perform at their best. It can be difficult for students to feel which muscles initiate the correct alignment in training. However, with the use of an exercise ball, the students gain a great sense of posture and weight-placement whilst feeling each correct muscle group working throughout each exercise, which then stays with them whilst performing.

PBT focuses on core strength, weight placement and alignment of the body with a gradual approach of carefully designed exercises and repetitions of these exercises that trigger their muscle memory. The program is designed with safe dance methodology to promote a long, healthy career. PBT is now being taught by over 6000+ certified teachers worldwide and over 4500 schools globally have added PBT classes in their curriculum for students.

PBT is not only a program to improve technique in ballet dancers, it is now being appreciated and incorporated in training by all forms of dancers, athletes, physiotherapists and even footballers!



# ABOUT THE FOUNDER MARIE WALTON-MAHON



Marie's former ballet training was in Newcastle Australia passing all RAD examinations including Honours in Advanced and the Solo Seal award in 1970. In 1971, she continued her studies in France with a scholarship at the Rosella Hightower School In Cannes before being offered a professional contract to join Les Ballet de Marseille, under the artistic direction of Roland Petit. The company toured to Paris with the late great Maya Plisetskaya

**“I WAS ASKED BY MAYA PLISETSKAYATO TO JOIN HER WHILE SHE PRACTICED A PARTICULAR FLOOR BARRE BEFORE CLASSES. I NOTICED HER SETTING UP HER MIND AND BODY BEFORE CLASS EACH DAY AND I NOTICED WHEN DOING THIS MYSELF, I PERFORMED BETTER. THIS EXPERIENCE INSTILLED IN ME THE HUNGER TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DANCERS’ BODY AND THEIR PREPARATION TO PERFORM AT A HIGH STANDARD AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BODY.”**

## THE STORY BEHIND PBT

Marie's personal career was cut short in 1973 when her father suffered a heart attack and she was required back home in Australia. She then opened up her own school in 1974.

“I found a new passion in teaching and assisting every child to obtain their personal best in training. I studied books in anatomy and in 1979 trained with Valerie Greig who wrote the book (Inside ballet technique) that inspired my continual learning with innovative teaching styles.” During the 1980's many graduates from her school were taking up positions in prestigious Pre-Professional schools and positions in acclaimed ballet companies. Her confidence grew in her ability to teach the students, promoting the feeling of every movement through muscle memory in order to achieve the active movement. In the mid 90's she commenced working with a group of 10-year-old students with the use of stability balls and after only 3 months the students became so aware of their posture, alignment and weight-placement that it encouraged Marie to explore more exercises around the concept of removing the floor and setting up the proprioception in the mind and body, ready for the classroom.

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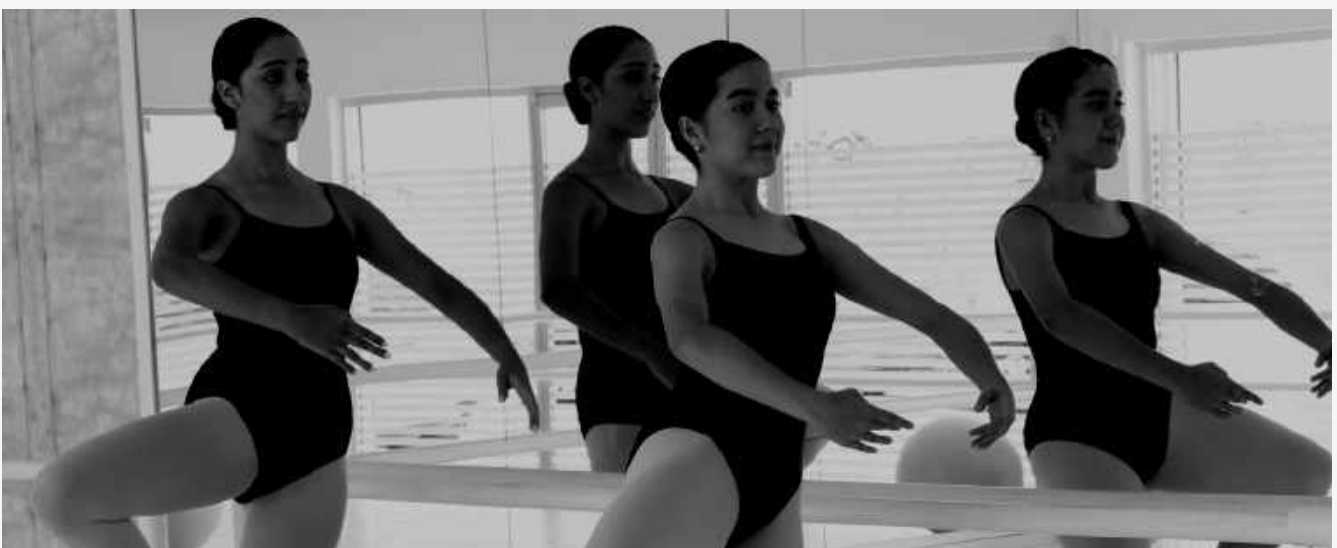
## THE STORY BEHIND PBT

In 2005 Marie experimented with these exercises, which created the foundation for the PBT program, with a 16-year-old male dancer, Daniel Roberge, who had no former ballet training.

He was instructed to practice PBT daily alongside ballet classes in order for him to display the improvement. He improved so much that in 2007, two years after his first ballet lesson, he sat for all senior ballet examinations and was awarded the silver medal at the Genèe International Competition in Singapore. The next year Daniel signed a contract with Washington Ballet.

Marie acknowledges that nothing takes the place of good ballet training, however, convinced that alongside ballet training, PBT accelerates technique.

In 2012, Marie was tutoring teachers for the Royal Academy of Dance, showing the teachers a couple of exercises to improve the students' alignment and stability. It was at this course that the teachers requested Marie to film all of her work and share her findings. Three DVDs and an online training program later, Progressing Ballet Technique teachers courses sell out around the globe and is being officially taught in thousands of schools across 40 countries.



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# PHYSIOTHERAPIST ANALYSIS OF PBT

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## References

Quin E, Rafferty S, Tomlinson C (2015): Safe Dance Practice. Human Kinetics. Champaign, IL.

Welsh, T (2009): Conditioning for dancers. University press of Florida.Gainesville, FL.

PBT website: accessed 30 July 2020. <https://pbt.dance/home/about>

Progressing Ballet Technique (PBT) is a unique training system using ballet-technique specific exercises to train skill acquisition in a graded and progressive manner from junior through to advanced levels.

The PBT program enhances the process of skill acquisition defined by Quin et al 2019, pp 255 as 'the process of learning and developing a new ability through instruction and practice', and that of motor learning 'the process of learning and improving the new movement actions through practice and experience' (Quin et al 2019, pp 253).

PBT teaching refers to this learning of a new skill via 'muscle memory', while acknowledging that while skill acquisition might require the strengthening of certain muscles at certain joint angles, the processes that are important for learning and memory of new skills occur mainly in the brain. The predominant areas of the brain involved in 'muscle memory' include the motor cortex, the basal ganglia and the cerebellum, along with the afferent and efferent neural systems in the periphery.

Dancers must optimise a number of physical capacities to achieve their dance goals (Welsh 2009 pp 4-10) including:

Alignment: Dancers must learn to align their bodies in ways that allow them to move efficiently. Good alignment is sometimes called placement. PBT works for correct alignment through all exercises, at all levels.

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Co-ordination: the nervous system and the muscles that execute and control movement must collaborate to accomplish the skilful movements that dance requires. This neuromuscular co-ordination contributes to 'muscle memory', a cornerstone of the PBT program.

Flexibility: dancers are required to move their joints through the full range of movement required by the choreography. Careful, dynamic stretching is an important component of PBT.

Strength: is actually three related capacities - muscular strength (the maximal amount of force a muscle or muscle group can generate), muscular endurance (movements required by choreography repeated without fatigue) and power (a combination of force and speed). PBT progressively builds towards each of these with increasing repetitions, increasing level of difficulties and increasing force & speed.

Aerobic capacity: while an advanced PBT class may result in elevated breathing, heart rate and sweating it cannot be claimed PBT enhances cardio-vascular capacity per se until further research into the PBT program is completed.

PBT also follows the 3 principles of conditioning:

i) adaptation and reversibility, ii) specificity and iii) progressive overload.

The first principle of physical conditioning, adaptation, explains how 'when the human body is challenged repeatedly, it gradually develops the capacity to manage that challenge', also known as the overload principle in exercise physiology.

This overload is inherent in the progressive challenges to the dancers bodies as they work through the beginner, intermediate then advanced levels of the PBT program. Overload is challenged further by the addition of the equipment used in PBT including the exercises ball, pilates ball, bosu and resistance bands. When we challenge our bodies they grow stronger (Welsh 2009 pp 14).



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Adaptation has a direct corollary called reversibility (Welsh 2009, pp 14). If we stop working a capacity, that capacity will diminish or become weaker. Dancers are encouraged to continue PBT even when away from the studio to maintain all capacities to an acceptable level, 'use it or lose it'.

The second principle of conditioning, specificity, holds that the exercise needs to closely match the specific ability you are trying to build. All PBT exercises have the goal of improving a specific element of balletic technique.

The third and final principle of conditioning is progressive overload. 'Our capacities will expand fastest when the challenge is increased progressively' (Welsh 2009, pp 16). A sudden increase in demand will load the body too quickly and this is when injury may occur. There is strong evidence in the dance & sports medicine literature supporting a gradual increase of load during the dancer or athlete's training cycle. Sudden increases in load can occur after returning from a break, during dance intensives and when rehearsing or performing adds longer hours, shorter breaks and increased demands on the dancers. PBT classes are structured to avoid any sudden overload as the dancer trains.

PBT has also taken into consideration those dancers with joint hypermobility (GJHS), those with genu recurvatum (hyperextended knees also known as sway back legs), have a dynamic (postural) or structural scoliosis, tibial torsion and neural challenges eg Chiari malformation. All PBT exercises can be modified to meet the needs of each individual dancer.

Progressing Ballet Technique (PBT) is an innovative body-conditioning and strengthening program developed by Marie Walton-Mahon for students to understand the depth of training muscle memory in achieving their personal best.

# ENDORSEMENTS

*Progressing ballet technique is a unique and essential approach to the art form that is ballet. For the longevity, safety, knowledge and preservation of the art, to come across progressive ballet technique is visionary and something all young dancers should be aware of and I urge them to embrace this revolutionary support system.*



## **STEPHANIE WILLIAMS**

American Ballet Theatre



*"Wow! The results from the Progressing Ballet Technique workshop are amazing! Concepts that were difficult for my students to understand, for example engaging their core whilst keeping freedom in the upper torso and arms, have become so easy for them to feel now. Magical penny drop moment – so that's how you do it! A Brilliant investment"*

## **NATALIE ROGERS**

Principal of Bojangles Dance, Sydney.

*Progressing Ballet Technique is of real benefit to dance students. The effective exercises will strengthen their core stability, muscle control, balance and help their dancing.*

## **LI CUNXIN**

Artistic Director - Queensland Ballet  
Former Principal Dancer - Australian Ballet  
Former Principal Dancer - Houston Ballet  
Best selling autobiography 'Mao's Last Dancer'



*PBT is Revolutionary!! Marie Walton Mahon is one of the great pioneers of our time. She is paving pathways and charting territory unseen in Dance Medicine. She is truly reinventing dance conditioning and fine tuning the dancers bodies like never seen before! PBT sharpens technical precision so that the dancer can achieve more than they have ever imagined.*

## **TINA SFERRA, MSPT**

Owner Elite Performance Physical Therapy



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## SCHOOLS AROUND THE WORLD



### **Gina Tse**

**Former prima ballerina of The Royal Swedish Ballet Company and Director founder of The International Ballet School**

"Here at The International Ballet School in Stockholm we have incorporated PBT within our Associates pre professional training system from as young as 8 years to 18 years. We have

seen incredible results using PBT alongside the students classical training improving strength and placement of body for their classical technique. We see within our younger students an awareness of their muscles from PBT which then they can find in their training. Interestingly we also see very few injuries and hardly any chronic injuries within our Senior groups. PBT has had amazing effect on all our students and when incorporated on a daily basis presents fantastic results"



### **Dr. Fernando Zikan**

**PhD Physiotherapist, Professor at Medicine's School of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Teacher at Ballet's School of Rio de Janeiro Opera House.**

"The dancer body in today's world needs preparations and care that go beyond ballet classes. The knowledge of Dance Medicine united with the tradition of classical teaching needs to arrive in dance classes.

Strength, flexibility and stability are fundamental factors for the development of a good dancer and the PBT presents itself as an important support in this process, uniting: science, health and art."



## **RENATA GOUVEIA**

**Dancer at the Municipal Theater of Rio de Janeiro (Theatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro (TMRJ)), teacher at the State Dance School Maria Olenewa, Physiotherapist, and director of the Studio Gouveia coach.**

I have been a dancer at the Municipal Theatre of Rio de Janeiro (Theatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro (TMRJ)) since I was 17 years old whilst I am also a Physiotherapist. In the beginning, I was thrilled with the method (Progressing Ballet Technique) for my own personal development, but after I became certified teacher was able to start teaching the method at the Maria Olenewa State Dance School (official school of TMRJ) as a regular subject.

The method is really revolutionary, not only for the conditioning of student's bodies but perfecting the physical precision of dance. With PBT, the student develops pelvic control from an early age which in my opinion is the greatest key to the alignment of a dancer's body and the development of quality movement in dance. I apply PBT intensively among my Private lessons with students at my Studio (Studio Gouveia Coach) and the improvement in performance has been incredible, aiding to achieve excellent results in national and international competitions. It is a delight and pleasure to work with such an effective technique.

PBT has infinite possibilities as it adapts to different body types and individual abilities. Progressing Ballet Technique works with any type of physical structure and not just a single body "pattern" which makes it an extremely efficient method. With PBT each student can develop and improve, achieving their personal best in dance.

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## DILIA MIESES CONSERVATORIO DE DANZA ALINA ABREU, SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

This is part of the students I am teaching PBT at Conservatorio de Danza Alina Abreu, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. It is the first time I teach PBT and I have realized it is a wonderful way to reinforce the basics and foundation of Classical Ballet at the same time than the participants get stronger and freer!!.



I always have thought that the true teacher is not a technician who only implements a manual but instead somebody that uses the professional experience to teach the method in the best way, with a personal touch and obeying all the principles that support that creation. In that way, the teaching is more vivid, charm, and enjoyable for both the teacher and the student.

As Miss Marie says dancers are artistic athletes so we must not forget to be creative, artistic!! I use different music (beautiful one) and once the student learns the exercise well I try they approximate the performance to the final goal: to dance stronger, more elongated, freer, and with joy without losing the consciousness of the body work required. I am very happy with this beginning!!♥ Thanks to PBT"

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# SARAH DICKINSON PBT CERTIFIED NORTHERN BALLET SCHOOL



"The systematic and logical development of the exercises has ensured that the students have been able to fully engage and remain challenged in their classes in-spite of having to work outside of the studio environment.

I absolutely love the clear developments and layered approach along with the many possible variations to each exercise. Everyone has benefited from this truly wonderful program and over the past 12 weeks, much progress has been made.

As we, at last, can start to look forward to getting back into the studio I am safe in the knowledge that my students are ready to do so. Thanks to PBT!"





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# ALICE JACKSON

## PBT CERTIFIED

### FIGURE SKATER TEACHER

I. LOVE. PBT. I've been teaching Dance to Figure skaters as part of their summer intensive and I give them one PBT a week. **I LOVE IT. THEY LOVE IT. ITS MY ABSOLUTE FAVORITE DAY OF THE WEEK.**

Amazing results. I love that I'm starting them off with PBT right away, as when their ballet class comes along, half of the work is already done for me!!!! Today I introduced the batterie section of the course (working simple changements) and during ballet



I decided to try them out for real. NO SCISSORS. EVERYONE OPENING SIDE TO SIDE. the only problems I encounter are legs opening TOO FAR TO A LA SECONDE. WHAT A WONDERFUL PROBLEM ☺☺☺ cant wait to see more of this work translate in their ballet and their skating. LOVE THIS PROGRAM CANT SAY IT ENOUGH.



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# MASTERS THESIS

## EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL AERIAL CIRCUS TRAINING METHODS AND PROGRESSING BALLET TECHNIQUE

A study completed by **Rosalinda Rojas, Graduate Student at the University of Northern Colorado**, where students were asked to take part in a study of the effectiveness of traditional aerial circus training methods and Progressing Ballet Technique to enhance body awareness and develop aesthetic sensitivity relevant in aerial dance movement.

Rosalinda Stated "The overarching principles of PBT introduce short repeatable forms of movement patterning and repatterning through self-moving and/or guided touch, enabling the practitioner to shift towards self-knowledge, awareness and transformation. Teacher-led cueing guide a student through experiential values considered to be the center of each practice. Transformational conditions are deepened by the integration of practice tools in the form of resistance devices (bands, balls, walls and domes). Practitioners are encouraged to examine and reexamine movement habits by moving consciously and intentionally. The progression of PBT instruction considers levels of self-knowledge, understanding and abilities that foster conditions for selfgrowth and conscious embodiment.

**"PBT teaching techniques contributed to developing their aerial dance abilities and mentioned improvements in their strength, endurance, body awareness, sensitivity, connectivity and presence. The members of the experimental group even ranked their aerial movement awareness as high by the end of the study."**

REFERENCE: [HTTPS://DIGSCHOLARSHIP.UNCO.EDU/CGI/VIEWCONTENT.CGI?ARTICLE=1121&CONTEXT=THESES](https://digscholarship.unco.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1121&context=theses)



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# HOW TO GET THE BEST RESULTS

## **5 & 6 year old students**

Would benefit from practicing PBT 3/4 hours classes supervised once or twice per week

## **7 - 10 year old students**

Would benefit from practicing PBT 1 hour classes supervised twice per week and encouraged to practice the weaker areas themselves

## **11 - 14 year old students**

Would benefit from practicing PBT 1/4 hour classes supervised twice per week and encouraged to practice the weaker areas themselves

## **15 - Pre Professional year old students**

Would benefit from practicing PBT 1 1/2 hour classes supervised three per week and encouraged to practice the weaker areas themselves

## **Adults**

Would benefit from practicing 1 hour classes supervised three per week and encouraged to practice the weaker areas themselves

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## PBT STUDENTS



### **Austen McDonald**

Has commenced his training at the Tanzakemiezuerich. Austen is a valued member of the online PBT training.

### **Lucelle Davis**

Lucelle has been accepted into the Paris Opera Ballet School Summer Intensive! Lucelle is a valued PBT student also featured in our online PBT exercises videos



### **Tyla Steinbach**

Tyla Steinbach, a corps de ballet member from San Francisco Ballet who is a valuable PBT member.

### **Cameron Holmes**

Cameron started progressed to full-time ballet training at Tanya Pearson's Classical Coaching Academy in 2016.. He joined The Australian Ballet in 2018. Cameron still using PBT to train and build his technique



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# CPD WITH THE RAD

## EARN UP TO 20 CPD POINTS WITH PROGRESSING BALLET TECHNIQUE

A PBT teachers workshop goes for 6 to 8 hours and covers the entire program, allowing you to be certified at the end and left with a thorough understanding of the work and how to apply it.

Teachers can earn 6 CPD credits from completing the certification course (Level 1) either by attending a workshop or completing online certification application through our online training.

### Overview of credits:

**Completion of Level 1 will grant you 6 CPD credits**

**Completion of Level 2 will grant you 9 CPD credits**

**Completion of Level 3 will grant you 3 CPD credits.**

**For additional points teachers can submit their PBT Class Plans to gain 2 CPD credits (once a year)**

