

clientele who know that Pilates is the exercise of choice for numerous models, actors, athletes and even professional dancers around the world.

Vivian Zapanta has well earned her title as guru

Pioneered by the late Joseph Pilates, the mind-body exercise system enhances core strength and stability, improves posture and alignment, increases flexibility, improves muscular balance and strength, increases endurance and muscle tone, prevents injury, enhances athletic performance, relieves stress and back pain, improves balance and coordination, and heightens body awareness.

The Stott Pilates method that Vivian employs was developed by Moira Merrithew, a former dancer who modified the original Pilates exercises to come up with her own modern anatomically based approach to the original exercise method. Vivian is not

and she and her sister started teaching Polynesian dance. This was back when Hawaiian dancing was all the rage. Eventually, she went to the University of Santo Tomas, where she graduated cum laude majoring in Physical Education. This led to a job at the Mandarin health club where she taught, of all things, a class called "sexercise"—but then this was the '70s. By the time the Jane Fonda revolution had everyone feeling the burn, Vivian was establishing herself as the Jane Fonda of the Philippines, with her small exercise segments in "Coffee with Lee," an early morning show. Inevitably, her popularity and success motivated her to put up her own gym, VZ Shapemakers, in Greenhills. Eventually, she had her own television show, VeeZee body, which aired for 30 minutes Saturdays.

Through all this, Vivian managed to raise a daughter, study cooking, as well as explore SOM or Science of Mind, which she credits for her new positive outlook on life. It was a turning point, she said, because of which she learned to be at peace with herself and appreciate everything that comes. But for this feisty woman, taking what comes did not mean slowing down. As an IDEA (International Dance Exercise Association) Health and Fitness Association ambassador to the Philippines, Vivian continued to upgrade her craft. After becoming a certified Les Mills instructor for Body Balance, a Pilates/yoga/tai chi based form of exercise, Vivian spent six months in Canada training for Stott Pilates.

Results

Her recently-opened studio is equipped with \$35,000 worth of state-of-the-art Stott Pilates equipment and machines. The only Asian in the certification body of Stott to

date, Vivian also likes to instill positive outlook in her faculty and clients.

There's a reason that Pilates is so popular in spite of the hefty sum one has to pay for private instruction: It gets results.

Personally, when I stopped dancing, I went to the gym for three hours every day just to stay fit. I get exactly the same results with my weekly Pilates sessions. I find that my muscles are lengthened and I am more centered—something that translates even when I teach ballet.

Though I have been taking Pilates for six months, I had never tried Stott Pilates until my session with Vivian. Because Pilates originated from one person, the exercises are all similar, regardless of the method. Stott Pilates focuses on specific parts of the anatomy. The Authentic Pilates exercises have also been greatly modified into a program that is unique to Stott.

Having been a professional dancer, I tend to approach exercise programs with a

different mindset, often over-analyzing every movement. I have to admit that I am very picky when it comes to fitness instructors. It is difficult to explain the differences in methods without getting overly specific. Suffice it to say that I had a good and challenging workout with Vivian. She is articulate and passionate about her work and it comes through when she is working with you. To paraphrase something a journalist told me: At the end of the day, it is all about the teacher.

With her franchise of Stott Pilates, Vivian has once again proven that she has been, and will always be, one of the best-known fitness gurus in the country. Somehow I have a feeling she won't stop there either, and that she still has so much more to offer.

Vivian Zapanta Pilates Studio is at the Tiffany Place, 166 L.P. Leviste St. Salcedo Village, Makati City. Tel. no. 886-7744. or (0917) 844-0944.