

## A Singularly Sensational Career

After injuries sidelined Trish Garland, a star of the original Broadway cast of *A Chorus Line*, Romana Kryzanowska helped her get healthy again—and discover a whole new career as a Pilates trainer.

by Anne Marie O'Connor

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LETA WARNER

### **Pilates Style:** TELL US ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD.

**Trish Garland:** I grew up in Lawrence, Kansas, a small university town, with three brothers and one sister. My father was a district manager for a farming magazine and traveled a great deal. My mother was the anchor of our family. When she was a young girl, she wanted to become a nurse but her family discouraged her. Because of that disappointment, she vowed not to let that happen to us.

Dance was my first entrée into this world of opportunity. I loved it from the beginning. The smell of crushed rosin, the wall-to-wall mirrors, the music, everyone assembled in their various forms of disciplined attire.

In order to pay for our dance classes, my mom did the laundry for my dance teacher and my sister and I cleaned the studio. Since we didn't have enough money for both my sister Jacki and me, I often watched from the sidelines. My mother, bless her heart, also saved every extra penny so she could take my sister and me to see the legendary Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo and Ruth Page Ballet Company when they performed in Kansas City.

Inspired, I begged my mom to let me go to Chicago so I could dance. (I was always dramatic.) After much coaxing, my parents allowed me to go off alone, at the ripe old age of 10, on a Greyhound bus to Chicago. I spent the summer at the Stone-Camryn School of Ballet. It was a dream come true, even if the summer did fly by like a wink of an eye.

Six months later, I received a Christmas card from the school offering me a summer scholarship. After that, I became very serious; I started training in Kansas City at the Conservatory of Dance. I ended up auditioning for the illustrious San Francisco Ballet Company, which offered me a Ford Foundation scholarship to study at their school. My parents were reluctant to let me go because of my age, but they knew I had a short window of opportunity. So in 1964, when I was all of 15, I was back on a Greyhound bus, this time headed for California. I finished high school at George Washington High and danced with the San Francisco Ballet until 1967.

### **PS: SO, HOW DID YOU GET FROM THERE TO BROADWAY?**

**TG:** In 1967, after a change in management, there was a mass exodus of dancers from San Francisco, so I went to New York to reunite with my sister Jacki. She was dancing in a Broadway show, *Happy Time*, starring Robert Goulet. I wanted to pursue a career as a ballerina and thought that dancing on Broadway was beneath me. Well, after several months of auditioning and not landing anything but a regional dance company (which was fine except for the starvation part), I changed my tune.

I saw an ad in *Backstage* for a 5'8" female dancer/singer for the national touring company of *Cabaret*. Yikes! I hadn't sung in front of anyone since I was 10. I ran home, pulled out all of my sister's sheet music and realized the only song I knew was "I Enjoy Being A Girl." But lo and behold, I got the job. I was cast in the chorus, as the American Buck: I had drums on my chest, a triangle between my legs and an American eagle on my head. And I was thrilled!

### **PS: WHAT CHOREOGRAPHERS DID YOU WORK WITH ON BROADWAY?**

**TG:** After *Cabaret*, I got a replacement part in the Broadway show *Follies*, which Michael Bennett had choreographed. At the same time, Bob Fosse was doing a television special with Liza Minnelli called *Liza with a Z*. I got that too. So I was working with two of the most famous choreographers simultaneously. It was an amazing time!

### **PS: HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH A CHORUS LINE?**

**TG:** A fellow dancer, Michon Peacock, invited me to a workshop one Saturday night. She told me we were going to dance, talk about our lives and that Michael Bennett was going to spearhead the evening. It sounded exciting, so I went. The stories told that night would be the basis for *A Chorus Line*.

A lot of the questions that were being asked related to my childhood. I was reluctant to share too much because my sister was also there and I thought that some of what I might say could hurt her feelings.

So later, when we were auditioning for the show, I was given my sister's monologue to read. I was a nervous wreck and kept shaking. I had elephant-bell pants on and they were shaking; even the paper I was reading from was shaking. I asked them if they had heavier paper. Everyone, Michael, Marvin Hamlisch, broke up laughing, and that's how I got the part—because I made them laugh.

### **PS: WAS A CHORUS LINE AN INSTANTANEOUS HIT?**

**TG:** Yes! We started off-Broadway at the Newman (now the Public Theater). Even though they had done no advertising, there was a buzz around town that something special was going on there. It was the ticket. The audience was on a raked stage, so we could spot the stars that came to see us—Paul Newman, Sir Laurence Olivier, Shelley Winters, Gene Kelly—so many I can't remember. I

**I wanted to pursue a career as a ballerina and thought that dancing on Broadway was beneath me.**



couldn't believe that they were coming to see us! When the rave reviews came out, the show exploded and we moved to the Shubert Theater on Broadway. The rest is history.

**PS: HOW LONG WERE YOU IN THE SHOW?**

**TG:** We opened off-Broadway in April 1975, and moved to Broadway in July 1975. Then all but five of the original cast members came out to California, first to open in San Francisco and then in Los Angeles. I left the show in 1977 after I tore my ACL...in ACL. I always thought that was a bit of irony—I lived out the Paul story.

**PS: AFTER YOUR INJURY, DID YOU DO PILATES TO REHAB?**

**TG:** Yes, but not until much later, when Romana Kryzanowska would come to my rescue. Because I was in L.A., I did my initial rehab with Ducky Drake, a famous track coach at UCLA. Pilates wasn't as familiar to dancers then as it is today. I didn't really know what it could do for me.

**PS: AFTER YOUR KNEE INJURY, WERE YOU ABLE TO CONTINUE DANCING?**

**TG:** Yes, I was one of Dolly Parton's "girls" in the movie version of *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* and I performed in several commercials, including one for Dr. Pepper. After re-injuring my knee doing *Best Little Whorehouse*, my concentration turned to acting in film and television.

**PS: HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT PILATES?**

**TG:** My sister was looking for a ballet teacher for her two daughters, Samantha and Jessica, who were two and four at the time. Someone told her there was this wonderful woman

**As keepers of Joe Pilates' flame, we have a major responsibility to maintain the integrity of the work.**

named Romana Kryzanowska teaching ballet at the Ansonia on 73<sup>rd</sup> and Broadway. So my nieces, along with Romana's granddaughter Daria, took ballet together. I would go to their recitals when I came to town and that was my first introduction to Romana...through dance.

**PS: SO HOW DID YOUR SISTER FIND OUT ABOUT ROMANA'S "SIDE" BUSINESS OF PILATES?**

**TG:** Funny you say "side" business. Romana is a legend today, but at that time, she was a working mom with two children to support. She taught Pilates in the first part of the day, and then taught ballet after school to the kids to supplement her income. She was and is an incredible role model.

When my sister's husband lost his job, my sister needed to work. She told Romana and, without hesitation, Romana told her to come to the studio and Romana taught her Pilates so my sister could make some money. That's the way you used to get certified—by working beside the master.

**PS: HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH PILATES?**

**TG:** I was auditioning a lot in New York from 1985 to 1992 and would go to see Romana and have her work her magic. I was still having a lot of problems with my knees. I had undergone three knee surgeries by then. I clearly remember my first lesson with her. She put me through the paces of a rigorous session, challenging me as a dancer and yet being sympathetic to my injuries. She said very little, and since dancers seek approval, this was daunting for me. I kept trying to prove myself to her, sweating bullets hoping to hear accolades for my excellent performance.

At the end, she said, '*Golubchik, you must be effortless, not effortful; you must look like a swan, not a workhorse.*' I nearly died, but I knew she was right. I swear she is the most intuitive woman I've ever known. I miss working with her terribly.

**PS: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR CERTIFICATION?**

**TG:** I was already teaching Pilates in L.A. to supplement my acting income. My sister told me Romana was starting a certification program with Sean Gallagher in New York, Performing Arts Physical Therapy (PAPT), and their associate in L.A. needed a teacher. After interviewing me, they gave me the job and paid for my certification.



**PS: HOW DID YOU END UP OPENING GARLAND STUDIO?**

**TG:** While I was working at PAPT, I was also working with private clients in their homes; I wanted to work with a greater number of people and felt a stationary location would allow that. Romana discouraged me from opening a studio, because of the headaches and hard work. I (shamefully) didn't listen, and in 1995, I started a small studio in my home, graduated to my guesthouse, and in 2000, moved to my studio in Sherman Oaks, where I am currently.

**PS: HOW DID YOUR STUDIO END UP BECOMING A TRAINING CENTER FOR ROMANA'S PILATES?**

**TG:** Michael Levy, another instructor in L.A., and I shared that responsibility for a time. Then, five years ago, Garland Studio became the Southern California Training Center. I think hard work on my part, their trust in me and the need for a center were all integral ingredients in their decision.

**PS: DO YOU STILL WORK WITH CLIENTS?**

**TG:** Absolutely, I love working with both clients and apprentices. I have a need for continual growth. Romana fostered that in all of us—always learning. When you teach, you get to see the work in many different ways because everyone is so unique. You are then able to capitalize on the wealth of the work in such a way that every day is different.

**PS: WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT TRAINING TEACHERS?**

**TG:** It requires a completely different skill set. When working with a client, you are in a sense choreographing a routine that is individualized for that specific person. When training apprentices or teachers, you are teaching them the entire body of work, but also the whys and hows, so they gain the wisdom to know what exercises to give to the varied body types they will deal with as clientele. It's a very in-depth process requiring great patience and compassion. It's enormously rewarding to help someone develop and understand the work.

**PS: HOW OFTEN DO YOU OFFER THE ROMANA'S PILATES CERTIFICATION AT GARLAND STUDIO?**

**TG:** The certification program is generally

offered twice a year; the first one starts mid-February and the second in August. We also have CPE (Continuing Pilates Education) once a year in May/June. For more information, check my website, [www.trishgarlandpilates.com](http://www.trishgarlandpilates.com).

**PS: TELL US ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL LIFE.**

**TG:** I have a loving and exceptionally funny husband, George Drucker, who is a partner at Crenshaw Drucker Communications. I have two, wonderful stepchildren, Lindsay and Andrew, who both live in Chicago. I have been a proud member of SGI-USA, a world peace organization, for 38 years.

**PS: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE FUTURE OF PILATES?**

**TG:** I think we have a great future! It's amazing to think about how far we have come, from something that nobody had heard of and now being embraced by a widespread audience. I think Joe would be very proud and Romana should be too. Without her, we wouldn't be having this conversation. She is the reason Joe's legacy continues.

As you know, in today's world anyone can hang up a sign and call it Pilates. I think the key to our continued success and growth is to make sure that each teacher or trainer who hangs up that sign really understands and can implement this incredible body of work. In a nutshell, that means getting continuing education from sources having that knowledge.

As keepers of Joe Pilates' flame, we have a major responsibility to maintain the integrity of the work. I think it's incumbent on us to constantly work on understanding his philosophy and the depth of the work he shared. I always know teachers who have been trained by Romana, because they are constantly seeking and taking lessons. They never think they know it all; quite the contrary. They always have this voracious appetite to learn more. She taught that by her own example, always having a quest for knowledge. She is a great mentor.

**PS: WHAT DO YOU THINK THE GREATEST HURDLES ARE FOR PILATES TODAY?**

**TG:** Fragmentation is one of the biggest hurdles we face in our community. Pilates is a beautiful macramé of connectedness. We are in the business of making people healthy, and I think we need to do the same thing in our own community: uniting instead of separating, coming together as a team. The use of "we" instead of "I" would be a good start.

**PS: WHAT DO YOU MOST LOVE ABOUT THE WORK?**

**TG:** The people, our daily adventure together, and that the work remains endless and timeless. **PS**



TOP: GARLAND SHOWING HER STAR FORM IN A TEASER.

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: GARLAND WITH HER TEACHER AND MENTOR, ROMANA KRYZANOWSKA IN THE EARLY 2000S.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM: SHOOTING ROMANA'S FIRST VIDEO IN THE EARLY 90S.