

Senior Momentum

By: Marisa Dellatto

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Look good, feel great, live longer

Health & Fitness

They're putting the 'age' in agile! Meet NYC's top fitness pros over 65

By MARISA DELLATTO

It's time to put your notions of old age out to pasture.

Far from retiring, these NYC seniors are having the time of their lives working as fitness instructors — and using their years of training to sculpt, tone and perfect bodies of all ages. Who said that jocks had to be young?

In fact, fitness programs for the elderly are among the top health trends for 2018, according to the American College of Sports Medicine's Health & Fitness Journal's 2018 survey of thousands of physical fitness professionals. "When you're older, you really need an older teacher," Marjorie Jaffe, a senior personal trainer who focuses on older clients, tells The Post. "You're really not interested in [toning] your arms or your butt. You're more interested in your balance, keeping your body straight and not limiting your life."

Seasoned instructors also possess a self-assurance that younger clients can benefit from — and look forward to. "By 40," says Jaffe, "you're going to have so much confidence. And that's a fabulous thing to have."

Here, New York City's senior fitness instructors — who range in age from 68 to 82 — tell The Post what it's like to still kick butt, creaky hips be damned.

Roger Puckett, 82, and Yvonne Puckett, 81

Even a recent knee-replacement surgery can't keep Roger off his feet.

A month after his procedure, the dance teacher was back in the studio.

"I'm not doing pirouettes or double tour-tetés, but I am teaching," he says.

He credits his lifetime of dancing for his quick recovery — a skill he and his wife, Yvonne, also a professional dancer, spent decades honing.

The couple, who have been married for 50 years, have worked alongside Bob Fosse and Elvis Presley and danced in movies and shows both on Broadway and off.

"The energy I have now at 81 is equal to what I had when I was 21," Yvonne says.

And it shows: She teaches 15 classes a week, while Roger teaches 11.

The most important rule of the class? Never stop moving. "I don't even let them stop in between songs!" Yvonne says.

Besides, there's no reason to slow down. "We love dance, and we love each other," says Yvonne, prompting Roger to chime in, "I feel like this is the happiest time of my life."

Cardio jazz dance with Yvonne, Saturdays at 1:45, and core training with Roger, Saturdays at 2:45, \$25/class, McBurney YMCA, YMCANYC.org



Yvonne and Roger Puckett are in their 80s — and teach more than a dozen dance classes each week.

SENIOR MOMENTUM



Lennox Blackmoore, 68

A professional boxer for 17 years, Blackmoore now does private coaching at Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn, where he's trained champions from all weight classes — including Sonya Lamonakis, Julio Cesar Green and Vivian Harris.

He's currently working with a 64-year-old woman — "a real fighter," he says — whom he finds "inspiring."

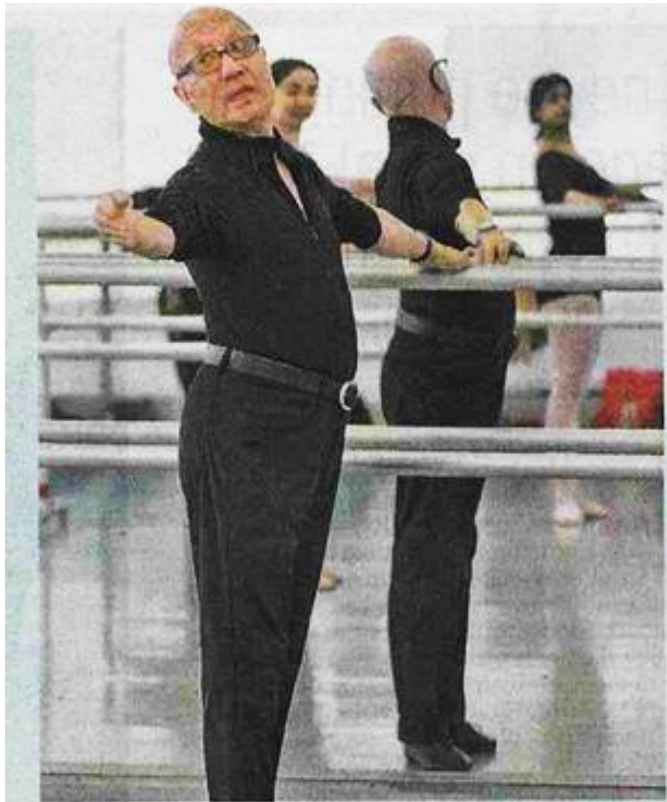
During a session, Blackmoore helps his clients with drills, footwork, core strength and stamina. He still spars with up-and-coming fighters, but only to a degree. "I don't go heavy; I need my energy and my strength," he says.

Back in his boxing days, the Guyana native jogged 10 miles a day. Now, he's more strategic — and he uses his limitations to his advantage. "Boxing is a sport of rest," he says. "You have to control your energy supply."

"I have a lot of wisdom in me," he says. "Things I didn't get to do during my time in the final [fight], I can put it in other people. So I love it."

Sessions with Blackmoore, \$40/hour at Gleason's Gym, 130 Water St., Brooklyn, GleasonsGym.com

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Finis Jhung, 81

Despite having his hip replaced in 2017, Jhung continues to teach adult beginner ballet classes at the Ailey Extension in Hell's Kitchen.

"I'm in perfect health," Jhung says, even if he no longer does "big jumps."

The professional ballet dancer has been teaching since 1972, although these days his focus is on amateurs seeking physical and mental stimulation.

"They don't do things perfectly, but that's not what they're looking for," he says. "They're starting to work their muscles, they're starting to improve their balance and they're learning how to move to music. So it's almost like a meditation."

Jhung says that Buddhism helps him stay inspired: "You must keep doing something, and you have to keep inventing."

That outlook certainly helps him inspire others.

"They like me, because I'm older than they are," Jhung says. "I'm still able to stand and balance and show them what's possible."

Absolute beginner ballet with Jhung, Sundays at noon, \$22/class, Ailey Extension, 405 W. 55th St., AileyExtension.com