

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT?

Modern Dancer Cross-Trains to Another Tune

BY JEN MURPHY

When you dance for a living, dancing eight hours a week is work, not a workout. Fana Tesfagiorgis, a member of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, embraced an eclectic mix of cross-training to increase her strength, endurance and flexibility.

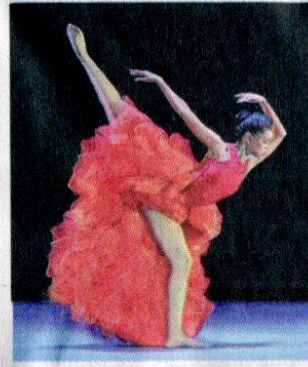
"You have to do a lot more than dance," says the 25-year-old, who joined the modern-dance company last May.

Ms. Tesfagiorgis who is a graduate of the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. program in dance, began looking for a workout to supplement her dancing about two years ago. "A lot of dancers cross-train so I started asking what they did," she says. "I wanted something that would challenge me and leave me feeling stronger and more in tune with my muscles."

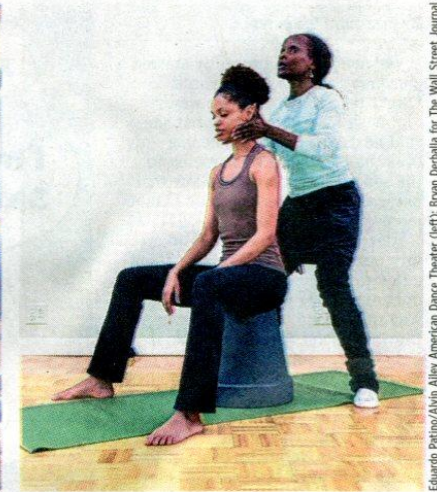
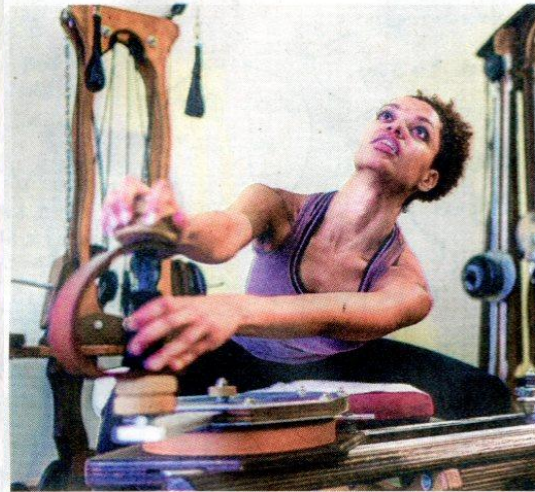
Former Alvin Ailey dancer Clifton Brown introduced her to the Gyrotonic Expansion System, which involves two methods of exercises: Gyrokinesis, done on a mat and chair; and Gyrotonics, using special equipment that offers support and resistance. Developed by Julius Horvath, a professional dancer from Romania, the method aims to elongate the muscles while building strength.

Renee Robinson, another former Alvin Ailey dancer, also introduced Ms. Tesfagiorgis to Floor Barre, which involves exercises similar to those performed at the ballet barre, but done lying down.

She says she also "needed something without a lot of impact." So



Fana Tesfagiorgis, an Alvin Ailey dancer, above, does exercises on a Gyrotonic machine, right, at Fluid Fitness, a Gyrotonics gym in New York. Far right, in a training session with Renee Robinson, who is a Gyrokinesis instructor.



Eduardo Patino/Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (left), Bryan Derballa for The Wall Street Journal (2)

over the summer, she started pool workouts with former Alvin Ailey dancer Lisa Johnson-Willingham. "I think half the fun is trying new things that can help your body," she says.

The Workout

Five days a week Ms. Tesfagiorgis spends 90 minutes running through ballet postures with her dance troupe. While standing at a ballet barre, she bends her knees as her heels lift off the ground to perform a plié. After running through a dozen positions, she does the positions again in the middle of the room without a barre.

"Not having the barre for balance means more core work," she says.

Her 60- to 90-minute Gyrotonics and Gyrokinesis sessions involve sequences of spiraling, circular movements, which flow together in rhythmic repetitions, with corresponding breathing. For example, she lies on a bench and places her feet in straps, with 25 pounds of resistance each, dangling above her head. She then runs through hamstring exercises where her legs make scissor motions, circles and bicycling motions. She does these workouts twice a week before dance practice.

She does an hourlong Floor Barre workout once a week. These are exercises "much like we do at the barre, but we do them very slowly and try to use the muscles in the most efficient way possible," she says. "It allows me to notice muscular imbalances."

Five times a week she does one-hour pool workouts at New York Health & Racquet Club. She warms up with laps on a kickboard. She then puts floaties around her ankles and runs through a series of ballet exercises in the water.

"The floaties make your legs want to lift out of the water so you have to

use all of your energy to keep them submerged," she says.

The Diet

Breakfast is either strawberry or blueberry yogurt or eggs with turkey bacon or chicken sausage. She has a light soup or salad topped with chicken, turkey or fish for lunch. She cooks fish or chicken for dinner with steamed kale and other vegetables.

Ms. Tesfagiorgis loves juices and will often order green lemonade, a mix of celery, kale, cucumber, and ginger, from the juice bar near Alvin Ailey. She snacks throughout the day on protein bars, nuts, fruit, and yogurt. Her splurge: peanut butter.

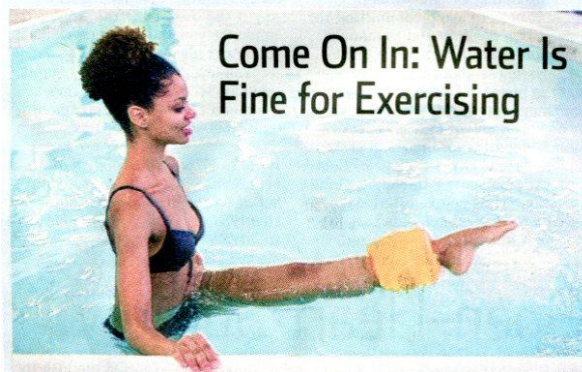
The Gear and Cost

For dance class, Ms. Tesfagiorgis likes to wear Yumiko leotards, which retail for around \$60 a piece. Alvin Ailey supplies her Sansha and Capzio dance shoes. She wears a Speedo bathing suit, cap and goggles in the pool.

She receives a discount for her gym membership through Alvin Ailey and estimates she spends \$350 a month for her gym membership, pool training and Gyrotonic sessions.

The Playlist

A live pianist accompanies Alvin Ailey's dance sessions. Ms. Tesfagiorgis says Gyrotonics and Gyrokinesis are done without music, "but the breathing becomes the music, especially in group classes."



Come On In: Water Is Fine for Exercising

A pool workout doesn't have to mean just swimming laps.

"People don't think to try their normal workout in a pool," says Carol Kennedy-Armbruster, a senior lecturer in the department of kinesiology at the Indiana University School of Public Health in Bloomington, Ind.

Dr. Kennedy-Armbruster, who did her master's thesis on water exercise, likens moving in water to moving in molasses. "It's a resistant medium, which causes you to exert more energy," she says.

Many people get introduced to water workouts because they are injured and use the pool as a way to rehab without causing impact to the body, Dr. Kennedy-Armbruster says. Simply walking in a pool can provide a challenging workout. Some pool facilities may have lanes for water walking, she says.

She suggests walking forward, backward and sideways to use different muscles. "Start in water that is waist deep and when you're ready for more resistance move to chest-deep water," she says. "When walking feels easy, try jogging."

Kickboards, swim fins, webbed gloves, and paddles can be used to challenge different muscles in the pool, says Dr. Kennedy-Armbruster. She also suggests trying lower body exercises such as walking lunges and squats in the pool.

"People think pool workouts are for ladies in flowered swim caps," Dr. Kennedy-Armbruster says, "but if you notice they bounce in place. Once you add some movement in the water across different planes your muscles are going to be challenged."

—Jen Murphy