

En Pointe

Gifted ballerina Chan Hon Goh shares her strategies for living well.

CHAN HON GOH IS A TALENTED and ambitious dancer who has used her gift for dance and strong work ethic to become one of the leading stars of both The National Ballet of Canada and The Suzanne Farrell Ballet. Chan frequently shares her talent as a guest artist with dance companies around the world. In addition to performing, Chan

is also an entrepreneur who owns and runs a dance supply company called Principal by Chan Hon Goh™. In January 2006 Chan joined the AARC Foundation as its first Honorary Patron. Here, she shares with us the importance of maintaining good musculoskeletal health.

Q] As a ballerina, how important is it to maintain healthy bones?

A] Maintaining good musculoskeletal health is extremely important in that we earn a living through movement. Bones are the main instrument in creating our art form, making it imperative that all

of my bones are healthy and strong because of the impact that is demanded of my body. Dance requires enormous flexibility, so it is important that I maintain strong, toned muscles to support the frame that creates the art form.

Q] How have you seen arthritis affect your life?

A] I have always known arthritis. My mother was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. She was a beautiful dancer and was forced to end her career prematurely because of her arthritis. In lieu of a longer professional stage career in dancing, she took on the role of teacher.

Q] How have you seen arthritis affect the dance community?

A] In our profession, the word arthritis often comes up in conversation as something we should expect as we age. This isn't right; it's scary and shouldn't be assumed. I think an awareness of arthritis and understanding the early indicators of the disease are critically important for all dancers. I really believe that it should not continue to simply be accepted by dancers as a fact of life.

Q] In addition to dancing, what steps do you take to stay healthy?

A] Maintaining a balanced diet is a crucial part of staying healthy, but I also supplement my diet with calcium and vitamin D. Swimming is my secondary form of exercise. It causes less impact on my joints, but strengthens and tones the muscles to support my bones.

Q] What is your greatest accomplishment?

A] That is very difficult; I think that as dancers we are taught to be very critical of ourselves. Our whole art form is consumed with being better; always aiming to be closer to perfection, but it will never be perfect. I am proud in that I have been able to have a distinguished career in dance. It is incredibly fulfilling. On the other hand, I am also very proud and feel very fortunate to have been able to get pregnant and give birth to a beautiful little boy and have a family life.

Q] Who were your role models growing up?

A] My role models seemed to change depending on my stage in life. Of course, as an aspiring dancer, I looked up to Margot Fontaine, Karen Kain and Natalia Makarova. Day to day, my parents were my most influential role models. They taught me strong values and they lived by those values every day. I saw them prove through their own actions that which made them successful.

Q] What words do you live by?

A] "We are what we do, and excellence should not be out of the ordinary; if we do it often enough, it will become habit." ●



Chan Hon Goh
in *Swan Lake*