

21 UNDER 40

These talented young teachers are shaping the future of yoga.

YOGA HAS COME a long way, baby. Just a generation ago, devoted yogis had to travel to India or help organize the occasional visit of their master teacher. Thanks to their dedication, many of them became master teachers themselves. Maty Ezraty and Chuck Miller, Patricia Walden, John Friend, Rod Stryker, and Shiva Rea, to name just a few, have taken the ancient practices and made them relevant for the next generation of American yogis.

Now that next generation is starting to make its mark. Here, we've gathered 21 gifted, well-studied teachers under the age of 40 who together represent the incredibly diverse and yet deeply connected character of yoga in America. It's not an exhaustive list but a sampling of teachers who are shaping yoga's future.

We limited our selection to teachers who are based in the States (which makes it easier for you to study with them) and who are in the trenches every day, either directing their own yoga studios or teaching around the country. Some are innovators—or yogic mutts, if you will—who have studied many traditions and are crafting their own unique interpretation of yoga. Others are meticulously preserving a treasured style in its pristine form. They may appear to have little in common, but they all share an inner calling to pass down a system whose goal is to encourage compassion and contentedness, ease suffering, and awaken us to our interconnectedness. We're grateful to these teachers—and to all of the teachers and students out there—who are dedicated to exploring all that yoga has to offer and to sharing their discoveries along the way.



PHOTO: KENNETH GRAHAM

Simon Park remembers how, as a small child in rural Korea, he had an image of being a primal warrior. But all that changed when he was five and his family moved to Philadelphia. Eager to be an all-American kid, Park played baseball, football, and basketball. It took years for him to reconnect with the primal part of himself. He found it when, as an undergraduate at UCLA, he stumbled upon Shiva Rea's yoga class in the World Arts and Cultures department. It took Park some time to warm up to the practice, but once he did, he found it healing for his body and his mind. "Yoga allowed me to open to people a lot more," he says. "Shiva helped me find the bridge

between the seeming dichotomy of being a fierce, primal warrior and a soft, open-hearted yogi."

Park considers himself an "energy-centered practitioner" and focuses on helping students find the flow of energy in their bodies through movement and self-observation. "Alignment is important, and the breath is important, but I'm trying to teach students to understand energy in order to heal their own bodies and find freedom. Yoga is a method to free yourself in the world—to be happier and more genuine and more connected to people. I try to give that spirit in the classroom."

These days Park, who has been influenced by many teachers, including Maty Ezraty, Dharma Mittra, Joan White, and Duncan Wong, teaches workshops and retreats around the world, spreading his own style of yoga that blends traditional hatha practice with Thai Yoga Massage. These classes, which Park has developed over the years through his own experimentation and study of martial arts, increase body awareness, encourage self-evolution, and just feel good.

WHERE TO FIND HIM IN 2008 Teaching at the Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health and the Telluride Yoga Festival, and in Korea, Japan, and China. Learn more at wheresimon.com.

Simon Park
Home Base
**New York City
& Philadelphia**
Age 36
Style **Flow Yoga**

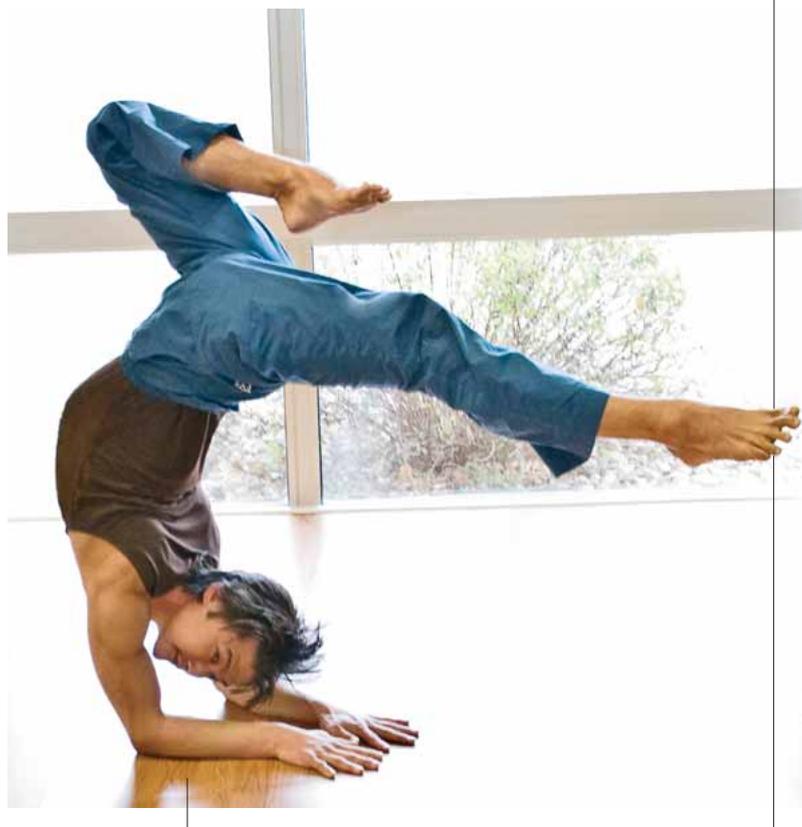
Sianna Sherman

Home Base **Berkeley, California**
Age 39
Style **Anusara Yoga**

Sianna Sherman is a captivating storyteller, whose inspiring and heartfelt teachings have garnered a faithful audience. With a soothing voice, she weaves together Anusara Yoga's Universal Principles of Alignment, personal anecdotes, Hindu mythology, and Tantric philosophy, occasionally mixed with a few lines from classic children's literature. "Stories open up our ability to absorb yogic teachings by giving us a lens through which to view ourselves," she says. "They also inspire creativity and joy. One of my favorites is *Mary Poppins*. She helps people unleash their imaginations and soar to new heights. That's what I want my students' hearts to experience."

Sherman, whose teachers have included Richard Freeman, K. Pattabhi Jois, Sally Kempton, and Douglas Brooks, apprenticed with John Friend and was one of the first to be certified to teach Anusara Yoga. Today she travels the world, often with Friend, leading teacher trainings and workshops. At the heart of Sherman's message is the importance of connecting with others: "I hope people find the courage to live from the heart with compassion and love. You can step into this practice in a way that opens you up to the people around you. You don't have to be fluent in your asana practice, but you do have to give it everything you've got."

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching at *Yoga Journal's* Colorado conference; giving teacher trainings in Berkeley, California; and leading retreats and workshops around the world. Visit opentograce.com.



Monique Schubert

Home Base **New York City**

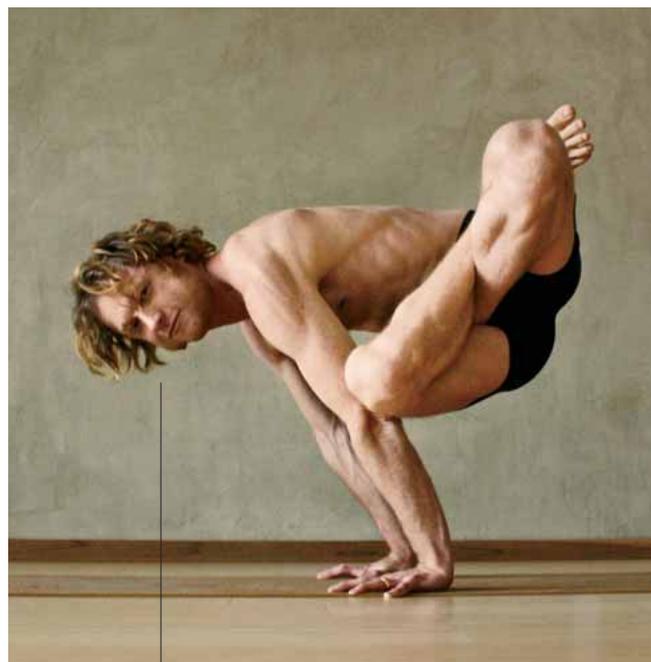
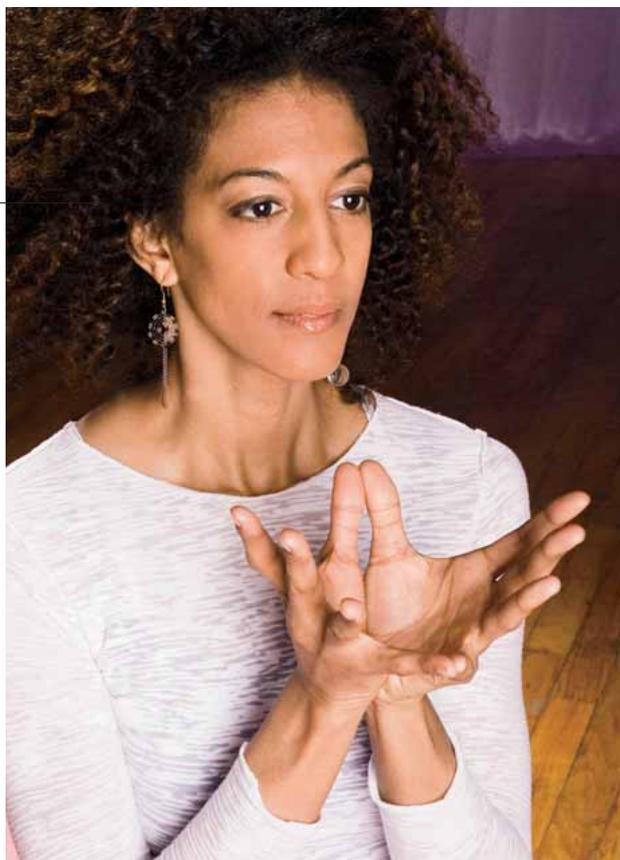
Age **36**

Style **Kripalu Yoga**

"I want yoga to be healing [for others], because it was for me," says Monique Schubert, a Kripalu-certified instructor who took up yoga in college but found her mentor when she began taking classes at the home of Kripalu Yoga teacher Maya Breuer. Schubert started with Breuer when she was 24, and after a lifetime of bad posture, yoga finally helped her to stand up straight. It also helped her resolve grief and depression, inspiring her to help others, starting with children. The notion of teaching kids came to her in a flash during her training. "I saw myself teaching young people," she says. "I can't counsel them, but I can offer something to alleviate the sadness."

Schubert now teaches students all over New York City, through schools and special programs. For three years she taught incarcerated teens. "They inspired me to practice harder, because they would ask these questions—and you knew [that] if you were faking it, you were going to get exposed," she says. Her classes focus on traditional poses such as Tree, Cobra, Warrior, and Sun Salutations—*asanas* that beginners can do well and then grow with. "I teach the basics because I want everyone to have the real tools they need to help themselves," she says. "Like all the yogic scriptures say, the external teacher awakens the inner teacher."

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching at Bronx Community College, at a free summer series in Socrates Sculpture Park, and at Shambhala Yoga & Dance Center in Brooklyn.



Darren Rhodes

Home Base **Tucson, Arizona**

Age **36**

Style **Anusara Yoga**

Darren Rhodes is quite literally the poster boy for Anusara Yoga. You can find him on the Anusara syllabus poster, deftly demonstrating more than 345 awe-inspiring poses. His motivation for achieving such a feat wasn't ego driven; it came from his belief that *asanas* create more than just physical change. "When I come

PHOTOS FROM LEFT: GUILLERMO HUNG; MILO



across a posture I really want to do, I ask myself, 'How do I have to shift physically, mentally, and in my heart to be able to do that?'" He adds, "I want to be able to do a posture because I know it will require transformation on all levels."

Rhodes grew up in a family of yogis. His mother took up the practice when he was in utero, and his father is an avid meditator. He remembers entertaining his parents' friends by doing poses in the living room. In high school he began practicing in earnest, using a Richard Freeman video and going to local studio classes. But it wasn't until his early 20s that he met Anusara Yoga founder, John Friend, and had one of the most *shakti*-filled experiences of his life. "John turned my yoga practice into a radical, rockin' life celebration," he says, "which is what I strive to share in my classes."

As a result of his own fire and passion for the physical, Rhodes's classes at both of his Yoga Oasis studios in Tucson, Arizona, are playful yet intense. "I ask students to be with the asana as a mode of transformation. The most beautiful thing about yoga is that it allows anyone and everyone—no matter what their level—to find their bliss."

WHERE TO FIND HIM IN 2008 Leading workshops in Louisville, Kentucky; Northampton, Massachusetts; and Asheville, North Carolina. Learn more at yogaosis.com.

PHOTO: DAVE KAMM

Karina Ayn Mirsky

Home Base **Kalamazoo, Michigan**

Age **32**

Style **Para Yoga**

"Connecting to a 5,000-year-old tradition of saints and sages lends a unique quality to meditation practice. I've had moments of feeling as if I'm in the presence of those who have done these techniques over centuries," says Karina Ayn Mirsky, who in 2002 was initiated by Rod Stryker into the Tantric tradition of Swami Rama of the Himalayas, known as Sri Vidya. This feeling of unseen support carried her through a diagnosis of lymphatic cancer at age 27, and she credits her survival to that support. "I felt guided and

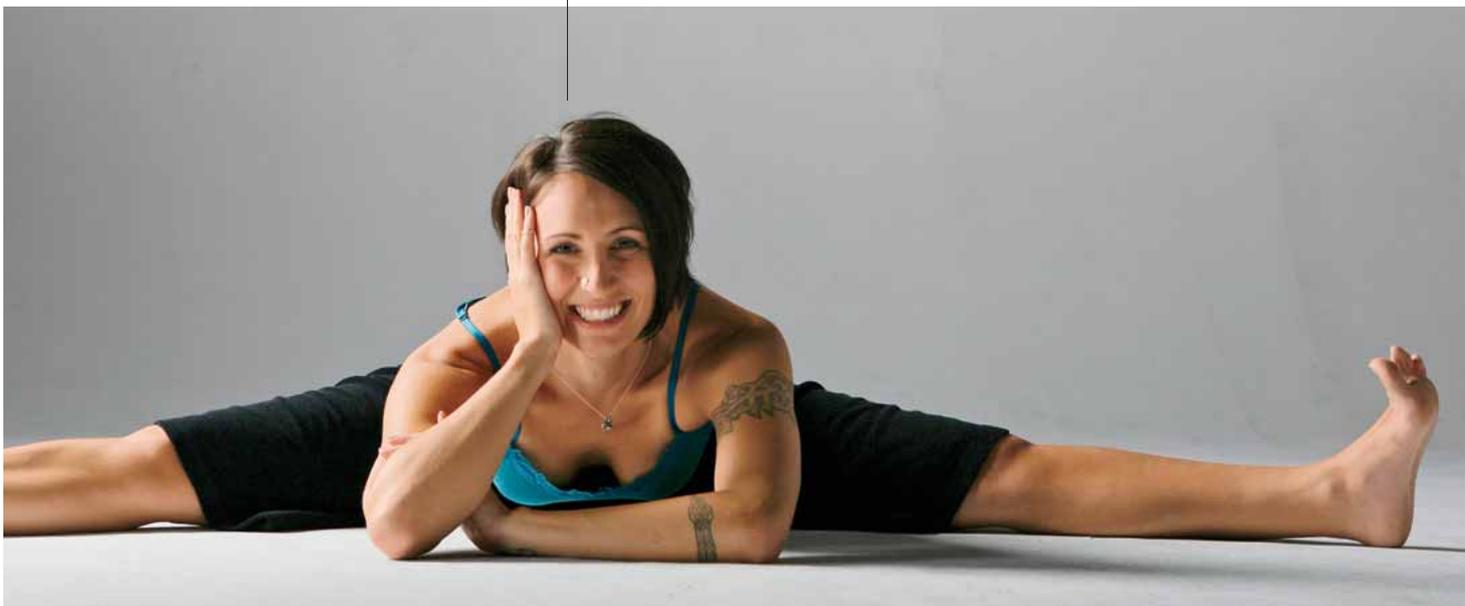
held by the grace of my tradition, its teachers, and its ancients," she says.

Her personal practice informs her teaching, but she's adamant that what's right for one person might not be right for another. "My approach to teaching is holistic and individualized. It draws from my experience as a woman; massage therapist; cancer survivor; and student of psychology, yoga, Tantra, and Ayurveda. I study the nature of minds and bodies as they fluctuate with the time of day, season, phases of life," says Mirsky, who is currently pursuing a master's degree in East-West psychology.

Classes at her studio, called Sangha Yoga, start with a discussion of everybody's needs that day—physical or psychological—followed by a brief meditation or

pranayama. They then continue with chanting before the asana practice. A yoga practitioner for nearly a decade, Mirsky has studied extensively with Para Yoga founder, Rod Stryker, and Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, the head of the Himalayan Institute. She has spent the past three years developing yoga programs for people with a variety of ailments, including obesity and eating disorders. "What I hope to impart to my students is the value of service to others."

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Giving teacher trainings at her Michigan studio and teaching workshops in New York, Cincinnati, and Chicago. Visit sanghayoga.com.



Kino MacGregor

Home Base **Miami, Florida**

Age **30**

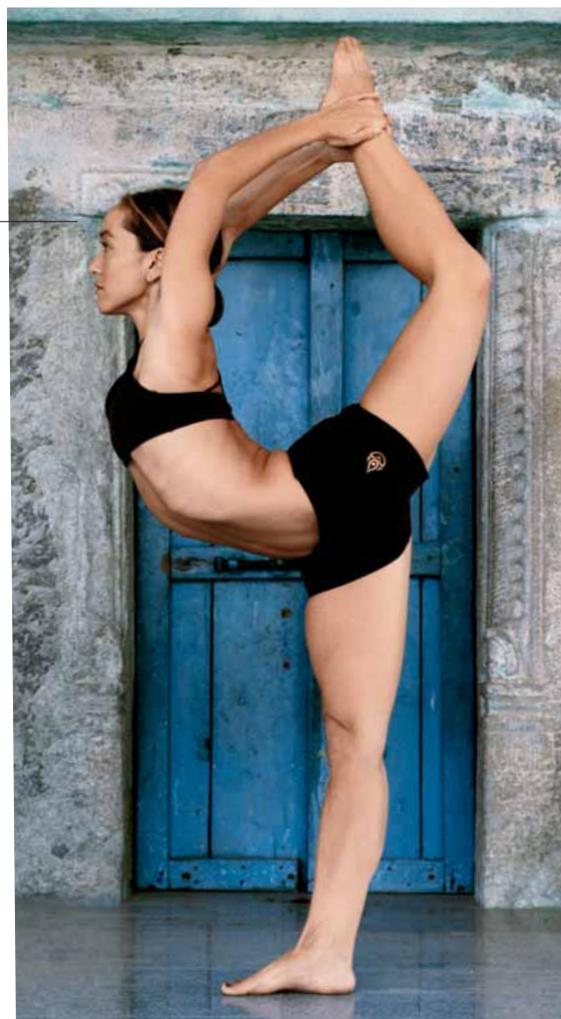
Style **Ashtanga Yoga**

Kino MacGregor had been practicing Ashtanga Yoga for less than a year when her guru came to her in a dream: K. Pattabhi Jois saved her from a raging-mad Lord Shiva and put her on a boat to Mysore, India. "I was this American girl with very little knowledge of Eastern iconography, and suddenly there I was in the Hindu version of *Lord of the Rings*." Within two weeks, MacGregor had a plane ticket to India. Within seconds of meeting Jois, she knew he would influence her life. "Before my analytical mind could think, I knelt down and touched his feet. From that moment on, I considered him my teacher," she says.

Ten years later, MacGregor is the cofounder (with her fiancé, Tim Feldmann) of Miami Life Center, which offers yoga and nutrition classes as well as workshops on spirituality, bodywork, and life coaching. A PhD candidate in holistic health, MacGregor believes that yoga is a catalyst for huge life changes and that students need community and support. "Miami Life Center seeks to provide spiritual guidance for those who wish to integrate lessons of higher consciousness into their daily lives."

There are group Ashtanga Yoga classes at the Center, but MacGregor's true devotion lies in keeping the traditional, self-paced Mysore style alive. "Guided classes can be challenging and frustrating for people," she says. "But Mysore gives you as much time and space to do as many modifications and take as much time as you need." Wherever her students are on their path, MacGregor seeks to support them with openness and empathy. "My presence as a teacher is to hold a space of possibility for my students, respect the tradition and lineage that I teach, and offer a beacon of spiritual light for those who wish to look deep within themselves."

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Giving one-week intensives at the Miami Life Center and in Copenhagen, Denmark, and teaching workshops in Washington, DC; Pittsburgh; and Europe. Visit miamilifecenter.com and ashtanga-awareness.com.



Jason Crandell

Home Base

San Francisco

Age **33**

Style **Alignment-Based Vinyasa**

Jason Crandell cares about the placement of your collarbones, thighbones, and arches of your feet, but not for aesthetic reasons. "I'm a technique-oriented teacher—but not for technique's sake," he says. "The detail is there to help focus the mind, go inside, and have a rich, calming experience." It was that calming effect that kept Crandell going during his early days of yoga practice. As a former ice-hockey player and skateboarder, he had an athlete's tight body and a competitive drive. Both qualities made yoga difficult. "The poses never came easy to me, and I experienced a lot of discomfort for a long time," he says. "But afterward I always felt clear, grounded, and content."

PHOTO: TOM ROSENTHAL

Alanna Kaivalya

Home Base **New York City**

Age **27**

Style **Jivamukti Yoga**



Alanna Kaivalya usually begins class with a guitar in hand or sitting in front of a harmonium. She offers a Sanskrit chant related to a specific theme or perhaps turns her students on to a creative riff such as Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," transforming it into a lead-in for a mantra like *Om namah shivaya*.

The music and chanting captivated her when she took her first Jivamukti Yoga class six years ago. Kaivalya has always believed that music has great power to influence positive change in people. Born with a hearing impediment, she says music has given her a profound vehicle for self-expression.

The 27-year-old seems both exuberant and wise. She says she believes that within each student lies a vast wellspring of love and potential—and it's her job as a teacher to draw that out. Her classes blend rigorous poses and soothing adjustments

with bursts of yoga philosophy. And the effect is a contemporary understanding of ancient knowledge that can inspire even the most stressed-out type A New Yorker. Her oft-repeated advice to all is, "Don't miss the vibrations!"

In 2007 Jivamukti cofounders Sharon Gannon and David Life asked Kaivalya to move from her hometown of Denver to New York City. They felt that her being closer to them and their centers was the next step in her evolution as a teacher. She happily obliged. "I do what I love, and I do it with great love. Any time you act in accordance with that principle, good things will come."

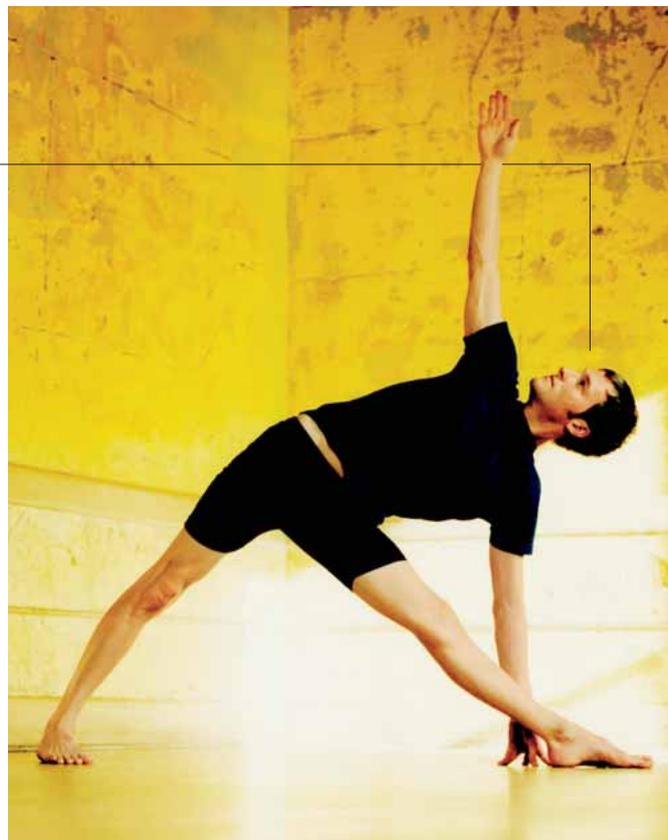
WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008

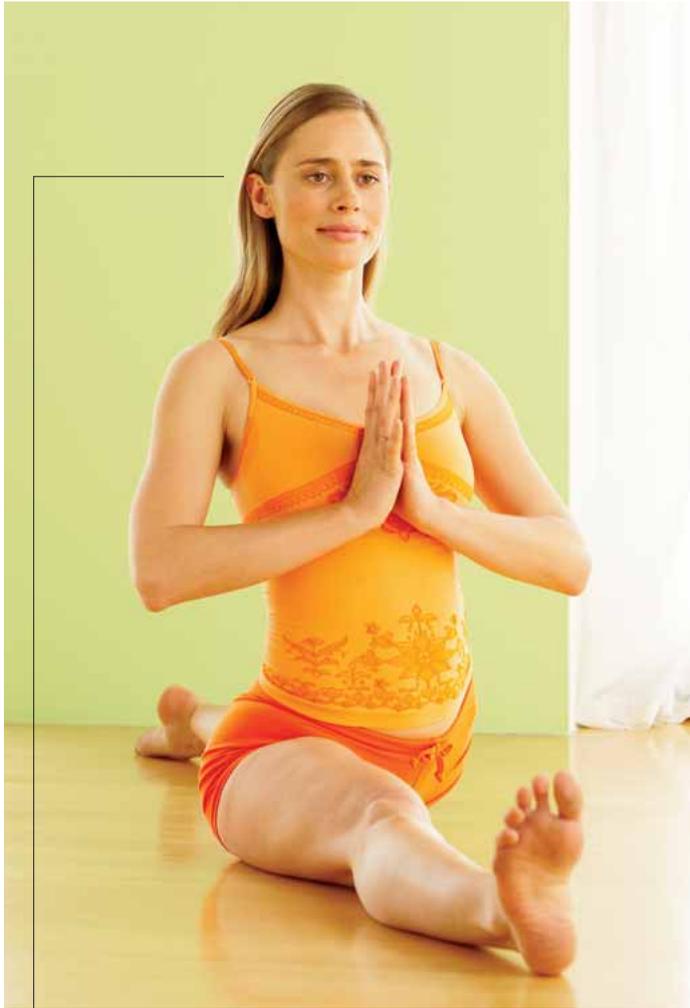
Giving classes in Manhattan and at *Yoga Journal's* Colorado Conference, and singing on her new album, *Shine*. Visit jivadiva.com.

Crandell's influences have included Iyengar Yoga teachers Richard Rosen and Ramanand Patel. He apprenticed with Rodney Yee before taking on the role of yoga director at the San Francisco Bay Club (an athletic club with a popular Mind & Body Center). He leads his own workshops and retreats and is a contributing editor for *Yoga Journal*. Crandell's well-crafted sequences combine the precision of Iyengar Yoga with the steady rhythm of vinyasa flow. Beneath the asana, his message to students is consistent: Focus on the process of self-discovery rather than the goal of perfecting poses. "I want my students to be really curious about who they are and to be accepting of whoever that may

be on a particular day. I want them to see that everything inside and outside is incredibly mysterious. I want them to use the practice to just check in, see what's unfolding, and learn to deal with it skillfully."

WHERE TO FIND HIM IN 2008 Teaching at his annual retreat at Feathered Pipe Ranch, at *Yoga Journal's* Colorado Conference, and at the Asia Yoga Conference. Visit jasonyoga.com.





Marla Apt

Home Base **Los Angeles**

Age **37**

Style **Iyengar Yoga**

Marla Apt's classes at the Iyengar Yoga Institute of Los Angeles are packed. But she doesn't let the popularity go to her head—she stays focused on transmitting the tradition that she holds so dear. "Asana and pranayama are understood in Iyengar Yoga as a means to practice the *yamas* and *niyamas*, gain emotional stability, connect with your subtle anatomy, and steady the mind," she says. "I hope to convey this to the best of my ability to students."

Her mother took her to an Iyengar class in Los Angeles 17 years ago, and Apt was immediately hooked. "It was the first yoga class where I saw the technique was able to embody the philosophy. I had the sense that the teachers really knew a lot." After completing her teacher training in 1995, Apt headed to India to spend a year taking classes with B.K.S. Iyengar. Eventually, she began assisting classes taught by Iyengar, his daughter, Geeta, and his son, Prashant. She returns regularly with her husband and fellow teacher, Paul Cabanis, to study with the Iyengar family.

Apt has held many leadership roles within the Iyengar organization: She served as president of the Iyengar Yoga Association of Southern California (IYASC) for four years, and she was president of the national association for two years. She has also worked as an organizer of the Iyengar Yoga National Convention. Recently, she has pulled back from her public roles

Chandra Easton

Home Base

Berkeley, California

Age **35**

Style **Yin Yoga,
Vinyasa Yoga**

"In the Buddhist tradition we practice for the benefit of others," Chandra Easton says. "Yes, I can be happy and better myself on this path, but I can also be of service." Service is one of the themes that shapes Easton's work as a yoga and meditation teacher.

Although her mother began practicing Tibetan Buddhism when Easton was five, it wasn't until her 20s—when a health scare put her in a tailspin—that she began to take her spiritual practice more seriously. Fortunately, she found solace in the

teachings of a visiting Tibetan lama, which eventually led her to spend a year studying in Dharamsala, India. She then enrolled at the University of California, Santa Barbara, studying comparative religion and working under Buddhist scholar B. Alan Wallace. In 2001, after her daughter Tara was born, Easton began her teacher training with Sarah Powers and fell in love with Yin Yoga.

Now her philosophy is coming to life with the several projects she has in the works. Together with Powers and yoga teacher Janice Gates, she cofounded Metta Journeys, which offers trips that combine yoga and meditation with a philanthropic component. This year they will take students to Rwanda

to raise funds and awareness for the organization Women for Women International, which financially and emotionally supports women who are survivors of war. On the trips, students will have a chance to interact with the women there as well as to do yoga. Future journeys include a return to Rwanda in 2009, and trips to India and Bosnia. Easton is also teaming up with her husband, Scott Blossom, and a group of experts in the Tantric tradition to teach Samavesha Yoga, an approach that blends asana with philosophy, mantra, pranayama, and meditation.

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008

Teaching in the San Francisco Bay Area, at the Esalen Institute, and at the Telluride Yoga Festival.

PHOTO: DAVID MARTINEZ



to focus more deeply on her practice and to begin teaching around the United States and internationally. "I believe that yoga is for all people, so I'm constantly trying to expand my field of practice, knowledge, and experience to be able to help as wide a range of students with as wide a range of issues as possible."

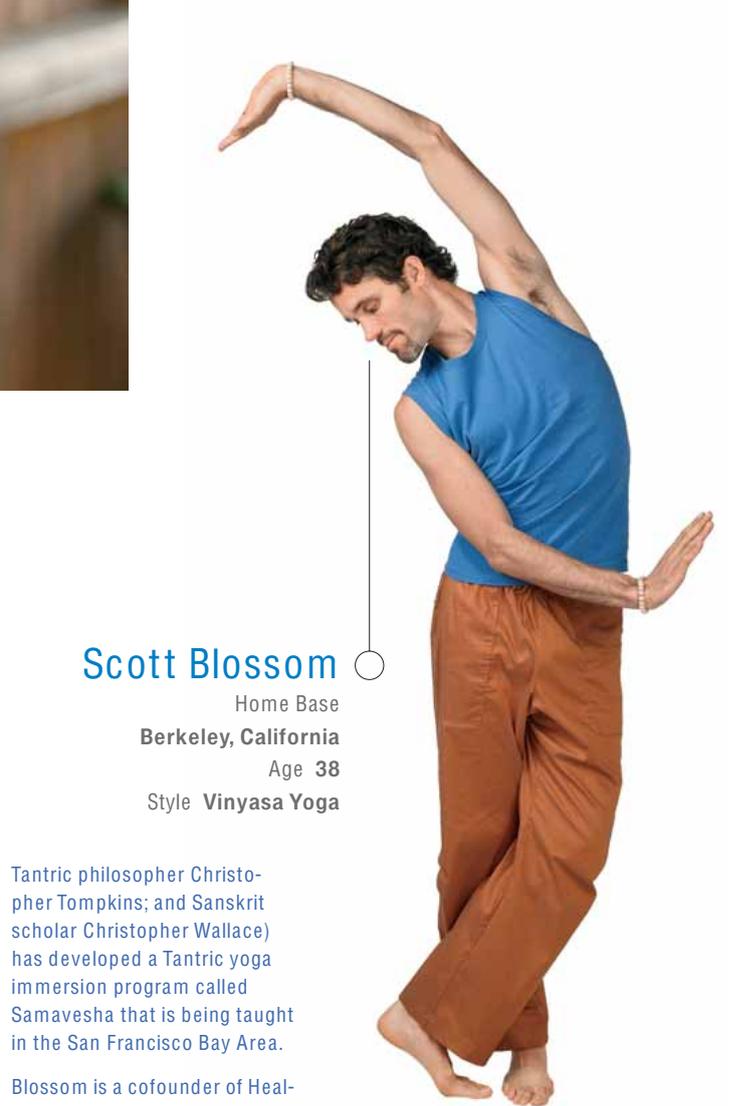
WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching workshops in Los Angeles, Japan, and Istanbul. Visit yoganga.com.

A typical class with Scott Blossom includes mantra, philosophy, asana, and pranayama. "I feel like yoga is a ritual—one where you bring all the elements into it, a kind of alchemical mix," he says. His asana teaching is based on Shadow Yoga, a style developed by Hungarian yoga teacher Natanaga Zhander (a.k.a. Shandor Remete), which blends the Ayurvedic principles of energy flow with Tantra in the hopes of leading to effortless and spontaneous meditation. "I want to give people the asana they know and love, but I also want to nudge them toward meditation. My vision is that

people are going to fall in love with meditating and will then do it by choice."

Blossom began his love affair with meditation 16 years ago. After a silent meditation retreat in Thailand with his twin brother, Michael, Blossom returned with a new perspective. "When I got back I couldn't take the physical practice as seriously," he says. "For me, it became a vehicle to meditation."

After years of study with Ayurvedic scholar Robert Svoboda and yoga teachers Zhander and Erich Schiffmann, Blossom (and his wife, Chandra Easton;



Scott Blossom

Home Base
Berkeley, California
Age 38
Style Vinyasa Yoga

Tantric philosopher Christopher Tompkins; and Sanskrit scholar Christopher Wallace) has developed a Tantric yoga immersion program called Samavesha that is being taught in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Blossom is a cofounder of Healing Opportunities, Inc., a Santa Barbara, California, nonprofit that offers yoga, massage, acupuncture, and stress management to people who have life-threatening illnesses and to those who provide care for them. "People are looking at the bigger picture, at how the yoga community can help the larger community through *seva* [selfless service]," he says.

Down the line I see people really defining yoga as service."

WHERE TO FIND HIM IN 2008 At Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health, Feathered Pipe Ranch, and Ojai Yoga Crib. Learn more at shunyatayoga.com.

PHOTOS (FROM TOP): PAUL CABANIS; MARTIN SCONDUTO



Kate Holcombe

Home Base **San Francisco**

Age **37**

Style **Yoga in the tradition of T. Krishnamacharya**

Study asana with Kate Holcombe and you'll get plenty of personal attention, as she mainly teaches one-on-one. She was steeped in this approach while studying with T.K.V. Desikachar, who fondly calls Holcombe his "American daughter."

"We're trained in this lineage to see the whole person," she says. "We view the human as a whole system with different dimensions—the body, breath, mind, personality, and emotions. I try to provide support in whatever way is going to work best for the individual."

Two events convinced Holcombe to dedicate her life to yoga. The first was a bad bike accident during a semester abroad in India. Her yoga teacher at the time, Mary Louise Skelton, took her, broken ribs and all, to Desikachar, who gave Holcombe a powerfully healing yoga practice. A couple of years later, Skelton, diagnosed with breast cancer, was dying with clarity and grace: "It was very clear to me that this was from studying with Krishnamacharya for 35 years," Holcombe says. Now, after six nonconsecutive years of study in India, Holcombe has a thriving practice of private clients and small groups. Her burgeoning nonprofit, the Healing Yoga Foundation, works with homeless women, people with HIV/AIDS and cancer, and other groups; national teacher trainings are in the works. Her Yoga Sutra classes, taught in small groups with a focus on chanting the Sanskrit verses with proper pronunciation, are anything but esoteric. She's known for using personal experience—both as a yoga teacher and as a busy mom—to reveal the meaning of the sutras. Holcombe says she's grateful that her yogic lineage is deeply spiritual as well as practical. "My teacher calls himself the postmaster—that he just delivers," she says. "And I really feel that way, too."

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching in San Francisco and Seattle, and training teachers in New York City and elsewhere. Learn more at healingyoga.org.

Charles Matkin

Home Base

Garrison, New York

Age **36**

Style **Hatha Yoga**

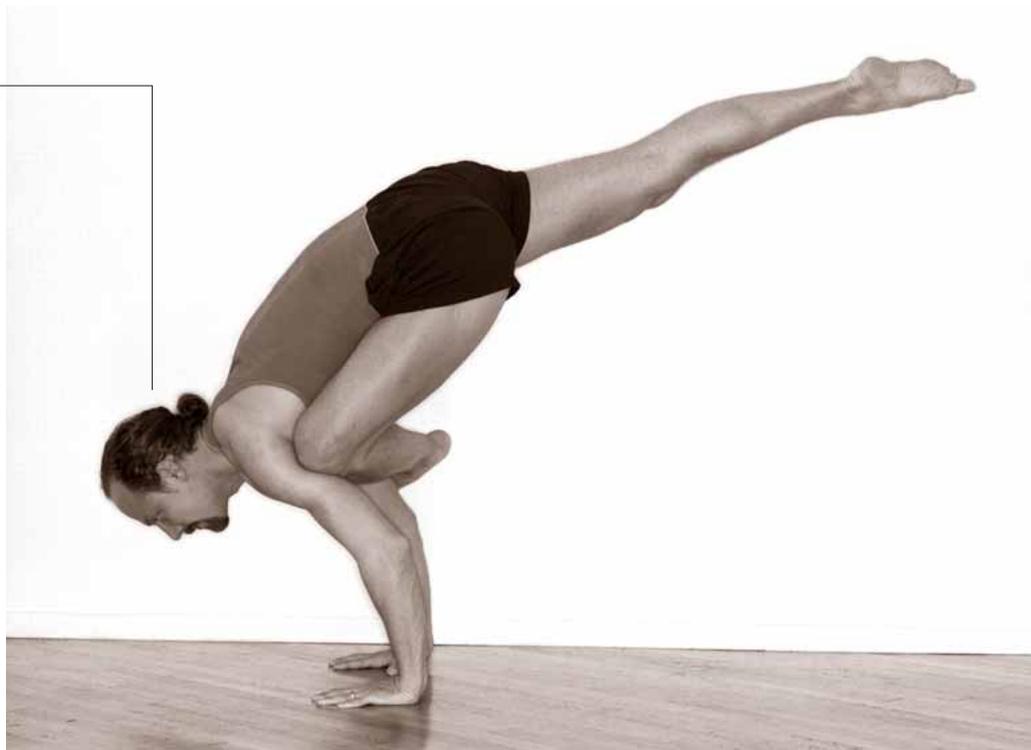
Yoga is a family affair for Charles Matkin, who was born in Canada and raised in a transcendental meditation community in Iowa, where even Grandpa did Downward-Facing Dog. But as a teenager Matkin rebelled against his spiritual roots, refusing to meditate and eventually moving to Manhattan, where he worked three jobs, took premed classes, and dabbled in acting—the period he now lovingly refers to as his "jerk years." Eventually Matkin returned to the mat and studied many styles of yoga, trying to build his own context.

"No dogma" is how Matkin sums up his current approach to teaching. "I try to teach a range of principles rather than rules," he says. From the many disciplines he has studied—Feldenkrais to Iyengar Yoga to Jivamukti, and more—he now feels equipped to use whatever method or tool he believes will best reach his students and help them on their path. He keeps classes playful by injecting quirky observations and jokes. "There's humor in my classes so people can laugh at themselves," he says. "It's supposed to be 'enlightenment,' not 'enheavy-ment.'"

Today he and his wife, Lisa Bennett-Matkin, own Matkin Yoga in Garrison, New York, where they conduct teacher trainings and workshops. They've also created a teacher training program in therapeutic yoga and a video series called *Healing Yoga*—a result of their interest in integrative medicine. This year they plan to launch a new studio in Manhattan. "I feel that the teacher is inside of each of us; it is so easy for people to look outside for an answer," Matkin says. "Challenge yourself to look inside."

WHERE TO FIND HIM IN 2008 Teaching at Matkin Yoga Studio and the Omega Institute. Visit matkinyoga.com.

PHOTO: JESSE GOFF



For more hot teachers under 40, turn to page 130.

In the Mysore room of YogaWorks in Santa Monica, Simi Cruz moves from student to student, offering them guidance as they silently move through the self-paced Ashtanga Yoga practice. As she scans the room for misalignments and energetic blockages, Cruz, who has graced the cover and pages of this magazine many times with her stunning poses, will reach for a block or a strap to modify a pose if a student needs it. "Props work well for people who have injuries, and they're good for preventing injuries," she says. "If you see someone pushing too hard or moving too fast, you have to pull them back sometimes." Cruz studied Ashtanga Yoga in India with K. Pattabhi Jois but learned to modify poses from her primary teachers, Chuck Miller and Maty Ezraty.

As a small girl, Cruz learned Sun Salutations from her mom, and she began taking yoga classes at 18. When she found Miller and Ezraty in her early 20s, she spent the next 10 years at YogaWorks in Ezraty's class six days per week. To this day she calls Ezraty her "second mom."

Cruz cherishes the individual attention she's able to offer in her Mysore room. "I do something different with every student," she says. "I get one-on-one time with all of them, and I get to design a practice that's good for them individually, which is how yoga was

meant to be taught." And she hopes to give her students the tools to practice in a way that's safe and healing for them. "That's my job as a teacher—to nurture students until they can go out and fly on their own."

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 At YogaWorks locations in California and New York. Visit simicruz.com and yogaworks.com.

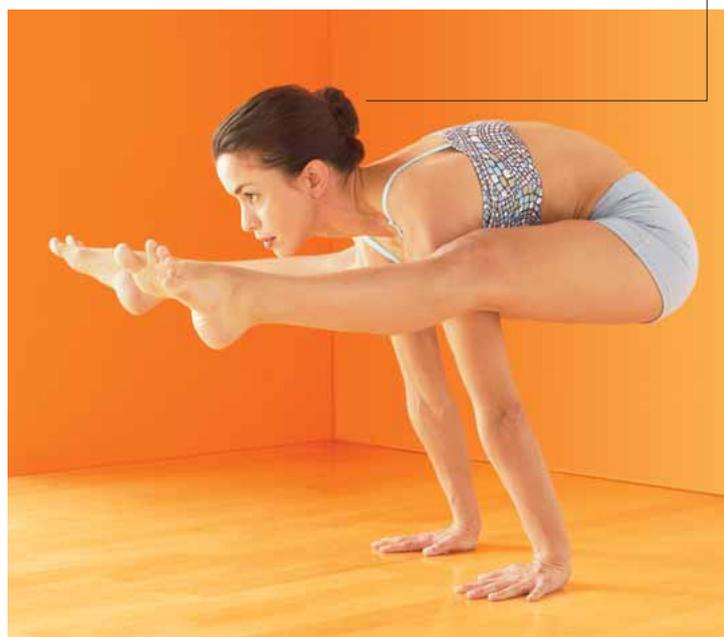
Simi Cruz

Home Base

Los Angeles

Age 33

Style Ashtanga Yoga



PHOTOS (FROM TOP): MATTHEW WAKEM; DAVID MARTINEZ

continued from page 99

LISA BLACK AVOLIO

Home Base **Seattle**

Age **38**

Style **Baptiste Power Vinyasa Yoga**



When Lisa Black Avolio teaches asana, she hopes to convey more than just the physical shapes of the poses. “I focus on empowering students to be the best they can be and to step up to the edge of transformation,” she says.

Black, one of a handful of teachers with the title of Senior Master Baptiste Power Vinyasa Yoga teacher, practices what she preaches. In addition to teaching yoga in the style of Baron Baptiste, Black has created her own flowing style called Shakti, which combines principles she’s learned from Baptiste, Shiva Rea, and Ana Forrest with her own philosophy and life experience. “As a teacher, it’s important to be authentic and not to try and be anyone else or teach like anyone else,” she says.

Black travels to assist Baptiste at workshops and teacher trainings, teaches her own retreats, and runs two bustling Seattle-area studios: Shakti East and Shakti West. “I enjoy the directing and managing, but teaching is the thing that I really love and am passionate about.”

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching at both Shakti studios; at her annual retreat in Maya Tulum, Mexico; and around the country at Baptiste yoga trainings. Learn more at shaktivinyasa.com.

JARVIS CHEN

Home Base **Boston**

Age **35**

Style **Iyengar Yoga**



Certified Iyengar Yoga teacher Jarvis Chen challenges his students to look beyond the superficial workings of the mind and into the intelligence of the body.

“When I started yoga I was a very rational, scientific-minded person,” says the Harvard scientist and yoga teacher. “But yoga helped me discover my *bhakti* quali-

ties—compassion, love, and a connectedness to something bigger.”

Chen is a social epidemiologist who conducts research at Harvard School of Public Health and brings his yoga to work every day. “I study health disparities in poor and disadvantaged communities, and my yoga helps me approach the subject with compassion. Even if you haven’t lived in poverty, you can understand the want and fear that comes with deprivation because, as the Yoga Sutra teaches, fear is universal.”

In the yoga room, Chen, whose primary teacher is Patricia Walden, loves working with beginners. He specifically enjoys the process of showing students how going from gross alignment instructions to subtle instructions brings greater fullness to the breath and focuses the mind. “The transformation from disintegration to integration happens over time, but even beginners can get a taste of it.”

WHERE TO FIND HIM IN 2008 Teaching at B.K.S. Iyengar Yogamala in Boston and at workshops in Middletown, Connecticut, and Charlottesville, Virginia. Learn more at jarvischen.com.

CHANDRA OM

Home Base **Raleigh, North Carolina**

Age **37**

Style **Classical Yoga in the Style of Dharma Mittra**



Chandra Om’s purpose as a teacher is crystal clear: to carry on traditional yoga through the method of Dharma Mittra, a yoga master in New York, whose teachings are infused with reverence for chanting, meditation, the guru, and the belief that asana is performed as an offering to God. Today Om, who has studied with the Brazilian-born Dharma Mittra for 14 years, holds the high honor of being the only person to whom he has given permission to teach his advanced practices.

This teacher-of-teachers runs the thriving North Carolina School of Yoga and travels to New York once a month to study with her guru. At the core of her

teaching are yoga’s ethical guidelines: “Without *yama* and *niyama*, there is no yoga,” she says. “I myself love the postures and a strong asana practice. But holding both legs behind your head and standing on one finger inverted doesn’t make you a nice person.”

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching at her school in North Carolina. Check out her recently published book, *Dharma Mittra: A Friend to All*, a biographical account of the life of her teacher. Learn more at ncschoolofyoga.com.

KIRA RYDER

Home Base **Ojai, California**

Age **34**

Style **Vinyasa Flow (Formless)**



If years ago you had suggested to Kira Ryder that she would someday be leading a magical little yoga community in a wild Western town, she wouldn’t have bought it.

Growing up on the East Coast in a driven, ambitious culture, Ryder was hardwired to believe that numbing your feelings was superior to facing them. “If anyone had told me that yoga was spiritual, I never would have signed up.”

After 12 years of yoga practice Ryder is the director of Lulu Bandha’s, a thriving yoga studio in Ojai, California, and her core value is compassion. With classes ranging from Strong Vinyasa to Sweet Vinyasa and Yoga Siesta to Yoga for Stiff White Guys, Ryder’s mission is to give people the skills to create a yoga practice that meets them where they are. Ryder, who names renowned yoga teacher Erich Schiffmann as her main asana influence, encourages students to feel their way into poses, inviting a sense of formlessness within the forms. “The hope is that there will be a sense of self-assurance that they know what’s best,” she says. “The house rule is ‘You’re in your body, not me.’”

After six years Lulu’s has a devoted community of locals, and a national community is building as well. Last October more than 250 yogis from around the country flocked to Ryder’s fifth annual yoga conference, the Ojai Yoga Crib.

Throughout the year she communicates over the Web with a blog on Channel Yoga and by posting videos—highlights of her classes as well as workshops led by other teachers—on LuluVu. “I love community when it allows people to discover themselves. That’s the most important thing.”

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching at Lulu Bandha’s, at her annual Ojai Yoga Crib, and on her blogs and videos. Learn more at lulubandhas.com.

EMILY LARGE

Home Base **West Palm Beach, Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia**
Age **36**
Style **Viniyoga**



As a physical therapist, Emily Large helped people find ease in their bodies, but it wasn’t until she discovered Viniyoga that she found her life’s true passion—blending physical and spiritual healing. “Yoga has a profound

influence on my body and empowered me to heal myself,” she says. “I wanted to share that with other people.” Thanks to her extensive background in anatomy, physiology, and rehabilitation, Large knows the nuts and bolts of how injuries happen and how to heal from them. “That foundation gives me the confidence to guide students through a yoga practice while keeping them safe.”

Large has completed the four-year, 1,000-hour yoga therapy program of the American Viniyoga Institute and is now a certified yoga therapist. Her classes cater to students with specific health issues, such as low-back pain, chronic headaches, and neck and shoulder tension. Her teaching style reflects the mantra of her primary teachers, Gary Kraftsow and Mirka Scalco Kraftsow: “If you can breathe, you can do yoga.”

Large also introduces church groups to yoga. A devout Christian, she has credibility among people who may be skeptical of yoga’s spiritual implications, a skepticism she admits she once shared. “I was ner-

vous I’d have to give up things in my diet or adopt different spiritual beliefs, but I found out that yoga isn’t about dogma—it’s about nourishing the individual.”

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching yoga at her surf retreat in Costa Rica. Learn more at livinglargetherapy.com.

HEIDI SORMAZ

Home Base **New Haven, Connecticut**
Age **39**
Style **Forrest Yoga**



Heidi Sormaz knows about body issues. Growing up as a ballerina, she battled eating disorders. She also knows the harm resulting from pushing to overachieve. While working on her PhD in psychology at Yale University, she realized that her body was in pain. She practiced Iyengar and then Ashtanga Yoga to get in shape, but she pushed too hard and found herself with more injuries. During a teacher training

PHOTOS (FROM LEFT): STEVEN LARGE; MICHAEL SHANNON

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program with master teacher Ana Forrest a light bulb went on. “I asked myself, ‘Why am I working so hard?’ In order to achieve something—whether it was yoga teacher training or my PhD—I was willing to push myself too hard. I was willing to stay in a pose that wasn’t comfortable.”

After Sormaz had this intellectual realization, she began cultivating the same wisdom in her body and bringing it to her studio, Fresh Yoga, which she opened in 2002. Her mission: Yoga should always be healing for the mind and body. Sormaz recognizes the value of different paths and offers a variety of styles at her studio, but she wants all her teachers to impart the importance of breathing and feeling.

Her own classes focus on providing an experience that is physically, mentally, and emotionally transformative. For example, if she’s teaching someone with scoliosis, the main focus may be to lessen the curve in the spine. But if she’s working with a student who’s overweight, she tries to help them reframe their negative thought patterns. “It’s less about the body and

more about the thoughts,” she says. “Our thoughts are our biggest barrier. And we are all dealing with our healing.”

WHERE TO FIND HER IN 2008 Teaching at Fresh Yoga. Learn more at freshyoga.com.

BRIAN LIEM

Home Base **New York City**

Age **39**

Style **Om Yoga**



During class you’ll find Brian Liem telling stories and engaging with his students. A sense of humor and openness lies at the foundation of his philosophy. “I’m not afraid of being the class clown,” says Liem, director of programming at Om Yoga. “Rather than lecturing directly from texts, I try to pass on the teachings in an accessible way.”

Twenty years ago, Liem faced a bundle of challenges all at once. Those tragedies helped him realize that he’d better make the most of his precious time on earth. He

decided to become a yoga teacher. Today, Liem sees himself as a link in the great yogic chain. He’s been taught by Cyndi Lee, founder of Om Yoga; Judith Hanson Lasater, teacher of Iyengar Yoga; and Eric Spiegel of the Shambhala tradition of Buddhism. Liem draws from them all to teach sweet asana classes with an overlay of Buddhist meditation practices.

Liem sees yoga as a great community builder. He represented Om Yoga in 2004 at the Gay Spirit Culture Project’s conference. “I find through yoga practice there’s a language that can transcend differences—without denying the diversity of any individual—and initiate a dialogue,” he says.

WHERE TO FIND HIM IN 2008 Instructing at Om Yoga’s 2008 teacher training program in Manhattan and leading a weeklong retreat in Morgan’s Rock, Nicaragua. Learn more at omyoga.com. ■

By Diane Anderson, Samantha Dunn, Andrea Ferretti, Catherine Guthrie, Nora Isaacs, Lauren Ladoceour, Valerie Reiss, and Kelle Walsh.

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