



intuitive he was about the reasons behind my posture. We then moved to a massage table and he used his hands to apply pressure in varying degrees to specific areas of my body. Although it was not comparable to any massage techniques I have experienced before, and could not always be described as comfortable, I found it very relaxing. When he had finished my right side, I noticed, much to my surprise,

that I was feeling unbalanced. I am aware that if you have not experienced the process for yourself, it sounds quite implausible (as

my colleague asked: "and you didn't take any strange tablets?"). But I definitely had the feeling that my right side was longer and lighter than my left. Luckily my Rolfer liked me enough to work on my left side and even me up, after which I got up and walked the length of the room. The best way to describe the sensation (apart from the word "weird," which it is easy to overuse when describing the whole process) is to say that I felt like I had new legs. Slightly wobbly ones, maybe, but once I had established my footing, I felt lighter, more upright and was moving with more fluidity. I left the session feeling deeply relaxed and somehow altered. As Rolfering improves posture, it also made me feel taller—the effects of which were still

HANDS ON

How Rolfers United will straighten you out



Feeling the rub (above); a touching trio—Rolfers United Tom Cooper, Mattheus Juan Els and Andrea Clusen (below, left to right)



noticeable after a couple of days. OK, so it may not transform clients from average height to that of a supermodel, but it certainly leaves you feeling like one! <<<

Rolfers United sessions are available in German and English at:

- WOYO Club München
Lothstrasse 3, www.woyo.de
- Haare, Haut und Seele
Westermühlstrasse 21,
www.haarehautundseele.de

Tom Cooper also works at:

- O'Sinitri, Siemensstrasse 14,
www.osinitri.de

For further information and contact details visit www.rolfers-united.com

EVER WONDERED WHAT was causing those headaches? Or worried about your bad posture? Perhaps you feel the effects of sitting in front of a computer all day? Well, Rolfering could be just what you need. Though it may sound vaguely comical, the therapy promises very real results. Rolfering is basically hands-on, connective tissue manipulation and movement education, which aims to balance the body, enabling people to move more freely and maintain better posture. And even if you don't have specific aches and pains, Rolfering could still have a noticeable effect. "A lot of people think that a pain-free body equals good health, but that is not the case," says certified Rolfer Tom Cooper, one of three founders of Rolfers United, a Munich-based group devoted to the method. "There is a greater goal and a whole world of higher functioning."

Sounds good. But is Rolfering just another new-fangled, new-age method of therapy? In fact, the practice has been around for many years. Structural integration, or Rolfering as it is now known, was first

MOVEMENT PATTERN

developed by New Yorker Dr. Ida Rolf. After earning a Ph.D. in Biological Chemistry in 1920, she studied and explored many techniques, including osteopathy, yoga and the Alexander Technique. Rolf wanted to find an effective treatment for conditions that conventional medicine could not help, so developed a method of working with the body called structural integration.

Although the technique is well established, it is only thanks to the efforts of people like Scottish-born Cooper and his colleagues at Rolfers United, German Andrea Clusen and South-African Mattheus Juan Els, that Rolfering is finally getting a higher profile. A classic Rolfering sequence consists of ten sessions tailored to the individual client's needs, each lasting around an hour, with the ultimate aim of developing a more efficient movement pattern. Whether

Rolfering can have a lasting effect, however, does depend on factors such as age, physical condition and willingness to participate in the process. If the client wants only symptomatic relief for specific pain or symptoms, one to three sessions are sufficient. Indeed, according to Rolfers United, the practice can be valuable to people of all ages who need help with neck pain, back problems, impaired mobility and other problems that result from chronic tension. It is also useful for people who want to improve their personal appearance or increase athletic performance. The answer to all ills, then? Ever skeptical about this sort of treatment, which often seems designed for people with more money than sense, I decided to put my preconceptions aside and put the Rolfers to the test.

The first stage of the session involves stripping down to your underwear (the embarrassment passed after a few moments—helped by the fact that I had chosen my biggest Bridget Jones-style underwear!) while the Rolfer observes you standing, walking and sitting, in order to assess your movement pattern and body structure. I was instantly impressed not only by what my Rolfer, Mattheus Juan Els, picked up about my body, but also by how