

SHAPE

December 2012

Get Fit

TRADE SECRETS



DANCING QUEENS

No delicate ballerinas here! The women of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater are hard-core athletes—and their sculpted physiques prove it. They rehearse for eight hours a day, five times a week, and strength-train almost daily. We asked three of the modern dance company's leading ladies to each share her top exercise for toning the area she's most proud of. Add these moves to your regular routine at least twice a week, and soon you'll have a showstopper of a body—even if you never set foot on a stage. **BY DANIELLE McNALLY**

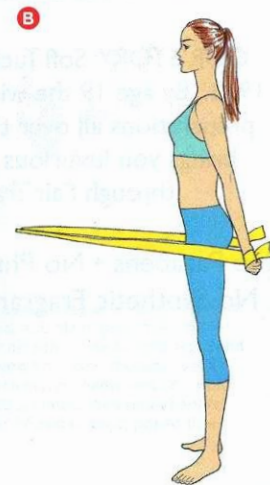
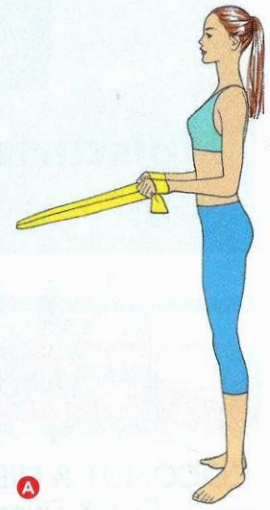
“Strong arms are especially important when I work with a partner,” says Rachael McLaren (shown), 27, who studied at Canada’s Royal Winnipeg Ballet School before joining the company in 2008. “I do this exercise every other day to target my triceps.”

FOR McLAREN'S
AWESOME ARMS

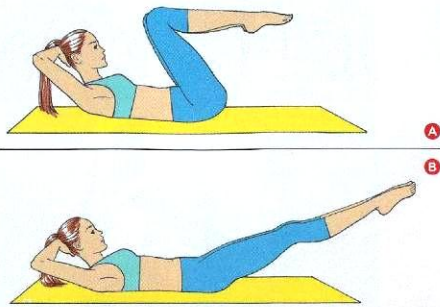
FIRST POSITION KICKBACK

Works triceps

Tie the center of a resistance band around a sturdy object (like a doorknob or ballet barre) at waist height and stand facing it with heels together and toes turned out. Hold one end in each hand, elbows bent 90 degrees at sides and palms facing floor (band should be taut) **[A]**. Extend arms slightly behind you **[B]**, then return to starting position. Do 3 sets of 15 reps.



ANDREW ECCLES ILLUSTRATION, AIMEE LEVY

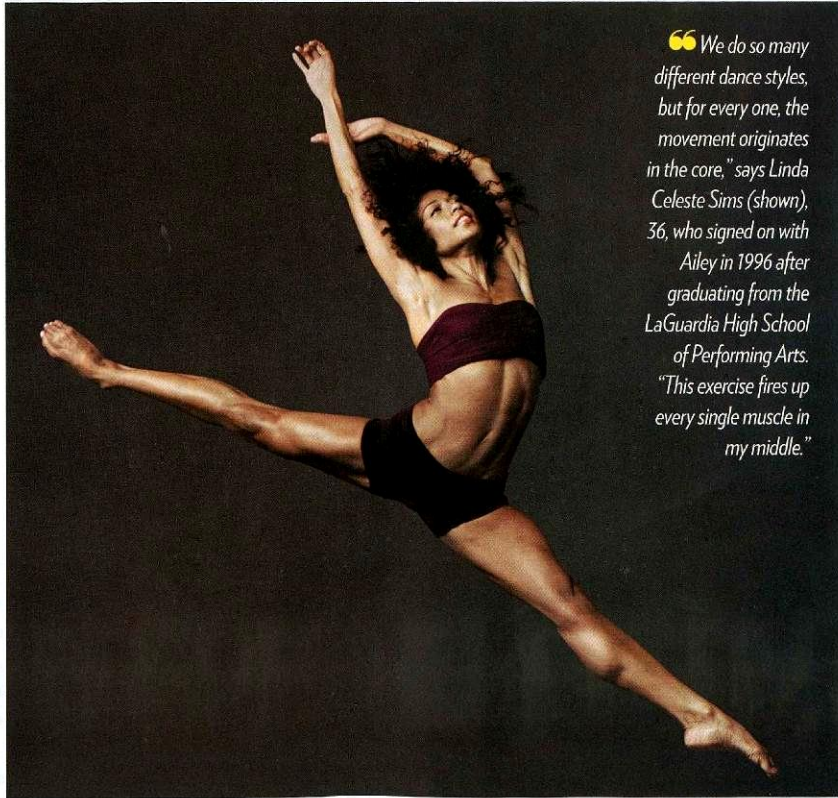


FOR SIMS
AMAZING ABS

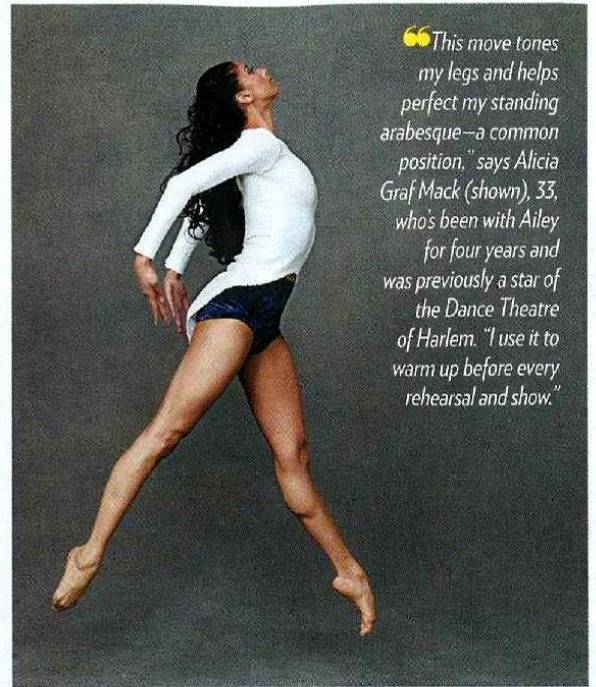
DOUBLE-LEG EXTENSION

Works core

Lie faceup on a mat with legs extended in front of you and hands behind head. Crunch up as you draw your knees toward your chest [A]. Keeping shoulders lifted, extend legs at an angle in front of you [B]. Return to starting position. Do 3 sets of 10 reps.



“We do so many different dance styles, but for every one, the movement originates in the core,” says Linda Celeste Sims (shown), 36, who signed on with Ailey in 1996 after graduating from the LaGuardia High School of Performing Arts. “This exercise fires up every single muscle in my middle.”



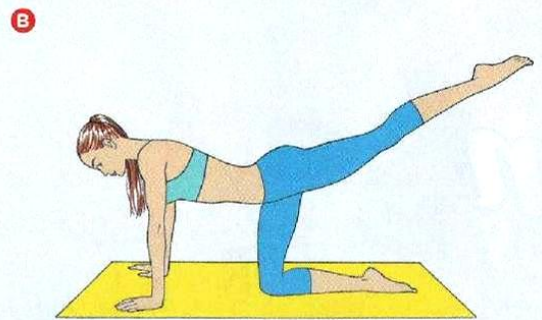
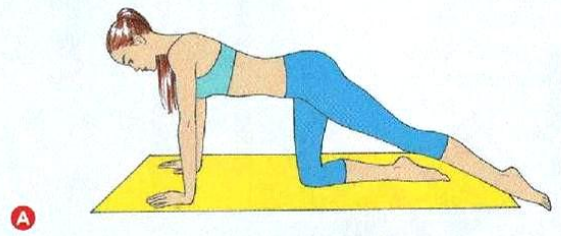
“This move tones my legs and helps perfect my standing arabesque—a common position,” says Alicia Graf Mack (shown), 33, who’s been with Ailey for four years and was previously a star of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. “I use it to warm up before every rehearsal and show.”

FOR MACK’S LEAN LOWER BODY

KNEELING ARABESQUE

Works butt and legs

Get on all fours with wrists aligned under shoulders and knees under hips. Extend left leg behind you, foot on the floor and toes pointed [A]. Lift left leg high behind you [B], then lower to starting position. Do 15 reps; switch sides to complete set. Do 3 sets.



SEE THESE FIERCE FEMALES IN ACTION

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater kicks off its season on November 28, with five weeks of performances at New York City Center; then it hits the road for a nationwide tour. For more info and tickets, go to alvinailey.org.