

# BALLET BODY

Step up to the barre in this ballet-inspired workout that helps you build strength and sculpt a lean dancer's body

**I**f you want to know how to hone a lithe, supple body, who better to ask than a dancer? With a decade of experience as a pro ballerina in some of the world's most renowned ballet companies, Mercedes Schindler knows first-hand the results you can get at the barre and beyond.

At her new Notting Hill studio, Physique London ([physique-studio.co.uk](http://physique-studio.co.uk)), Mercedes teaches a unique fitness fusion of barre, yoga and Pilates, as well as pre- and post-natal workout programmes, where her core belief in the connection between mind and body helps students move with strength, grace and understanding so they can face whatever challenges life throws at them.

## GET A BALLET BODY

As ballet activates all the major muscle groups in your body, Mercedes' signature ballet-style exercises

boost your strength, sculpt your figure and improve your posture, balance and alignment. But the benefits don't stop there; you'll also discover improved coordination and sharpened cognitive function – not to mention the positive mindset and reduced perception of pain, stress and anxiety, that comes from releasing all those endorphins.

Over the following pages, Mercedes shares her top nine moves to do anytime, anywhere. Based on the Physique philosophy that your mind and body are intrinsically linked, she believes building strength in both these areas will make you happier and healthier. Simple and effective, these moves work the most important muscle groups in your body for the supple, sculpted and slender physique of a ballerina. Get ready to dance like no one's watching!



## MEET THE TRAINER

Mercedes Schindler is a former ballerina and founder of Physique, offering ballet-based workouts for better mind and body ([physique-studio.co.uk](http://physique-studio.co.uk)). She has a diploma in classical ballet, has worked with renowned ballet companies such as English National Ballet and has worked in the fitness industry for 10 years.

In place of a ballet barre, use a kitchen table top, chest of drawers or windowsill at hip height. If you don't have dumbbells, use filled water bottles and if needed, rest for 3-5 seconds between sets.





### SECOND POSITION PLIÉ WITH RISE AND PULSE

**Benefits:** Works core, glutes and all leg muscles. It also helps correct posture.

**Reps:** 8

- Place both hands at the barre. Position your feet wide, your toes pointing outwards.
- Bend your knees, keeping your upper body straight. Your tailbone should point towards the floor, shoulders over your hips, ankles in line with your knees and knees directly over your toes (A).
- Inhale to rise onto your toes. Exhale to lower your heels, draw your navel towards your spine and squeeze your glutes to feel the resistance. Always lower your heels slowly with control.
- Hold the last raise and pulse up and down with control. Add a balance at the end, reaching your arms overhead and rising onto your toes (B). Hold for 5 seconds.



### ARABESQUE RISE WITH ARM PULL-UP

**Benefits:** Works the glutes, knees, calf, back, shoulders and biceps.

**Reps:** 8 **Sets:** 3

- Place both hands at the barre, and stand with feet parallel. Raise your right knee towards your chest without tucking your tailbone under – keep your spine long (A).
- Reach your right leg straight back into arabesque while bending your left knee, and pull away from

the barre (B).

- Engage your core and bend your elbows, squeezing your shoulder blades together while pulling yourself up, bringing your knee back towards your chest.
- Rise up onto your left toes at the end, with equal weight in all toes to ensure correct ankle alignment.



*This is a great pre-ski workout and will help reduce your chance of injury.*

### 3 SECOND POSITION PLIÉ WITH SIDE LEG LIFT

**Benefits:** Works all of your leg

muscles, obliques (side abs) and back muscles.

**Reps:** 8 **Sets:** 3

- Stand with one hand at the barre, and take your feet wide apart to second position, toes pointing outwards. Take your other arm out to the side, and bend your knees deeply into a plié (A).
- Rise up while lifting your right leg and bending your upper body towards the barre as you move your free arm over your head (B).
- Lower back into a plié in second position.



*Add light weights to work the arms at the same time.*



*The resistance band gives the move more impact, but you can do it without a band as well.*

### LEG LIFTS WITH RESISTANCE BAND

**Benefits:** Works your bottom muscles, IT band and calf muscles.

**Reps:** 8 **Sets:** 4

- With both hands on the bar and feet parallel, place a band under tension half way up your lower legs (A).
- Open your right leg as far as possible on an inhale (B), close as you

exhale. Make sure you keep the band under tension at all times.

- Keep your hips and shoulders square – avoid turning your hip out by thinking of lifting your leg from your heel and outside of your foot, rather than leading with your toes.





## 5 PLANK AND SIDE PLANK WITH ARM CIRCLES

**Benefits:** Works the entire body and is the perfect stabilising exercise.

**Reps:** Hold for the count of 10; repeat on the other side

- Start in a high plank, with your wrists directly under shoulders, elbows slightly bent and rotated outwards. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and draw your shoulders away from your ears.
- Engage your bottom and inside thigh muscles. Draw in your ribs to avoid arching your spine.
- Come onto your toes as much as possible and hold for a count of 10 (A).
- Place your left hand in the middle of the mat and roll into side plank, pushing off from the outer edge of your left foot rather than putting weight into your ankle.
- Reach your right hand towards the ceiling (B) and start four slow controlled circles with your arm, inhaling to reach over your head (C), exhaling to circle up, lifting your hips a little higher every time.
- Place your right hand back onto the mat into plank position and hold for the count of 10, then repeat on the other side.

## 6

### PORT DE BRAS

**Benefits:** Creates beautiful, toned ballerina arms.

**Reps:** 10 **Sets:** 5

- Sit on the floor with a straight spine and take your arms to the sides, in 2nd position (A).
- Bring them into a round ball (1st position, B) in front of your navel, open out to the sides and then lift above your head into an O shape (5th position, C), then

open back out to the sides again (A).

- Repeat this continuous movement 10 times then hold arms towards the side for the count of 5. Stretch your elbows as much as possible.
- Repeat the whole thing 5 times to feel the burn.



*Perform at a fast pace, keeping your upper body still, engaging your core and squeezing shoulders together and down.*



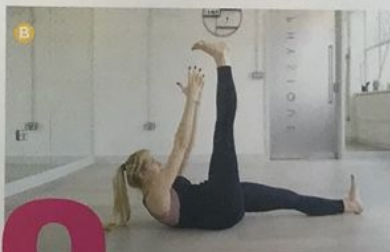
## 7 WARRIOR 3 LEG LIFTS

**Benefits:** Works all your back muscles and glutes. Improves ankle, knee and hip stability.

**Reps:** 8 **Sets:** 4, alternating legs without a break

- Start with both hands on the barre and pull away, bringing your shoulders and hips parallel to the floor.
- Extend your right leg and raise it to 90° or as high as possible without opening your right hip upwards. Flex your right foot so the toes point down towards the floor (A).
- Lower your leg half way (B) and lift 8 times back to (A), holding the last one and extending your arms towards the barre to reach into a balance.
- Keep your core engaged and upper body still and stable throughout.
- Swap legs and start again straight away.

*Add ankle weights or perform on a wobble board to increase the intensity.*



## 8 ABS EXERCISE

**Benefits:** Works your abs.

**Reps:** 8 **Sets:** 8

- Lie on the mat and lift your right leg towards the ceiling, flexing both feet and reaching your fingers towards your toes (A).
- Inhale, then as you exhale, raise your shoulders and head off the mat and keep your lower leg grounded into the mat (B).
- Repeat 8 times, holding the last raise and hovering your left leg 5cm off the ground. Repeat four times continuously, then switch legs.



## 9 BOAT POSE

**Benefits:** Works your core and strengthens the deep hip flexors.

**Time:** Hold for 5 deep breaths.

- Sit tall onto your sit bones and draw your knees to your chest. Lengthen your spine by holding on to the back of your knees (A).
- As you exhale, lift your feet off the ground and have your hands by the side of your hips, palms facing up, to engage a rotated squeeze in your shoulders.
- Straighten your legs as much as possible without compromising a long straight spine (B). Hold for 5 deep breaths.

