

DON'T CRAMP YOUR STYLE!

Warm-up exercises for performers

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You should get into the habit of doing at least 20 minutes of warm-up exercises every working day. These exercises are beneficial for all performers, whether you are practising/rehearsing or performing. Think of yourself as a 'performance' athlete; you need to prepare yourself physically.

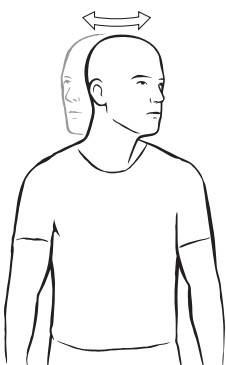
The first eight exercises should ideally be done sitting down. When doing these exercises, stretch as far as you can without straining or inducing any pain. Do each exercise 3–5 times, breathing slowly and deeply throughout. For the standing exercises, make sure your feet are firmly on the ground but don't lock your knees, otherwise you will create problems in your back. If there is any pain, STOP, and discuss this with a healthcare professional.

Acknowledgment:
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Illustrations:
Luke Skirenko

1. Head turns

- Turn your head to one side and then the other.



2. Head tilts

- Tilt your head sideways on both sides without raising your shoulder.

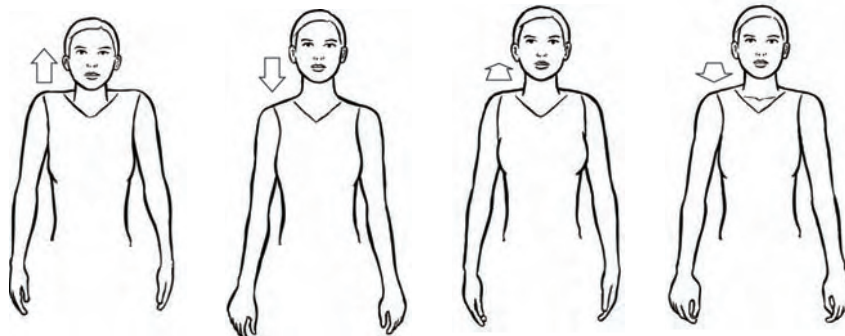


3. Back twist

- Sitting down and with your arms crossed over your chest, twist your back from side to side.

4. Shoulders

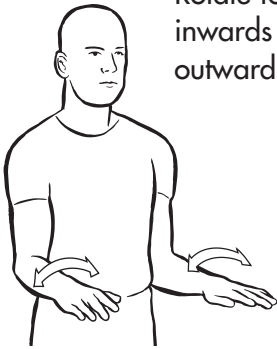
- Shrug and release shoulders, then roll them forwards and backwards through a full circle.



5. Forearms

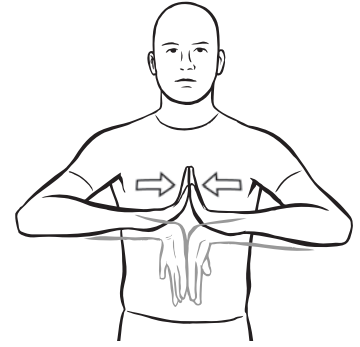
- With your elbows by your waist, bend (flex) your elbows to 90°.

Rotate forearms first inwards and then outwards.



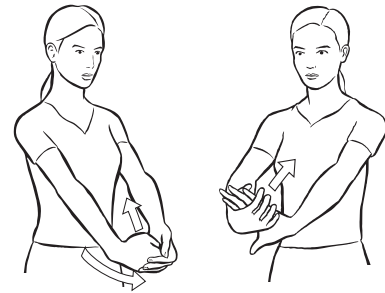
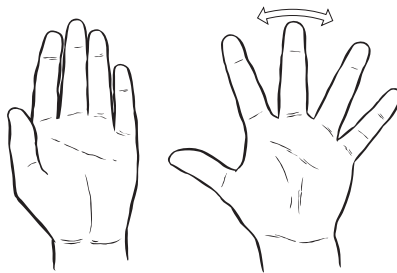
6. Wrists

- Put your fingertips together and try to bring your fingers into contact along their complete length. Don't raise or lower your elbows and keep the palms of your hands apart.
- Do the same thing with your knuckles together and fingers down.



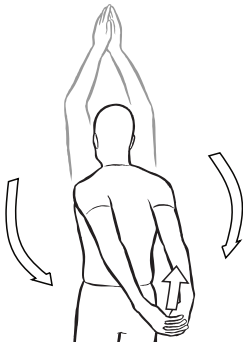
7. Finger spread

- Slowly spread your fingers as far apart as you can, and then bring them back together. You can also do this exercise with your palms together.



8. Hand

- Hold the back of one hand in the palm of your other hand and bend it forward at the wrist.
- Then bend your wrist back keeping your fingers and arms straight.



9. Shoulders and upper back

- Bring your arms over your head, hold your hands together and stretch.
- With your elbows straight, reach behind you and stretch your arms.



10. Lateral stretch

- With your arms above your head, take hold of one wrist with your other hand and pull it up and to one side. Feel the stretch in your side.

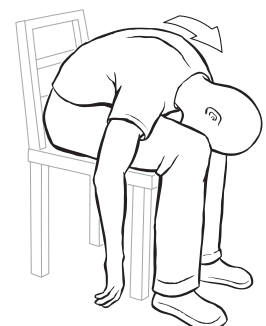
11. Lower back

- Against a support if possible, push thumbs into lower back and arch backwards, keeping knees straight and head forward.



12. Back

- Sitting on a chair or stool, let your upper body fall forward with your arms hanging at the sides of your legs. Arch your back fully from your head down and feel the stretch in your back.



After playing

Don't stop the activity suddenly; if you are practising, unwind slowly by playing pieces that are less demanding. Then cool down using the stretching exercises described here.

Ten top tips

1. Don't suddenly increase the time you spend rehearsing or studying (maximum 10-minute increase per day). You should increase by ten minutes each day for three days and keep at this level for the rest of the week.
2. Leave more difficult passages and pieces for towards the middle of your practice session, when your muscles are ready and not yet tired out. Increase the speed, difficulty and intensity of the pieces you are playing as you progress through the session.
3. Don't become obsessed with repeating a passage or gesture that you can't quite get right. Look for alternatives.
4. Take a five-minute break every half-hour.
5. If your muscles feel overloaded, do some stretching.
6. Do as much as you can to optimise your working environment: think about lighting, noise levels, temperature. Make sure your daily routine – eating, sleeping, exercise – works for you.
7. Don't play at the time of day when you're most tired.
8. NEVER play if you are experiencing pain. If you feel any pain, stop playing and do some gentle stretching. If such pain does not go away or if it reappears in subsequent sessions, see a specialist in Performing Arts Medicine.
9. Do exercises to stretch your muscles before playing and whenever you feel like or need it.
10. Make sure you find time for warming up and stretching.
You know you will enjoy it and it will make you feel great!

Take care with these exercises if you are hypermobile (very bendy) or if you suffer from glaucoma or high blood pressure. Remember, if you have any concerns about your health, or if you are in pain, you can contact BAPAM to arrange a free assessment at one of our clinics.

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