

Unleash the Power of the Flutist's Body – Timani Method
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Timani exercises in handout are for those attending the presentation.

Please do not share publicly. Thank you.



Musicians' Health and Movement Institute

Transversus differentiation (supine, sitting and standing)

The transversus abdominis is an important muscle for all musicians, even if it does not do any skeletal movements on its own. It supports all movement and breathing and is an important foundation for a good overall coordination of the torso and limbs. For example, if we want to sing or play stronger, it is very beneficial to start the initiation of the extra power needed in a deep place, deep in the belly, including the transversus abdominis muscle. This will offload other areas that tend to tense up for musical expression, such as the neck, shoulders and wrists. Besides, it tends to sound even more natural and powerful when the initiation of musical expression comes from a deeper place.

The transverse abdominis muscle also contributes to the last part of expiration, or to the control of controlled expiration (as in playing a wind instrument or singing) and in expiration against resistance (a mouth piece). However, it should be possible to activate this muscle independent of breathing, as it also functions to stabilize the torso when doing movement, like lifting the instrument, or lifting the arms toward the instrument. The intra-abdominal pressures created by this muscle (and some more muscles with it) helps with healthy movement, support and breathing. A functional transverse abdominis will actually anticipate all movements of the limbs by naturally activating 30-40ms before the action of for example lifting an arm. The specific awareness-exercises for this muscle can help to regain this natural function and therefore contribute to better overall coordination.

STANDING:

- Find the ASIS (the bone sticking out the most in front of your hip bone) and put two fingers in the soft area of the belly just inside of it. This is where you can feel if you are using the transversus abdominis most differentiated
- Dig in with the fingers
- Rest the other hand on the navel, without pressing
- Release the belly out
- Draw the navel and the lower part of the transversus in and breathe normally
- Repeat
- Slowly pull the navel in and out, while pushing one leg, and then the other away into the ground ("Standing shuffle")

SITTING IN BALANCE

1. Sit from standing: flick your skirt or tux tails back as you sit.
NB: not the same as arching back.
2. Pull skin of buttocks back.
3. Explore arching back, rib thrust and tilting pelvis (this is common habit).
4. Hands under sit bones, tilt pelvis back & forth.
5. Find balance, just in front of most-force down through bone.
6. Balance lumbar spine – Compare coming out of slouching by thrusting ribs & arching back with: instead try *slightly* slouching and simply take the top of pelvis forward so spine effortlessly follows.
7. Balance arm structure over this. Try lifting arms with & without activating transversus abdominis.
8. Compare with weight on thighs, compare with "good posture", or slouching.

SITTING:

- Find the SIAS (the bone sticking out the most in front of your hip bone) and put two fingers in the soft area of the belly just inside of it. This is where you can feel if you are using the transversus abdominis most differentiated
- Dig in with the fingers
- Rest the other hand on the navel, without pressing
- Release the belly out
- Draw the navel in by activating the lower part of the transversus and breathe normally
- Relax some seconds
- Slowly pull the navel in and out while pushing one knee forward to push the sitting bone into the chair (combined with the seated version of “The shuffle”). See if you can keep this tensegrity and connection to the ground, as though the power from the sitting bone is what helps to keep the transversus active. This way you don’t have to hold



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Sitting Shuffle: actively use contact of sit bones and chair.

Gives proprioceptive input to brain, improves coordination, reduces stress.

Push one knee forward, then the other. Feel sit bone digging into chair with a reaction of the spine lengthening upward. Go back and forth 10 or 12 times.

Take a moment to sense how you feel afterward.



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Shoulder tune-up / Skulder tune up

This exercise trains the ability to control some important movements in your shoulder. A little bit like being independent in each finger when playing an instrument, you also want to be independent in the shoulder joint. This is to avoid using more muscles than necessary when using your arms to play. This exercise will also help you to understand better where you can have your shoulders as a reference before doing other exercises for the shoulders and arms, or when playing your instrument or singing. It is not supposed to feel tense in any way. But perhaps in the beginning, some muscles will try to join a little bit here and there. Over time, try to relax these muscles, so that it is mostly the serratus anterior that will do the work. You can train the serratus anterior muscle specifically in other exercises to be more confident on how it affects your shoulder blade in different ways.

Sometimes it may seem like the shoulder comes up high in this exercise. Then, try to relax the muscles close to the neck as these should not be lifting the shoulder blade but should relax more when the arm goes up. Try to get a clear image of the difference of pulling the shoulders high or rotating the shoulder blade upward. It can look similar, but there are different muscles doing the different tasks, and you don't want to pull the shoulders up and in as this will be straining.

Step by step

- Lift the arm 90° to the side. The shoulder blade will naturally rotate upward to give your upper arm the possibility to move upward freely without restriction
- Keep your arm approximately 15° toward the front of the body, because this is where the shoulder joint is naturally centered
- Put the fingers of the other hand on the acromion which is the bone on top of the shoulder. This bone is a part of the shoulder blade
- Lower the arm slowly, keeping the position of the acromion
- Go up and down a few times without the shoulder blade/acromion moving with it
- When you have mastered that, experiment with other arm movements related to playing your instrument, still keeping the shoulder blade in one position as you move



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Get the book: **Unleashing the Potential of the Musicians' Body – anatomy and exercises for healthy playing** by Tina Margareta Nilssen (Published by GIA)

Website: <https://www.timani.no/>