

Unleash the Power of the Flutist's Body – the 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")



## Whole body exercises

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### Bouncy / Bouncy

Musical expression requires a fine sense of movement and distribution of muscular activation and relaxation. This exercise can help you to find an even activation of the deep muscles in your body that can help with musical expression from a full body experience. By distributing a subtle activation throughout the body, we don't need to overly tense up local areas (such as shoulders, wrists, fingers or holding the breath) that can become tired from creating the musical expression, or supporting the technique, alone.

#### Step by step

- Jump up and down in a comfortable pace, approximately 7-10 times
- Find the right sound when the feet hit the floor, not too loud
- Sense that the activation distributes in the whole body to make the jump coordinated and “elegant”
- To illustrate what happens if we are not in the gravitational line, and to feel how the whole body and alignment matters:
  - Jump hanging with the hips forward, feel the uncomfortable impact in the back/hips
  - Jump with head forward, sense how even the feet and jumping itself is affected
- Go back to doing it in the gravitational line/in the natural way
- Repeat about 3-4 times, stop the movement, but keep the distribution of tension, lift your instrument and start playing! Or lift the imaginary instrument during, before and after exercise pose



*Bounce upwards*

*Landing still and with slightly bent knees*

## 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.

### 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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8. Compare with weight on thighs, compare with “good posture”, or slouching.

**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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## Serratus tune-up / Serratus-tune-up

This exercise trains the serratus anterior muscle and helps to differentiate it from the pectoralis major muscle (the big chest muscle) that you can find in the front armpit. By activating the serratus anterior muscle, we can potentially experience less unwanted tension on top of the shoulders. This is because the serratus anterior is designed to both move and stabilize the shoulder blade but comes from below and the outside of the shoulder blade and not above, where most playing related tension normally accumulates. In addition, we want to relax the chest muscle as we perform the exercise. This helps the shoulder joint have less tension in front, so that we can experience potentially a more open and relaxed chest. This can help us with breathing and playing more effortlessly.

### Step by step

- Stand facing the wall, about an armlength away
- Put one hand on the wall in front of you and walk it up higher till about past your head. This way you will naturally get the shoulder blade in a good position. Make sure you let the shoulder follow the arm movement, don't press the shoulder down away from the ear
- Keep your arms straight and strong (make sure it is not passively over-stretched if you have hypermobile elbow joints)
- Put the other hand on the opposite chest muscle to feel that it stays relaxed and start doing shoulder blade 'push-ups' without activating the chest muscle – still keeping the arm straight and strong
- After you push yourself away from the wall and come back toward it, make sure that you keep the shoulder blade onto the rib wall all the time, and not winging
- Be aware of the whole-body alignment, and the transfer of forces from your arm and all the way down to your foot
- You can also do the exercise with both hands on the wall once you feel secure that the chest muscle is relaxing



### VARIATIONS WHEN THERE IS ENOUGH STRENGTH

- Do the exercise standing with the hands on a chair
- Do the exercise on all fours

Make sure that the shoulder blade is firmly onto the rib wall in all of these variations, so that it is not winging (sticking out from the rib wall in the back). And that it feels comfortable.

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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)

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