

Sustainable Performance 2017-2018

Playing better with less effort / Rike Hesselink, physiotherapist.

Lesson 4 (2018-01-18)

In retrospect: What are we doing? What is our goal? Why are we coaching our body little by little? No hard targets. Making music isn't the same as top sport, even though performing at a high level definitely requires physical and mental effort of the musician. When you behave like a top sportsperson, you will need a team of specialists to help care for your wellbeing. And it will be uncertain how long you can keep performing on the highest level or when to stop. On the other hand it's quiet possible you will be able to play until well into old age if you are lucky, especially because you are able to fully breathe (inward movement) and use your whole body in a coordinated way (outward movement).

It is life-long-learning...

When musical instruments changed over time, there was a need to find a technique to play. The harpsichord was first played without the thumb, later they started to use the thumb too. When people started to play the forte piano there was a need to be able to play legato. Something that is not possible at the harpsichord. There is a development not only in piano playing, but I suppose in the playing of all instruments, since there are etudes to overcome special difficulties in playing. Those exercises focus on breathing, the use of the hands and little by little the shoulders too.

It is interesting to know that François Delsarte (1811-1871), who was a teacher in singing and declamation, was introducing the body and body expression. Later it was Jaques Dalcrose (1865-1950) a music teacher has the aim to develop the musicality of his students. He introduced movements corresponding with rhythms from the music.

Around 1900 the body was rediscovered (remember the Victorian period!) The emancipation of women began: no corsets anymore! The traditional ballets are still there, but also a new style of dancing was introduced: on bare feet and also in different clothing. People started to think about the possibilities of the body in order to express themselves.

Not only in dancing but also in thinking about health there is a big change. Breathing fresh air, going outside, exercising. After the industrial revolution there is more spare time for everybody. Sports are not only for the wealthy rich or for English boarding school students. Nowadays we live in a culture with lots of comfort. We have cars, washing machines, computers etc., but we are lacking physically straining our body in our daily lives.

A number of people* developed exercising methods by describing their own experiences. A physical complaint, limitation or restriction triggers someone to find out how to deal with his or her body in order to heal. Since we didn't get a users manual of our body, we have to invent one ourselves! Everyone needs to discover along the way what suits them. And as life is full of surprises, we have to persevere our whole life to deal with the circumstances we encounter. When you are twenty years of age, your body has less experience compared to someone at the age of eighty. At that age, you probably cannot make a head roll or run the marathon anymore, but you can still make music if you are lucky.

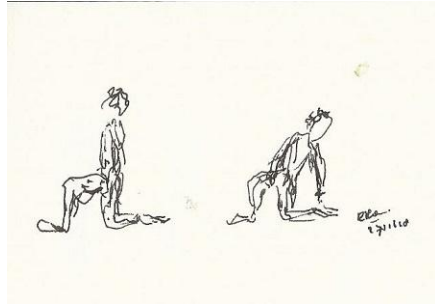
After each lesson someone asks me about shoulder problems. Very often it is due to misuse. How do you use your body as one unit or in coordination?! We forget about our legs and the part below the diaphragm.

Let's do some movements!

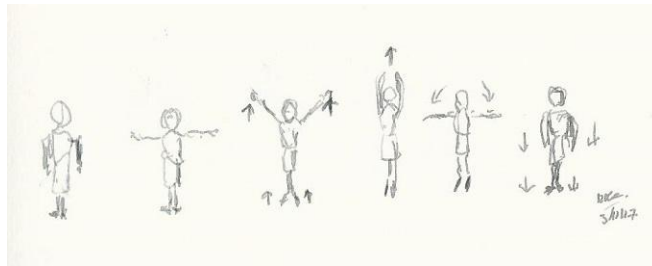
- Walk on the spot, lift your knees and notice that your arms start following the movements of your legs: they start swinging. The arms don't initiate this movement, they only react to the movement of your legs.
- Lift you knee and touch that knee with the opposite hand, a crossed movement. Do this to the left and to the right.
- Now more active: notice that your leg is the primary mover, your body twists, you don't have to stretch your arm.
- Now do this crossed movement 4 times in front of you and then switch to making it around the back, also 4 times. Later make it 2 times in front and 2 times around the back.
- Now pause a moment and then start anew. How does this work out? Can you return to the crossed movement straight away or do you first touch the same side by mistake?
- Introduce between those movement a touch sideways.



- Feet closed and swing your relaxed arms up and down, let your torso rotate with this movement; your knees actively bending as well. Find a rhythm. Make variations by swinging your arms to one side/around your back. Make half a circle/ a whole circle. Don't forget your knees! They help to continue the swinging movement without any effort. The main aim is to find a rhythm in these movements.



- Standing on one knee, touch the leg behind you and find out it's position. Have a look by turning your head and torso and touch your heel with your hand. Do the same with the other leg forward and the other hand.
- Also on one knee: Put your hands behind your head, elbows to the side; stand up by pushing with your rear foot and shifting your weight forward. Don't engage your arms and shoulders!



- To finish we repeat the movement 'Ik Sta': standing with closed feet, arms are moving sideways and up, while shifting your weight forward and lifting your heels from the floor. (Voluntary: look to your hands or close your eyes). Then arms to the side and down while your feet are landing too.

So now your body is prepared to play your instrument!

*Methods:

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https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mensendieck_1864-1957 Ans Samama

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