

Sustainable Performance 2017-2018

Playing better with less effort/ Rike Hesselink, physiotherapist

Lesson 6 (2018-02-22)

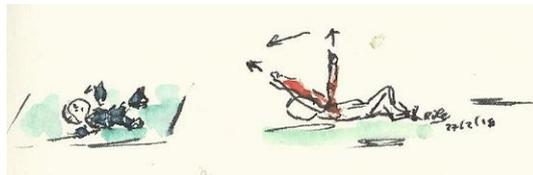
Questions to start:

- . Did you read the summary /summaries?
- . What do you remember of the postures/movements of the percussionists last time?

Take home message: Your feet, legs and spine need to be activated and prepared before playing. This helps to free your arms and hands, so they become available for playing your instrument!

History of the use of the arms:

- A baby has had to discover his arms and hands to act and manipulate with. That they belong to him, and he can use them to clap with and put things in his mouth. Later on he uses his arms to move, to turn his body over, to crawl, to pull himself upright, to grab, to catch and throw.
- By then he's quite developed. Using your fingers and wrists independently is an advanced skill that we develop later.
- A baby moves his hands upwards, over the middle of his body towards his mouth and head. We can bring our arms further up, palms together, above our head. A kind of stretch, also extending our trunk. Make sure you don't let your arms rest on the floor above your head because this will take the shape away from your trunk (your spine will arch and your chest will come up, we don't want that). This is a nice way to stretch your back, especially because it feels light and easy.



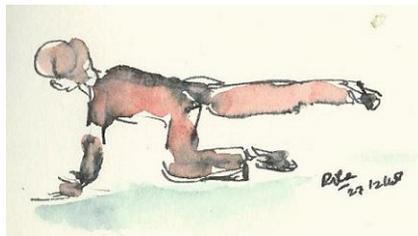
- There is a sound in your arms! Exercises in falling:
Lay on your back, arms a little separated from your body, hands lying down on the side of your little finger (where there's a small, soft muscular "pillow"; on the back of your hands are the knuckles, they are hard to rest on). Bend your elbow a little; your upper arm faces the ceiling. Your hand and wrist are in a neutral position, as if still lying down. Bending the elbow is an action of the biceps; when you relax it, your lower arm drops onto the floor with a thud. You can hear this, and also the softer thuds of your fingers.

- Bend your elbow again and lift your elbow a little and then drop it again. You first hear the heavy thud of your upper arm, then the lighter thuds of your lower arm and fingers. There's a rhythm to this falling. You can even lift your arm all the way up and then drop it. Don't forget you have an elbow that automatically bends (unless you keep it extended, which you are not supposed to do!). You'll hear the rhythm starting in your dropping arm: the tone of the sound will go from heavy to light during the fall.

On hands and knees crawling position):

- Discover the difficulty in evenly distributing your weight over your lower legs/back of feet and your hands/arms! Feel the influence of your head position, chest position and lower back position has on the pressure in your hands and wrists. When you lower one of these areas, the pressure in your hands increases.
- Besides: how does your weight rest on your hands? We tend to rest much more on the base of our hand and on the side of the little finger. Notice that small children, who cannot yet walk properly, use their full hands, just like an elephant uses the whole sole of his foot to bear his weight. As soon as we are able to walk, we seem to lose this ability and start to lean on just the base and the outside of our hands, our index fingers coming off the floor.
Notice: the more parts of your body are engaged and active, the easier you are resting on your hands.

Resting weight on your hands is a nice opposite movement for your fingers to all the bending they continuously have to do in all your activities. Resting weight is a type of stretching, so it's the opposite of bending or flexing your fingers. This gentle way of stretching gives the palm side of your hands more space to move and it will improve your sleight of hand.

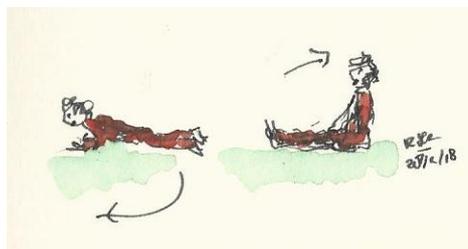


Practice on hands and knees:

- Extend your left leg backwards. Make sure your knee is extended and your leg moves in a straight line, without noticing anything in your arms and shoulders!
- Extend your left leg backwards and extend your right arm and hand forward, as if you want to shake hands. This means the side of your thumb is upward.
- With an extended left leg: Put your right hand on your back; now look under your left arm. Your spine rotates all the way to your tailbone. Your weight shifts toward the right lower leg and back of foot. This way you can keep your balance.

- Try extending both your left leg and your left arm! This feels weird because there's no rotation in your spine.

Lying prone: Go from this position to sitting as fast as you can, whilst looking in the same direction. Your legs are going to the front via your side and then lie parallel in front of you. From this position back to lying prone; you can move your legs back the same way or the other way as they came in front. Your centre of support changes and you can feel clearly where your hips are situated. You automatically keep breathing.



Kneeling position:

- Repeating earlier exercises: Turn around and touch your heel with your hand.
- Keep your hands behind your neck, push off with your rear foot and stand up. By shifting your weight forward, you activate your legs and trunk. This way you don't need to use your hands.



- Lying on your back: Getting up by way of rotating; humming softly allows you to check if you keep breathing during the motion. You turn over, pull up one knee, put your foot down, push off with your rear foot and stand up. This is one large spiralling movement.
- From standing: gently bend forward all the way, from head to tail your back makes a nice arch; your weight shifts toward your forefeet. Don't pull your belly in, that would block your breathing!
- Slowly come back up from your feet, ankles, knees, hips and trunk (keep breathing!); your weight stays on your forefeet. Eventually your head will automatically follow the movement; you end up standing actively upright.
- If in doubt: lay one hand on top of your head and push it up with your head. Chest and trunk are extending. You are as tall as you are and you are allowed to show it. Moreover, when you stand up tall, you actually look smaller than when you are awkwardly trying to avoid looking tall.

- We finished the lesson with the arm movements from lesson 5. Arm movements in all three planes so you feel you are standing in your own centred space:
- The frontal plane
- The sagittal plane
- The transverse plane



The frontal plane

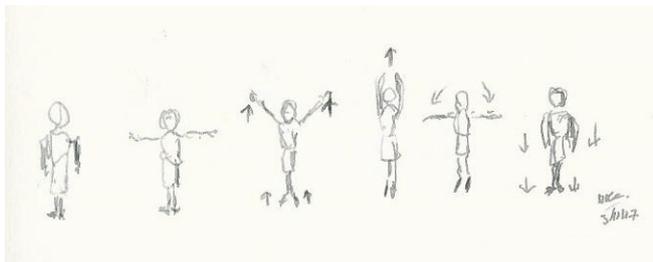


The sagittal plane



The transverse plane

Finally the exercise "IK STA" (see previous lessons)



We have experienced how the trunk, feet, legs and pelvis are influencing the use of your arms. And above all: How comfortable it feels when you are able to use your body as one cooperating system!

On April the 19th we will meet for the last lesson in which we will summarize this series.

If you have any questions before then, e-mail to: info@rikehesselink.nl