



Feet

4 foot exercises / 4 fotøvelser (massasje, fotvrideren, spre tær, anda)

Our feet are an area of huge complexity and possibility. There are 26 bones in each foot, and a lot of muscles both in the foot itself and in the lower leg. The leg muscles are involved in moving the toes, foot and ankle, and are therefore crucial to balance and a comfortable stance. Many therapists and researchers look at the role that the foot plays in the coordination of the rest of the body. Being at the bottom of the body, the feet are a foundation, carrying a lot of weight when we stand, walk and run. The way we use the feet in these tasks can affect us hugely as musicians – especially because of the connections in the fascia system going all the way from the foot and through the whole leg, and then up to the torso and head. Even breathing can be felt in the feet, as well as be affected by the nerves that connect the foot muscles to the pelvic floor muscles (which are involved in breathing as well). The best thing is to check this out for yourself. How you stand, and just doing exercises for the feet may have an impact on how you feel in your connection to the floor, and perhaps also up to your knees, hips, breathing and neck.

You can do these, or some of these exercises almost every day before or during practice times! And it's also a great prep before exercising, walking or jogging to develop the foot muscles further.

Step by step

1. MASSAGE:

Massage your foot with slow and deeper movements. Imagine that you are massaging it like you would try to bring water into a dry sponge, trying to gradually make it softer.

Put your thumbs on the sore spots, go deep and stay for a while

Have the intention of making the foot bigger – sideways. Spread the bones in the mid-foot (metatarsals) with your hands to get a wider foot



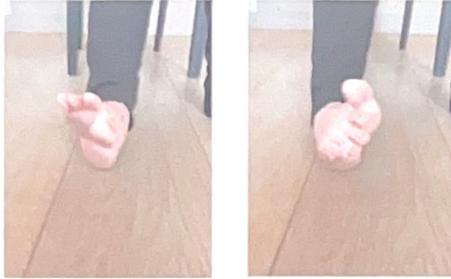
2. TWIST THE FOOT:

Rest the heel on the floor with the ankle dorsiflexed (extended, as in lifting the toes toward your front ankle) or just hold it out in the air

Twist the foot in and out (inversion and eversion).

Feel that the big toe turns the sole of the foot outwards and the pinky toe turns the sole of the foot inwards to get a real active twisting sensation inside your foot muscles

Spread the toes to get hold of the small muscles inside the foot even more



3. SPREAD THE TOES (ABDUCTION):

Keep the foot in a dorsiflexed position and try to spread the toes apart

Ensure the pinky toe and the big toe go straight out to the sides, and that there is space between every toe

If it's difficult you can help and guide actively with your fingers pulling the toes apart, and then trying to keep the position when letting go



4. THE DUCKLING SWIMMING ACROSS THE POND:

Rest the heel on the floor with the foot flexed

Bend the MTP-joint while keeping the toes straight

Heel and toes go forward, and MTP-joints go back.

If it's difficult, put the foot on the ground and pull together from there



Finish the whole exercise on one foot first. Then stand up and sense the possible difference between your feet. This way you can detect the new sensation better and train your brain into more awareness of the sensation of the feet.



DIP + MCP + PIP tune up / DIP + MCP + PIP aktivering

There are 3 exercises here. Choose the one relevant for your playing at this moment in time. For example, part 1 or 2 can be enough to begin with.

Even if we use the fingers for playing our instrument every day, we rarely train the separate movements of our finger joints. This can be useful for contracting the muscle in the full range of motion, especially for the DIP joint (outermost joint). It may be a bit uncomfortable in the beginning, so don't push yourself too hard but try to come a little bit further each time until you reach closer to 90 degrees. This will enhance the gripping action needed for most instruments and create a more distinct sensation and controlled movement for the action of playing.

Step by step

PART 1

- Lock the PIP with the thumb and two fingers of your other hand (*fig 1*), and flex the DIP all the way to 90 degrees (*fig 2*) or to the maximum you can manage
- Slowly release
- Repeat the movement only once or twice on all fingers - or the fingers of choice where you need it the most, if comfortable
- Put your hands in your lap, close your eyes, and sense if you feel the joints more



Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3 (Part 2)



Fig 4 (Part 2)

PART 2

- Now hold inside the hand below the knuckle joint. (*fig 3*) Bend the MCP joint while extending the PIP and DIP joints (*fig 4*); The MCP joint can move to 90 degrees. Then go to the next finger and so on
- Feel with your opposite thumb that something activates/becomes more firm inside your palm
- While keeping the position for 2-3 seconds, check that your wrist can move freely and relaxed
- Put your hands in your lap, close your eyes, and sense if you feel the palm more



PART 3 – not so often needed

- Now hold the MCP joint and flex the PIP (*fig 5*); this one can move to more than 90 degrees. Then go to the next finger and so on
- Variation: To enhance the movement control and options, do the PIP joint without holding with the opposite hand, and try to keep the DIP and MCP completely straight as you bend (*Fig 6*).
- Variation 2: Do the PIP joint without holding with the opposite hand, and try to consciously bend the DIP joint with it, but keeping the MCP joint straight
- Put your hands in your lap, close your eyes, and sense if you feel the joints more



Fig 5 (Part 3)



Fig 6 (Part 3)

TIPS

- Find out from playing observations Which joints are the weaker ones, and work eccentrically with strengthening them individually against an object

PART 4

- Now put the pieces together. Trying to flex and lengthen the fingers simultaneously with the initiation from the PIP joint. You can use a surface to push up from

Names of the joints of the fingers and hands:





Thumb drill / Tommeltrim

When moving the fingers in certain patterns year after year, we often go into habits that over time can become unconscious limitations. To break the habits of the thumb, see if you can control these different patterns of movement, and test how it feels to play afterwards. Very often, it seems to make the thumb more available to subtle and dynamic movements which can be very beneficial for playing most instruments. For some instruments we need a great variation of thumb movements, and on others the instrument is resting the weight on the thumb. In either of these cases, this exercise can relieve the thumb of stress, create more possibilities and more awareness and nuance.

Try to be very specific with this exercise, and look very closely at the details. If it seems very easy, you might want to check if the joints that should remain still are maybe moving a little bit anyway. Then try to be more aware of keeping them still the next time around. Also be aware of the position of the hand relative to the thumb throughout the exercise.

Step by step

- First, flex and extend the IP joint, without the MCP joint joining in (*fig 2*). Work slowly. (The CMC joint should be in a natural position, not sticking out)
- Flex and extend the MCP joint, without moving any of the other joints (*fig 1*)
- The third movement is bending and extending the lengthened thumb from the CMC joint (*fig 3*)
- The fourth movement is abduction (as in pressing down the key at the piano) and adduction with the lengthened thumb from the CMC joint (*fig 4*)
- If it is difficult to control keeping the other joints still, help them with passively keeping them in place with the opposite hand (as in *Fig 1*)
- Put the hands in your lap, close your eyes and feel the difference
- Do the other thumb



Fig 1: flex and extend the IP joint



Fig 2: only flex and extend the MCP joint



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Fig 3: Bend and extend the lengthened thumb from the CMC joint



Fig 4: abduction and adduction

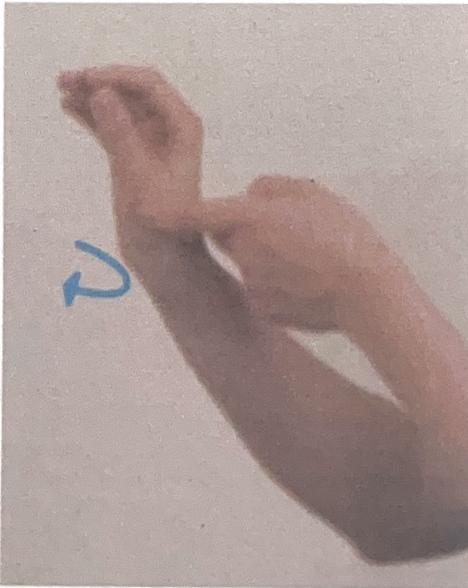


Fig 5: Advanced - Opposition movement to activate opponens pollicis



Fig 6: don't spread the hand or overextend the thumb but keep the thumb inside of the hand so you have a 3-dimensional hand