

Stretching Routine and Gentle Warmup

General comments:

These stretches are to be used to gently warm up your body to prepare for playing. Hold each pose for a few breaths. Feel free to hold them longer. You should not feel pain. Do not stretch to the point of shaking or extreme tension. These are gentle stretches. If I write "hold", this means to hold the pose and breathe, not hold your breath!

I am not a trained yoga teacher, and do not claim to be an expert. This is simply the routine I do to get ready to play or start my day.

If you have never taken a yoga class before, you might want to look at videos or images of the following poses:

Mountain Pose, Yoga eagle arms, Lion pose

Standing Pose (Mountain Pose) and Breathing

Begin by standing with your eyes closed, feet comfortably hip width apart. Feel your feet firmly on the ground, arms relaxed at your side. Take a few slow deep breaths to center yourself. Exhale fully.

2) Neck stretches

Ear to Shoulder

On an exhalation, slowly lower your right ear to your right shoulder. Hold this pose for a few breaths. Inhale, lifting your head back to center.

On an exhalation, slowly lower your left ear to your left shoulder. Hold for a few breaths, inhaling back to center when ready.

Looking over your shoulder

On an exhalation, gently turn your head to look over your right shoulder. Hold and breathe. Inhale back to center. Exhale and turn your head to look over your left shoulder. Hold and breathe. Inhale back to center.

Nodding yes/no

On an exhalation, slowly lower your right ear to your right shoulder. Gently and slowly nod "yes". When you get to a tight spot, pause and breathe into that spot. Now slowly nod "no." Breathe into any tight spots. Pause, and on inhalation, bring your head back to center.

On an exhalation, slowly lower your left ear to your left shoulder. Gently and slowly nod "yes". Breathe into any tight spots. Slowly nod "no." Pause and breathe into any tight spots. On an inhalation, bring your head back to center.

Going deeper with Ear to Shoulder

Put your arms behind your back and hold your right wrist with your left hand. Gently reach towards the ground. Lower your left ear to your left

shoulder. Hold, and inhale back to center. Switch hands; hold your left wrist with your right hand. Gently lower your right ear to your right shoulder. Hold, and bring your head back to center on an exhalation.

3) Upper chest and upper/mid back. (Pectorals and trapezius)

Arms behind back/Eagle Arms

Bring your arms behind your back and clasp your hands together. Open up through the front of your body by rolling your shoulder blades together and down. While keeping your shoulders down, gently raise your clasped hands about 6 inches away from your body. Breathe and continue to reach up and out with your heart. Release your hands and return to mountain pose.

With your arms in front of you, bend your left arm and bring your elbow to your body's center. Place your right elbow over your left elbow. Wrap your forearms around each other. Keep your shoulders down and relaxed. (To check if your shoulders are relaxed, shrug your shoulders, then drop them.) Unhook your arms and return to mountain pose.

Bring your arms behind your back and clasp your hands together. Clasp your hands opposite of how you first clasped them. Roll your shoulder blades together, and open up through your body. Gently raise your hands about 6 inches away from your body. Keep your shoulders down, and open up through the front of your body. Breathe and hold. Continue to reach up and out with your heart. Release your hands and return to mountain pose.

With your arms in front of you, bend your right arm and place your left elbow over your right. Wrap your forearms around each other. Keep your shoulders down and relaxed. Unwrap your arms and return to mountain pose.

4) Shoulders and Arms

Shoulder Rolls

Slowly roll your shoulders back, up, forward and down, completing a full circle. Continue these small circles. Pause, and change directions.

Arms

Gently open and close your hands. With palms up, slowly open your hand fully and stretch your fingers in different directions, like a starfish.

Make your hands into gentle fists and slowly circle your wrists; pause and change directions.

To stretch your left triceps, raise your left arm to the ceiling with your thumb pointing behind you. Bend your elbow and place your hand on the back of

your left shoulder. Place your right hand just below your left elbow and gently push your left arm back as you continue reaching down your back with the left arm. Hold and breathe. Release your arms and return to mountain pose.

To stretch your right triceps, raise your right arm to the ceiling with your thumb pointing behind you. Bend your elbow and place your hand on the back of your right shoulder. Place your left hand just below your left elbow and gently push your right arm back as you continue to reach down your back with your right arm. Breathe. Release your arms and return to mountain pose.

5) Spine and Torso

Back and Forward Bend Flow

Inhale and reach your arms overhead, palms facing each other. Slightly bend your knees and do a gentle backbend, chest open and your heart reaching forward and up, eyes looking toward the ceiling. Exhale and bring your arms to the floor (forward bend). Repeat this flow several times. Inhale into a back bend; exhale into a forward bend. If you feel tight in the lower back, pause at the bottom of your forward bend and breathe. Be sure to keep your knees slightly bent. Return to mountain pose.

Side Stretches

Place your feet slightly apart, slightly wider than your hips. Raise your right arm with your palm facing towards your body (thumb pointing behind you). Gently reach toward the ceiling, and on an exhalation, lean to the left. Slide your left arm down your left leg. Press your right foot into the floor for more stretch. On an inhalation return to center. Bring your arm back down. Raise your left arm with your palm facing towards your body (thumb pointing behind you). Gently reach toward the ceiling and, on an exhalation, lean to the right. Slide your right arm down your leg. Press your left foot into the floor for more stretch. On an inhalation return to center and bring your arm down.

Standing Twist

Place your feet apart, slightly wider than your hips. Slowly begin to swing your body side to side in twisting motion. Involve your arms in the twist. Return to mountain pose.

6) Legs

Hamstring stretch

Bring your feet close together. Cross your right foot over your left. On an exhalation, fold into a forward bend and let your spine be rounded and

relaxed. Pause and breathe for several breaths. On an inhalation return to standing. Uncross your legs. Cross your left foot over your right. On an exhalation, flow into a forward bend. Pause and breath for several breaths. On an inhalation return to standing. Uncross your legs and return to mountain pose.

Ankles

Balance on your left leg and slowly rotate your right ankle in circles. Pause and change directions. Balancing on your right leg, slowly rotate your left ankle in circles. Return to standing.

Feet

If you can, take off your shoes and flex your foot and toes.

Face

7) Lion Pose

This is a yoga pose to stretch the muscles in your jaw and face. Open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue. Do this several times to relax your jaw.

8) Mountain Pose

Return to standing. Close your eyes and breathe.

Bring this centered and relaxed feeling to whatever you are doing today. Have a great day.

This Routine is also offered as an audio guided practice.

For more info check out:
www.mollysharpcreates.com

Viola Concerto Duets is a project I started so that I could accompany my students on standard viola repertoire. This allows them to experience the piece as a whole much earlier in the learning process. The following works are currently available:

Telemann Concerto in G
Stamitz Concerto in D
Hoffmeister Concerto in D
Marcello Sonatas in G and e minor
Hummel Fantasie
Weber Andante e Rondo ungarese