

WARM UP EXERCISES  
FOR MORRIS DANCING

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## WARM UP EXERCISES FOR MORRIS DANCING.

KEY WORDS ARE:- GENTLE SLOW PROGRESSIVE

1. The aim of a warm up is to increase the flow of blood to the muscles and soft tissues around the joints. This heats the tissues which improves their ability to stretch and prepares them to cope with the more strenuous exercise of dancing. Therefore it is important that gentle exercise is done first to increase the blood circulation and then a gentle stretching. To fully prepare the muscles and joints, the exercises are repeated using more range of movement and as the muscles work harder their ability to stretch will improve. Further stretching exercises are then done.

2. Always stretch joints and muscles slowly and progressively; you should feel no strain.

3. All exercises should be comfortably done, NEVER with force. If any exercise causes you pain, you must stop that particular exercise.

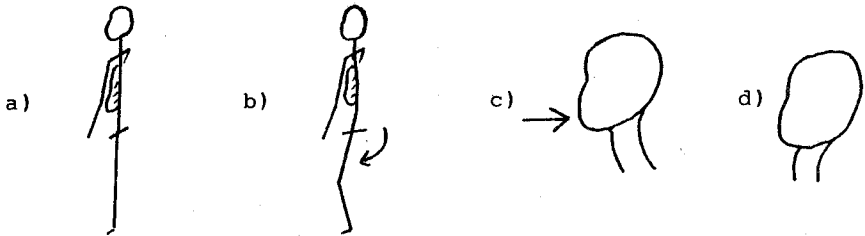
4. This can be used as a general warm up routine, but:-

a) look at your dances and if a particular step needs a more specific stretching exercise then add it to the ones shown here,  
b) if you feel stiffness in any joint or muscle, or have had a previous injury then you must spend more time stretching and exercising this specific area.

5. The number of times you perform each exercise and the length of time you "hold" a stretch will depend on how your joints and muscles feel as you are doing each exercise. Learn to recognise when your muscles feel relaxed and aim to work your joints through their full range of movement (ie as much as they are capable of without strain to the soft tissues surrounding them). The number of times to perform each exercise, given in this exercise programme, is only a guide.

6. A warm up must be done immediately prior to dancing whether you are in a hall on a practice night or outside a pub on tour. If you have to travel on a coach/car for any length of time in between dance venues on a day tour, then warm up again before starting to dance.

EXERCISING AND STRETCHING THE NECK.



1. Stand with feet hip distance apart and knees relaxed. Tighten bottom and stomach muscles to tuck your seat under (do not arch your back) (a) (b).

2. Keeping shoulders down and relaxed pull chin back (c) (d) and slowly lower head down towards chest.

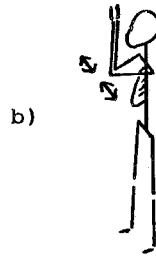
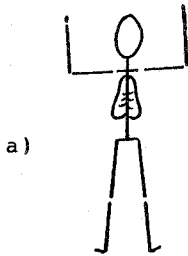
3. Smoothly roll head around to the right and keeping chin in look over right shoulder. Return by lowering head slowly and return to the middle.

4. Keeping chin tucked in repeat this movement to the left.

5. Repeat this sequence as often as required. Guide - 6 times right and 6 times left.

## EXERCISING AND STRETCHING THE SHOULDER JOINTS

A.

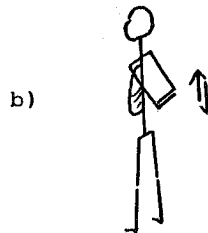
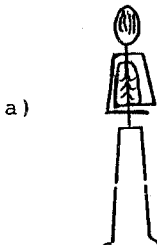


1. Stand as for previous exercise.

2. Hold arms out to side at shoulder level and bend elbows to 90° with hands towards ceiling (a).

3. Bring elbows and hands together in front of face (b). Move them together and apart 1 inch (if your elbows don't touch, take them in as far as you can and move them together and apart with a 1 inch movement). Guide - repeat 50 times.

B.



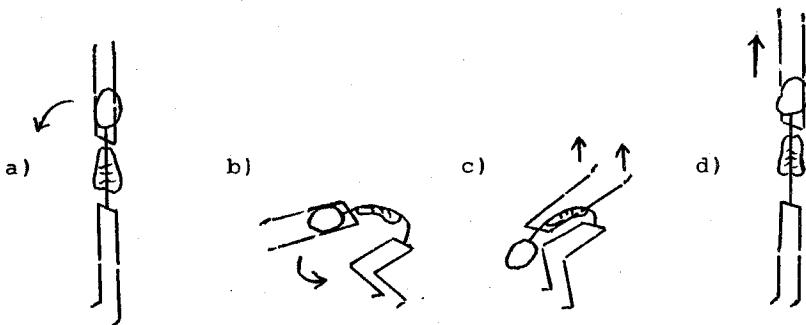
1. Stand as for previous exercise.

2. Fold arms behind back (do not arch your back).

3. Keeping shoulders down and relaxed, lift folded arms away from your back as far as is comfortable. Lift and lower arms with 1 inch movements.

4. Guide - 30-50 times.

## EXERCISING AND STRETCHING THE BACK.



1. Stand as for previous exercise, and stretch both arms to ceiling (a) (don't arch your lower back).

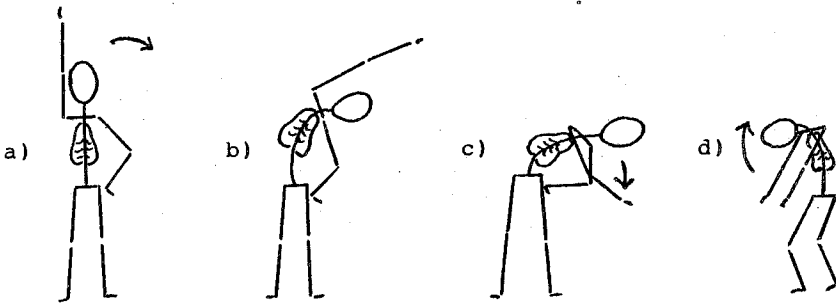
2. Bend both knees and reaching forward with your arms, bend your upper body forwards and down towards your thighs (b).

3. Swing arms down past calves and continue, to raise them behind your body (c) (knees are still bent and your body is close to your thighs).

4. To come up, reverse the movement and reach your arms up to ceiling (d) (don't arch lower back).

5. Guide - repeat 10 times.

## STRETCHING THE WAIST AND LOWER BACK.



1. Stand as for previous exercise.

2. Reach right arm to ceiling and place left hand over left hip keeping left elbow in line with body (this supports the lower back) (a).

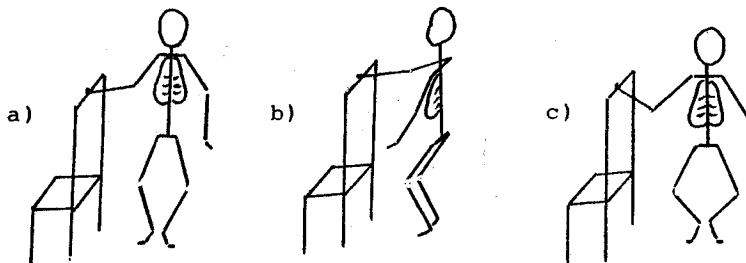
3. Reach right arm up and over head keeping elbow straight and bending, from the waist, as far as you can comfortably to the left (b).

4. When you feel the first tightening along your right side, stop and hold your position. As the tightness reduces reach over further and as the tightness returns, stop and hold this position. Progress until you feel your muscles and joints are fully stretched. Breathe normally, do not hold your breath.

5. To return to your starting position, bring right arm down across your body (c) and bend your body to the front (d). Gently curl your back up into standing position.

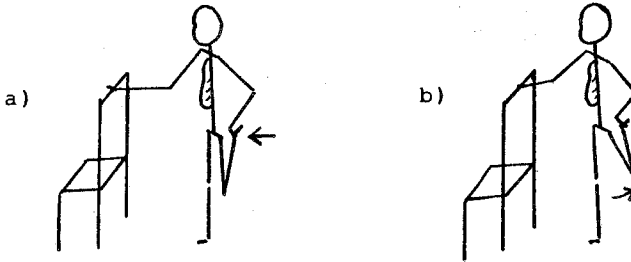
6. Repeat the movement to the right. Guide - hold for 2-3 new positions each side.

EXERCISING BOTTOM, UPPER LEG AND CALF MUSCLES.



1. Hold onto a chair for balance.
2. Stand on the balls of your feet with both heels together and both knees and toes turned out. Keep bottom and stomach muscles tight to tuck your seat under (a).
3. Keeping back straight, bend your knees and lower your bottom 3 inches and hold this position for 5 seconds. Lower a further 3 inches and hold this position for 5 seconds. Lower and hold once more (b).
4. Repeating these three stages as you straighten your knees, return to your starting position.
5. Guide - repeat whole sequence 2-3 times.

STRETCHING THE QUADRICEPS MUSCLE (AT THE FRONT OF THE THIGH).



1. Hold onto chair/wall for balance, Tighten bottom and stomach muscles to tuck seat under.

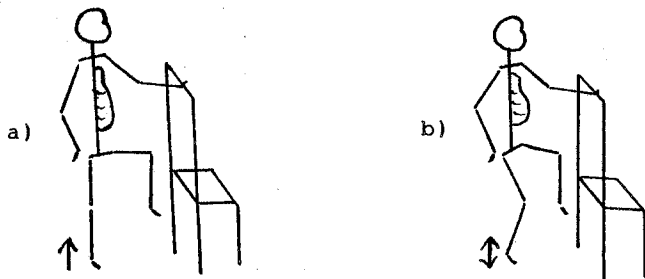
2. Keeping both knees together, bend right knee up behind and hold your right ankle with your right hand (a).

3. Gently pull right heel towards right buttock until you feel a tightness along the front of your thigh and hold this position. As the tightness lessens, pull in heel again and hold this position. Continue until the muscle feels fully stretched and relaxed.

4. (If your heel is already touching your bottom, increase the stretch by maintaining your position and gently move the right knee backwards (b) (keeping seat tucked under)).

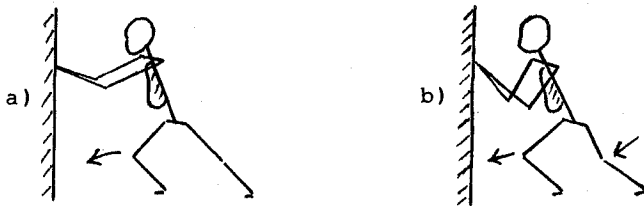
5. Repeat with the left knee. Guide - hold for 2-3 new positions each leg.

## EXERCISING CALF MUSCLES.



1. Hold onto chair/wall for balance.
2. Standing on left leg, bend right knee and hip to 90°.
3. Raise left heel 2 inches off the floor and lower. As the muscle begins to feel worked, gradually increase the range of movement by lifting your heel higher, as feels comfortable (a).
4. Bend left knee slightly and raise left heel 2 inches off the floor and lower. Again, increase the range of movement, as feels comfortable (b) (it is essential to keep the knee bent as you raise and lower the heel).
5. Stretch the left calf muscle, using the next exercise.
6. Guide - 30-50 lifts initially, 20-30 with increased range of movement.
7. Repeat with the left knee bent up and raise right heel as above. Stretch the right calf muscle using the next exercise.

## STRETCHING THE CALF MUSCLE.



1. To stretch the left calf muscle, stand with a wall/chair in front of you and take a stride forward with the right leg. Both feet must be facing forward and both heels on the floor (knees in line with your feet). Place both hands on wall/chair and lean the body towards it.

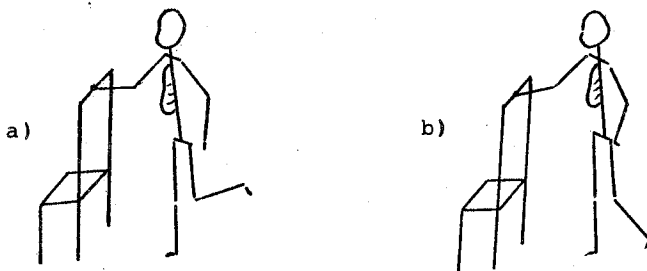
2. Bend right knee and push right knee forward to stretch left calf muscle (both heels must stay on the floor). Hold this position and lean forward again as tightness in calf reduces and then as the muscle tightens, hold the position (the left knee remains straight throughout this exercise) (a). Repeat as necessary (see 5.).

3. Return to the same starting position and repeat the previous exercise, but this time keep the left knee slightly bent all the time. You will feel the stretch lower down the calf (b).

4. To stretch the right calf muscle, repeat with left leg forward.

5. Guide - repeat hold for 2-3 new positions each calf.

EXERCISING THE HAMSTRING MUSCLES (AT THE BACK OF THE THIGH).



1. Stand and hold a chair/wall for balance.
2. Stand on left leg and keeping both knees together gently bend right knee up behind you to  $90^\circ$  and lower (a) (b). Repeat until the muscle feels "worked".
3. Repeat on right leg.
4. Guide 30-50 times each leg.

## STRETCHING THE HAMSTRING MUSCLES.

a)



b)



1. Stand and bend your body forward until your hands are on the floor by your feet. Bend your knees as much as you need to, keep your head tucked down and shoulders relaxed (a).

2. Gently move your body towards your thighs until you feel the stretch in the hamstring muscles (if you can do this without feeling this stretch, try straightening your knees until you can). Hold this position and then as the stretch lessens pull in closer/straighten the knees until you feel the tightness again and hold this position.

3. Repeat until the hamstrings feel comfortably stretched.

GENTLE RUNNING TO INCREASE CIRCULATION AND RESPIRATORY RATE.

1. Jog around the hall for 2 minutes. Run clockwise and anticlockwise to ensure a balance of muscle work.

2. Try varying the above exercise by:

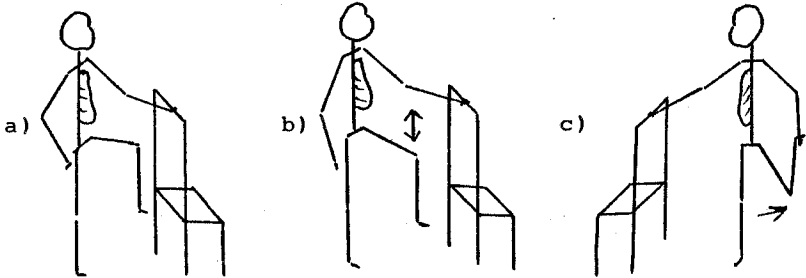
- a) running backwards for a short distance
- b) running on toes
- c) running and bringing knees up high
- d) running and kicking up feet behind you

3. Jumping on the spot a) from one foot to the other  
b) with both feet off the ground

(When out on tours and running is impractical, try jogging on the spot instead.)

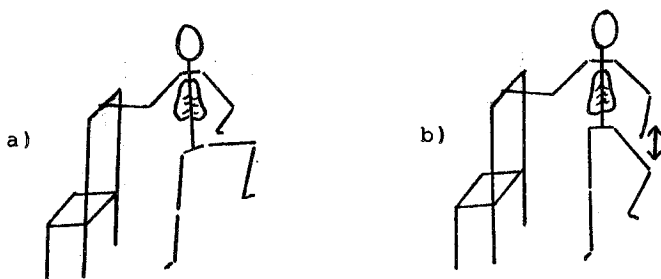
## SPECIFIC STRETCHES - A FEW EXAMPLES

### A. IF YOUR DANCES INVOLVE HIGH STEPPING:



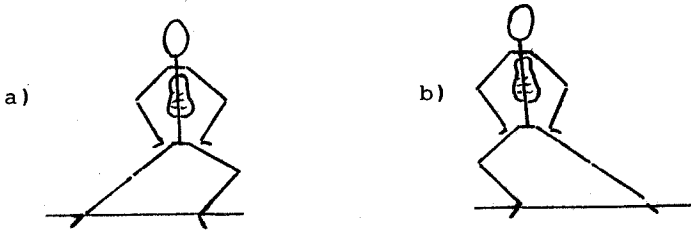
1. Stand and hold a chair/wall for balance.
2. Bend right hip and knee to  $90^{\circ}$ . Lower and lift knee 2 inches down and up to work the muscles at the front of the hip (a) (b).
3. To stretch these muscles use the advanced quadriceps stretch without holding the heel into the bottom (tighten bottom and stomach muscles to prevent your lower back arching) (c).
4. Repeat on left leg. Guide - 30-50 times each leg.

B. IF YOUR DANCES INVOLVE LIFTING YOUR KNEE UP AND OUT TO THE SIDE: EXERCISE TO MOBILISE THE HIP JOINT.



1. Stand and hold chair/wall for balance.
2. Bend right hip and knee and lift right knee out to the side. (keep hips facing forward) (a).
3. Lift and lower right knee 1 inch up and down (b).
4. Repeat with left leg.
5. Guide - 30-50 times each leg.

C. IF YOUR DANCES INVOLVE LEAP FROGS: EXERCISE TO STRETCH THE INNER THIGH MUSCLES.



1. Stand with stomach and seat muscles tight and tuck seat under with feet apart. Feet and knees should be comfortably turned out.
2. Bend right knee out to the side, keeping left knee straight and both heels on the floor (a). (Both hips must face forwards throughout this exercise.)
3. As the inner thigh muscle of the left leg tightens, hold the position and as the muscle relaxes bend the right knee further until the muscle tightens again. Stop and hold this position.
4. Repeat as necessary. Guide - hold for 2-3 new positions each leg.
5. Repeat with the left knee leading (b).