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Yoga for Musicians: Practice Room Yoga

Practical Yoga & Meditation for Everyday Practice

Presented by Jenni Brandon at Arizona State University
(E-RYT 500, RPYT, Composer and Conductor)

What is yoga?



The word “yoga” comes to us from Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language. It means “yoke” or “union”, and our practice of yoga unites the body, mind and spirit. In contemporary terms, yoga includes a reinforcement of personal ethics, physical practice (asana), breath work (pranayama), and meditation to create a deeper connection with oneself.

Why have a regular yoga and meditation practice?

A regular yoga practice integrates the mind, body, and spirit in a way that we gain a deeper connection to our self. It teaches us that everything we do has an impact on our health and our lives. A yoga and meditation practice can physically reduce stress, lower high blood pressure, maintain strength and mobility, and calm the mind. As musicians there are great demands on you physically and mentally, and a regular yoga practice can help you find the balance between professional and personal life.

1 minute meditation

Find a comfortable seated position on the floor or in a chair, or you may also lie down on the floor. Close your eyes.

Bring your attention to the breath, taking a couple of deep breaths to allow yourself to settle into this practice.

Begin to follow the breath and as you do, think on these words:

Inhale: I know that I am breathing in

Exhale: I know that I am breathing out

Repeat this for a minute or longer.

When finished slowly open your eyes and feel the effects of a calm and focused meditation session.

Pranayama (breath) work: *Prana* (in Sanskrit) means life force or breath sustaining the body. *Ayama* means to extend or draw out. The practice of Pranayama means to extend or draw out the breath.

Nadi Shodhana - alternate nostril breathing

In this breathing exercise, you will alternate between left and right nostrils as you inhale and exhale. This is to unblock the "nadis" which in yoga are the passages that carry that life force (prana) all through the body. We want the energy in our body to flow, and if this passage of energy is blocked, we may feel mentally and physically unwell. A regular Pranayama practice may be a boost to your immune system as well as helping us find calm and grounding through slow breathing. Nadi Shodhana Pranayama can help us to prepare the mind and body for meditation.

1. Come into a comfortable seated position, whether that's on the floor or seated in a chair.
2. with your right hand in a fist in front of your face, extend the thumb and fourth finger (ring finger), and pinky finger.
3. Cover your right nostril with your thumb.
4. Inhale through your left nostril slowly, then cover the left nostril with your ring finger.
5. Uncover your right nostril and exhale slowly, followed by a slow inhale through the same nostril.
6. Cover your right nostril with your thumb, and uncover your left nostril, exhaling slowing through the left nostril.
7. This is one complete cycle. Try this several times, finishing by taking a few deep, cleansing breaths.

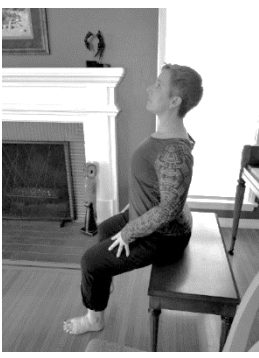
Here's a little more information about Alternate Nostril Breathing and how to do this practice of Pranayama: [Try This 5-Minute Breathing Practice to Balance Your Body, Mind, and Energy | Yoga Journal](#)

Practice Room Yoga

Below is a short sequence of poses (asana) that you can do with a chair or piano bench.

Start this practice with your feet hip distance apart and planted on the ground, hands resting in your lap. You might begin with the 1-minute meditation above and several rounds of breathwork.

You might also set an intention (a way of being) for your practice - both yoga AND your practice of making music! This might be something like “I am calm” or “I am grateful” or something that you’d like to work on for yourself. Repeating this intention throughout your practice can remind you to carry it with you and practice it throughout your day.

	1) Cat Pose Placing hands on thighs, round your spine and draw shoulders forward 
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Exhale as you take Cat Pose. On the inhale, slowly move into cow pose. Repeat several times to help stretch in the shoulders and back and open the chest for more fluid breath. You can practice Ujjayi breath as you inhale and exhale.

 3) Neck Stretch Allow left ear to come toward left shoulder, then extend right arm slightly out to the right. You may gently place your left hand on top of head to deepen the stretch, being careful never to pull on the neck. Take several deep breaths, then release hand and return head to neutral position. Repeat on other side.	 4) Extended Arms Extend arms toward the ceiling, shoulder distance or wider, palms facing toward each other, shoulders drawing away from ears. Try slowly exhaling arms back down to your side, and inhale them up to original extended position several times.
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5) Seated side stretch
From extended arms pose, lower your left hand to the seat and slightly extend right arm across cheek and over to the left. You should feel a stretch through your right side. Repeat for your other side.



6) Seated Twist
From the extended arm pose, exhale as you cross your left arm to your right thigh or knee. Bring your right arm behind you, either to rest on the seat of your chair near your hip, or you may rest your arm on the back of the chair. Take several breaths in this twist before moving back into extended arms and repeat on the other side.



7) Open hip
Lifting right foot off ground, bend knee and gently help to externally rotate the leg and bring the right ankle to rest on the left thigh. Keep right foot flexed, you may stay here, or take the pose deeper by slowly folding forward over the legs, taking several breaths. Hugging knee to chest, slowly lower foot back to ground. Repeat on other side.



8) Wide leg open hip pose with twist
Taking feet wider than hip distance, turn toes and knees out so they face the same direction. Bringing either the left elbow to rest on the left thigh, or for a deeper stretch extend your left arm toward the ground inside the leg, use the leverage of the arm on the left leg to help rotate the torso toward the ceiling, extending opposite arm to ceiling, taking several breaths. Come back to seated and repeat on other side.



9) Chair Lunge
Turning to face your chair, place your left foot on the chair, being sure that your left knee is over your ankle, and your right leg hip, knee and ankle are in alignment. If balance is an issue, skip to pose #10 and do with both feet

planted on the ground, hip distance.



10) Standing side stretch
With left foot in chair lunge (see #9) clasp hands above head and stretch slightly to the left, or toward the leg up on the chair. If balance is an issue, place both feet on the floor, hip distance, and do the side stretch from here. Carefully place foot back on ground and repeat Chair Lunge and Standing Side stretch on other side.



11) Wide leg forward fold
Standing behind your chair, place your hands on the back of the chair and step feet back until

chest is parallel with the ground and arms are straight. Then take feet out wide, toes slightly turned toward each other. You can sink a little further toward your bottom, feeling a stretch in shoulders, back, and hamstrings. If you do not have a chair, you can do this pose at the wall with palms flat on wall.



12) Calf stretch
Holding on to the back of the chair, step your left foot back about 2 feet and bend your right knee, making sure your knee does not go past your ankle.

With feet hip distance, seal down through the back heel, adjusting the distance between the feet until the heel seals comfortably on the ground. Feel the stretch in the back calf for a couple of breaths, and then, when done, step back foot to meet front foot. Repeat on other side.



13) Seated meditation
Come seated on your chair or bench, feet hip distance and planted on the ground. With hands resting on the lap, close your eyes and think "I know that I am breathing in" and "I know that I am

breathing out" as you exhale for a minute or more. You may add the *Prithivi* mudra to this meditation. (see #14)



14) Prithivi Mudra (Earth Mudra)
Touching your fourth finger to the tip of your thumb, allow the other three fingers to extend long. Use this mudra

to ground and root you, to help create stability and self-assurance.



Jenni Brandon is an award-winning composer, conductor, and Registered Yoga Teacher (E-RYT 500, RPYT) through Yoga Alliance. Based in California, Jenni is passionate about supporting people in their yoga practice and started Bloom Yoga to offer guidance for their yoga journey. Bloom Yoga offers private and small group classes of yoga (both in person and online), corporate yoga, as well as prenatal and postnatal yoga. When she is not on her mat, Jenni is commissioned to write music for soloists, chamber ensembles, concertos, opera and orchestra. Her music appears on over two dozen albums, and has been awarded the Sorel Medallion, American Prize, Paderewski Cycle, Women Composers Festival of Hartford International

Composition Competition, and Bassoon Chamber Music Composition Competition, among others. She also presents workshops and talks on collaboration and the business of music, striving to create a supportive environment where collaboration leads to an exploration of ideas. Visit bloomyogapractice.com and jennibrandon.com for more information.