

Stretching

**Improving flexibility –
the ‘when, where, why, how and how not’**

Eileen M. Wanke

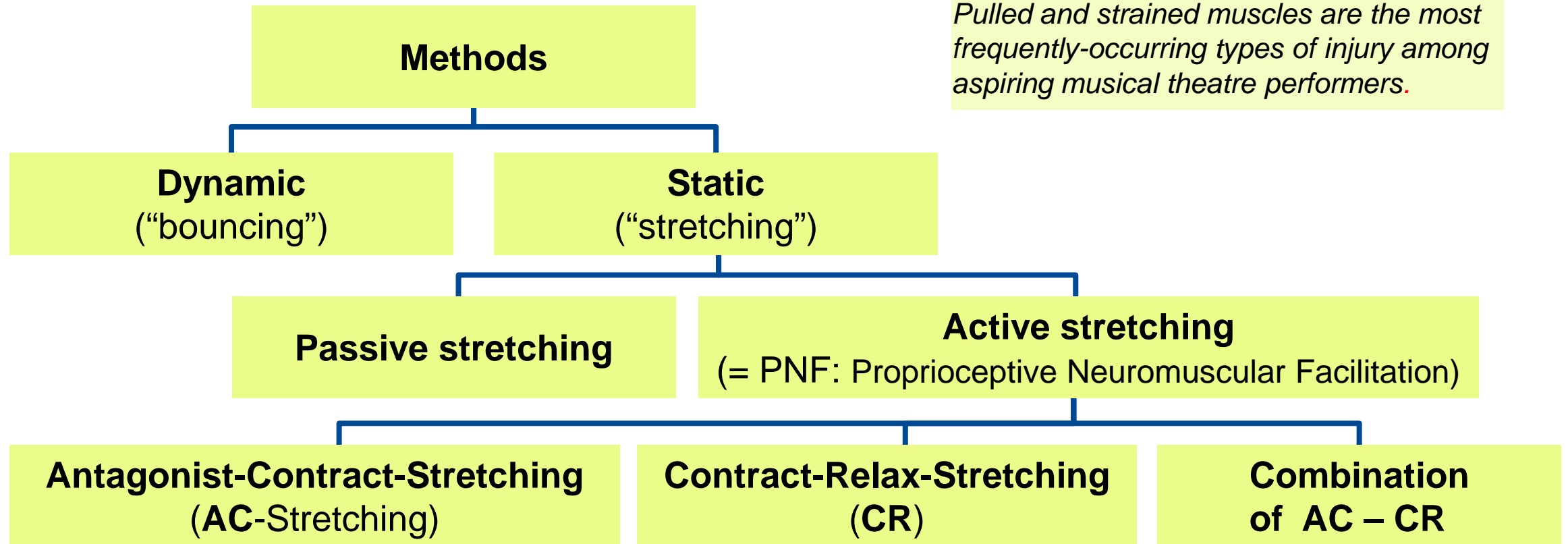


Attention!

- In dance, a basic distinction must be made as to whether stretching only serves to maintain an already established mobility or whether, (in the case of “hypermobile” dancers, for example) it possibly also means ritual or relaxation, or whether it's really about increasing range of motion.
- That makes a considerable difference to planning and execution.
- It is about increasing range of motion and associated important medical considerations.

Stretching methods

Pulled and strained muscles are the most frequently-occurring types of injury among aspiring musical theatre performers.



Musculature

Stretching

- = pulling apart the actin-myosin filaments
- simultaneously: elongating the elastic structures
- resistance increases with increasing stretching (muscle spindles/protection against injury).



Structure

- belly of the muscle
- muscle fibre
- muscle fibril
- actin
- myosin
- troponin
- tropomyosin
- titin

Intensive stretching desired – expected effects

- Is/are there:
- THE BEST stretching method?
- an Increase in range of motion?
- increased performance levels?
- an improvement of the ability to regenerate?
- injury prevention?
- prevention/relief of muscle soreness?

Intensive stretching desired – expected effects (1)

- There is THE best stretching method
Wrong
- There is an increased range of motion
Right, within individual limits
- There is an increase in performance
Wrong, intensive stretching reduces muscle strength
- There is an improvement of the ability to regenerate
Wrong, does not apply to intensive stretching after dance classes

Intensive stretching desired – expected effects (2)

- Injury prevention
Wrong, does not apply to intensive stretching immediately before or after dance classes
- Prevention/relief of muscle soreness
Wrong, does not apply to intensive stretching immediately before or after dance classes

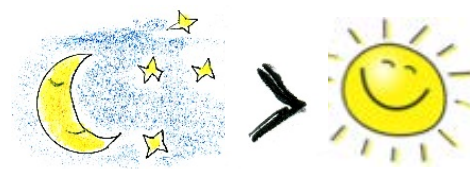
Influences on flexibility



Gender:
female better than male



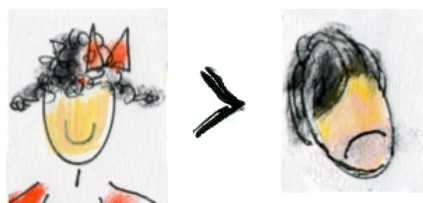
Temperature:
better warm (after warm-up)
than cold



Time of day:
better in the evening
than in the morning



Age:
younger better than older



Emotion:
relaxed better than stressed



Readiness to perform:
alert better than tired

Improvement of range of motion – tips (1)

- Carry out intensive stretching as an autonomous teaching unit (separate from dance training).
- Intensive static stretching at the end of a workout does not make sense. Instead it is better to do stretching about 1 hour after the end of a workout.
- If stretching exercises are included in a warm-up, swing exercises and submaximal stretching exercises should be performed in such a way that the holding period of 10 seconds is not exceeded (Eder 1991).
- Plan over the long term to achieve your training goal, since an improvement in mobility does not happen overnight.

Improvement of range of motion – tips (2)

- Cool-down: no maximal stretching.
- Achieving improved mobility costs more than maintaining it.
- Careful selection of a basic stretching program, with a genre-specific program as an extension.
- Additional stretching training units with planned improvement of movement range.
- Frequent stretching helps more (initial value reached after 1 hour)



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Under www.vbg.de/prevention-musical-dance you will find the following additional material:

- Methodological-didactical commentary
- Background information for teachers
- Work sheets
- Media collection