Teaching and the Role of Motivation

The most successful teachers of instrumental music are those whose musicianship and knowledge enable them to produce good performances of good music and whose understanding of student motivation encourages enthusiastic participation on the part of their students that leads to greater development of their musical skills. Marin Alsop, conductor of the Baltimore Symphony, and Tom O’Halloran, a successful instrumental music teacher in Carlisle, Massachusetts, agree that personal relationships are the basis for understanding teacher–student psychology and student motivation.

We feel it is important to discuss motivation in this text because the relationships and rapport established between student(s) and teacher will do much to distinguish successful from unsuccessful teaching outcomes. This chapter will outline the most recent thinking about motivation theory and provide a host of motivation suggestions that are used in the best rehearsal rooms and classrooms. Observing, over time, what motivates your students to improve will be an interesting route to enhancing your teaching success.

A successful teacher initially establishes respect by being knowledgeable and helpful, the two essential components in a positive personal relationship with students. What really matters is the effect you have on students and their musical competence. Related to respect is trust, a deeper personal relationship between student and teacher. Trust is so important that it exists at various levels in all organizations and strengthens over time through meaningful experiences. It is never quickly gained. Instrumental music is both a team and individual accomplishment: the greater the trust between teacher and students, the greater the potential for musical excellence. The students must have confidence in the teacher’s knowledge and skill in music. But trust extends beyond the ability to conduct, and the list of factors that contribute to trust is lengthy. William Tierney has written extensively about trust, suggesting that trust is not innate, that it depends on the competence of the trusted (the teacher), and that it can be neither coerced nor commanded. The trustworthy teacher selects appropriate and challenging music, provides help, makes fair decisions, follows the rules and regulations set forth in the handbook, acts on the student’s behalf, has integrity, has a sense of humor, knows what is important and what is trivial, and more! Instrumental music teachers often become confidants of students when students recognize that the hard work required to become competent performers pays off due to the teacher’s ability to meld the efforts of the many into a satisfying whole.

More is needed than a solid understanding of the instruments and how to validly assess students. Good teachers can inspire students, and effective teachers continue to hone this skill by improving their understanding of student psychology and the culture of the classroom and school. Some motivational strategies work well with the entire group while others work uniquely well with individual students. Teachers are successful when they understand that the individuals in any group may vary because of home life, talents, past experiences, kinds of parental support, and specific socioeconomic situations. Students with equal ability and experience, but differing in their motivation (more on this in a moment), will respond differently to failure and success in the classroom.

This initial emphasis on motivation doesn’t imply that an inspirational speaker will naturally be a successful music teacher, but it is an essential characteristic that is often not easily

acquired. A master instrumental teacher must also be a good musician, have skill at modeling, have a sense of humor, use good judgment, and be a self-starter. Are these qualities sufficient? No, the teacher must be broadly educated, be disposed to hard work, be patient and persistent, understand the purpose of schooling, work cooperatively, care about each and every student, be politically savvy, and more! The list of desirable traits is almost inexhaustible; at the height of behaviorism some teacher education institutions compiled lists of over two hundred “essential” teacher traits.

The study of motivation is a subdiscipline in educational psychology; from this large and important field we can only sketch some current ideas that help in understanding students. The astute teacher learns to apply ideas gained from a study of student psychology to the ever-varying teaching situation. The study of motivation is not limited to education; it is crucial to almost every field of work. American business studies the motivation of its workforce in an effort to understand the priority workers give to television, sports, vacation, and their families over their job and their advancement. The military uses motivation to attract enlistees and to help them tolerate endurance tasks for vague outcomes. And, of course, coaches of athletic teams depend on their motivational skills to inspire players to overcome those obstacles that interfere with winning. In the examples cited, the priorities of the teacher/leader/coach and those of the students/followers need to match—or at least be compatible. Psychologists tell us that personal incentives usually center on enjoyment, money, power, relationships, recognition, or personal excellence.

Instrumental music is about personal excellence, relationships between teachers and peers, and the enjoyment music brings. Students want to be with others and to be accepted. We all wish to possess high self-esteem and competence and to feel that others have confidence in us. Imparting knowledge about Stravinsky is a matter of teacher clarity and competence, but leading students to perform Stravinsky well is the domain of motivation.

The psychologist Csikszentmihalyi suggests that tasks in themselves can be motivating. Students can become so interested in pursuing a task (for example, learning their lesson or part) that they lose all track of time and, if interrupted, can’t wait to return to the task. Csikszentmihalyi calls this behavior “flow.” Teachers seek tasks that encourage flow and that relate to course objectives.

**PSYCHOLOGY**

Pintrich and Schunk (2002) state that professionals disagree over what motivation is, what affects it, how the process operates, its effects on learning and performance, and how it can be improved (p. 4). A central core of achievement motivation, the most common type of motivation in the literature of educational psychology, is competence motivation. That seems obvious enough. The instrumental teacher’s purpose should be to develop musical competence, which requires that the students acquire skills and understanding, and which is the primary focus of this text. Psychologists believe that the desire to become competent is an inherent psychological need of the human being; thus, the instrumental music teacher begins with a psychological advantage. Admittedly, achieving competence is more than establishing teacher–student rapport; parents, the community, private teachers, and the school administration all are involved. Differences in the community and school cultures shape the conduct of instruction, affecting the rehearsal situation, the priority of objectives, standards, and teaching strategies. Despite these many variables, the teacher with knowledge about student motivation and the elements of teacher–student rapport can be highly successful.

Group motivation may be more important in instrumental music than in math and language arts classes, and it may well be the most important ability a teacher can possess. Because group motivation is greatly influenced by each individual’s motivation, it is impossible to separate the two.

**Motivation Orientation Theory**

The study of individual motivation is centered on “goal orientation theory,” a way of understanding motivation that provides a framework for the students’ motivational orientations as well as for the learning environment and all three types of outcomes—cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Goal orientation theory also provides a framework for discussions on pedagogy, both in terms of direct instruction and constructivism. Thus, motivation can be discussed in terms of frequency, intensity, and duration, as teacher and student strive to attain

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goals, the most prominent being musical competence. Goals are critical because they organize, encourage control, and direct action. A goal to reduce one’s indebtedness requires organizing (setting priorities), controlling impulse buying, and taking action in general to spend less and save more. A student’s goal to have a “perfect” lesson requires him or her to organize a practice schedule, to control it by staying focused on the most difficult material, and to direct action into daily practicing. When the goal is attained, the student experiences a sense of competence and avoids all of the negatives that accompany a feeling of incompetence.

The prevalent motivational theories based on goal orientation theory and designed to explain competence–incompetence and achievement are termed self-theories and self-efficacy. Both these insightful theories help capture much of what occurs or should occur in the music teaching–learning situation.

**Self-Theories in Motivation**

The American population is about equally divided about what they believe motivates their desire to learn. About 40 percent of the population desires mastery of subject matter and naturally seeks challenging tasks despite the possibility of failure. These individuals sign up for extra instruction in their weak areas and receive more satisfaction in individually mastering a task than in attaining recognition for it. A second group of individuals (another 40 percent) focuses on performance goals. These individuals are motivated to perform better than others and to win at competitions; they avoid any necessary extra instruction and work. They cram for examinations, select easy tasks over challenging ones, and avoid situations where they won’t look good. Individuals in this second group are excellent at rationalizing failure. A third group, about 20 percent of the population, is related to the second group. Individuals in this group either have no desire to achieve or perform or they shift back and forth from one orientation to the other; their focus is on performance-avoidance goals, that is, avoiding any tasks that demonstrate low or inferior ability.

A clear example of self-theories affecting motivation can be found in beliefs about intelligence. Mastery students believe that IQ is changeable—that is, that they can improve—whereas performance students believe that IQ is fixed and that they must do the best they can with the intelligence they inherited. A similar, and perhaps more extreme, example in regard to musical aptitude is the belief that one either has or does not have a “talent” for music, and not having “talent” is often an excuse used by those who fail to achieve competence or drop out of instrumental music instruction. The implication of this theory for instrumental music teachers is that members of performing groups are or should be primarily mastery students who believe that competence in band and orchestra is due to effort more than ability. When mastery students “mess up,” they willingly accept and seek help; they practice, participate in sectionals, and solicit music that is even more challenging than they are expected to know—all to ensure success.

If performance students “mess up,” they attribute such failure to a lack of talent, to bad luck, to teacher prejudice, or to a host of other rationalizations. They will also attempt to find ways to avoid being put in the same situation a second time. An understanding of self-theories in motivation helps teachers to recognize and make use of the students’ reactions as fitting one of these three self-theories in motivation. Successful teaching encourages students to think like mastery students, minimizing “cramming” before a concert. If the teacher criticizes mastery students on a difficult task, the students think that the teacher believes they have the skill and competence to succeed. If the teacher praises mastery students on an easy task, these students will think the teacher believes they have minimal ability and competence. The insightful teacher needs to observe all students to see whether they attend carefully to instructions, identify tasks, mentally organize, rehearse, mark their music, check for understanding, and ask for guidance. Teacher comments on these observations reinforce mastery learning.

**Self-Efficacy, Including Self-Concept, Self-Esteem, and Self-Regulation**

**Self-Concept** Playing an instrument is an individual competency and the student’s perception of how well he or she can learn is important in self-motivation. Motivational psychologists discuss the desire to learn in terms of self-concept, the belief one has in one’s own general competence. Often self-concept is limited to whether individuals believe themselves to have talent and, in this respect, self-concept is directly related to performance goals.
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Self-Esteem While perceptions of competence are based on cognitive judgments of skill, knowledge, and abilities, self-esteem is the student’s emotional reaction to his or her own competence. Self-esteem (or self-worth) affects learning, as a student’s positive perception (attribution) of competence helps that student surmount difficulties and sustain motivation, thus contributing to mastery learning. The student’s perception of what constitutes competence will largely determine his or her level of aspiration for both individual and group goals.

Self-Regulation, Self-Control, or Self-Efficacy Albert Bandura (1997) promoted the concept of self-efficacy, which deemphasizes the importance of natural ability. He believed that students’ mental effort should focus on the fundamentals of learning and argued that learning is not primarily influenced by environment (socioeconomic situation and more) or inner impulses (talent), but rather by a student’s ability to reflect, be proactive, be organized, and be self-regulating. Thus, Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy is similar to a mastery orientation in self-theories. It determines how individuals feel, think, behave, and motivate themselves to master challenging tasks. Self-efficacy is negatively affected by stress. One’s experience, role models, peer group, and emotional state influence the approach one takes to any task in life. One is not born with a sense of self but learns that actions produce effects. This learning continues throughout life, with different priorities becoming important at different stages in life. As one ages, life requires different types of competencies that, in turn, require further development of self-efficacy.

Students often consciously decide on the extent to which they can be successful and whether the goal is worth the effort that will be required. Self-efficacy depends not only on motivation but also on whether one already has a reservoir of knowledge and skills that will make achieving the goal possible. When the goal seems attractive and attainable, the task itself becomes motivating and one experiences “flow.” Student violinists might hear Joshua Bell perform a Beethoven concerto and be inspired (self-efficacy) to apply their present knowledge and skills to learning that same concerto. The students’ organizing, reflecting, and regulating are aided when the teacher provides appropriate feedback and helps establish intermediate performance goals that are challenging yet feasible. The basic premise of self-regulation is that the students take control of their own learning; the terms self-efficacy, self-concept, self-regulation, and self-control, as used in the literature on motivation, all refer to the various ways in which students: (1) analyze the task, the environment, and the resources required (including the needed time for learning); (2) adopt appropriate strategies; (3) understand their own tolerance and persistence levels; and (4) judge the tasks to be important. These various mental appraisals should become habitual and should occur almost automatically.

Total self-learning in music is rare and, despite self-learning theories, teachers and critics retain a vital role in providing feedback, identifying errors and misconceptions, and originating new learning and new techniques. Music majors understand the importance of continued private instruction and the role of coaches, along with self-motivation. In leading students to musical achievement (competence), the teacher is guided by an understanding of motivation self-theories and the various elements of self-efficacy/self-learning (beliefs). Students are likely unaware of these psychological theories but are affected by these forces without their explicit knowledge. And, to repeat, musical competence is also shaped by the influence of students’ backgrounds, the environment, teachers, peers, parents, the community, and more.

THE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CLASSROOM

Developing pride in a musical organization is an important component in motivation. There need be nothing “second class” about school ensembles. Good music can and should be performed well at any age—having challenging musical standards (an aspect of motivation) is a critical component of being an effective teacher. It is simply not true, however, that good music in itself furnishes sufficient motivation for students. The teacher must understand the students and also his or her own role in helping students take responsibility for their own learning. This idea is not terribly surprising to a student in instrumental music. In other school subjects, ideas about motivation and self-efficacy have altered teachers’ perceptions of their responsibility and relationship to students. These motivational theories have been successfully applied to individuals; presently the school reform movement is advocating the use of these same principles throughout entire classes and schools. They are asking all faculty members to understand self-theories and to use them to establish challenging goals, focus on
the needs and backgrounds of individual students, and apply mastery learning and self-efficacy to entire classrooms.

The one-on-one relationships established in the rehearsal situation depend on the principles of motivation that are, in turn, dependent on students having certain musical knowledge and skills. Any music teaching, whether of an individual or a group, has as its aim the development of musical independence, which consists of knowledge, good practice habits, technical proficiency, and musical understanding. To accomplish this goal in a group situation, both individual and group goals are necessary, as are the means to attain these goals. The following pages contain suggestions that can aid students in achieving self-motivation and group motivation that will work in various situations. These suggestions are divided into the categories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

**Intrinsic Motivation**

The study of motivation consists of identifying why individuals invest personal resources in attaining a goal. The reasons are multiple and change over time but are usually categorized as being either intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is easier to understand; it consists of desire for a tangible reward—a prize, a compliment, first chair, or the avoidance of an unpleasant situation, and so forth. As individuals vary in motivational strengths and in the value they place on various rewards, individual observation is required to determine the motivational strength of external rewards for each student. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, derives from the experience—emotional, mental, or physical—that occurs within the individual. There is no apparent external reward to be gained from the effort expended.

**High-Quality Music**

The music itself should be the central motivating force for any musical learning, though it is rarely the only factor. To furnish genuine motivation, music must be of high quality, for poor music soon becomes tiresome and boring. Also, poor music is so easily available to students on CDs, iPods, or television that they do not need to participate in school music groups in order to find it. Teachers are tempted to make one of two mistakes regarding the quality of the music to be used. The first is to use popular commercial music on the assumption that it will interest students. The fallacy in this approach is that the basic goal of developing a discriminating love of good music can never be reached, even though students may acquire considerable performing skill. The second mistake is to set unrealistically high standards for the music used. To use high-quality music does not necessarily mean to use only classic literature music. The skillful teacher begins where the students are, selecting music that will appeal to them at their present level of understanding and gradually introducing them to more sophisticated music as they become ready for it. Understanding the meaning of the music is as important as cognitive and psychomotor readiness. Using a variety of types of music is more satisfying than a steady diet of one kind and students can learn to judge between varying qualities. As long as the music is well written, challenges the students with something new, has genuine musical worth, and is not trite or shallow—in short, as long as it broadens the students’ appreciation—it is good music and should be used.

**A Wide Musical Repertoire**

New music is the most obvious way to maintain interest. Even if the individual or the group is not able to perform frequently rehearsed music perfectly, there comes a time when a change is necessary. Nothing brings on boredom faster than working continually on the same few pieces or trudging wearily over the same exercise until all is perfected. If a long period of time is needed to learn a piece well, the selection is probably too difficult. The exercises should also be of varied levels of difficulty. This wide variety not only helps maintain interest but also can contribute to the sight-reading and interpretive abilities of the learners. This principle holds for both individual and group instruction. The inclusion of jazz and mariachi music along with instruction in improvisation are examples of methods for changing the pace of rehearsals. Limiting students’ musical experiences to a single method or style contributes to a loss of interest.

**A Clear and Attainable Goal**

All students should know why they are practicing and what their objective is. Similarly, teachers should make clear in rehearsals where they are leading the group. Like the proverbial carrot in front of the donkey, the goal should be visible; unlike the carrot, it should be attainable. Teachers must have long-range goals that shape their planning and programming, but short-range goals are also necessary.

For the greatest effectiveness, a goal must be specific and cooperatively established with the students. If the group is working toward a concert performance, members will put forth
more effort if the date has been set and the music selected. When time is given to drills, sight-
reading, listening, or factual or technical learning, students will respond more readily if they
know the purpose of the activity and its priority in the time available. The goal should be mod-
eled for students to help them understand both how it should be accomplished and what the
desired performance level is. It is especially important that skills be correctly modeled, as stu-
dents are inclined to decide based on their own level of mastery. With the clarification of
these goals and skills, individual and group errors can be used as an opportunity for learning.

**Technical Drills Using Real Music** Scales, studies, and exercises should anticipate the
difficult spots in the music being learned. Until students encounter a particular technical
problem in a piece of music, they will see little reason for practicing exercises designed to give
them that facility. Treat technical studies like vitamins that are to be taken as needed but
never as the main ingredient of the diet. As with all rules, the exceptions are many—for exam-
ple, producing long tones and extending students’ range should be daily habits, as are warm-
ing up and warming down.

This is not to suggest that technical studies be omitted—far from it. Because technical
drills focus on particular kinds of learning, they can help students become technically profi-
cient much more rapidly than they would if only musical pieces were practiced. Artists con-
tinue to practice exercises in the classic texts for their instrument. Drill needs to be meaningful
and relevant, but if omitted altogether, the individual and the group will suffer.

**Musicianship Skills and Factual Knowledge** Factual knowledge about music and the
ability to perform skills of musicianship, such as transposing, reading several clefs, and impro-
vising, are both goals of the music program and real motivators. Like good music, skill and
knowledge have intrinsic value and furnish valid goals for motivation. Students like to know,
for instance, the problems that double-reed players have with reeds—how difficult they are to
make, how scarce good cane is, and how much adjusting is necessary. They can be interested
and inspired by details about composers and about the music—how a fugue is put together,
the background for a Wagner composition, or the type of social system in which Haydn lived
and worked. The more students know and the more they can do in any area, the more they
are likely to retain a lively, active interest in it. Encourage students to enroll in Advanced
Placement (AP) music theory. Teaching appropriate concepts from AP theory to the entire
ensemble is valuable, as all students understand the relevance of AP courses.

**A Tradition of Excellence** Music programs with a reputation for quality provide a mo-
momentum that motivates students to practice and minimizes discipline problems. When there
is an established standard to attain, students usually accept the challenge. High school students
are idealistic and take pride in doing things well. They can derive satisfaction from meeting
high standards in both personal and group achievement; they develop loyalties toward indi-
viduals and organizations that expect much of them and enjoy living up to those expectations.
Students taking private lessons seek out demanding teachers, knowing that their effort will be
rewarded with higher skills and a more successful performance.

A tradition of excellence is not established overnight. If a teacher moves into a school
without such a tradition, he or she must build it by starting with the younger students. Older
players unaccustomed to high standards will resist drastic reforms and may retain their
habits of sloppy practice or halfhearted participation. Sometimes such students respond to
the challenge from younger players who begin to surpass them and occupy first-chair posi-
tions. Sometimes the best way of dealing with these students is to be patient and wait for
them to graduate.

**Independent Musical Activities** Try to arrange schedules and assignments to make it
possible for students to work together toward a common goal. Practicing alone can be boring
and take considerable self-discipline, whereas working on parts with other students is much
more enjoyable, especially for students who play such nonmelody instruments as tubas and
horns. Two or three students practicing together, all on the same part or each on a different
part, can increase the pleasure of the participants as well as help develop musicianship.

Supply duets, trios, and other kinds of ensemble music to interested students. Whether
the group remains together for a long period or simply reads through the music a few times,
such activity should be encouraged. A good library of ensemble music representing a variety
of instrumental combinations and levels of difficulty is essential in a good instrumental
program.
Students should be encouraged to study piano, guitar, or a second instrument because variety makes music more fun and because of the valuable insights obtained by viewing the same musical problems through a different lens.

**Small Ensembles**  The small chamber group presents the greatest musical challenge, the best training, the most individual responsibility, and the highest musical pleasure of any activity. Special problems involved in establishing small ensembles include scheduling, grouping students of similar levels of ability, and helping the groups become independent of teacher supervision. To create an ensemble of students whose levels of ability are comparable is perhaps possible only in a large school. In smaller schools the group will usually be uneven, and the more advanced students will have to wait for or even help the less advanced. This situation can have learning advantages, if it is properly handled to avoid resentment or antagonism. The learning derived from small ensemble work is likely to be more valuable if the teacher does not have to regularly supervise rehearsal. It is important to promote an atmosphere in which independent rehearsal is desirable and expected. It is also an opportunity for students to develop leadership. With musical independence, students may seek ensemble experiences in the community, with students in neighboring schools, or with friends who are not enrolled in school music. It is the decision of the individual teacher whether small ensembles perform in public, go to festivals and contests, or play only for their own pleasure. Performances for appropriate community groups, however, increase motivation and also strengthen public relations.

**Music for Supporting Players**  The second-chair viola player and the third snare drum are likely to lead humdrum existences musically. When possible, the teacher should use music that gives solo passages to the seldom heard supporting players. Even a short solo passage may offer incentive for additional practice. Such music may be short on artistic value but it is long on psychological value. Every player deserves the opportunity to be heard.

**Listening Experiences**  Players should not play all of the time. They should occasionally listen. Listening should include both live and recorded performances, amateur as well as professional. Older, more advanced players may perform or demonstrate for younger players. Students are always interested in performances by groups at their own age level, whether these are semiprofessional or simply outstanding public school organizations. Some students will be more encouraged by virtuoso displays and master performances. Hearing an occasional poor performance may serve as an opportunity for learning to make intelligent criticism. Attendance at a professional concert, the appearance of a teaching-artist in the school, informal presentations by skillful adult members of the community, and exchange concerts with other schools are all great learning experiences. Miles Davis is reported to have recorded *My Funny Valentine* fourteen times with no two performances alike. Analyzing some of these performances sharpens the ear and the brain and is more like play than work. Teachers can instruct students to download recordings onto their iPods or ask students to purchase a single tune from iTunes, for example, so they can hear a recording of a song they may be preparing for a concert. In listening experiences, the ability to understand and hear musical differences in several recordings commands respect from most students.

**Good Equipment and Facilities**  Much has already been said on this point. Good-quality tools help to produce good results. Poor-quality instruments affect both the group and the individual: inferior instruments handicap the students and may embarrass them as well. The teacher should see that both school-owned and student-owned instruments are of the best quality possible. Lack of practice areas or a good rehearsal room can also be a handicap. Players of large instruments such as the tuba, string bass, or drums in particular need an in-school practice room, which may also be a great convenience to other students whose schedules permit practice time during the school day.

Regardless of the physical facilities in which teacher and students work and learn, a room that is efficiently arranged, neat, and ready for work provides a certain motivation. A room in disarray indicates a laxness and lack of concern.

**Favorable Attitudes**  Students will accomplish little without the proper attitude. Attitudes are contagious—especially among teenagers—and so the attitude of a few may set the pattern for the group. The teacher needs to communicate to the students a sense of responsibility for their own individual parts in the organization, together with a pride in the organization and a desire to work for it. Students need to feel that their practicing is important, not only for their own improvement but also for the improvement of the group as a whole. The teacher can
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instill a sense of responsibility by taking notice of those students who are responsible, commending sections that have improved, pointing out areas that are weak, and helping students who need extra practice find the time and place to do so. The use of section leaders is motivating both for the leader and the others in the group. Pride in the organization can be encouraged by stressing honestly the achievements of the group, planning attractive activities, and reporting any commendations that come from the community, the student body, or school officials.

Esprit de Corps In the beginning it may be necessary for the teacher to be the main source of inspiration. A group spirit of unity and a desire to belong and be accepted will lead a student to adopt the ideals of the group. If the group is included in appropriate decision making, a spirit of pride and responsibility will be fostered that will spread to new members coming into the group. Because high school students are not mature adults, group spirit can be strongly influenced by such extrinsic values as uniforms, contests, social affairs, and good publicity, as well as by successful performances.

Student Leaders Esprit de corps can be enhanced through student leaders. In addition, some of the less talented students can find recognition and satisfaction in performing organizational tasks or becoming student officers. Student government not only aids in developing group morale but also in lessening the load for the director and providing a chain of command through which the teacher may implement needed regulations. Some leadership positions are best filled by popular election, whereas other leaders should be appointed by the director.

Respect for Students and Student Ideas Students need to see that their ideas contribute to the selection of music, procedures, organizational rules, and even the amount of practice expected of every member. Even though it must be clear that the director makes the final decision in all matters, he or she must be a good listener. If the atmosphere encourages students to believe that they and the group can improve, students will establish high standards and expectations for themselves, often exceeding those of the director. Standards and rules must be enforced in such a way that they are perceived as being fair to all involved.

A Sensible Schedule The schedule should make it possible for students to practice and to attend all rehearsals. Performance goals should be reasonable so that the students are not discouraged. Take care not to exploit talented students. Often they are capable in many areas, and many teachers wish them to participate in those areas of interest. Because of this, such students can become accustomed to doing rapid, superficial work and forget the importance of sustained effort. Persistence is one of the important transferable outcomes of a valid instrumental music program. The teacher must be willing to think of the students' welfare first by helping them acknowledge their limits and budget their time wisely.

The Motivational Force of the Teacher The teacher is the decisive element in providing inspiration, motivation, and learning. Teachers should model the best ethical behavior in their dealings with students, the administration, and the community. Their level of musicianship, technical facility as performers, pedagogical competence, command of musical knowledge, leadership, and depth and breadth as human beings can inspire students to imitate and emulate. Maintaining a sense of humor throughout the day is always important to morale. Teachers of instrumental music ideally provide the inspiration that comes from being a fine musician and a fine teacher.

In addition to being timely, motivational goals and activities must not be too specific. Teachers should apply the “Goldilocks” principle and pursue programs that are “just right” with goals that are understandable, relevant, meaningful, and attainable.

The foregoing suggestions have a long-range perspective and are based primarily on a belief in the motivating force of good music and in the importance of psychology in working with students. These suggestions should be the basis of the teacher’s planning and decision making. The next section explores the motivational power of temporary or short-term goals. Although short-term goals alone would never be adequate to provide a healthy atmosphere or a firm basis for musical learning, they can serve to create temporary inspiration and day-to-day interest. These goals provide extrinsic rather than intrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic Motivation Effective Praise Most students will respond to a deserved compliment from a teacher whom they respect, and will work to earn one. Praise can be directed at the entire group as
long as it is specific or focused on one instrumental section or one individual. The praise must be honest and must not be so frequent as to become meaningless. Praise remarks must be varied, straightforward, presented in a declarative manner, and should recognize both the effort and talent of all students. Praise for individuals and small groups also can be effectively shown by nonverbal gestures.

Praise and approval can come from sources other than the teacher. The commendation of the administration and the student body is important and a legitimate goal for which to work. One excellent way for a music group to receive deserved recognition is through publicizing its activities. Newspaper, television, and radio publicity concerning group activities fosters both school and public awareness and encourages pride in the organization.

Criticism and Disapproval Being inspirational should not imply that the teacher always hands out compliments. The teacher should use praise liberally when it is merited but be firm when the situation demands it. It is fairly well established that punishment as well as reward is effective in learning. Many successful teachers create a lasting enthusiasm for music while at the same time arousing a certain amount of apprehension at the weekly lesson or daily rehearsal. When students can relax without fear of criticism regardless of what they do, the atmosphere no longer offers that creative tension in which learning takes place. However, as a general rule, sarcasm, ridicule, and other unfair practices have no place in good teaching, and criticism and disapproval should not be couched in these terms. Students do, however, respect firmness and want to be challenged to meet high standards. Respect for the teacher may often be based on the number of mistakes the teacher identifies and the helpfulness of the suggested corrections. When offering criticism, teachers need to know whether performance failure is due to lack of ability or lack of effort. Mild punishment works wonders when the problem is a lack of effort; however, when the untalented student is doing everything he or she can, negative criticism leads to discouragement.

Parents’ Support Enlist parents’ support but never allow home practice to be used as a form of punishment for students. Many directors send a periodic progress report to the parents in order to maintain a close relationship between the music program and the home. Electronic newsletters to parents and online expectations should be followed up, on occasion, by printed material. Emphasis on a regular time for practice may serve as a motivator for students. If the teacher feels that practice is important enough to be done at a particular time each day, with few exceptions, an aura of significance develops around the practice hour and its value is enhanced.

Grading Systems Many systems of grading are used in music programs, including the following.

1. Practice charts. Students are required to practice a specified amount each day. Those who exceed the minimum get higher grades. The drawback to this approach is that it rewards effort rather than results.
2. Progress charts. Students are graded for completing specified objectives. Such a chart has the advantage of establishing definite goals and of rewarding actual attainment. It gives the teacher an impartial and objective vehicle by which to determine grades and places music on the same plane with the more academic subjects.
3. Point systems. Like progress charts, the point systems rewards achievement. Point systems may be helpful in determining annual awards to members of the organization. Some teachers object to the clerical effort involved in keeping an accurate record of earned points for each student, but student help and computer programs can be successfully used in keeping records.

There should be no surprises in the use of any grading systems. One of the important values of a systematic grading procedure is that students can examine their progress and see the results. By seeing the graphic illustration of their progress for the year and the relationship between work and achievement, students can make personal evaluations of their progress.

Competitive Seating Plans With a competitive seating plan, the better players are encouraged to work for the honor of retaining first-chair positions, while others strive to catch up. For this plan to be effective, the teacher needs to schedule tryouts at regular intervals. The importance of the first-chair position for every part should be stressed (e.g., first chair, third clarinet) not simply the solo chairs. Students in these “chairs” are responsible musically, academically, and socially for the members of their section. Whether tryouts are announced ahead of time or
scheduled without notice is the teacher’s decision. Some teachers feel that announced tryouts stimulate more energetic practicing, whereas others have discovered that their students practice more consistently when they have to be ready for unannounced tryouts.

**Challenge Systems** Students in the lower ranks may aspire to the higher chairs through testing the occupant in a fair match. The director should make the challenge system as democratic and fair as possible, probably by including students on the judging committee and by having a clear procedure that will also serve to produce added practice. In order not to spend too much class time on challenging, it is better to have a set time or schedule in which challenges may take place.

**Tryouts for Chair Positions or Ensemble Membership** As in other subjects, the music teacher should make specific assignments and then test all students on their preparation of the assignments. Such testing may take place at rehearsals, sectional practices, or at lessons, but regardless of the method, students should be expected to do the work assigned and to be graded accordingly. Whether such tryouts affect seating is up to the teacher. All classes and ensembles, except the beginning classes, must have enforced standards for membership that always include performance competence.

Some teachers succeed in holding tryouts during regular rehearsals by calling on individuals to play the assignments in front of the group. The director should not force unwilling students to submit to such a practice if it seems too harsh. Negative criticisms are usually best given in private. Once the routine is established, however, it may encourage students to be well prepared in order to avoid making a poor showing before their peers or a teacher they respect.

**Competition on Technical Proficiency** Students can derive a great deal of fun and inspiration from an occasional contest for sheer technical proficiency—players compete to see who can play the greatest number of scales correctly, play the fastest, hold notes the longest, and so forth. Competitions for producing the highest note are seldom advisable but students seem to enjoy this task more than seeing who can hold a note the longest. Such contests are not a serious part of any assessment but can be used to stimulate interest and challenge students to greater technical mastery.

**The Value of Written Tests** Used infrequently, tests of musical learning may result in extra effort from students. Such tests may focus on knowledge of music fundamentals: terms, keys, scales, and tuning. Although these tests give no indication of the student’s playing ability, they help to emphasize the importance of basic musical knowledge. Written tests take up valuable time, but even in performance groups an occasional written test can provide motivation for learning and give the teacher some valuable insights into areas needing improvement.

**Public Performance Evaluations** Public performance evaluation, properly handled, can contribute both to the level of motivation and to musical understanding. For example, an outside critic may be employed during the regular rehearsal period to listen to individuals and sections, to comment to the group on its performance, and to offer suggestions for improvement. Or students may perform their parts for the entire ensemble, analyze their own strengths and weaknesses, and suggest how they will improve their parts by tomorrow or by next week. Such an activity can be great fun, constitute public testimony of intent, and act intrinsically and extrinsically as a motivator for musical excellence. In addition, members may comment on their section’s progress toward the overall goal and what they need to do to improve. The more specific the suggestions, the more helpful this activity will be. (This activity is similar to the teaching and motivating devices developed by Project Zero in the Pittsburgh public schools.) Comments like “take your parts home and practice” are not specific enough to be meaningful. Comments about how the intelligent use of warmups and home drills can improve the intonation, balance, or musical line can bring results, if followed.

**Membership Standards for All Groups** Although there must be flexibility in selecting members for each group in order to achieve instrumental balance, students should have an accurate idea of what is required for membership in the group. A clear set of standards is one way to encourage practice and achievement. In addition, standards can help dispel any feeling that the teacher is partial or unfair. Published rules must be followed; the fewer exceptions made, the more important these rules will become in the eyes of all members. Moreover, there is a natural desire to be a member of a group that has an aspect of selectivity. The Marine Corps and Phi Beta Kappa would lose their appeal if open to all comers. Musical organizations should not be exclusive, but membership should imply that certain standards have
been met and maintained and that each member has attained a certain level of achievement. If a student must be dropped from the group for failure, any failure(s) must be well documented and changes made with the input of all stakeholders, including parents, administrators, and the student.

**Awards** Awards may take the form of letters, medals, sweaters, jackets, service stripes, or certificates. An award has no intrinsic value of its own and is important only as a means of promoting greater musical growth. Even so, students often prize an award highly, taking pride in earning it and pleasure in others' recognition of it. As with membership standards, a definite system for giving awards should be established and well known. Students are concerned about the "fairness" of any recognition or motivational device. If the point system or competitive chairs are an accepted practice, the awards system should be related to these and to other administrative practices. To be most effective, awards should be presented in a public ceremony.

**Scholarships** The scholarship should relate to the music program and its objective—for instance, a scholarship to an outstanding summer music camp or for private lessons. This kind of award may be used to sustain the interest of the best students in the organization. Funds for scholarships may be secured through money-raising projects by the group itself or by parents' groups. They may also come from one or more civic groups or from private individuals. The scholarship(s) should be publicized throughout the year and be awarded at the close of the school year to enhance the importance of instrumental music.

**Section Rehearsals** Section rehearsals help the students with specific difficulties and provide additional incentive for outside practice. When the whole group always rehearses together, students may not hear their mistakes or realize how important it is that they each perform their parts correctly. If scheduling makes extra section rehearsals impractical, the director should consider using some of the regularly scheduled large-group rehearsal time for concentrated work with various sections. It is easier for students and teacher to identify errors in smaller groups. When feasible, several sections might be scheduled at the same time with responsible students in charge.

**Summer Music Camps** The inspiration of a music camp comes from excellent teachers, the outstanding ability of other students, and a high level of performance. The director should encourage any student who can attend a summer music camp to do so. A local summer camp can often be organized with successful results. The staff might differ from the regular school staff and may consist of college music students, teachers with free time, or guest conductors from college campuses or neighboring school systems. If an actual camp site is available, the experience is enhanced, but even without an outdoor atmosphere the local music camp can be worthwhile.

**New Instruments** The teacher should encourage students to own the best instruments they can afford. When a student obtains a new instrument, the teacher should make the acquisition known to the group and draw attention to the student's new possession.

**CDs, MP3s, Smart Music, DVDs, and Videotapes** The use of recordings allows students to hear and see their efforts and points their shortcomings as well as achievements. Problems of intonation, wrong notes, and poor attacks and releases often show up more vividly when recorded than in actual rehearsal. Having recordings allows for sectional critiques and external evaluators who perform similar tasks as judges at a music festival. An impending recording session furnishes another incentive for additional work and is in this sense much like a live performance.

**Social Activities** Special dances, banquets, and trips foster a spirit of unity and help maintain interest. They also provide a change from the routine of daily rehearsals, concerts, and sports events. In addition, social activities help the director become acquainted with students in a different setting.

**ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR MOTIVATING STUDENTS**

In addition to the motivational devices just described, other possibilities that require extra resources in the way of funds or time allotment are also highly successful. High schools should consider commissioning works and inviting the composer to attend and conduct the premier performance of the work. Frank Battisti, following the lead of the Eastman Wind Ensemble, initiated this idea more than fifty years ago with the Ithaca, New York, high school band, and
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it has been adopted by many fine ensembles that have the resources. The thrill of playing a number at its first public performance with the composer in attendance and/or conducting is a most memorable event.

State and local arts councils will support an artist-in-residence program in your school. Select the instrument you wish to promote, write a proposal, and submit it to the arts council. Many superb performers graduating in applied music from American universities will willingly teach and perform in public schools. They are inspirational for both strong and weak performers.

Form a jazz band, a brass band, a drum and bugle corps, a mariachi ensemble, a recorder quartet, or other attractive ensemble. Encourage students who play in garage bands on piano, guitar, and other instruments to find their place in the orchestra or wind band as well. These students are enthusiastic, often have special musical skills, and can prove to be motivational for other students.

Scheduled Saturday morning sessions at which older students can assist younger students and the entire music faculty is in attendance have advantages for beyond the extra rehearsal. Older students gain a feeling of accomplishment; younger students are inspired by the performance abilities of the high school students. All participants gain an appreciation for the size and diversity of the school system’s instrumental music program. Performances by the high school ensemble for the grade schools and middle schools can inspire younger students to begin instrumental music study. Making a CD or DVD, performing on the local television channel, and furnishing pictures and stories to the yearbook and school newspaper are all opportunities for public recognition in which students can take pride.

Interesting computer programs that can judge the accuracy of pitch and rhythm or serve as an accompaniment for soloists or for practicing continue to be a motivational tool. Take the opportunity to incorporate music theory and music history into your programs and relate instrumental music participation to experiences students might have outside school.

PERFORMANCE

Theoretically, the music program does not exist for the sake of performance. In practice, however, most of the efforts of both teachers and students focus on performance as the conscious or unconscious goal; the opportunity to perform naturally represents the greatest single motivating factor. Music is an aural art and the greatest satisfaction often comes when performers feel their music has reached a listening ear. Therefore, the instrumental music teacher should provide occasions for a variety of performances, knowing that the opportunity to perform will stimulate more conscientious and concentrated practice, prompt interest in concomitant musical learning, provide an outlet and a reward for students, and serve as a demonstration of the accomplishments of the music program. The danger is that this last consideration will take on undue importance and that performance will become the goal of the program rather than a vehicle for greater learning and musical understanding. In considering performance and motivation, one should remember that performance is encouraged primarily because of its motivational power, not the reverse. Students need to be challenged to do their best and to attain what is possible, for them and for the group; with most groups that means a reasonably active performing schedule with music that can be performed well.

Performance can take several forms. Contests and festivals are a common and valuable form of public performance. In some instances, these occasions are the only times groups play good music. It is unfortunate that instrumental music organizations have had to publish lists of “acceptable” music, and even these lists have been corrupted. The challenge to compete successfully is so strong that the music for contests and festivals is learned more thoroughly and played more enthusiastically than music for any other occasion. If the pressure to succeed in the competition is too great, however, the psychological negatives can outweigh the pluses. It is the teacher’s responsibility to see that the efforts of the group are focused on excellence for its own sake and for the sake of the music, not for that of winning the highest rating.

Concerts are just as important and nearly as intense as contests and festivals. Here again, the music should be carefully chosen for its value and played as well as possible. The music chosen should be well within the ability of the group, so that a satisfactory performance can be achieved without an unreasonable amount of preparation.

Exchange concerts have all the advantages of regular concerts with the additional value of competition—the students’ desire to excel in comparison with another group, school, or
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The teacher should not make a competition a major consideration and should be careful to emphasize good and bad features of both groups so that the students profit from their own playing and also from hearing the exchange group. Any assignment to listen to another ensemble must be carefully prepared; critical listening has to be learned and is especially difficult in the excitement of exchange concerts.

Special performing events are another form of motivation. Bringing in a guest conductor or guest artist to work with the group, hearing an artist perform, attending a clinic, or playing in select groups such as all-state or all-city organizations, youth orchestras, and wind bands, can result in great inspiration for young players. Membership in all-state ensembles or the biannual National Youth Orchestra is a major accomplishment and should be publicized.

Tours, though often viewed with dismay by teacher and administrator alike, have high appeal for students. Although performing tours may not be worth the agony involved, great value can be gained from them. The kind of “professionalism” gained from performing well day after day is a fine experience for students. However, the teacher must decide whether the expenditure of time and effort for value received is justified.

The value of solo, small-group, and large-group performances before civic organizations has been noted. However, here is a word of warning: When one or two highly touted groups such as the jazz band or string quartet are sent out exclusively, these groups tend to become exploited, the learning value diminishes for them, and other deserving students do not get the opportunity to perform.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored sound educational principles translated into terms and situations applicable to the instrumental music program. Sound motivation, however, is not used simply to improve the music program. Motivation is essential. Motivation is the *sine qua non* for learning, musical or any other kind. The teacher cannot take or leave it as desired, for if there is no motivation there will be no learning, and where there is thoughtless or misguided motivation there may be negative learning. Motivation comes from within, but the teacher can provide day-to-day situations that are as desirable as possible so that the student’s interest grows and he or she becomes motivated to develop in those areas that are the teacher’s goals and student’s goals. Basically, individuals are motivated by their own needs. The psychological and physical conditions that hold promise of answering these needs can stimulate students to respond. Hetland, Winner, Veeneman, and Sheridan (2007) have recently completed a study of the outcomes of exemplary visual arts instruction and they identified eight habits of mind: developing the craft, engaging and persisting, envisioning, expressing, observing, reflecting, stretching, and exploring and understanding, each of which has surfaced in our discussion of motivation and self-learning.

Motivation, however sound, is not in itself educational. Even the best motivation may not lead to learning. In music, we often forget that not all experience is educative, just as not all experience is motivating. To be educative, experience must be purposeful. Psychological studies have indicated that people attending lectures or reading material gain widely differing information from what they read or hear, depending on what they expect to gain. When purposes differ, the resultant learning also differs. To apply this to music is not difficult; merely practicing or reading through music or drilling perfunctorily on exercises is not educative. Thus, with respect to performance, good music must be used and performed with the best musical insights of the teacher. Instrumental teachers have been accused of continuing to teach primarily in the “drill” fashion, with often poor results. Although drill can be insightful when there is a musical purpose, excellent and meaningful teaching is the responsibility of the teacher. The secret lies, as Alsop and O’Halloran suggest, in the interpersonal relations that are at the heart of motivation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In November 2007, *The Christian Science Monitor* reported on the Stephen-Argyle (Minnesota) High School football team having won sixty-seven consecutive games. The team’s playbook, however, had no diagrams of offensive formations and defensive counters. Instead it had sixteen pages of goals, rules, expectations, guidelines, nutritional tips, and inspirational quotations from a wide variety of philosophers, such as “First say to yourself what you would be. Then do what you have to do.” How is this coach using motivation? What applications, if any, are there


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2. Your first-chair violinist is clearly the best musician in the ensemble but does not share equally in the responsibilities you expect of all members. This situation is affecting group morale. What strategies, if any, would you employ to change the attitude of either the first-chair violinist or the members of the ensemble?

3. What behaviors have you noticed among your peers that indicate they are performance or mastery oriented? Have these behaviors led to the outcomes that you might have expected? How?

4. How important is musical talent in musical competency? Assuming musical talent is normally distributed, how should a teacher use his or her perception of student talent in positive and negative comments (rewards and negative criticisms)?

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of on-the-spot tryouts for chair positions and group membership? Take a position and debate this issue with a classmate and then switch sides.

WEB SITES

Goal Setting
Center for Educator Development in the Fine Arts

www.teachingmoments.com
http://finearts.esc20.net/music_strategies/mus_strat_moti.html