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Intrusmental Pedagogy
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Kohut: Ch. 6

The Psychology of Teaching

Motivation is clearly the life or death of a student's success in the studio. Those who are easily motivated welcome challenges, are more receptive to teacher suggestions and comments, and show a general trajectory of progress in the music studio. There are many levels and layers to motivation. As a teacher, we can ask: what level and kind of motivation does this student need? For new students, and especially beginners, the teacher should focus on fostering motivation through creating a sense of enjoyment and keeping the student actively engaged in and out of the lesson. In the case of more advanced students, the teacher can focus on motivation as it relates to self-efficacy and expectations from the teacher and student.

Kohut and Madsen both mention special cases in student motivation. These special cases include students who, despite routine motivational efforts, still do not seem to be motivated. In these cases I think it is particularly important for the teacher to have some knowledge of motivational studies. This knowledge can help the teacher craft a unique solution to a student's motivational situation.

I had a high school age student who had been with me for four years prior to COVID. The student contracted COVID and experienced some long term symptoms. Just prior to their infection, the parent shared with me the student's declining interest to practice. I started to incorporate extra communication in lessons. Communication included asking about practice and other relevant life-activities. All conversations were trying to gauge a general sense of motivation from the student. The parent, student, and I communicated for another two months on the student's practice progress and topics of motivation and engagement. There was little progress, and then there was none. Eventually, we had a meeting where I had to be overly firm and ask the student if they wanted to play the viola at all. In the end, the student lacked any intrinsic

motivation. After reading this week's material, I am curious how difficult it might be to try to revive enjoyment. I believe that enjoyment must be present for one to truly dedicate themselves to progress in the music studio. The enjoyment does not have to be experienced every second or even every day, but it must be there. There must be something in the lesson or in practice that is "fun" for the student, no matter the level.

Competition can be an important motivator when it is used in healthy doses in the music studio. Whether it is a concerto competition or competition with oneself, competition provides a platform for comparison. There was always a great quote outside my teachers door: "The only musician you should compare yourself to is the one you were yesterday". This is the type of competition is that is most important in the music studio.

Teachers should be careful to recognize what motivates and what discourages their students. If a student is extremely motivated by a Primrose competition title, then let that drive them to practice.

Madsen stated in their article that competition can narrow self-efficacy. I agree that competitions whose outcomes are winning or not winning can contribute to lack of perspectives in evaluation. Students can miss what made them successful or not because they are simply focused on yes or no.

Achieving high performance standards in the music studio requires a balance between giving students achievable goals and appropriate motivations to meet those goals. Achievable goals are directly related to a students skill level. A teacher may change their standards over time, in fact, one hopes that a teacher can raise studio standards over time.

If an advanced viola student is given the goal of playing a transcribed violin work, this could be an achievable goal and healthy motivator. If the same goal is given with the addition of a short timeline for performance, this can turn into an unhealthy motivator for the student.

[in regards to motivation...]Like who wants to spend hours a day in a practice room by themselves making sounds they aren't good at or aren't easy for them? Especially poor young children on strings! So squeaky! So scratchy! Careful in our strategies and teaching to keep the enjoyment alive!!

There are some clear traits of both **intense and laid-back teaching** that can be negative. An undesirable intense teacher can be described as highly energetic, overly-involved, and emotionally reactive. A undesired laid-back teacher might be too understanding, lack emotional responses, and be disengaged during lessons. All of these teaching characteristics are unproductive towards motivating and engaging the music student music. Traits can be modified and be combined from either extremes to create a balanced teaching personality.

Showing intense emotions and gestures can move the student to experience a desired emotion themselves. When teachers use intensity in the music studio, it should be in a way that conveys the goals of the music. An example of using intense gestures would be clapping or dancing to show pulse. Some examples of showing intense emotion are talking excitedly in high pitched voices or bellowing singing to convey musical character. There is also some value in being theatrical, or somewhat goofy in front of students. In many cases, this goofiness relaxes the student.

Teaching traits that signal a relaxed environment can be just as useful in the studio. Many music students do not have outward personalities and may be overwhelmed by an intense teaching personality. It can be quite useful and professional in the music studio and in performance to not show too much emotion or personal detail. This can help keep lesson time focused on the student and avoid bringing any unnecessary or distracting thoughts into the music lesson.