

Motivation and enjoyment in the making of music



Music educator Kristin Thielemann presents building blocks on goals, self-motivation, networking, mindset, routine, and dexterity.

When we listen to music or actively make music ourselves, we often feel happiness. Certain chord combinations, melody lines or even the use of a certain instrument can result in goose bumps, moving us to tears, or even making us feel completely euphoric. In short: music motivates us and brings us joy. But why is this so, and how can we help our students when they lose their motivation and their joy of making music? Let us search for inspiration!

When our own motivation vanishes, or seems to elude our students or children, we often find ourselves in search of practical ideas to reignite these fires!

In 2019 the publisher Music Schott released my motivational guidebook „Voll motiviert - Erfolgsrezepte für Ihren Unterricht“ which has quickly become the bestselling publication in practical musical education.

In addition to instructions on how to recognize individual types of motivation, the book contains a wealth of practical tips that can inspire self-motivation. Because one thing should be clear: motivating other people repeatedly is not only for ourselves but also for our counterparts a rather tedious exercise in the long run, and it is for all

more beneficent and goal-oriented if we can help our counterpart find his or her own path to self-motivation.

Teaching building blocks for better dexterity, enjoyment and motivation in making music

Since a detailed consideration of the individual types of motivation at this point would go beyond the scope of this article, I will limit myself to individual points that quickly and sustainably create joyful and motivated music making. However, you should not forget that there is not a magic button, the patent remedy, for motivation and happiness; each person responds to different things and will find his or her own individual path to be happy and motivated in making music.





that go beyond repertoire, memorization prima vista / sight reading. These elements can contribute enormously to self-motivation and joy in making music.

1. Routine

Regularly making music helps to build up many skills within a short period of time and is also good for one's instrumental "fitness".

Of course, it often takes some time to stick to a fixed regiment for practicing. Therefore, experiment with different times in your day in order to find out what works for you personally. After all, practicing and making music for only fifteen minutes a day will bring you or your students to a proud total of over 90 hours in a year, a huge gain for your self-motivation.

2. Dexterity

Start your practice time with things that come easily to you: a favorite song, repertoire piece, or a pleasant warm-up exercise. If you already start with things, you can master readily, you will quickly develop a good feeling for playing and continue with joy. As a benefit, melodies and music that are perceived as beautiful, release the happiness hormones in the brain. Subsequently you'll find that this Dexterity-Start will make harder exercises, or pieces of music, easier to master.

However, you should also allow for days when practicing does not go as you would like. Accept this and treat yourself to something nice instead: perhaps a break, a piece of chocolate or a cup of coffee. Avoid plodding on doggedly. We should use this practice slump to relax so that we can rebound with more facility and motivation in making music.

3. Mindset

We can do something good for ourselves and create positive impulses that strengthen motivation. This can be attending a workshop or webinar with a famous soloist or teacher, or live lessons with a teacher you trust. Seek inspiration by going to concerts, streaming concerts, or even listening to great new recordings. And above all, don't skim on the material: a high-quality instrument that is easy to play, with a good sound and excellent intonation, will give you much more pleasure when practicing than a cheap mass-produced instrument.

Likewise, sheet music editions customized to your needs with supplementary audio

People are happy when making music comes easily, but what can we do to help this happen? When students learn impeccable instrumental technique in their lessons, valuable steps in the right direction are taken, but there are other teaching components which effect more ease, happiness and motivation in playing.

One example is repertoire maintenance: Often in class a new piece is learned and when it is mastered, we put it aside and move on to the next step.

Pieces on which we work intensively become our repertoire. While playing these repertoire-pieces, not only does this result in the so-called "flow feeling", but at the same time patterns are stored in the brain, which can be transferred when learning new pieces of music: The technical and musical challenges are automated and appear easier. Taking the next step is easier when we remember patterns from pieces of music we have already learned.

In addition, easy songs, for which the respective player has a special relationship, can be integrated into the repertoire, these personal favorite pieces, music that touches us in some way, makes us happy or remind us of situations that are special to us.

Regular maintenance of our repertoire is also one of many ways to quickly start playing from memory. This building block also lets us build our own competence in making music; making us happy, spurring us on to become even better, spontaneously picking up our instrument and showing our abilities to other people, without sheet music.

Another component to strengthen self-motivation is to learn prima-vista playing, also called reading from sight. This can be easily incorporated as a teaching element by trying to play shorter and easier pieces prima-vista.

For prima-vista playing, one initially chooses pieces of music that contain common components such as scales, chords or other tone combinations frequently used by composers. These patterns can also be found in more difficult works, making it easier to work on demanding literature. To experience suddenly that even difficult pieces can be played effortlessly in comparison to before can be a great boost in motivation and trigger real feelings of happiness.

In the second part of my contribution, I would like to introduce you to five elements

demos and Play Alongs mean that you have a lot of good material to choose from, in which you can go on a journey of discovery and set new goals for yourself. In any case, you should prefer this to the stack of copies or even printouts from the Internet! While you are already happily playing through the umpteenth piece in your new edition of sheet music, other musicians are still searching the Internet for suitable sheet music that first needs to be paid for ("Kids, does anyone remember my PayPal password?") and then have to be printed out. ("Do we still have a new printer cartridge somewhere?"). During this time, you have already had a relaxing practice session with your suitable sheet music.

4. Goals

Practicing without goals can have a negative effect on motivation in the long run. Therefore, find some short-, medium-, and long-term goals and write them down on a timeline. For example, as a short-term goal within the next four weeks, you would like to learn a certain piece of music that you care a lot about; in the medium term, you would like to join a certain ensemble; and in the long term, you would like to perform a piece as a soloist in front of an audience.

5. Networking

Networking with others while learning or making music is an important point in self-motivation.

For those who, in giving up music-making also lose a circle of friends, this can help you make it through the phase of low motivation. It is important that we recognize our dilemma and discover for ourselves the way out of a crisis. The best possibility we have is to teach ourselves to regain our motivation and to discover again the joy of making music.

This networking and exchange with others is especially important for children and young people who make music, to help them out of a motivation slump. Other children and young people who make music demonstrate their own motivation. This motivation can uplift a person when things don't go so well: How can other people be inspired by playing this instrument? What makes them happy? Do they have worthwhile goals that would also suit yourself? Do other instrumentalists play pieces of music that inspire you and that you would like to be able to play someday? Are there precious editions of sheet music that you could purchase, music apps or concerts, workshops, or webinars with artists that would inspire you? Social networks today

offer a variety of opportunities to exchange interests with likeminded people who are also inspired by all of the above, providing an inspiration and a group feeling.

My wish would be that these tips will help you develop your self-motivation and that making music will always be a joy and a source of happiness!



Kristin Thielemann

www.vollmotiviert.com

Kristin Thielemann studied orchestral music and music education at the Lübeck University of Music and was a scholarship holder of the Richard Wagner Foundation and the Munich Philharmonic. During her studies she was already under contract with the orchestra of the Deutsche Oper Berlin. Since 2009 she has been working for the Schott Music publishing house, where she has written many articles for music magazines such as "üben & musizieren", but has also published sheet music for the music education sector.

Her parents guidebook «Jedes Kind ist musikalisch» («Every child is musical» Schott Music 2016) has been translated into Chinese and her publication about motivating music lessons (Schott Music 2019) is one of the best-selling German publications in music education.

Kristin Thielemann is guest lecturer at colleges and universities, holds training courses for music educators and gives lectures for parents. During the lockdown in the corona crisis, her podcast on online music lessons, reached five-digit audience numbers within a few weeks.

She is a juror at music competitions in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.



KRISTIN THIELEMANN
vollmotiviert.com