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Fostering Affect, Rapport, and Care for Optimal Performance in Studio Music Instruction

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> *One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.*
>
> – Carl Jung

In this chapter, we explore the relational components of one-to-one teaching in the applied music studio environment. We begin with a discussion of the evidence for the need to consider relational aspects of one-to-one music teaching, then defining the terms affect, rapport, and care ethics. We then discuss teaching considerations for fostering positive relationships, including feedback, modeling, nonverbal behaviors, and considerations of motivation. We conclude by highlighting the important boundaries of a student-teaching relationship in this environment before providing practical suggestions for teaching.

On Being Well and Playing Well in the Music Studio

In the music studio, the one-to-one nature of lessons makes positive interpersonal relationships an essential consideration for optimal student learning (Burwell, 2017; Creech & Hallam, 2011; Gaunt, 2011; Gaunt et al., 2021; Zhukov, 2013). In addition, studio music instructors are often influential figures for music students, as they have a more prolonged, high attention relationship when compared to almost any other student-teacher dynamic (Nerland & Hanken, 2002). However, as music teachers are essential in reinforcing the connection between instructional practices and students' flourishing (Björk, 2016), it is of utmost importance to understand the types of practices that help teachers and students to develop a healthy teaching-learning relationship—which should focus on teaching and learning processes that are student-centered—and for which a supportive interpersonal relationship between teacher and student is needed (Pozo et al., 2022).

Because the student-teacher relationship in the music studio is a powerful one, when those relationships are unhealthy, they can have problematic consequences for student learning. While it is somewhat rare for students to be willing to openly criticize their teachers in research contexts, the extant literature suggests that when there is significant dissonance in the lesson environment, student learning suffers (Burwell, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; Nerland & Hanken, 2002; Ryan, 2021). In addition, studio teachers largely work without any kind of substantive training in teaching or oversight of their teaching practices; it is essential to understand how these one-to-one learning environments can be optimized for both student performance and wellness outcomes.

There is a significant body of literature suggesting that affect and rapport are essential to successful teaching in the applied music studio environment (e.g., Blackwell, 2022; Blackwell et al., 2020; Clemmons, 2009/2010; Creech, 2012; de Bruin, 2021; Hyry-Beihammer, 2010; Kurkul, 2007; Nerland & Hanken, 2002). Understanding how applied music studio instructors develop positive affect in their students, how student-teacher rapport might be fostered, and how positive rapport might encourage positive performance outcomes could lead to teaching practices that promote student well-being and high-level performance skill simultaneously. In this chapter, we argue that the affective, relational dimensions of music teaching are not just nice to have in studio lessons but they are also *essential* components of optimal music learning, student motivation, and wellness.

Feeling "Good" or "Bad" After a Lesson: What Is Affect?

Affect is a word that is often used in contemporary psychological research, but it is rarely defined (Schimmack & Crites, 2005). While affect is typically understood as having to do with feelings, it has been defined as a "generic term for emotions and other mental states" that have the quality of being either pleasant or unpleasant for the person experiencing them (Efklides, 2006, p. 3). This term can include feelings, mood, motives, or aspects of the self, such as self-esteem (Forgas, 1994). Importantly for teaching, affect can describe the general experience of feeling "good" or "bad" after a lesson, even if the learner cannot pinpoint a specific event, interaction, or emotional state to have "caused" those feelings.

Students can also "bring" affect with them to the lesson, which we might describe as showing up in a "good" or "bad" mood. Students can also develop affective responses to situations, environments, or people—that is, a student can have a negative or positive affective association with lessons or their teacher—which can in turn impact their motivation to learn, their ability to focus, and their persistence in practice. For instance, when students are engaged in deep learning activities, their affective state can lead to either flow (feeling totally in the moment and engaged in learning, which is associated with peak performance; see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) or boredom and frustration (D'Mello & Graesser, 2012). Additionally, student-teacher conflict has

been associated with higher anxiety in students (Kurdi & Archambault, 2018), suggesting that negative relationships impact student affect.

In music performance, a positive affective state might be the difference between walking into a practice room ready to learn and avoiding the practice room altogether. This is important for teachers to be aware of because they can have a substantive impact on student's affective states. For example, a lesson that starts with a welcoming check-in with how the student is doing generally, rather than simply a businesslike, direct beginning, might help students to enter the lesson in a positive affective state and to be more ready to learn (Blackwell et al., 2020). Additionally, that a positive affective state can contribute to flow suggests that optimized learning is more likely to happen when students are approaching learning with a healthy state of mind, including healthy sources of motivation and positive self-concept (Rogatko, 2009). Given how long and arduous the process of developing high-level musical skill can be (McPherson, 2006), fostering positive affective states can help students to tackle challenges in learning. Additionally, issues such as music performance anxiety (MPA) are distinctly affect related (Cohen & Bodner, 2019); research suggests that when teachers maintain good relationships with students, they are better able to identify their students' MPA struggles and can alter instruction to better support them (Barros et al., 2023; Patston, 2014). Teachers have an important role to play in fostering positive student affect, and this is often accomplished through the establishment of student-teacher rapport.

Trust, Honesty, and Human Investment: What Is Rapport?

Because the applied music studio lesson environment typically requires one-to-one focused attention, positive relationships are essential for both student affect and optimal learning, and those positive relationships are perhaps best characterized by strong rapport. Rapport has been defined as an overall feeling between two people encompassing a mutual, trusting, and prosocial bond (e.g., Catt et al., 2007; Frisby & Martin, 2010). This definition includes two main important features: a reciprocal relationship, where both people are invested in positive interactions, and trust. For rapport to develop, this means that both parties have to be willing to build trusting, positive relations over time. Notably, rapport is a phenomenon that exists in interrelations between people; while some people are better at building rapport than others, it is not a specific dispositional quality or personality trait (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990).

In terms of trying to understand what rapport actually looks like in practice, Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) proposed a conceptual model of rapport based on three interrelated components: mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination. *Mutual attentiveness* means that each person's focus is directed toward the other person, and they experience mutual interest during the interaction. *Positivity* is characterized by feelings of mutual friendliness and a sense of caring. *Coordination* involves being "in sync" such that actions between

individuals have a sense of regularity and predictability that result in smooth interactions. Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) also noted that these components may be seen with varying strength as rapport develops; for example, people tend to stick to social niceties in early interactions but may become more coordinated, direct, open, and honest without the need for excessive "niceness" in more developed relationships. Additionally, having high levels of one characteristic does not necessarily mean that the others will be high—an interaction can be highly positive while one person is not particularly attentive, which is likely to make the other person feel ignored or unimportant.

Students have reported that rapport is an essential component of effective relationships in a number of teaching-learning environments (Black- well, 2022; Catt et al., 2007; Kurkul, 2007). In other educational settings, student-reported rapport has been associated with ratings of course instructors and courses (Demir et al., 2019; Rowan & Grootenboer, 2017) as well as motivation to achieve positive perceptions of learning and self-reported grades (Wilson et al., 2010). Conversely, students consider a lack of rapport with their studio teacher to be negative and may even believe that their musical success is dependent on establishing a meaningful personal relationship (Ryan, 2021).

Notably, rapport is not characterized by "excessive friendliness" or easy learning content (Rowan & Grootenboer, 2017, p. 1) but rather by meaningful social presence, opportunities for enjoyable interactions, and a respectful connection between teachers and students. It is a common misconception that rapport is simply positivity but the previous research on rapport helps to clarify the honesty, trust, and openness that rapport also requires. Rapport is better characterized by what it makes possible in teaching-learning relationships: kind, honest evaluations of performance from teachers, and the ability to receive this information as a genuine attempt to reach musical goals for students. Additionally, strong rapport fosters positive feelings about learning. According to Kurkul (2007), strong rapport in music lessons "breaks down resistance to new ideas, builds trust and encourages motivation and interest in students, thus increasing their ability to learn" (p. 331). Both teachers and students have highlighted professional trust as an essential component of effective student-teacher relationships (Gaunt, 2011). When students feel safe to take an active role in a lesson, they are more likely to express confusion when it arises, ask clarifying questions, and generally act as a proactive partner in their own learning (Pozo et al., 2022).

In music learning contexts, there is growing evidence that rapport is not just good for positive relationships and affect but also for optimizing student performance. For example, in a study of internationally renowned violin pedagogue Brenda Brenner, Blackwell (2022) found that students described a nonjudgmental approach to errors, which made them comfortable to work on their flaws in their lessons. In her study of four master teachers of singing, Clemmons (2009/2010) found that clear expectations and high standards, a sense of safety and mutual respect, and an enthusiastic, affirming teaching style all helped students to be successful performers. In turn, these students were

willing to take musical risks, try new things, and focus intensely to improve their technical shortcomings—all necessary components of achieving optimal performance. Similarly, within the realm of beginning instrumental music studies, several international studies acknowledge that a particularly positive and relaxed atmosphere in the music classroom, where teachers display a high level of friendliness, can support young students' intrinsic motivation and musical skill development (e.g., López-Íñiguez & Pozo, 2016; Sloboda & Howe, 1991).

Relationships with teachers have also been found to impact student outcomes across developmental levels. In a recent study with postgraduate musicians in Europe, López-Íñiguez and Burnard (2022) found that these musicians' teachers had a crucial impact in their learning and professional pathways in music, which were structured into eight stages: (1) infancy, (2) childhood, (3) early schooling, (4) middle schooling, (5) junior schooling, (6) senior high schooling, (7) higher education, and (8) transitioning to career. The study found that some teachers performed *acts of recognition* of these musicians that powered positive changes in their educational and professional careers, such as sharing formative experiences with them or supporting their studies and growth. However, other teachers also performed *acts of rupture* that included dictating meanings and diminishing these musicians' self-confidence (such as patronizing attitudes or preventing students from receiving professional opportunities); this behavior prevented the musicians from choosing educational and career paths that would be aligned with their well-being and interests. Thus, it is crucial that teachers offer positive support to students in order to help professional music students thrive both in music education and in the music industry.

Considering Relational Practice: What Is Care Ethics?

Music teachers and students are relational beings, and their lives are constituted by, with, and through their (musical and human) relationships. Thus, it is important to regard music teaching as a practice that privileges responsible collaboration and relationality. The "relational turn" in professional practice (e.g., Edwards, 2010) has been mostly addressed from the perspective of collaboration between music teachers (de Bruin, 2021; Miettinen, 2021; Westerlund & Gaunt, 2021). Yet, teacher-student interactions in the music studio are also a relational practice. For instance, Gaunt (2011) found that students tend to be strongly influenced by their teacher's views on appropriate student-teacher relationships in studio lessons, and thus teachers set the tone for the relational values in their studios. This type of relational practice can lead to both music teachers and students experiencing *relational agency* (Carey & Grant, 2016)—a capacity of attuning and working with others in order to collaboratively solve complex problems with more collaboratively built, powerful solutions (Edwards, 2011). This type of agency requires an active dynamic consisting of appreciating what others bring to the table and recognizing their

points of departure and familiarity with the "problem" to be solved, as well as aligning one's own departure point to the newly and collaboratively generated interpretations or responses. One practical way of undertaking such a process is by enacting the *ethics of care* (Slote, 2013) in the music classroom—in a way, there cannot be a healthy relational practice without moral grounding.

During recent years, research has acknowledged that professional music practice in contemporary societies cannot simply remain at the artistic, technical, and creative levels but must also include ethical and socially responsible aspects (e.g., Westerlund & Gaunt, 2021). Such complexity involves care ethics, which is an empathy- and respect-based philosophical approach that emphasizes "the epistemic virtue of open mindedness [and] epistemic humility" toward others (Slote, 2013, p. 80). In music education, this can be seen, as López-Íñiguez and Westerlund (2023) discuss, from the perspective of musically gifted children who are a special case of students requiring more *empathetic reflexivity* from their teachers, parents, and society at large. Enacting care ethics in this case would imply understanding that, often, these children perform at professional levels and are remunerated for their work (i.e., minors undertaking adults' professional duties). Due to their potential for achieving performance eminence, teachers responsible for these children's education often apply "value-free, technically defined authoritatively prescribed competences" (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2015, p. 73) that are not necessarily conducive to well-being, nor to the optimization of performance, or socioemotional development considerations beyond talent. Teachers of gifted students should be aware of how they can show care for these students.

In that regard, teachers must understand that a *collective concern* toward musically gifted children's upbringing (caring *for* them) is not enough for enacting care ethics, and thus, a *collective responsibility* is needed (caring *about* them) (Noddings, 2015; Urban, 2020). To genuinely care about musically gifted students (and any music learner for that matter) requires recognizing that students have rights to decide about their life and musical education, as well as about their role in the music industry, instead of being persuaded and pressed into a system that might not enhance their well-being. It is our collective responsibility as teachers to inform them about their rights and educational/professional options (and their consequences), and care ethics "provides a critical, morally oriented framework for a more holistic understanding of these children's sociodevelopmental process and the importance of the child to be given voice and agency in this process" (López-Íñiguez & Westerlund, 2023, p. 124).

Teaching Considerations for Affect, Rapport, and Care

While the relational considerations of developing affect, rapport, and care are relatively clearly outlined in the above literature, there is also evidence that specific teaching behaviors might help to both foster positive affect,

student-teacher rapport, and care ethics and optimize performance. While all of the considerations discussed later are typical components of teaching, their use in lessons can be optimized by considering how they will impact both student affect and rapport.

Feedback

Feedback is an essential component of learning in any environment, but research suggests that certain kinds of feedback are more valuable for learning. For instance, in studio teaching environments, Blackwell (2022) found that both teachers and students valued what was termed *neutral feedback*, in which both positive and to-be-improved aspects of the students playing were discussed without emotional delivery, because it both helped the student to see feedback as a genuine attempt to improve student playing and eliminated the potentially negative affective consequences of feeling harshly criticized. Burwell (2016a) highlighted student dissatisfaction with receiving feedback only when they played poorly, which not only did not give them information about what they were doing well but also hindered the student-teacher relationship. In that line, López-Íñiguez et al. (2022) discuss the importance of positively embracing errors as tools for collaboratively dealing with clarification and feedback—considering that feedback should be specific if it is to be of use for students (Biggs & Tang, 2011). These authors discuss that immediately stopping a student when they play something wrong not only reduces the student's ability to think for themselves but also sends out a critical message that induces resistance to feedback (Lerman & Borstel, 2003) and, consequently, damages rapport.

Praise as a Special Consideration

The research literature shows that while virtually all people enjoy praise, it is not effective for learning (Benson-Goldberg & Erickson, 2021; Maclellan, 2005; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2021). Praise is importantly different from feedback, in that feedback provides specific information to a learner about what they are doing well or what they can improve, whereas praise simply highlights something positive about a learner without giving them information for improvement (McPherson et al., 2022). Research suggests that ability-focused praise (also called "person" praise) has a negative impact on intrinsic motivation, and thus praise should be used with caution in social and educational contexts (Kyosuke et al., 2020). Additionally, praise for "giftedness/talent" or intelligence undermines both motivation and performance (Dweck, 2007; Zentall & Morris, 2010) and has been associated with higher extrinsic motivation (Bear et al., 2017). Additionally, evidence suggests that when teachers heap on unearned praise, students think their teacher must not believe in their abilities (e.g., Dweck, 2007; Graham & Chen, 2021), which may also lead to negative affect for the student.

For these reasons, it has been argued that while positive feedback that provides specific information about what a student is doing well can be useful for both rapport and learning, praise that simply identifies a positive attribute about a person—particularly if this is an attribute that is not readily controllable, such as giftedness or intelligence—is not useful for learning (see McPherson et al., 2022). Additionally, external rewards used for praise, such as stickers or prizes, have been definitively shown to erode intrinsic motivation, as well as negatively impacting achievement, and are not effective in fostering long-term, high-quality engagement in learning (Deci et al., 2001; Evans & Ryan, 2022; Hattie & Clarke, 2018; see also Kohn, 1993).

Modeling

Teacher modeling on their primary instrument is a common component of music performance teaching (Gill et al., 2022). For example, Colprit (2000) found that 20% of lesson time in Suzuki string teachers was spent on teacher modeling, and Blackwell (2020) found that teacher modeling on their instrument made up 42.5% of all coaching behaviors in applied music studio lessons. While modeling on the instrument is an essential component of helping students to develop aural understanding of music, it can be a problematic teaching behavior when over-applied. There is evidence to suggest that students do not always respond well to teacher models, as simply hearing a correct performance may not help when the student needs a verbal explanation of what to do (Creech, 2012). Daniel and Parkes (2019) note that when lessons are conducted in a very teacher-directed way, the teacher does most of the talking, the modeling, and the explaining, and this is less engaging for students because it encourages passivity. Issues with "imitation learning" in which students simply copy have been highlighted as problematic (Hyry-Beihammer, 2010); as a student in Haddon's (2009) study aptly said, "If you demonstrate something, it's almost not being taught: it's copied" (p. 62). Thus, while modeling is a useful teaching tool in specific contexts, simply copying is not learning, particularly when it is over-used.

Over-use of modeling may also impact student affect. Blackwell and colleagues (2020) found that teacher modeling on the instrument was more frequent for students who reported lower subjective vitality[1] in lessons (see discussion of Self-Determination Theory later in this chapter). Students tended to be more passive in their lessons with a great deal of teacher modeling and did not show obvious performance improvement in their lesson, suggesting that over-modeling is negative for student affect and motivation to engage. Conversely, students who reported high subjective vitality after lessons received more vocal modeling (even though the teachers were all instrumentalists) and side coaching while they performed, which allowed more time for students to play while still receiving support on their playing; additionally, these students audibly improved their performance over the course of the lesson.

Blackwell (2018) noted that teachers' modeling behavior seemed to vary as a function of student age, with more modeling, teacher gesturing, and side-coaching occurring during lessons of younger students, suggesting that skilled teachers adapt their teaching in context-dependent ways to meet the needs of their students. Gill and colleagues (2022) suggest that peer and coping models (models that provide information about how to deal with challenging performance situations) may be particularly helpful for students with lower self-efficacy, allowing them to see others struggling with the same challenges. Similarly, Haddon (2009) noted that younger students may need more models as they're learning, but models can be stifling for more advanced students. Yet, a European music school-level study by López-Íñiguez and Pozo (2016) on a constructivist cello teacher found that when she used less modeling, more dialogic talking, and activating her seven-year-old student to explain how she solved learning challenges (and why) encouraged the student's proactivity, agency, and motivation. Thus, while modeling is an essential component of teaching performance, its use must be contextual, and over-use can be problematic for both student learning and affect.

Nonverbal Behaviors

Research suggests that nonverbal communication conveys 60 – 65% of the meaning in human interactions in close relationships (Guerrero & Floyd, 2006), and when there is a lack of consistency between verbal and nonverbal behavior, people tend to believe the nonverbal message more strongly. In a study of students' perceptions of studio voice teachers' nonverbal behaviors, Levasseur (1994) identified steady eye contact, forward posture, head nodding, smiles, laughter, appropriate touch, animated facial expressions, varied vocal inflection, sensitive use of space and timing, and expressive use of gestures as indicative of successful voice teachers. Appropriate touch is important to note, whereby teachers should always ask a student before touching (i.e., "may I put my hand on your elbow to show you the direction of the bow"). Blackwell and colleagues (2020) found that when teachers used more physical proximity (meaning spending most of the lesson sitting or standing with the student, as opposed to behind a desk or other physical barriers), observed rapport was higher and students reported greater subjective vitality, suggesting that the nonverbal behavior of working alongside the student in a lesson can engender positive affect and stronger relationships.

Conversely, in a case study of a "dissonant" student-teacher pairing, Burwell (2016b) found that the student's nonverbal behavior showed clear signs of anxiety, and the student contributed very little verbally to the lesson dialogue. As a consequence of this passive behavior, the teacher seemed somewhat constrained in how they could teach, as in that a great deal of their energy was devoted to "instructing, encouraging and persuading this particular student to participate in her own lesson" (p. 468). While the student and the teacher

were not discussing these nonverbal cues, it was clear that this behavior was having a negative impact on the lessons, and a lack of communication about these issues led to a lack of student performance improvement.

Additionally, Zhukov (2013) suggests that studio teachers ought to put a greater emphasis on the nonverbal cues they receive from students, rather than relying solely on what they say, in order to improve communication and interpersonal relationships. Kurkul (2007) found that teachers who were more able to decode nonverbal cues were rated higher by students on rapport, communication, pedagogical skill, and general instructional competence. The evidence from these studies suggests that a great deal of human communication takes place without words, and teachers must consider how both their own behavior and the behavior of their students might be impacting the overall lesson environment, and whether that impact is helping or hurting learning.

Competency, Autonomy, and Relatedness: Considering Motivation

When considering why someone would put in the enormous effort required to perform an instrument at a high level, we are really asking a question of motivation. Students must sustain motivation through many frustrations and challenges (i.e., resilience), and these challenges will inevitably have an emotional component. Indeed, it has been argued that motivation is often emotionally driven, as our desires and needs as human beings are often driven by what we enjoy, love, or value. Salovey and colleagues (2008) argue "there is wide agreement that emotions are primary sources of motivations . . . they arouse, sustain, and direct human action . . . and provide individuals with information which shapes their judgements, priorities and actions" (pp. 534–535). When considering what might motivate students to achieve at the highest levels, it is important to understand how their affective state might impact their motivation, and how relationships with teachers might lead to both better affective and motivational outcomes (López-Íñiguez & Burnard, 2022).

Perhaps one of the clearest and most useful theories in understanding how relationships and emotional wellness relate to motivation is Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT proposes that humans have basic psychological needs for *autonomy* (i.e., the need to experience psychological freedom and volition), *competence* (i.e., the need to feel effective and skilled), and *relatedness* (i.e., the need to feel closely connected to others). SDT proposes that the satisfaction of these needs is essential for individuals' high-quality motivation and flourishing; conversely, frustration of these needs undermines motivation and increases risk for amotivation (a lack of motivation to engage in any activity) and poor well-being outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

When applying SDT to the music studio, it is important to consider how teachers might support these basic psychological needs and foster student motivation. When students feel overly controlled and like they cannot make choices about their learning, they become less motivated to learn. The many

stories about authoritarian music teachers who dictate every aspect of a student's performance provide cautionary tales for avoiding overly controlling environments, because they reduce both autonomy and relatedness. While challenging exercises and repertoire are important for stretching musical skills, musical tasks that are far beyond a student's current ability level are likely to cause frustration and decrease motivation. Positive learning experiences and the well-being of music students can be partly explained by autonomy-supportive interpersonal styles adopted by their teachers (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2020), suggesting that meeting student needs, even when presenting challenges, fosters their both wellness and motivation to learn music.

There is research evidence that highlights how these psychological needs can impact both affect and performance (e.g., López-Íñiguez & McPherson, 2020). Coutts (2019) noted that in adult students, managing frustration is essential because the ability to play progresses more slowly than cognitive understanding, and failing to manage this negative affective response can result in a decrease in motivation or quitting altogether. Additionally, giving students the autonomy to decide what they would like to play and to ask questions removed the perception that they were playing "to be judged" by their teacher, rather shifting the focus to their goals and their teacher's support of reaching those goals (Coutts, 2019, p. 499). In turn, allowing students to be autonomous agents of their own learning increased student-teacher rapport, by "approaching tasks from a problem-solving perspective rather than a performance perspective, led by the students" (p. 502). Zachariou and Bonneville-Roussy (2024) proposed that teacher autonomy support precedes learner's ability to self-regulate the learning, suggesting that providing scaffolded opportunities to develop these skills helps young learners in their musical development in a healthy way.

Blackwell and colleagues (2020) conducted a study of university-level music students using the SDT construct of vitality, which describes "one's conscious experience of possessing energy and aliveness" (Ryan & Frederick, 1997, p. 530). The high vitality students were able to make musical decisions (supporting autonomy), made progress within the lesson (supporting competence), and showed stronger rapport with their teachers (supporting relatedness). Their low vitality counterparts, on the other hand, had lessons in which they were much more passive (thwarting autonomy), did not make noticeable progress in their lessons (resulting in frustration for all parties and thwarting competence), and their student-teacher relationships seemed overly formal (thwarting relatedness). The researchers found that not only did the students in the high vitality group feel better at the end of their lessons, but they also showed more progress during the lesson, exhibited higher rapport with their teachers, and were more active participants in their learning. The key takeaway for understanding affect, rapport, care, and optimal performance is that these students did not just *feel* better in their lessons but they also *played* better.

Considering Boundaries: What Are the Limitations of Student-Teacher Relationships?

While rapport is essential in lessons, it is important to note that it is rapport within the context of a professional student-teacher relationship, which has important boundaries and limitations. Research has shown that relationships similar to a parent-child dynamic can become too authoritative and controlling, may result in advice-giving about a student's life that goes beyond the bounds of a student-teacher dynamic, can harm the student's emotional well-being, and can hinder student autonomy (Ryan, 2021). Burwell (2016a) noted that students who feel overly controlled by "one way" of doing things may also experience interpersonal friction. Conversely, if the student engages in over-exaggerated hero worship of the teacher, rapport is hindered (Nerland & Hanken, 2002), and students may be more motivated to receive praise from their revered teacher than to develop their musicianship to their highest ability (Crocker, 2021). Concerningly, there is research evidence of students relying on their studio teachers for advice with health issues rather than health-care professionals and teachers attempting to provide these answers, suggesting that students may not understand the boundaries of a teacher's role and see them as "all knowing" and that teachers may overstep their professional expertise (Williamon & Thompson, 2006).

In a study of factors leading to students and teachers ceasing lessons in postsecondary music performance studios, Ryan (2021) found that both incompatible personalities and being too close or familiar could result in the dissolution of the lesson relationship, highlighting that either extreme is not optimal for music learning. Gaunt (2011) noted teachers describing their relationships with students as parent-child, friendship, or doctor-patient dynamics, highlighting that there is not an agreed-upon dynamic for what is appropriate among teachers. Ryan (2021) noted that some teachers preferred to maintain a kind of professional distance from their students, focusing their relational efforts on "a joint dedication to music rather than personal intimacy" (p. 70). We suggest that a personal dynamic that is focused on the student's musical progress, while still providing space for the student to seek guidance on larger matters, might foster optimal rapport; the key to this dynamic, however, is recognizing that there are professional and personal limitations on what teachers can offer to their students and that these might rely on a moral relational practice based on care ethics. In that sense, acting as a conduit to medical, mental health, and other services when the matters go beyond a student's musical progress, but not attempting to provide those supports that are well outside the teacher's professional role, can cultivate student wellness without crossing professional and personal boundaries.

Application: How Can Teachers Foster Positive Affect and Rapport?

Perhaps one of the best ways to support student motivation and affect is to provide appropriately scaffolded choices. These choices will look different with

students at different levels of ability, but the heart of choice at all levels is to help students feel autonomous in their learning, that they have the competence to reach their musical goals, and that they have a positive relationship with a teacher who wants to help them reach those goals. For young students, this might involve allowing them to choose between multiple pieces of similar difficulty in order to ensure that the pieces they choose are not frustratingly beyond their current ability levels. This may also involve a friendly conversation about why they like their chosen piece. For intermediate students, this might involve more independence in choosing repertoire and self-identifying the skills they would like to develop. For more advanced learners, teachers might guide the student as they develop a themed recital of repertoire they are truly passionate about learning, providing their expertise on performance while supporting the student's musical passions.

Teachers can also foster relationships with their students in which they see the feedback they receive as information that helps them improve their performance, rather than praise or criticism of their abilities (Blackwell, 2022; Coutts, 2019). Something as simple as delivering feedback without emotional content and without a personal evaluation (i.e., the difference between "that section is a bit sharp" and "I don't know why you're still playing sharp") can help students to focus on the information the teacher is trying to convey.

Building supportive studio communities can also help students to have positive motivational dispositions. For example, the first author was once taking part in a concerto competition, performing a particularly challenging assigned piece and in competition with several studio members. This situation could have easily become stressful, competitive, and demotivational. However, the teacher brought a particularly difficult section to the studio class, projected the score for everyone to see, and asked all of us to share how we were working on this passage. This simple decision allowed the studio to see the studio as a community that tries to help each other play at their best, rather than "the competition." The teacher also shared his own struggles in learning the section, which helped to build a sense of trust and shared goals. Such a scenario helps the learners to focus on their own progress, rather than comparisons to others, while seeing themselves as a part of a supportive community of like-minded people.

Student-teacher match is an important consideration in studio environments; numerous researchers have identified that a strong match between personality, expectations, and goals can lead to better lesson outcomes (Blackwell, 2022; Burwell, 2016a; Creech & Hallam, 2011; Gaunt, 2011; Ryan, 2021). We suggest that perhaps the best way to determine matches is to have trial lessons whenever possible to identify potentially good student-teacher dynamics and to avoid situations where major dissonance in lessons seems likely. Of course, this is not always possible, and in particular, independent studio teachers need to recruit students as a matter of financial security, so it would not be in their best interests to reject students due to issues of match. Creech and Hallam (2010) provide some useful guidance on this issue: "Inevitably, some teacher-pupil matches will be better than others, but as professionals, teachers

arguably have the responsibility for setting minimum standards of interpersonal behaviour that they apply consistently whatever the circumstances" (p. 404). This suggests that even when a teacher-student interpersonal match is less than optimal, the teacher is still responsible for establishing a positive learning environment, providing encouragement, fostering student motivation, and providing meaningful feedback to improve performance.

Additionally, while it is important for both students and teachers to develop their communication skills to work through any relational issues that may arise, it is imperative that teachers ensure that students feel safe in communicating (Ryan, 2021). Issues of power imbalance have been mostly reported by students or professional musicians in retrospect in previous research (e.g., López-Íñiguez, 2019), and in rare exceptions by teachers (e.g., MacKie et al., 2023). Gaunt (2009) reported that students can be "fearful of what might happen should the [one-to-one] relationship falter" (p. 193) and that students who switch teachers often do so because they feel it is difficult, painful, or even impossible to raise concerns about their lessons; this is consistent with other research that indicates power imbalance has a much greater impact on those who do not possess power (Burwell, 2016b; Nerland & Hanken, 2002).

The students' ability or willingness to express concerns about their learning in studio lessons necessitates a positive teacher-student relationship, founded on trust (Burwell, 2016b, 2017; Gaunt, 2010; Hanken, 2011). Chun and colleagues (2010) argue that while trust is essential to mentoring relationships, when it is an issue, teachers and students can work to overcome challenges in their formal relationship and promote trust through "emotional intelligence," consisting of the ability to "understand, regulate, and constructively use their own and others' emotions" (p. 424). This suggests that trust does not simply "exist" in relationships or not but it can be built, fostered, and maintained with careful communication.

Developing lesson environments that are collaborative, rather than teacher driven, can support the development of students' autonomy through mutually understood goals, questioning, and the encouragement of self-reflection, as opposed to controlling students' behavior or encouraging dependency on the teacher (Carey et al., 2018; Reeve et al., 2004). For example, the teacher can ask the student to self-assess their performance and ask guided questions about how they think they can improve their playing, rather than immediately providing direct feedback. In this way, the teacher can guide the student's thinking toward better strategies, without encouraging dependency by simply "giving the student the answers." While it is sometimes faster to simply tell the student how to improve their performance, it does not encourage the student to be an autonomous, self-directed musician, and it likely does not foster a meaningful sense of student-teacher rapport.

Concluding Remarks

Musicians often carry the belief that they must "suffer for their art," be it through painfully long practice sessions, lessons with authoritarian teachers, or

working to improve their craft to the point of misery. *But is this actually true?* The research on how affective and relational considerations impact music learning provides a clear answer: "suffer for your art" is a harmful myth. Treating students harshly is not only unnecessary in producing world-class performers, it is also counter-productive to helping students reach their full potential. This is not to say that learning to play music at the highest levels is not challenging, or tiring, or that students will always feel great when practicing or engaging in their lessons. It also does not mean that teachers should be "nice" to spare a student's feelings when they really need constructive feedback on how to improve their performance. Rather, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that when people are well and generally enjoy their learning processes, they are more motivated to learn, are better equipped to deal with challenges as they arise, and are happier while doing it. While it is true that some people do reach very high levels of performance with authoritarian teachers, we argue that it is likely that they do so despite the way they were taught, not because of it.

Summary

- Affect, rapport, and care have a major impact on student performance.
- Neutral, improvement-focused feedback can help to foster positive, trusting relationships.
- Over-use of teacher modeling may impact student motivation and affect by reducing their motivation and autonomy in lessons.
- Teachers should put a greater emphasis on the nonverbal cues they receive from students, rather than relying solely on what they say, in order to improve communication and interpersonal relationships.
- Teachers should also consider how their nonverbal behaviors might communicate engagement to the student.
- Motivation is heavily impacted by affect, and teachers should consider how they can foster student autonomy, competence, and relatedness to encourage positive motivation.
- While rapport is essential in lessons, it is important to note that it is rapport within the context of a professional student-teacher relationship, which has important boundaries and limitations.

Reflective Questions

1. Think back to your own lessons as a student. Who do you consider to be your most influential teacher, and why? How did they support your musical learning? Now, as a teacher, which of these features have you brought to your own music lessons and how do you think they serve/support your students?
2. Recall a time that you had low affect as a music student: what were the circumstances? How motivated did you feel to practice? What do you think would have helped you to feel better? And what about now, do you often check with your students about their affect?

Potential Actions

- Start lessons with a short conversation about how the student's week has gone, both personally and in their practice, to understand how ready the student is to learn.
- Record yourself teaching, and pay attention to the following:
  - The feedback you give—is it specific, actionable, and focused on the student's improvement?
  - Teacher modeling—have you limited its use to situations where a model is truly necessary, rather than using it as a go-to strategy for student copying?
  - Nonverbal communication—do the teacher and student seem comfortable with each other? Is their comfortable eye contact, relaxed body posture, and open body language?
  - How often is the student invited to make musical decisions? Is the student experiencing moments of competence, or are they consistently frustrated by activities that are beyond their current capabilities?

Note

1 Subjective vitality, as proposed by Ryan and Frederick (1997), is a psychological construct used to describe "one's conscious experience of possessing energy and aliveness" (p. 530).

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