The Psychological and Physiological Effects of Remedial Pedagogy on Adolescent Violin Students

Vanessa Mio, Ph.D. & Brenda Brenner, D.M.
University of Windsor
Indiana University Jacobs School of Music
Ontario Music Educators Conference Opus 100, 2019
Toronto, ON; November 7–9, 2019

Statement of the Issue

• Young adolescent violin students often exhibit technical/musical deficiencies in their playing that may have been established and reinforced in their prior studies
• This is often a result of insufficient instruction, ineffective communication, lack of student motivation, rebellion, or a failure to discern future technical/musical implications (Mio, 2015; Zweig, 2008)

Research Questions - What aspects of adolescent students’ violin playing require remedial pedagogy? What do violin students perceive are the reasons why remedial pedagogy is required? How do violin students perceive their level of artistic success before and after the implementation of remedial pedagogy? How do violin students maintain their motivation throughout the remedial process and in the future?

Objectives

• This study explored the process of remedial pedagogy implemented by Mimi Zweig, (Violin/Viola Professor at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and Director of the Indiana University (IU) Summer String Academy) with four adolescent students
• Remediation – the process of examining the foundational techniques and establishing a healthy approach to the instrument through ease of playing, technical facility, release of tension, and artistry
  • Through the lens of remedial pedagogy in violin instruction, students replace faulty motor responses (conditioned, ingrained, and subconscious techniques) with a novel response
• Throughout the duration of a four-week summer program, the participants had the opportunity to engage in remedial pedagogy while studying with Zweig, and share their lived experiences and self-perceptions as they experienced physiological/psychological challenges and changes in their skill level

Methodology and Research Design

• Qualitative multiple case study research design
• Four adolescent violin students chosen through a purposive selection engaged in three semi-structured interviews and observations
• Participants (between the ages of 13-18) from across United States (Iowa, Alaska), New Zealand, and Argentina with Suzuki and Sistema instruction background
• Interview data, field notes, and reflective journals were analyzed through the theoretical framework of self-determination theory, teacher attribution scaffolding theory, social development theory, and communities of musical practice theory

“I sometimes felt that I was going back to my old ways, but I also felt like I was rewiring. I didn’t feel like the same violinist in performance” (participant)

Results

• Some participants had an elevated view of their technical/musical proficiencies, which caused a disconnect between reality and their intentions in the practice room; others had understanding of inadequate early instruction
• Most participants claimed that they improved the martelé stroke the most over the summer, including resonance
in their tone and the “catch and release” through bow articulation
• Practice habits improved through deliberate practice techniques (e.g., isolating difficulties, using
rhythmic/bowing variations, separating tasks in the right and left hand, etc.) and increasing their focus on etudes
and scales
• Most participants experienced performance anxiety because of a lack of performing on a regular basis and
reverted to prior deficiencies
• Most participants were motivated by peer support and social interaction: finding the balance between serious
practice and leisure; motivation contingent on performance opportunities and peer/parental presence
• All participants stated that their self-efficacy improved throughout the remedial process and after

Conclusions

• All students have the ability to acquire musical/technical prowess if guided appropriately from the outset of
instruction (Coyle, 2012)
• Variable speed of remediation – Although some changes were internalized instantly, others were often difficult
to implement, resulting in frequent reversion to deficiencies that were comfortable (Rolland, 1974)
• Emotional challenges during remedial process – Many of the participants experienced discouragement at times,
which affected their motivation, perseverance, thought patterns, and artistic freedom during performances
(Ryan, Curren, & Deci, 2013)
• The success associated with scaffolding strategies is affected by the quality of deliberate practice, namely the
structuring of specific tasks, high level of concentration, self-monitoring, and repetition/error correction
(Ericsson, 2008)
• In terms of motivation and perception throughout the remedial process, students acquire confidence after acting
effectively in a given environment, relatedness through acceptance, support, and connection to peers, and
autonomy as they take ownership of their learning (Ryan, Curren, & Deci, 2013)
• Students create a “community of musical practice” through social engagement, musical participation, meaning,
practice, and identity (Kenny, 2016)

References


Contact

Vanessa Mio, Ph.D., M.M., B.M., Perf. Dipl.
v mio@uwindsor.ca

brenner@indiana.edu