

Motivation



Motivation is -as the word implies- the motor which drives your musicianship. Quite obviously, the statement does not apply to musicianship alone, motivation is the driving force behind anything you attempt to do.

At a certain moment, I realised myself that I lacked motivation during playing a specific piece. The perfect time for my guitar teacher Ed Westerik to ask me -not completely without a humorous undertone- “Why of all pieces did you start playing this piece in particular?” and later on (which was much more confronting) “Why did you start playing the guitar anyway? What’s your motivation?”

The conclusion after discussing this question was that I had selected a rather masochistic piece, with lots of problems and effort and very little fun, based on a myth that this piece was the measure of a skilled guitarist. A real motivation killer. So, I left the piece alone. And left the motivation question basically unanswered.

Basic questions like this make you think. As soon as you do, you’re involved in complex human psychology.

“Why did you start playing the guitar?” Well, one of my motivations was a good example, a few of my classmates played the classical guitar fairly well and made a nice ensemble. This incited a bit of an urge to play myself. Just like that, without fear for complications. The same principle as falling in love: you long and strive without any guarantee that the adventure will be successful.

Of course, there are more motivations to play. As a quiet and hardly conspicuous personality, I would like to steal the show some time (which is a motivation): playing a guitar well looked like a perfect method to achieve this. Just learn to sing with it and you are the successful and

celebrated entertainer with parties and campfires, at least that was what I observed at a few occasions. I must admit that my playing always has been far better than my singing.

Thus, over the years I maintained a little bunch of sometimes conflicting motivations, some helpful to start learning the guitar, others to keep learning and playing going. The balance of motivations will determine your progress in the end.

After my decision to start playing the guitar and to subject myself to teaching, my motivation changed to *playing pieces*. Preferably the same way as I heard on my guitar records. The only problem is, that there are few albums with beginners' pieces -*Pieces pour les Jeunes Guitaristes* was one of the scarce examples- but the intention is clear. Following the footsteps of John Williams, Julian Bream, Ida Presti, the Romeros and other guitar idols from my youth. Indiscriminate imitation without any individuality.

Later on, *speed* became my motivation. The metronome counted the rhythm of my ambitions: playing scales and arpeggios perfectly at maximum speed. Developing skills for the sake of technique. Not for support of musicianship, but just for the kick of breaking personal records. This motivation was destructive rather than constructive, causing injuries in the end.

Another motivation which looked like an earlier one in another shape: *Perfect Performance on stage*. I studied the hell out of all pieces for a recital and I stumbled across myself every time I left the stage with a sense of unfulfillment. Sheer frustration until I managed to change my attitude in such a way that I could enjoy my play just like the audience did. That was an eye-opener. Having fun on stage, I guess it's the only way to fight stage fright.

Along my "career" my motivations to play have changed a lot. They even disappear sometimes, just like writers (like myself) get a *writer's block*, the guitarist sometimes run into a *musician's block*. I recognize it, those times that the smallest flaw in the play becomes a reason to lock up the guitar in its case in frustration (I do not fling it in a corner, that's bad for the instrument) and to withdraw in a bad mood with the idea that twenty years of weekly guitar lessons have not taught you a thing, not even enough to play an easy piece perfectly.

Fortunately, in these hard times often unexpected motivators emerge. A well-played piece of guitar music on one of your CDs. The faint sound of an instrument playing a tune you recognize during a stroll in the neighbourhood. The enthusiasm of one or more musicians on stage while you are attending a musical night of one of your kids.

It's often a matter of permitting yourself to be motivated. Music has this wonderful power. That's the magic of the Muse, motivation through inspiration.