

# Self-motivation helped professional musicians maintain their practice during the COVID-19 pandemic

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The logo of the project entitled Expanding Reflexivity Of Professional Education In Music In Times Of Crises. Credit: Guadalupe López-Íñiguez

In the past two years the entire music industry has been thrown into a state of instability due to the paralyzing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An international team of researchers examined how classical professional musicians have coped with uncertainty, economic struggles, and work-life interplay during COVID-19 and how these factors have affected their practice. Practice is a crucial part of the development and sustainment of music careers.

"The musicians who are more internally self-motivated seemed to be more resilient to the [pandemic](#) threats and more capable of managing and maintaining their practicing routines," said the first author of the study, Guadalupe López-Íñiguez from the Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland. "However, more externally motivated musicians experienced a reduction in their dedicated time to practice during lockdown," she continued.

## **Three stages of the pandemic included**

The researchers analyzed responses to an [online survey](#) of 309 classical performing musicians from 41 countries in Europe and Latin America across three pandemic stages: immediately before the pandemic, at the peak of the pandemic in 2020, and when vaccines were being made available and lockdowns were being reduced or lifted.

Overall, the results suggest that self-[motivation](#) was an important factor in the resilience against the threats posed by the pandemic and the time spent practicing displayed by performing musicians during the pandemic.

The musicians displayed a variety of practice behaviors during the three stages analyzed. The time the musicians spent practicing immediately

before the pandemic and again at the time when the vaccines were being made available were similar. It did not matter whether these musicians belonged to the Self-Based or External-Based Motivation groups.

However, at the peak of the pandemic, the musicians' perception of threat exerted a significant impact on their practice schedules according to the two types of motivation studied. For instance, those musicians whose motivation was externally regulated, were more negatively affected at the peak of the pandemic; they displayed a maladjustment in their [time](#) spent practicing as it significantly decreased—despite this being a crucial part of professional musicianship.

## **Love of music as motivation**

The musicians whose motivation was self-based were more able to maintain their [practice](#) schedules during the peak of the pandemic despite the health and economic threats that COVID-19 posed upon them and the difficulties and challenges they experienced juggling online work and homeschooling and childcare in many cases during lockdowns.

"We are worried about the lack of intrinsic motivation in some of the musicians. People who study music in [higher education](#) because of other reasons beyond pure passion and love of music might not cope as well in a crisis like the pandemic," López-Íñiguez said.

The study suggests that to survive and adapt in times of crises and uncertainty, professional musicians who have difficulties being resilient would benefit from professional support. Such programs would help them develop adequate coping and stress management strategies as they learn to redirect their focus toward internal motives and cope during periods of uncertainty and unpredictability.

The research was published in *Frontiers in Psychology*.

**More information:** Guadalupe López-Íñiguez et al, Effects of Threat and Motivation on Classical Musicians' Professional Performance Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic, *Frontiers in Psychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.834666](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.834666)

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