



John Man is a young violinist who has been struggling for years to overcome his limitations as a musician. Though graced with some talent and a degree of innate musicality, Man has always found it difficult to play with the sort of polish and professional mastery shown by his colleagues.

“I tried just playing the way I want over and over and over again, hoping that it would get better,” he said. “It never did! It was like, the more I played it the same way the more it would sound the same. What could I do?”

Finally, out of sheer desperation, Man started doing what his teacher had been telling him to do in every lesson for the past five years. “The results have been incredible!” said Man. “It’s as if following the advice of an older, more experienced musician allows me to somehow cultivate effective working habits better than my own.”

We spoke to Man’s teacher, Dorothy Schnupsky, whose teaching philosophy revolves around a concept she calls The Job. “As musicians, our Job is to play the music as musically as possible,” she said. “So if you look at things like the notes, and perhaps the dynamics and phrase markings, and basically every other instruction that has been dutifully laid out on paper using a sophisticated and clear system of notation developed over centuries, then your playing will improve. I charge an hourly rate to say this.”

Man also took inspiration from his roommate Bob Guy, who is studying to be a doctor. Guy reportedly spends hours studying facts until he knows them, because he eventually hopes to use those facts saving lives. “When Guy encounters a complicated fact he really tries to understand what it is, rather than hitting it over and over again very fast until skills develop,” said Man. “He doesn’t stop to tell anyone how difficult it is and which other doctors do it the best and how the love of doctoring is in his blood, he just works at it until he gets better. He has such a talent.”

Man is very pleased that he no longer needs to use his old system of learning things, which he called The System. This required him to smoke frequently, evoke his greatness unintentionally with suggestive anecdotes, and always insist that other musicians do not have “feeling.” Now that he has discovered Schnupsky’s approach, he will soon find true happiness.

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