

Carol Rodland: On Learning to Work with Your Body, Not Against It

Description

I once heard a guitar teacher say that the point of practicing is to make things easier.

At first glance, the voice in your head might say something like “umm...duh.” And sure, there’s that – but I think there’s also a deeper wisdom to the statement when you ponder it for a moment.

Because aside from making what our fingers do more automatic, another important part of practice is figuring out how to make the physical act of playing more effortless. Or ease-ier, as it were.

For me, it wasn’t until the end of college that I began seeking ways to play with less physical effort, and experimenting with posture, finger pressure, and [major changes to my chinrest/shoulder pad setup](#).

It was a challenging and frustrating time, but the things I learned helped immeasurably with intonation and solved many of the technical issues and inconsistencies that had eluded me to that point.

Which, at the time, sort of surprised me, because I’d always assumed that focusing on physical ease was more about reducing one’s injury risk than solving technical problems.

Maybe this is another “duh” sort of question, but are the two more interconnected than we might tend to think? Meaning, is learning to play with more ease, also the way to play better?

Meet Carol Rodland

Violist [Carol Rodland](#) is a sought-after teacher and performer, who recently joined the faculty at Juilliard. Given her own history with injuries, and her thoughtful approach to teaching, she has valuable insights on how to learn to work with our bodies, rather than trying to solve technical problems through sheer force of will.

In this 31-min chat, we’ll explore:

- an analogy she often uses to help students learn something new or change an old habit (2:49)
- the importance of balancing one’s “zoom lens” with the bigger picture (6:49)
- the idea of “full body resonance,” and how that can change one’s playing (10:38)
- the link between playing comfortably, staying injury-free, and playing at a higher level with more enjoyment and flow (12:13)
- a few ways you can tell if you’re listening to a violinist play the viola, or a violist who has gone fully to “the dark side” (14:25)
- a common mistake we often make when learning how to “let go” (19:25)

- the importance of appreciating individual differences, and how there's no one "right" way to do things (20:30)
- her own difficult journey with injuries; how it happened, and how she overcame the various hurdles (21:20)
- how she got into pilates, and what she sees as being the benefits (24:30)
- her memory of the day she met Karen Tuttle, and the "ah-ha" moment she had (27:59)

Additional resources

You probably heard me reference Carol's YouTube videos a couple times during our conversation. For specific, actionable insights on how exactly to play with more ease (for violists, certainly, but for violinists and other string players perhaps as well – and even non-string players, when it comes to posture), click the links below:

- [Left-hand tips](#)
- [Bow arm tips](#)
- [Posture, Stance, and Set-Up](#)

Date Created

August 2018