

## Jason Haaheim: On “Deliberate Lessons” and How to Maximize Your Progress From One Lesson to the Next

### Description

The last few months have led to many changes in how we work, how we play, how we connect to others, and a whole lot more.

But I think our desire to learn and improve at things that we find meaningful and enjoy doing is still there. After all, many are continuing to take piano lessons, or participate in writing classes, or train in jiu jitsu online, even though doing so via Zoom is not quite (or nearly) the same experience as learning in-person.

Despite its many limitations, online learning does have one potential built-in benefit, that could be worth taking advantage of not just during these unusual times, but when in-person learning becomes possible again too.

### Meet Jason Haaheim

Jason Haaheim is the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra’s principal timpanist. But he took a rather unconventional route to winning that job, as it came after 10 years of working full-time as an engineer and researcher for a nanotechnology startup, where he had to squeeze all of his practice into the hours before and after work.

Given the constraints of time and energy, Jason – to semi-quote Matt Damon’s character in *The Martian* – “scienced the \$#@! out of his practice” in order to maximize the impact of every minute of practice.

We already spoke about the nuts and bolts of his approach to practice and audition preparation in a previous episode, which you can listen to [here](#), so in today’s episode we narrow our focus on just one specific aspect of this process. A piece of the puzzle that most of us probably don’t think of as being that big a deal, but which could actually have a huge impact on the effectiveness of our daily practice.

Umm...and what’s that exactly?

The benefits of recording *and transcribing* (!) your lessons.

In this episode, we’ll explore:

- Why deliberate practice and learning how to learn is perhaps even more important now than ever before (5:54)
- Why trying to take notes in lessons is probably counterproductive (10:08)
- Why there’s probably no legitimate reason for not recording lessons (12:03)

- What to do if your teacher doesn't feel comfortable with your recording a lesson (12:29)
- The two things that change when you review and transcribe your lesson (19:52)
- The legality (and ethics) of recording your lessons (25:15)
- Do you really *have* to transcribe the lesson? Why? (28:34)
- How going through the process could lead to more high-level “problem-solving lessons” as opposed to “diagnostic lessons” (40:04)
- How recording/transcribing/reviewing lessons could change your teacher's behavior too (42:16)
- Why lessons are also a valuable opportunity to watch your teacher solve problems, and learn how to become a better problem-solver (53:09)
- Jason's process of recording auditions, and what he would do immediately after playing a round, as it relates to becoming a much better judge of your own playing (57:39)
- The obligatory Star Wars reference to Force ghosts, Yoda, and Obi Wan (1:01:08)
- Quality vs. quantity and the rather arbitrary length of a 1-hour lesson (1:07:22)

## Notes

- I alluded to Robert Duke's talk on effective learning at a Starling-Delay Symposium many years back (2:27). Here's a link to some resources and videos on “smart” practice at his research lab's website: [Intelligent Music Practice](#)
- Carol Dweck on growth vs. fixed mindsets @TED: [The power of believing that you can improve](#)
- Jason references an article he wrote (24:59) about becoming your own best teacher: [No One Gets There on Their Own](#)

## Learn how to do deliberate practice at Jason's upcoming workshop

Jason is teaching a 5-day online workshop at the end of the month, specifically devoted to the topic of deliberate practice, and how to apply this to your music practice. If you've been feeling a little stuck or uninspired in the practice room, this might be a great way to add a fresh perspective and liven things up a bit. It's pay-what-you-can pricing, with proceeds going to Artist Relief and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. You can learn more about the workshop here:

[Deliberate Practice Bootcamp with Jason Haaheim](#)

[Deliberate Practice Bootcamp Online](#)

## On Anders Ericsson (1947-2020)

Philosopher and psychologist William James once wrote: “The great use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.”

As Jason notes in [his recent post honoring Ericsson's influence on his life and career](#), Ericsson's life's work is unusual, in that it's not typical for research to have such a clear, tangible, direct, and meaningful impact on the daily lives and experience of so many people. Yet from musicians to athletes to surgeons to computer programmers, Ericsson's efforts to deepen our understanding of how to cultivate expertise have had a deep and lasting influence on the lives of countless learners, and will continue to do so for many decades to come.

If you're interested in reading more about deliberate practice and want to do so through Ericsson's own words, a good place to start is: [Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise](#)

And to listen to Ericsson talking about his work, here's a podcast episode he did with James Altucher: [7 Secrets of Mastery](#)

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