

Practice Makes Perfect

It turns out the new way to get to Carnegie Hall really is to practice, practice, practice. New research suggests that's what makes musicians great, not natural aptitude. University of Arkansas music professor Elizabeth Margulis, PhD, found that when trained flute players listened to flute music, their brains lit up on an MRI scan but didn't react to violin music. If music were simply a genetic disposition, she says, their brains would have responded equally to both instruments. She observed similar results with violinists.

Of course, motivation, coordination, and a musical family help. But world-class musicians become proficient - and famous - not because they're prodigies but because they're prodigies but because they practice hours a day for many years to produce harmonious results.

- Cynthia Dermody, Reader's Digest, May 2005