



## Perception

*...something to think about...*

In the Washington DC Metro Station on a cold January morning in 2007, a man with a violin played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, approximately two thousand people went through the station, most of them on their way to work. After three minutes, a middle-aged man noticed that there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds, then hurried to meet his schedule.

4 minutes later, the violinist received his first dollar. A woman threw the money in the hat and, without stopping, continued to walk.

6 minutes later, a young man leaned against the wall to listen to him, then looked at his watch and started to walk again.

10 minutes later, a three-year old boy stopped, but his mother tugged him along hurriedly. The boy stopped to look at the violinist again, but the mother pushed hard and the child continued to walk, turning his head all the time. This action was repeated by several other children. Every parent, without exception, forced their children to move on quickly.

45 minutes later, the musician had played continuously. Only six people had stopped and listened for a very short while. About twenty people gave money, but continued to walk at their normal pace. The violinist collected a total of \$32.

At 1 hour, the musician finished playing and silence took over. No one noticed. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

No one knew this, but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the greatest musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written, on a violin worth \$3.5 million dollars. Two days before, Joshua Bell had sold out a theater in Boston where the seats averaged \$100 each.

This is a true story. Joshua Bell playing incognito in the Metro station was organized by the Washington Post as part of a social experiment about perception, taste, and people's priorities. The questions raised in a commonplace environment at an inappropriate hour: Do we perceive beauty? Do we stop to appreciate it? Do we recognize talent in an unexpected context?

One possible conclusion reached from this experiment could be this: if we do not have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world, playing some of the finest music ever written, with one of the most beautiful instruments ever made, how many other things are we missing?

*Brought to you by...*

**BECK**  
**SEMINARS**  
Keynotes • Workshops • Training  
[www.BeckSeminars.com](http://www.BeckSeminars.com)