



Washington DC Metro Station on a cold January morning in 2007. He played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time approximately 2 thousand people went through the station, most of them on their way to work. After 3 minutes a middle aged man noticed there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds and then hurried to meet his schedule.

**4 minutes later:**

The violinist received his first dollar: a woman threw the money in the till 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 3 year old boy stopped but his mother tugged him along hurriedly, as the kid stopped to look at the violinist. Finally 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 them to move on.

**45 minutes later:**

The musician played. Only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but continued to walk their normal pace. He collected \$32.

**1 hour later:**

He 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 best 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 sold out a theater in Boston where the seats averaged \$100.

**This is a real 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 common place 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: 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... **How many other things are we missing?**