



ARTS & CULTURE

World Champion Says Rubik's Cube, Violin Work Well Together

January 30, 2023

A University of Michigan student is one of the world's top "speedcubers," a person able to quickly solve a **Rubik's Cube**. He also is a talented **violinist**.

Stanley Chapel says the two activities work well together. He adds that he has equal interest in both. But the 21-year-old says the violin has helped him succeed in speedcubing.

Chapel is studying violin performance at the university's school of music, theater and dance. He said that ideas he learned from music study such as repetition and "breaking things down into their smallest" elements helped him get better at cubing.

Chapel grew up in Ann Arbor, not far from where the University of Michigan is located. He solved his first 3x3 Rubik's Cube as a 14-year-old. Five weeks later, Chapel entered his first competition, solving the cube in an average of 22 seconds.

In 2017 in Paris, Chapel placed fifth in both the 4x4 **blindfolded** and 5x5 blindfolded groups at the World Cube Association World Championship.

At the 2019 world championship in Melbourne, Australia, he won both events.

Accounting for the time it takes for him to study the cube before placing the blindfold over his eyes, Chapel can solve one in around 17 seconds.

"The deeper I go into ... cubing technique, the more I find interest in pushing the boundaries of what's possible there," he said.

Chapel has some strong natural abilities. He is able to remember thousands of ways to solve a Rubik's Cube and perform one of Johann Sebastian Bach's violin pieces from memory.

But Chapel also spends many hours working on his skills. In addition, he does regular hand exercises that help him avoid the kinds of pains that come with the large amounts of time turning the cube's sides.

Chapel says years of playing the violin also has helped him have "very, very fine motor control already built up."

Later this year, Chapel plans to defend his world titles in South Korea.

Once he is done with school, though, Chapel is not sure how speedcubing fits into his future plans.

"I guess it's cool to know that nobody is able to do this," he said. "But, at the same time, giving myself a little bit of a **reality check**, it's like, 'How much does that actually matter?'"

"It's not going to pay the bills when I'm older," Chapel said, laughing.

I'm John Russell.

Mike Householder reported on this story for the Associated Press. John Russell adapted it for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

Rubik's Cube -n. a kind of plastic cube with colored squares

violinist—n. a person who plays the violin (a kind of string instrument)

blindfold -v. to cover the eyes of (a person) with a piece of cloth

reality check - n. something which shows you that the real situation is different from what you believed or hoped

