The theoretical framework presented in this article explains expert performance as the end result of individuals' prolonged efforts to improve performance while negotiating motivational and external constraints. In most domains of expertise, individuals begin in their childhood a regimen of effortful activities (deliberate practice) designed to optimize improvement. This article reports a study on a musical idiot savant (NP) who is capable of memorizing large-scale pieces of piano music in three or four hearings. Attempts to memorize two contrasting pieces are documented, one a tonal composition by Grieg, the other an atonal piece by Bartok. The results are compared with those provided by a professional pianist.