

Please don't take the safe road. Take on challenges of whatever kind you can. If you're asked to change. . . rather than fighting it, figure out how you can do that, no matter how uncomfortable in the short run. . . Take video of yourself at every opportunity so you can really see what you look like. . . Challenge yourself to dig deeper. . . Think carefully. . . and be willing to change the way you do things. Challenge what you know. . . Listen, listen, listen. . . And don't be afraid to 'fail' short-term for a long-term success.

Then one day, after years of patience and understanding, DeLay told her, 'Listen, if you don't bring your violin next week, I'm throwing you out of my class.' Sonnenberg thought she was joking, but DeLay rose from the couch and calmly informed her, 'I'm not kidding. If you are going to waste your talent, I don't want to be a part of it. This has gone on long enough.'

The upshot was that Sonnenberg, who was terrified of losing DeLay, finally began working again. She says, "This is something I know for a fact: You have to work hardest for the things you love most. And when it's music you love, you're in for the fight of your life."

This tells you the significance of this book to musicians. And to how you approach not only yourself, but your singers.

Working with my own conducting students, I've told them that to really succeed, especially long-term, you have to be ready to give up past "successful" habits (like Sonnenberg's way of holding the violin) and go through the struggle of taking away what is comfortable and do something new. This means you will be worse for a while (a new gesture, new way of rehearsing) and feel awkward and uncomfortable. But unless you're willing to go through that "failure," you will cap how much you can grow and how much you can achieve.

I see this resistance to changing something you like, something you're comfortable with all the time. I understand it. But you have to know that you're hobbling yourself if you aren't willing to struggle with something that

is difficult. In a sense, you have to be willing to throw away anything from your past that may be getting in the way of your getting better.

It doesn't mean we like failing (in fact, the dislike of it motivates us to work hard), but we're willing to take the chance and also willing to "upset the applecart" over the short run to get better results over the long run.

So, my advice to my grad students: "Please don't take the safe road. Take on challenges of whatever kind you can. If you're asked to change a conducting gesture or long-held (and perhaps cherished!) habit, rather than fighting it, figure out how you can do that, no matter how uncomfortable in the short run. Annoying (and scary) as it is, take video of yourself at every opportunity so you can really see what you look like and whether it helps or hinders. Challenge yourself to dig deeper into the scores you study. Think carefully about your rehearsal technique (or whether you really have one!) and be willing to change the way you do things. Challenge what you know about choral sound. Listen, listen, listen (and listen some more!) to other choirs and recordings, discuss important issues with colleagues, go to conferences and workshops. And don't be afraid to 'fail' short-term for a long-term success."

An interesting book, indeed!