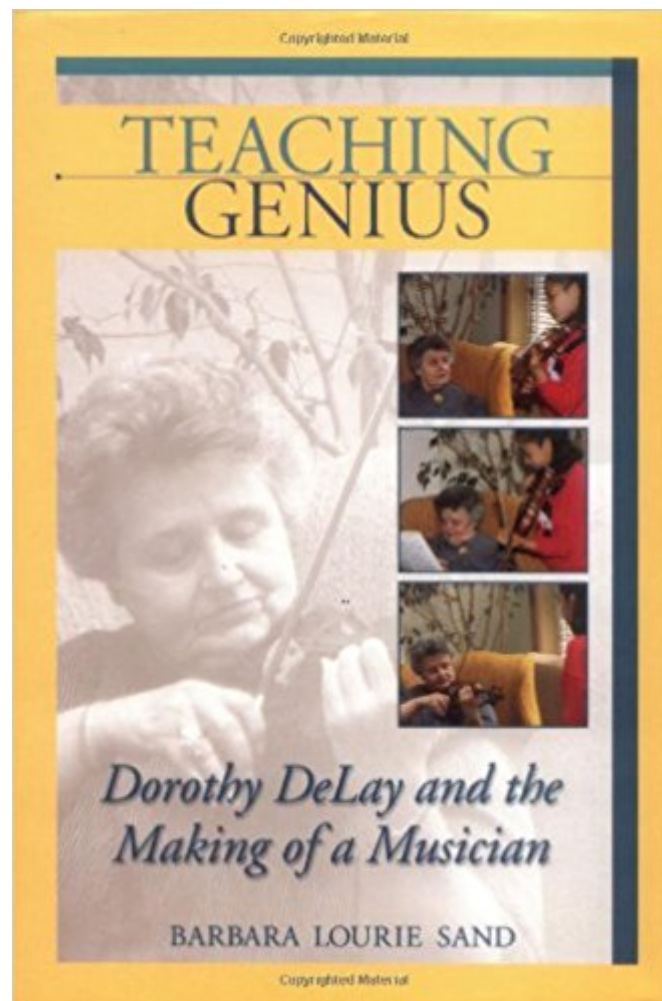


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Teaching Genius: Dorothy DeLay And The Making Of A Musician



Synopsis

The late Dorothy DeLay taught violin at Juilliard for more than 50 years, and a list of her pupils - from Itzhak Perlman and Kennedy to Midori and Sarah Chang - reads like a who's who of the violin world. For more than 10 years, the author was granted access to DeLay's classes at Juilliard and the Aspen School, allowing her to craft this fascinating book that is both an exploration of the mysteries of teaching and learning and a feast of anecdotes about an extraordinary woman.

HARDCOVER.

Book Information

Hardcover: 242 pages

Publisher: Amadeus Press (March 1, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1574670522

ISBN-13: 978-1574670523

Product Dimensions: 9.4 x 6.4 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.5 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 39 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #228,615 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #69 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Theatre #142 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Educators #506 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Instruments > Strings

Customer Reviews

Some people are born teachers, some become great through experience, and some become famous through their students. The renowned violin teacher Dorothy DeLay fits all three categories. She discovered her innate talent and love for teaching early in life, inspired by the great pedagogue Ivan Galamian, but her long association with him, first as his student, then as his assistant at the Juilliard School, ended in an acrimonious parting of ways. She then developed her own class of students at Juilliard and other prestigious conservatories, and soon acquired a worldwide reputation as unrivalled producer of prodigies and virtuosos. One of her first star pupils was Itzhak Perlman; it might be said that they made each other famous. The music world has long speculated about what sets DeLay and her teaching apart, and in this book, 10 years in the making, Barbara Sand tries to find some answers. She observed DeLay in action and interaction with her pupils at Juilliard, the Aspen summer school, and at home, and talked extensively with DeLay and her husband of almost 60 years, Edward Newhouse. Sand interviewed her assistants, her students past and present, and

the conductors and managers who engage them. What emerges is a portrait of a woman whose inexhaustible energy, determination, inquiring intellect, and single-minded commitment to her work and her students give her a larger-than-life quality. This is a personal profile, not a description of a teaching method. Indeed, DeLay claims she has none, though it seems clear that she is guided by Galamian's technical principles. However, she rejects his well-known authoritarianism, responding to her pupils' individual needs and tempering stringent demands with generous encouragement and support. What makes her approach unique is her deep involvement in her students' lives, from choosing their wardrobes to remaining available to them as adviser and confidante long after they leave her studio. Even more remarkable is her ability to launch them into the concert world. Their gratitude and devotion are unstintingly expressed by Sand's carefully selected interviewees, as is her own wholehearted admiration. The book is a hymn of praise. However, like all successful people, DeLay has her share of detractors. Sand dispatches them in a single chapter, mostly devoted to refuting criticism, some of which is undoubtedly inspired by envy. It is said that her students win major prizes and make successful careers because she attracts the best talents from all over the world, and because she has attained an unprecedented position of power and influence in the music profession's slippery back corridors. She takes only highly accomplished, motivated students who are preparing for solo careers and practice all day. Even the youngest children arrive playing virtuoso concertos, which indicates heavy family pressure and means that she can hand out the carrots while the parents wield the stick. Nevertheless, the chapter on prodigies makes the tortuous process of training and "handling" them sound utterly benign and healthy. Sand discusses DeLay's well-known habit of keeping students waiting for hours and leaving much of the teaching to her assistants (whom she gets on the Juilliard faculty), explaining that she accepts too many students and spends too much time promoting them. But she mentions legitimate pedagogical issues only by implication. Unlike teachers who also perform, DeLay never plays for her students (beyond some technical demonstration) to avoid exposing them to a single influence; instead, she advises them to listen to different interpretations on many recordings. But doesn't this also produce imitation, and perhaps confusion as well? Entirely performance-oriented, DeLay focuses on what is effective onstage and encourages a large-scaled, extroverted playing style. She speaks emphatically about teaching her students to think for themselves, but never mentions fostering their emotional response to the music or helping them in the slow, inward process of discovering their own feelings. Yet isn't this the key to becoming a communicative artist? Sand is an empathetic, adept interviewer, winning her subjects' confidence and eliciting frank, informative responses (though some could have used editing). Galamian, perhaps to contrast his teaching style with

DeLay's, generally comes off rather badly; DeLay herself speaks about their rupture candidly but without rancor. The book contains much absorbing information, punctuated with many detailed descriptions of people's looks and attire. There are sweeping statements about players and teachers. Why, for example, are such great artist-teachers as Flesch, Busch, Enescu, Rostal, and Bron not mentioned among the 20th-century "teaching geniuses"? Sand's style is a pleasure to read, engaging, lively, humorous, and to the point, despite some moments of confusion and contradiction. Her perceptive insights and warm feeling for her subject bring us closer to understanding what makes Dorothy DeLay such a fascinating, controversial personality. --Edith Eisler

"...[DeLay] was closely followed by Barbara Lourie Sand, whose resulting book...at last opens the door to Miss DeLay's studio." -- Paul Griffiths, The New York Times, September 3, 2000"...a masterpiece of the genre, Barbara Sand constructs a picture of the 'whole' DeLay..." -- Wes Blomster, MusicalAmerica.com August 17, 2000"...an unparalleled look both inside and outside DeLay's star-making studio, along with persuasively capturing the essence of DeLay herself." -- Ken Smith, Billboard, October 14, 2000"In addition to vivid anecdotal touches in the book, there are insights about DeLay's teaching...smooth and easy to read." -- Allen Hughes, Chamber Music, Summer 2000Her life, philosophy, and teaching techniques are thoughtfully examined in this wide-ranging and thorough biography ... -- Chamber Music

As an amateur, and very late beginner, violinist I have known who Delay was as well as the pantheon of names of the great teachers. Yet, this provided an insiders look at those people and how they nurtured the top professionals that we have come to admire and respect. Sand put a very human face on Delay and her colleagues and took us inside one of the top Conservatories in the USA. As one who now has a few students I also got some ideas on how to teach (albeit I did teach professionally in my own professional field). I also got to know some of the people who I see on stage warts-and-all. Great read and wonderful insight.

Love this book! It's an accurate depiction of Ms DeLay, Mr Galamian, the Juilliard School & the life of violinists who become great. It's worth every minute, every second, every exercise, scale, arpeggio, etude, blister, callous, and shoulder ache to play this instrument like few ever are able to. Thank you!

Nice book!

I really don't know what to think about this book. I've read a lot of similar books - I am a classical violinist myself and have known of Dorothy DeLay forever. I am an enormous fanatic of one of her most prized of pupils, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, who has always sung the "Ms. DeLay Praises". Sarah Chang, another product of the DeLay Juilliard stable of players, developed far more than I ever expected. She made the transition from prodigy to virtuoso with aplomb - and it is probably - with an emphasis on probably - due in some part to Dorothy DeLay. As for this book by Ms. Sand - well, it's not bad. It tells a lot about how Dorothy lived her life as master teacher of well over a thousand violinists, her teaching partnership with Ivan Galamian, who has long since been credited with making Perlman, Kyung-Wha Chung, the late Michael Rabin, and a whole host of others, into the incomparable performers they were. And it tells of DeLay's eventual split from Galamian (which ended - completely and totally - in a single phone call, as detailed here.) And it tells of DeLay's clout - how conductors, managers, concert promoters, came to her when they were in search of a fine young artist. How she helped steer her students along the path of righteousness in the often cold and calculated upper echelon of classical music. We get a good inside look at DeLay's studio and how she works. And, it tells of how her husband was involved in the process as well, fielding some of the hundreds of phone calls that came in to the DeLay house every day. I found that interesting and was previously unaware of it. Her approach of teaching students to teach themselves is indeed a noble one, but it doesn't work for everyone - and there were those naysayers who said that she never really taught anything. Basically this book is a compilation of many interviews with DeLay and her students, and observations of Ms. Sand's that were recorded during an extended period of time spent in her studio; I don't know if Sand is a violinist or not. I'm guessing not, judging from the way she writes. It's astonishing, the achievements of some of the 7 and 8 year old children whom Dorothy DeLay worked with - some of them had learned nearly the whole standard repertoire by the time they'd reached their teenage years or before. Yet the majority of them will never be heard, never sign with a record company, never make it to the top of the figurative Mount Everest. We'll never hear them in any major concert halls throughout the world. And there's some insight here as to why not. This book is geared primarily toward those who are not real familiar with the violinistic world - perhaps interested concertgoers who regularly hear Midori or Perlman or Sarah Chang or Nadja who have seen "a pupil of master pedagogue Dorothy DeLay" in the concert program notes, and wonder just how they got where they are, other than the endless hours of practice. For the benefit of the casual reader, Sand gives quite a bit of background about

other legendary teachers of the past century, and what it means and takes to "become a violinist." In this regard, the book succeeds. There are chapters detailing Sarah Chang and Itzhak Perlman (and one with Toby Perlman, his wife). Parts of other chapters contain info about some of her other major pupils; hardly anything on Midori though, who some say was DeLay's most gifted pupil and I wholeheartedly concur. Some of the other material presented might be a little much for the average reader, though. The things that go on behind very closed doors are not covered in this particular book, or probably any book; a student's life on the trail from student to professional in the "New York classical music community" - getting jobs, getting representation, getting booked for concert dates, etc. etc. It's a unique thing for every musician and while the rewards are great, they are only given to a minuscule number of individuals. That's why the vast majority give up after awhile, despite the rigorous training, and play in orchestras and/or teach and/or play chamber music and make a modest living. Again, back to my opening statement about not knowing what to think of this book... Dorothy DeLay had quite a bit of controversy surrounding her. Despite this, she had a way of teaching - perhaps it wasn't teaching so much as guiding - her students. And for many of them, it worked very well. She was not a stern taskmaster or overly critical. Was she an important teacher as Galamian was? Or just a good mentor? Did she really shape the lives and careers of her students? Did parents from around the globe practically demand that she teach their children because there was literally no one else who matched up to Dorothy DeLay? Did DeLay have something that no one else did? Was she, to some people, "the joke of New York who couldn't even remember her own pupil's names?" (direct quote to me from a Juilliard student.) To all of these queries, the answer is "perhaps."

Some have criticized this book for giving an overly-fawning portrayal of Dorothy DeLay. However, this book contains an excellent chapter devoted solely to DeLay's critics, and it doesn't shoot the critics down; it discusses the criticisms in a fair way. Dorothy DeLay died in 2002 but her legacy lives on. This is the woman responsible for teaching Perlman, Sarah Chang, Midori, Salerno-Sonnenberg, Nigel Kennedy, Cho-Liang Lin, Mark Kaplan, Shlomo Mintz, Gil Shaham, Simon Fischer, and too many more to mention. I never played for her, but did watch a lesson she taught once. Admittedly, it was rife with many of the things of which her critics complain: She arrived about three hours late (Getting "DeLayed"), and once the lesson began she was constantly answering the knock at the studio door, the phone ringing, etc. However, knowing that many people sought to play for her at least once, so they could then put her name on their resume, she didn't always take these occasions seriously, especially given the hundreds and hundreds of violinists she

heard in her life. Those special musical geniuses that DeLay *did* take a special interest in, though, she took a long way. While some violin teachers like to focus only on developing technique through scales and exercises, DeLay never failed to emphasize the musical, expressive, artistic side of the violinist's development. Whereas her contemporary Ivan Galamian would say "I don't teach music," meaning he only taught technique, musical interpretation notwithstanding, Dorothy DeLay would constantly ask her students things like "Where do you think this phrase is going?" and "What do you think is the most important note in this phrase?" and "What do you think Beethoven might have been thinking when he composed this passage?" So many music teachers today, of all instruments, neglect this area of development as they view performance as an olympic sport of technique. Yes, the profession is extremely competitive, but in such competition, when there are 1000 violinists that can hit the notes, the ones that stand out are the ones with a superior *artistic* finish. This book is an excellent survey of the inner world of Dorothy DeLay's studio; her philosophy, her former students, and much more. She was the single most influential violin teacher of the 20th century.

Teaching Genius is an amazing opportunity for musicians, teachers and parents of aspiring musicians to get a glimpse of the world of developing a serious violinist. Dorothy Delay played some part in the development of most well known violin soloists living today. She had to have something amazing and the author of this biography does an amazing job of bringing you into Ms. Delay's world. I know that my teaching style was profoundly affected just by reading this book. I feel that Dorothy Delay's ability to motivate and inspire her students still continues through the hands of a new generation of teachers who have been able to get to know her.

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