

7NEXT STEP: Seven Pathways to accompany your Journey



By Barry Green

www.innergameofmusic.com

Professional musicians, including classical performers, free-lance musicians, teachers, or workers in associate fields of music (including sales, recording, technology, composition) face new challenges in a post-pandemic world.

According to a study by [Help Musicians](#), one-fifth of musicians have considered a career change

because they cannot make ends meet financially through music. The same study stated that 80% of musicians have been unable to return to work full-time.

In addition to career changes, musicians often diversify their careers to supplement their income. They engage in entrepreneurial or multi-tasking activities closely connected, like playing and teaching. Other performers may find unrelated 'day jobs' in the service areas like merchandise sales, food industry, marketing, computer technology, real estate, or the visual arts.

Our climate for employment in the arts is rapidly changing and demanding. One of the primary keys to survival in the arts may exist beyond the technical skills to play a musical instrument. We must now turn to the personal HUMAN skills we bring to our craft as musical artists. This includes retraining and expanding our personality beyond musicianship to include more interpersonal skills, like awareness, creativity, compassion, humility, inclusiveness, patience, tolerance, and kindness.

Regardless of your reason to explore a new pathway, your motivation for change should not be to satisfy your ego, for promotion, or for financial gain. Change will be most successful when we seek passion and fulfillment in whatever we do. After all, most musicians were initially attracted to the arts because they love it and find it inspiring and enjoyable.

For some, change could mean stepping down to a position of less pressure; earning less income for the sake of comfort, free time, family, or hobbies. For others, we will explore the risks and challenges of moving from a rank-and-file position to a leadership role.

In researching this article, I was surprised to learn a very profound truth. I used to think that a promotion was 'moving up.' Yes, it might include more income, responsibility, or a special title like principal, maestro, director, coach, or boss. However, I learned that the concept of 'moving up' is more like 'moving over'!!!

More importantly, when interviewing colleagues who have followed their inspirations and changed course, I learned that embracing new personality skills not only helps their new positions but provides more confidence and satisfaction in their current role.

We will meet several artists who have confronted, adapted, and retrained themselves to find more satisfaction in their lives. By branching out, they have been challenged to develop additional skills for these new positions. These artists include orchestra musicians who also took positions as principals, concertmasters, concert artists, conductors, composers, arrangers, university deans, writers, educators, or public speakers.

I have found that it's not WHAT we do that brings us fulfillment, but instead WHO WE ARE and how we treat others that is essential to our satisfaction. We will explore seven focus areas to branch out into your next step. They include inspiration, education, commitment, listening, discipline, humility, and kindness.

1) INSPIRATION

Something happens that inspires you to change your life. It could be a person, a teacher, an accident, a conversation, or a moment of silence.



Libby Larsen <https://libbylarsen.com/>
Mastery of Music Pg 239. Creativity,
Barry Green.

Libby Larsen is a wonderfully expressive American composer. She believes that creative insights can take the form of an inner voice that speaks to us with many ideas throughout the day. We must always be in a state of readiness to hear this voice and act on it creatively. She calls this the MOMENT OF GO.

It's a special moment. Most people decide to ignore these creative insights. You must be courageous, honor it and GO with it.

Teachers and mentors are excellent sources of inspiration. When someone tells you that they believe in you, it can inspire you to take your 'next step'.

When I was a student at Indiana University School of Music, the celebrated violin teacher, Josef Gingold, told me that someday I would be the principal bassist of a major symphony orchestra. I never dreamed of that career until he encouraged me to pursue this path. After hearing this kind of trust from a famous musician, I started to practice six hours a day and two years later I got my job as Principal Bassist of the Cincinnati Symphony.



Barry and Josef Gingold, 1965, Indiana University, School of Music

The great international conductor Leonard Slatkin (and former music director of the St Louis Symphony, the National Symphony, and the Detroit Symphony) was first given the baton while in high school, playing first viola in the California Junior Symphony orchestra conducted by the distinguished conductor Peter Merinbloom.

The maestro had faith and trust in me as a musician. One rehearsal, the Maestro Merinbloom was called away for a phone call, and he turned to me and said: "Here, you conduct." He threw down the score of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*. That's how Leonard Slatkin's conducting career was launched.



Leonard Slatkin
<https://www.leonardslatkin.com/>



Kelly Hall-Tompkins
<http://www.kellyhall-tompkins.com/>

Kelly Hall-Tompkins is a world-renown concert violinist, chamber player, public speaker, social activist, concertmaster, and music video producer. She also played the violinist in the Broadway production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

While beginning her career as a soloist, she took her first professional position playing in the New Jersey Symphony. She describes how she discovered her own talent as a public speaker.

I didn't know that about myself. They had these things called renewal speeches for the New Jersey Symphony, encouraging the audience to renew their subscriptions. One day they asked me to speak. I said, "oh, no, no, no, no, no, no." Then while we were playing Mendelssohn Reformation Symphony, they asked to interview me on stage about growing up as a Lutheran.

I said, "Oh, sure. That's not a big deal." I realized I could do this. Shortly after, I became a regular concert speaker and spoke in front of 3000 people at the NJ PAC.

Kelly became restless playing in the symphony orchestra. She felt no control over the music she played and sometimes had to follow a conductor in a way that she didn't believe served the music. She felt powerless in her career. Kelly shares how she honored that inner voice that composer Libby Larson believes is always full of ideas.

I saw it differently. I can create more. I should be doing more. I've always had a calling as a soloist. Since I spent all my 20s in an orchestra, I would really like to do something different.

I learned from Oprah's show that I just can't wait for the universe to provide a parachute and then jump. I have to jump first, and the parachute will appear.

That was the year I shot out of the barrel with my imagination project and got a million views on YouTube. I created music videos instead of a CD. I wanted to reach a broader audience. It launched my career into a whole different sector. I've never looked back.

2) EDUCATION

Your parachute has landed you in new territory with your talent, ambition, energy, and commitment to following your next step. It's a new and perhaps lonely world that demands learning new skills before becoming as comfortable and fluent as you felt in your previous world.

Meet New Yorker Weston Sprott, who is currently the Dean of the Preparatory Division of the Juilliard School of Music while also being a full-time member of the trombone section of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Weston gained some experience in management while serving on the orchestra's contract negotiating committee. He earned a reputation as a problem-solver rather than a problem spotter.

Weston describes how the demands of serving the orchestra required developing some new skills."



Weston Sprott
<https://www.westonsprott.com/>

I realized there's a lot of learning that I needed to do if I was going to be effective in that role. I started consuming a lot of books related to negotiation, group dynamics, and non-profit management. What does it mean to properly manage a nonprofit organization? If I'm going to be in a position where I'm negotiating with people. I want to understand their job and how they do it, so I know how to engage with them. I learned speak with potential donors, manage a budget, and submit tax returns. These skills helped me work effectively.



Stefani Matsuo
<https://stefanimatsuo.com/>

Stefani Matsuo, the current concertmaster of the Cincinnati Symphony, began her career in the first violin section of the Indianapolis Symphony before joining the second violin section of the Cincinnati Symphony. She first won the associate concertmaster position before being awarded her concertmaster position. Each role required working with different leaders and partners and following orders from management and conductors. She talks about being prepared to work as a team member of the orchestra.

I wanted to play my best and be prepared with as much integrity as possible for the audience, the composer, the conductor, and my colleagues. If an entire section is giving and really organized, it affects the people around them. Sometimes section players might feel like we don't matter as much because we aren't heard individually. But being part of great section can be very satisfying.

An essential part of being prepared in any new position is observing both successful and less successful people in those positions. Maestro Leonard Slatkin describes how valuable it was for him to spend several years in Saint Louis observing his mentors on the podium. He learned not only what to do but also learned just as much by observing what wasn't working. Like Weston Sprott, he values the importance of learning skills that aren't obviously related to his job.

Everybody who conducts should play in an orchestra or sing in a chorus. They need to observe other conductors as a performer. It's one thing to just watch them, which I did when I came to St. Louis, but before that, I was playing in the Juilliard Orchestra. I was going to rehearsals of other conductors and the conductors of visiting orchestras. As a musician, I tried to understand the nature of communication between conductor and orchestra. I paid attention to what the conductor did (or didn't do) to elicit the kind of sound they wanted. Were they speaking too much, and was it relevant?

Kelly Hall-Tompkins was grateful for her playing experience in the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra.

In my opinion, you don't really know a composer unless you know many genres of their work. Playing in the orchestra was an asset because I know the score of every orchestral piece so intimately. Being able to play the overtures, operas, string quartets, and concertos really gives a fuller picture. That's how I approach my solo engagements as well.

3) COMMITMENT

Commitment is what binds you to your next step. The strength of this attachment, devotion, and faithfulness is critical to your success. I find it inspiring to learn how our colleagues can maintain this strength of focus. What do you care about? What is important to you? What do you really love?

Weston Sprott said that you have to figure out who you are and what you care about.

I realized there's a lot of learning that I needed to do if I was going to be effective in that role. I started consuming a lot of books related to negotiation, group dynamics, and non-profit management. What does it mean to properly manage a nonprofit organization? If I'm going to be in a position where I'm negotiating with people. I want to understand their job and how they do it, so I know how to engage with them. I learned how nonprofits work, how to write grants, raise money, speak with potential donors, manage a budget, and submit tax returns. These skills helped me work effectively.

Kelly Hall-Tompkins talks about how important it is to LOVE what you do.

I don't want to stay in any situation that I don't think serves my higher good. What are some of the projects that you want to impact your audiences?

I think artistry is the most important thing, and it's also the rarest thing. You know, it's not just getting all the notes right, but with imagination and nuance. You're changing lives.

Are you telling stories? Are you inspiring people in music? I'm always trying to expand access and use the platform to bring awareness about social issues that I think are important.

Kelly, once again, has a unique attitude about this when engaging in a new artistic project. She told me she also learned from Oprah to pay yourself first to fund your project.

This way, you can at least create a safety net for yourself. But if you're able to get it started with your own seed capital, then you don't have to wait for others for support.

When you are committed to a higher cause, the greater good for all, the team, the ensemble, the integrity of a composer's intentions, it becomes easier for you to stand your ground amidst criticism, division, or disobedience. When Stefani Matsuo was only associate concertmaster, she was temporarily assigned to the concertmaster position for a special Gershwin recording project of *American in Paris*. She had to pass down bowings for the violins, violas, cellos, and basses. The bowings didn't come from her but from the historical Gershwin estate and library. This represented the original urtext edition required for the recording project.

And so, I submitted these new original bowings to the other string principals. Some of my colleagues said they were not changing all these bowings because it doesn't work for their instruments. The conductor's said, "Stefani, that would be your job to go in and talk to them about that."

That was my first authoritative move. I had to tell my colleagues to change their bowings.

I was somebody who had been temporarily promoted from being in the section. I was younger and less experienced than these other principals. I felt emotional pressure and physical sweat running down my neck. There were a couple of sleepless nights where I didn't know how it would be taken.

I said, "you know, it's for the recording. I've spoken to the conductor, and he's adamant that the strings really must match their bowings in these places."

Once they understood it wasn't about exercising my authority but about doing what was best for the recording, they were more than willing to change. It ended up working out for the best.

We climb mountains one step at a time with a clear vision of where we are and where we are going. Suppose your next step is to leave a professional orchestra string section and become a principal player, or leave a university position and become an entrepreneur, a free-lance musician, instrument maker, or a real estate broker. In that case, you will need a goal and a plan. We must be clear and passionate about what we want and clear on a pathway to reaching that goal. The glue that binds us to this project, training, grit, and passion, is what makes up our commitment. Are you ready for your next step?

4) LISTENING

In some traditional music education circles, there is a concept that playing music can be accomplished by following instructions. They include playing notes accurately and in

tune, reading rhythms, following printed dynamics, using correct fingerings, bowings, articulations, drum sticks pedals, and breathing. But I believe music making is much more.

It is more about LISTENING, hearing the difference between the music you hear in your head and what sounds are being created by your hands, fingers, and instruments. If you play music by just following the notes and fingerings rather than the natural sound of the music, you cannot really hear what you are doing.

Playing in the Cincinnati Symphony, Maestro Leonard Slatkin was one of our favorite guest conductors. Rather than talking and giving a lot of instructions, he engaged us to listen to what other instruments were playing at the same time we were playing. He told me:

That means listening to what the orchestra is doing. See if it matches up with what you want. Or, perhaps, maybe the orchestra is doing something better than you could imagine. In this case, you'd go with it. A lot of progress can be made by just refocusing your listening.

You can also listen with your eyes. I believe in expressing my facial gestures, hands, and body to show what's in the music. Suppose a conductor can show a unique personality without using too many words. In that case, they're a terrific conductor.

Stefani Matsuo has expressed her leadership by emphasizing how important it is to be a great listener instead of giving many instructions.

Playing in the violin section really helped because I got to see what is effective from the back in terms of physical leadership. When communicating with your section, try to be as clear and concise as possible.

If you say too much, are people rolling their eyes? If you don't say enough, are they understanding what you're trying to get across? I also believe physical leadership is crucial. People can sense the length of notes and attack notes if you move naturally.

5) DISCIPLINE

Fear can be a great motivator when used effectively. Sometimes it works, but more often, it fails. There is a difference between how fear and intimidation are expressed by an authority figure and how others perceive it. My concern is how much fear impacts the quality of performance.

While it might be considered 'old school,' there was a time in recent history when tyrannical conductors like Toscanini, Solti, Reiner, Szell ruled their orchestras like military drill sergeants. Piano teachers would sometimes strike a student's hands with a ruler to remind them of the proper wrist position on the keyboard. Athletic team coaches often engage in unnecessary physical contact and intimidation to achieve winning results. Was this all justified under the umbrella of discipline?

Let's meet two experts in the fields of performance motivation.



Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser
<http://www.attitudeconcepts.com/>

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser directs an organization called *Attitude Concepts for Today* and is a world-renown inspirational public speaker and mentor to competitive marching band directors and music educators, especially in the wind and brass community. He has also written many leadership books for music students, parents, and teachers.

Tim describes the impact of communicating discipline:

Discipline comes from the word "disciple"; it means: "To follow." Many of us had teachers operating from a fear-based kind of authority. We are part of the animal kingdom, so when we are threatened it instinctively brings

about the "fight-or-flight" syndrome. We are in a "reactive" mode of decision-making rather than being "pro-active" in our response to the communication.

There was a time when people strived to achieve a climate of complete control. Any challenge from a player could be interpreted as a threat to this control, thus triggering more anxiety on all fronts. It's interesting to note: The number #1 fear of young people is to be embarrassed in front of their friends. (Certainly, it plays-out in the adult world as well.)

As a percussionist my inner dialogue would shout, "Don't play a cymbal crash unless you are absolutely certain or you get a definitive cue, because if you do play it in wrong place, you are going to experience the wrath of the conductor." Simply put, we don't want to be wrong and become a target-of-anger in front of our peers.

Intimidation can move things forward quickly, but there may be a long-lasting "price-to-pay" in terms of the TRUST RELATIONSHIP with the musicians at hand. Actually, it is possible to make corrections by addressing the mistake/error without diminishing the player. It's not "what we say" as much as "how we say it."

This not to say there aren't parameters for discipline, accuracy, and ensemble playing, etc. They all play an important role in the learning-growing-becoming journey. We simply need to be cognizant of the artistic/musical culture we create-and-nurture. We must ask ourselves, "Why would students quit choir, band or orchestra? It rarely has anything to do with the musical aspects of the

rehearsals/performances. It often has to do with the relationship with authority/director/leader

A director came up to me at the break in one of my workshop presentations and said, "I just don't motivate kids the way you do."

I asked, "How do you motivate them?"

He replied, "Well, I just kick'em in the rear until they get it right."

"So, what if they don't get it right?...then what do you do? I asked.

"I just kick 'em harder!" he retorted.

I responded, "We have one more session left in the clinic. What would you like to discuss that would be of benefit to your program?"

He said, "I have trouble with retention. Can you address that in your last session?"

It never occurred to him the climate he was creating was connected to the students' sense of SAFETY and SECURITY. Simply put, they were "taking flight" as their survival option.

For the most part, people do not get better by making them feel worse; they simply comply. Once we break the trust relationship, it's fractured for future communications. When it comes to being right or being kind, we're best-off to choose KIND. The logic being you can always go back and be right, but you can't always go back and be kind if you're facing a formerly damaged relationship. We're back to being PRO-ACTIVE instead of REACTIVE.

I believe that any performer can play to their potential when 100% of their energy is devoted to just making music. Suppose their attention is split between being intimidated and performing their best. In that case, it just isn't possible to put all their attention on the music. The performance will suffer because it is polluted with doubt and fear. Get rid of the fear and what remains is total concentration on the task at hand.

When embarking on any career change, you will have to work with new colleagues, conductors, supervisors, and bosses. While you may have no control over the personalities and styles of your leadership team, your reaction to their potentially abusive management style is within your own power. Rather than being fearful or intimidated, you can rephrase any negative language into a more nonjudgmental awareness instruction.

For example, when you hear, "*Basses, you are playing terribly out of tune. Your sound stinks!*" How about saying to yourself, "*Hmmm, I'll be more aware of my pitch and play with a lighter sound.*"

6) HUMILITY – Me vs. We

Playing in any ensemble, from a duo to a chamber group or combo to a full-size orchestra, is like being part of any sports, medical, or business team. Everyone has a job to do. When they work together, the whole is far greater than the sum of its smaller parts.

There is a difference when we see a member of the cello section not in perfect symmetry with the rest of the group. What's going on here? Is this musician thinking more about their own feelings and expressions than being a part of the cello section? Does this cellist feel they are a better musician than their principal and have to show off their technique? What does the principal player think about a section player vying for attention with excessive body movements?

Stefani Matsuo:

It's a whole different thing when the principal could respect a section player as being an equal or even superior musician. The principal is responsible for bowing and making leadership and musical decisions. It's a different job than a section player whose role is to blend into a larger section.

In the Berlin Philharmonic, all musicians are treated like rock stars. Anyone who wins a job in that orchestra is a great player. In one concert, a violinist will be sitting last chair. In the next concert, they could be sitting second chair and have solos and sound phenomenal.

This is an example of not 'moving up' but 'moving over.' Everyone's job may have a different function, but it's not about being better. It's really about how well you can do your job.

Maestro Leonard Slatkin believes that an organization can excel when everyone has the freedom to offer suggestions. Exercising humility and an openness to improve reinforces that a leader is not condescending to their colleagues.

My job was to get an orchestra to understand what I wanted to do with the music. If I can't quite think of a solution to a musical problem, I'll ask the orchestra what they think. Do you have any ideas about this? I have no problem just throwing it out there. I don't really think of myself as the person who knows everything. I'm just another musician.

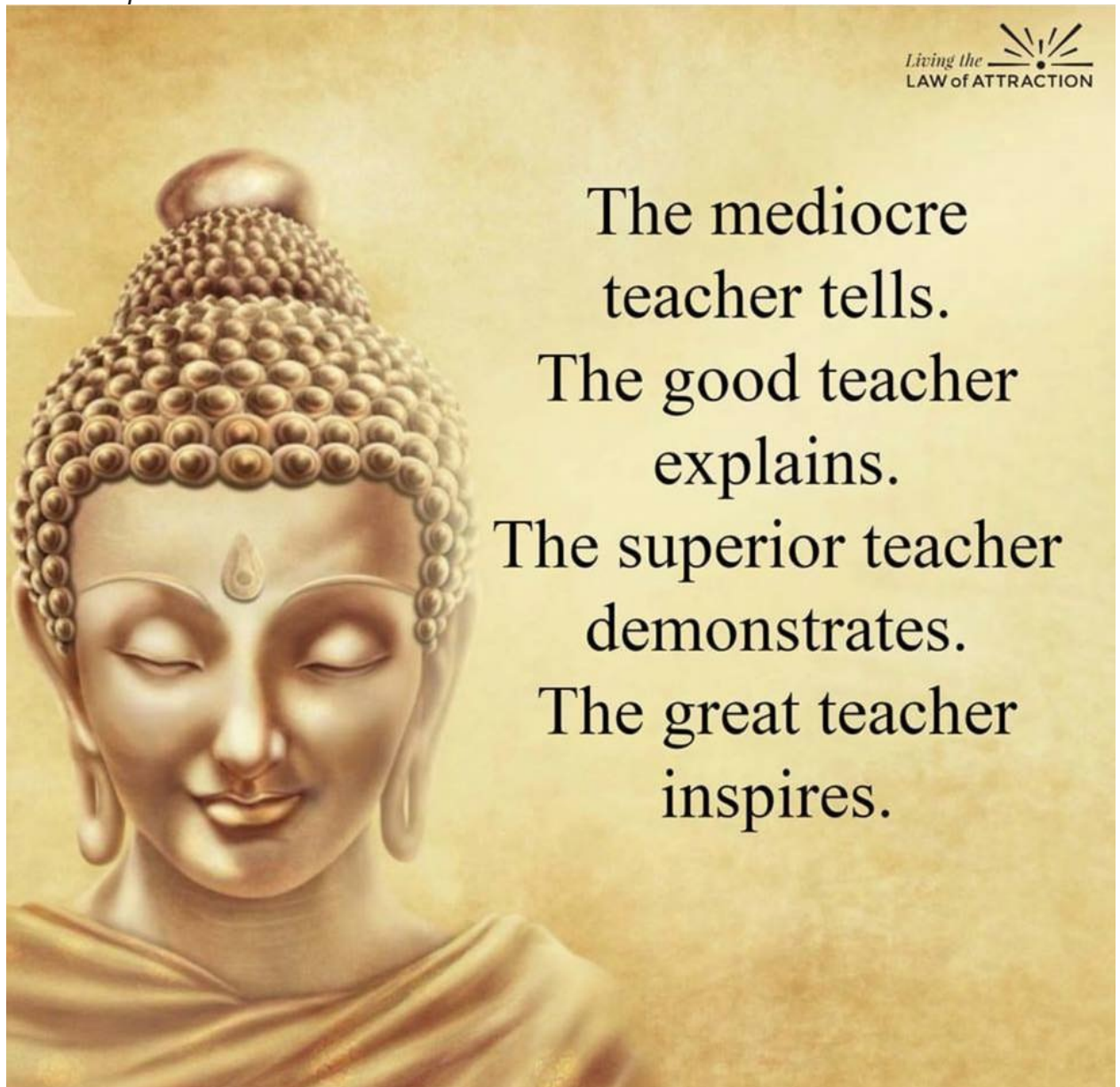
So yeah, I think of myself as just being another person on the stage. The best advice I offered for younger conductors is to listen to the orchestra. They've been through this. Be flexible and humble enough to make the changes.

Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser embodies humility in his leadership courses for conductors.

If we really want the maximum efforts from those around us, we must make ourselves vulnerable. If we're over-aggressive or demeaning, we are inadvertently putting up a firewall that says: "If you do anything to attack me, I'm potential of the individual and/or the ensemble."

As musicians, we live for those magical moments when we feel the full power of the music together; when everyone sets aside their I/me agendas and focuses on the WE-US benefits of the artistry at hand. When conductors express their feelings, it inspires the musicians to go for it. The ensemble mirrors the conductor.

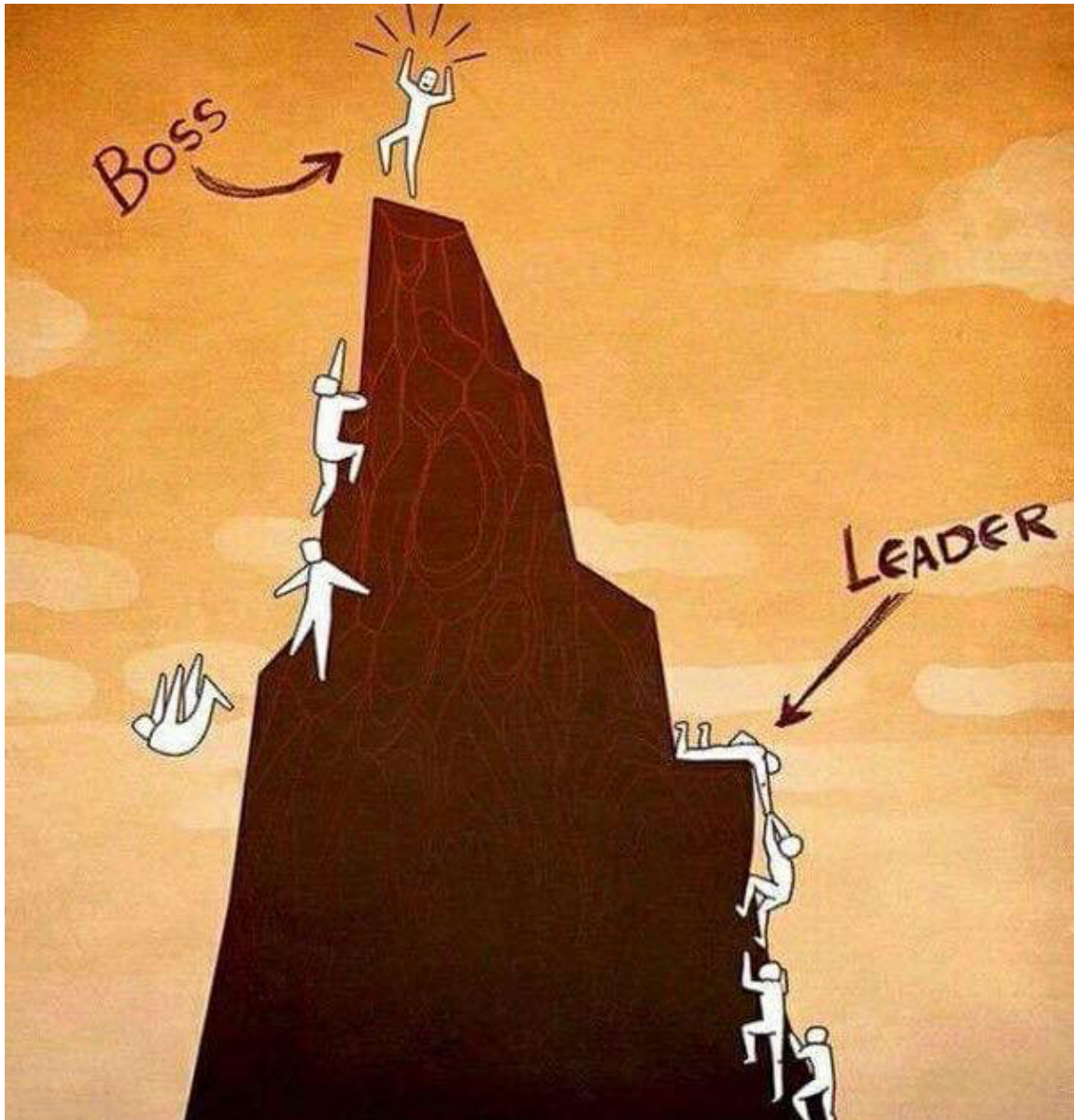
Our leadership is inspiring others to be all they can be-to open the flood gates of unlimited possibilities: PURE ART.



Let us remember, as a conductor, we don't make a sound; it's the orchestra or band that does the playing. We simply lead-them and inspire them to communicate inspiration to the listeners.

Here is one of my favorite cartoons: There are those celebrating and cheering at the summit of the mountain; they made it. However, if you look

*halfway down the mountain, there's a person who is leaning forward, pulling somebody else up. The question is: Which **is** the ultimate leader? Of course, it's the person providing the inspiration, growth, opportunity, and success for others.*



Again, it's not about what you do but rather what you can do to help the team succeed. It's not about me. It's about we.

7) KINDNESS

Your NEXT STEP is a journey into the unknown. This pathway may not be a straight line and could be filled with challenges and uncertainty. The only thing you have complete control over is how you conduct yourself on this pathway.

We have learned from those who succeeded that they bring unique personality skills of humility, creativity, discipline, character, and, most importantly, kindness to their colleagues.

Weston Sprott said:

It's important to always treat people well. It's simple, but it's true. Being kind is the right thing to do, it's good for the mental health of yourself and those around you, and it's also good for business!

Dr. Tim said:

People don't get better by making them feel worse. All they do is comply. Once you break that trust relationship, it's fractured. When it comes to being right or being kind, choose kindness. The logic is, you can always go back and be right, but you can't always go back and be kind.



Nokuthula Ngwenyama
<https://thulamusic.com/>

Nokuthula Ngwenyama prefers to be called Thula. She is a celebrated violist soloist and famous chamber music artist. She told me she used to be highly opinionated, a non-conformist, and anti-authoritarian. She left Los Angeles before she finished high school to attend Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

At the end of her second year, both her father and brother, who inspired her to play music, died. This experience caused her to take a break from music. Instead, she attended Harvard School of Theological Studies, where she learned lessons of tolerance and kindness.

Thula recalls rehearsing the third movement of the Brahms B-flat Major String Quartet. The other strings are supposed to be muted, while the viola isn't. The cellist strongly felt she should be playing with a mute on this occasion. She explained that Brahms's score didn't call for a mute for the viola.

The cellist said heatedly, "That's bullshit!"

Thula replied:

Look, if you care that much about me using a mute, I'll use a mute. I just don't care that much if it will get to the point of confrontation. It's not worth it to defend my ground. I will always cede to somebody else if they get nasty with me in rehearsal.

It doesn't mean I will think highly of them later or seek out playing with them. It just means I'm just going to do what they want, for now. At the concert, I'll do whatever I want. There is no way he can have a temper tantrum on the stage.

So, I'm happy with that.

I guess you have to be totally unthreatening on the outside and a tiger on the inside, knowing that you can kick everyone's butt if you need to.

From *Master of Music* by Barry Green, Page 157-160

I'm not advocating that everyone do whatever they like in a concert. However, Thula reminds us that nobody has the right to judge who we are and diminish our character. Only YOU know who you are. YOU are in control of your own self-esteem. YOU can always choose compassion, self-respect, and kindness for others.

When you bring these personality characteristics into your NEXT STEP, you will find a pathway to satisfaction and fulfillment. It begins with **inspiration**, honoring that inner voice and acting on it creatively. New directions will require new skills and new **education**. Your love and **commitment** will sustain you on this new pathway. **Listening** to the music, your colleagues, and your inner voice will inform your most natural performances. **Discipline** and efficiency will be achieved without fear and intimidation. Being **humble** and dedicated to serving the music rather than yourself will inspire your colleagues to help you succeed. Finally, exercising **kindness** will enable you to be inclusive and be embraced by your musical partners.

These seven pathways can be valued personality qualities that accompany your musicianship. It's not what you do with your instruments or your job description. It's who you are as a person, a precious soul on Earth. It's about how you treat others and express your unique talents that will determine your future. IT'S YOU. Enjoy the journey.

Special thanks to copy editor Krysta Piaskowski. BG

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