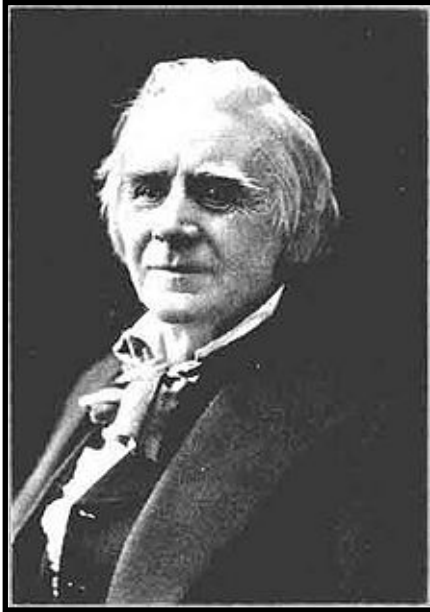


Reacting to Criticism

How a person reacts to criticism often means the difference between success and failure. Take the case of Ole Bull, the famous Norwegian violinist of the 19th century.



Ole Borneman Bull
Feb. 5, 1810 – Aug. 17, 1880

His practical father, a chemist, sent him to the University of Christiania to study for the ministry, and forbade him to play his beloved violin. He promptly flunked out and, defying his father, devoted all his time and energy to the violin. Unfortunately, although he had great ability, his teachers were relatively unskilled. So, by the time he was ready to start his concert tour, he wasn't prepared.

In Italy, a Milan newspaper critic wrote: "He is an untrained musician. If he be a diamond, he is certainly in the rough and unpolished."

There were two ways Bull could have reacted to that criticism. He could have let it make him angry, or he could learn from it. Fortunately, he chose the latter. He went to the newspaper office and asked to see the critic. The astounded editor introduced him. Bull spent the evening with the 70-year-old critic, asked about his faults, and sought the older man's advice on how to correct them.

Then he canceled the rest of his tour, returned home, and spent the next six months studying under able teachers. He practiced hours upon hours to overcome his faults. Finally, he returned to his concerts and, when only 26 years of age, became the sensation of Europe.

The question for us today: How do we respond to criticism? Does it make us angry, or can we learn from it?

--Beecher Hunter