

# Linda Yeo Leonard

## Recordings and Critical Listening Masterclass

*“World class players do not just happen – their talents are forged in the dual furnaces of determination and diligence.”* -Edward Kleinhammer, former bass trombonist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1940-1985)

Becoming the best player you can will take hard work and determination. But if you work to become 1%-3% better every week you play your horn, just think how much better you could be in 6 months . . . a year. Wow- that would be exciting!

I can't stress the importance of listening to great recordings- I picked up many things from my father playing trombone in my house growing up. Many of you probably don't have a parent who plays an instrument professionally. That's fine- there are many excellent recordings out there of great musicians playing your instruments.

### **Trombone:**

A Gala Festival (the Canadian Staff band, with Alain Trudel, Canadian trombone virtuoso- the best and fastest “Blue Bells of Scotland” I've ever heard!

Proclamation, Two of a Mind, The Essential Rochut, Cornerstone, Take 1, and the New England Brass Band recordings on my dad's website: [www.yeodoug.com](http://www.yeodoug.com). Bass trombone solos and trombone duets with brass band, solos, recordings of him playing when he was younger, and rocking brass band recordings with him conducting)

A New At Home and Experiments in Music, by Norman Bolter, my dad's co-worker- former 2<sup>nd</sup> trombonist in the BSO

At the End of the Century- Joe Alessi, principal trombonist of the NY Philharmonic

Fancy Free, by Blair Bollinger, bass trombonist in the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra

Trombones De Costa Rica- rocking trombone 4ets

Bonetown with Michael Davis and Bill Reichenbach

The Legacy of Emory Remington and the Eastman Trombone Choir

### **Euphonium:**

World of the Euphonium 5 by Stephen Mead

CDs by the Childs Brothers

American Variations by Brian Bowman

Leonard Falcone and His Baritone Volumes 1-4 (Euphonium CDs suggested by Mr. Bufis)

### **Tuba:**

Portrait of an Artist by Arnold Jacobs, former tubist, Chicago Symphony Orchestra 1944-1988

Tuba Tracks by Gene Pokorny, tubist, Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Roger Bobo Tuba Libera by Roger Bobo, retired tubist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic

### **Low Brass Ensemble:**

Chicago Symphony Orchestra Trombone and Tuba sections plays Concert Works and Orchestral Excerpts

The Antiphonal Music of Gabrieli- Brass sections of the Philadelphia SO, Cleveland SO and Chicago SO

Music of Gabrieli- Empire Brass (more Gabrieli antiphonal and non-antiphonal music)

But I must also say that listening to music not performed on your particular instrument is almost as important as being a trombone, euphonium or tuba geek. Listen to an early music ensemble, and listen to how they phrase together. Listen to a singer perform jazz or ballads. Get out a recording from the library of a bassoon or cello concerto. Listen to the Bach cello suites. Listen to the classical radio station from Chicago (WFMT 98.7). This is an absolute gem in Chicago, and you're missing out on a great opportunity to learn about music if you don't listen to this station. Listen casually and critically, and listen for phrasing, articulation, and breathing. Go to a live music concert. There are many ensembles in Chicago and in the suburbs. I play in the Northbrook Symphony Orchestra in the northern suburbs and we just had a concert last weekend. I also went to a trumpet recital the other week at Wheaton College, which was fabulous, and am attending a CSO concert this coming weekend- Brahms' "German Requiem".

There is nothing like being pinned into your seat by a hugely loud musical performance, or having to sit on the edge of your seat in order to hear someone perform a passage pianissimo. The holidays are coming up- ask your parents for some money that you can use to go to a great concert or two. Often students can get significantly reduced rates if you show your student ID.

Critique all the music you hear. Determine why you liked it or didn't enjoy it. I have to admit that I don't like everything that I hear, but that music also informs my playing. I heard a concert last year where the CSO came to the Wheaton college artist series, and the horns were way out of balance with the rest of the orchestra, but the trumpets were delicate and beautifully balanced.

I will often tell my students to listen to my playing and tell me how I was better than them. ("In every way" doesn't count!) I also rank myself on my playing, and tell them how I could have been better.

Tell me a story with your playing; communicate an emotion. My second teacher at Wheaton (Dr. Terry Schwartz) always encouraged me to do this, and it's a spectacular way to enhance the way in which you play. Some pieces are "happy" while others are "sad" or "angry". Often pieces also have sections. Make up your own story, and then try to communicate that to your audience.

Are there any ways I can suggest to get better at your upper range, lower range, articulation, double tonguing? Practice, practice, practice! No aspect of your playing is going to magically get better without dedicated work from you. Take time to work on all the aspects of your playing that you're really good at (to keep those in tip top shape), and then work on the aspects of your playing that you're not so good at. I cannot reinforce this enough, but it's really important to make your practice sessions Play-Practice-Play sandwiches. I have so many students who don't play through pieces ever until they come into their lessons. They're completely unprepared to make it all the way through because they've never done it that way at home. I often will not pass them on those pieces, because in real life you need to be able to play through something from beginning to end without stopping. I'm not so concerned with mistakes, but rather how you recover from them. Everyone makes mistakes- it's not an excuse for making them, but rather an explanation of how life really is. Learn from your mistakes, and figure out if they fall into patterns or sections, and then attack them with a vengeance. ☺

Listen critically to yourself every time you play, not only to listen for things that could be better, but things that are good already. I often find myself congratulating my trombone (Bertha) in the midst of a lesson because she helped me demonstrate something to a student. Giving yourself a pat on the back is fine, but then you have to get into how the piece could be better. There's always room for improvement. Develop a little looping pattern on the measures you need to work on, and break it down into bite sized chunks. Keep working on it, and eventually things will get better and easier.