

Linda Yeo

Recordings and Critical Listening Masterclass Overview

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

Becoming the best player you can be 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 six months . . . or a year. Wow – that would be exciting!

I can't stress enough the importance of listening to great recordings. I picked up many things from my father playing trombone in my house when I was 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 father's website: 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)

Anew At Home and *Experiments in Music* - Norman Bolter, retired Second trombonist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. www.air-ev.com

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

Fancy Free - Blair Bollinger, bass trombonist of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra

Trombones De Costa Rica - fantastic trombone quartets

Bonetown - Michael Davis and Bill Reichenbach (jazz duets for tenor and bass trombones)

The Legacy of Emory Remington with the Eastman Trombone Choir

Euphonium:

World of the Euphonium 5 - Stephen Mead

Compact discs by Nicholas and Robert Childs (Doyen recordings)

American Variations - Brian Bowman

Leonard Falcone and His Baritone Volumes 1-4

Tuba:

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

Tuba Tracks - Gene Pokorny, tubist, Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Roger Bobo Tuba Libera - 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, Cleveland and Chicago Symphonies

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

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 – it also streams on the Internet at www.wfmt.com). 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 fabulous trumpet recital a few weeks ago at Wheaton College, and am attending a Chicago Symphony concert this coming weekend - Brahms' *German Requiem*.

There is nothing like being pinned into your seat by an overwhelmingly 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 an orchestra 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.

Tell me a story with your playing; communicate an emotion. My second trombone 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 listening for things that could be better, but for things that are good already. 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 for 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.