

# AN ARTIST'S CORNER

*featuring*

**Dr. Irvin L. Wagner**



**Irvin L. Wagner** is a positive, enthusiastic musician who enjoys making good music in all styles. He is constantly trying to provide musical situations where the public and the musician can come together to share a rewarding experience. He views music not as something to be observed as if in a museum but as something to be felt, experienced, enjoyed and shared. His constant goal is to have both the performer and the audience feel stimulated and fulfilled.

This concept of making music comes naturally for “Irv” because he grew up singing gospel and country music with his family, played classical solos on his trombone from a very early age, and started playing jazz while still in high school. These experiences lead him to be involved with audiences of every type, and he always strived to please the listeners and his fellow musicians in every situation. Is it any wonder then that he now is recognized in the nation and the world for his contributions as an “ambassador of good will.”

Dr. Wagner has distinguished himself with many, many merits and has made a significant impact on trombone playing completely around the world. He performs in all styles of music be it classical or jazz, he composes, he arranges, he conducts, he teaches, and he serves. Even if you come to the most remote parts of this world: he has been there or they know about him and his trombone.

Irv served as President of the International Trombone Association from 1982-1984, and during his tenure traveled completely around the world performing, teaching, and organizing national trombone chapters in such countries as Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Israel, Greece, and Great Britain. This activity around the world resulted in him being “the Most Listened to Trombonist in the World in the 80’s” as he was heard by more than a quarter of the population of the earth. This came about through his public performances in over 30 countries and especially through a television special in China viewed by over 600 million people and a radio recital in India heard by 500 million people. More recently he has performed in Greece, Brazil, and in Rachmaninoff Hall at the Tchaikovsky conservatory of Music in Moscow, Russia.

He also enjoys an extensive career as a conductor serving as the Conductor of the Oklahoma Community Orchestra as well as a frequent Guest Conductor for such as the Austin (Texas) Symphony Orchestra and the Kansas City Symphony Orchestra as well as other orchestras around the world such as the Paraguay National Symphony Orchestra, the Russian Imperial Orchestra in St., Petersburg, Russia and the Cannes Symphony Orchestra in France.

Major honors have come to Dr. Wagner because of his untiring efforts. He holds two Distinguished Professorships, a David Ross Boyd Professorship and a Regents Professorship, at the University of Oklahoma. In 1988 Dr. Wagner was named “Oklahoma Musician of the Year” by the Federated Music Clubs of Oklahoma and the Governor of the State of Oklahoma. In 1997 the International Trombone Association gave him one of it’s highest awards for his significant contributions to the success of the organization, in 2013 the Association awarded him the “Neill Humfeld Award” for distinguished teaching, and in 2019 the Trombone Association acknowledged him with the very high “Lifetime Achievement Award

Irv holds a bachelors degree from McPherson College in Kansas and Masters and Doctors degrees from the Eastman School of Music. He has been a member of the Wichita Symphony Orchestra, the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, and is currently a member of the Oklahoma City Philharmonic Orchestra.

## **How old were you when you began playing your instrument? Did you start playing another instrument before your current one?**

I was one month shy of my 10<sup>th</sup> birthday when I started playing trombone. I had already done a lot of singing with my family and had taken piano lessons. My parents were farmers but always did a lot of singing for churches and schools. My Mom played guitar, and my older sister sometimes played accordion to accompany our Quartet. We went Christmas Shopping during the season, and I saw a Trombone in the Window of the Music Store and expressed an interest. My parents then asked the Elementary School Band Director if he thought I could play Trombone and Start in the middle of the year. He said yes, so my parents went back and purchased the trombone and I started about the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of January in 1948.

## What equipment do you primarily use?

I play a Shires trombone except if I have a jazz engagement, I play an old King 2B. But here is the story. I played a Conn 88H for many, many years. But when I was President of the International Trombone Association (1982-1984), I took a sabbatical from the University of Oklahoma to travel completely around the world to with the purpose of establishing Trombone organizations where possible. (A side note is at that time we called ourselves the International Trombone Association, but the membership was almost totally Americans, and it was my goal to finally make us international). Anyway, Holton wanted me to play one of their instruments while going around the world, so they took my 88H and made a Holton just like it. I had two prototypes which were amazing, but what one could purchase in the music store were not the same level as my prototypes. About that time Shires came along, and Steve fixed me up with some marvelous horns which I still play. I have several great Shires Trombones. However, when I am playing jazz I play an old "King 2B" from the late 1940s.

## What are some of your favorite highlights of your career?

So many to mention. I have been so fortunate to have traveled completely around the world performing concerts, presenting masterclasses, and yes-even conducting some world class orchestras. Now to mention a few specific trombone related ones.

1. Three times I have for "THE POPE" in Rome. Pope John Paul II. Amazing experience! I even had a chance to chat with him for 10 minutes or so about his musical interests because he is a fine singer as well as a playwright.
2. I have performed in some capacity for four Presidents of the United States—Nixon, Kennedy, Reagan, and George H. W. Bush.
3. I gave a Solo Trombone Recital in Rachmaninoff Hall at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music in Moscow.
4. At one point during the 1980's it was pointed out that I was the "most heard trombonist in the world." That came about through a special TV documentary shown many times in the China with me performing as well as teaching trombonists at the Central Conservatory in Beijing because I brought a new concept in teaching and performing to the them. In addition, I recorded a recital on All-India Radio. It was estimated that a Quarter of the Population of the Earth Heard Me through those and performance in the USA and other parts of the world.
5. As a Conductor I conducted several Polychoral performances inside St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice where the acoustics are "the best."
6. As a Conductor, I have conducted the Russian Imperial Orchestra in St. Petersburg, the Paraguay National Symphony Orchestra in Ascuncion, the Santa Fe (Argentina)

Symphony Orchestra, and American orchestras such as the Oklahoma City Philharmonic, the Kansas City Philharmonic, and the Austin (Texas) Symphony Orchestra.

7. I must also mention that I developed an entertainment act long ago where I play "Spoons and the Spoons and Trombone at the same time." I have done that act for countless thousands of people including American National Television.
8. Although the performances listed above are really significant and noteworthy, I must point out that some performances I have given in Nursing Homes, in schools for young children, for hospitalized individuals, for funerals rank just as high in my heart.

### **What are some of your favorite and most influential albums that you have heard?**

Because I have been around for a long time, the list is endless and diversified. I have always loved listening to the Stan Kenton Band recording, Pat Williams recordings, Christian Lindberg solo Trombone CDs, Urbie Green and 21 Trombones, The Berlin Philharmonic recordings, the Vienna Philharmonic, George Roberts, Tommy Dorsey, Four Freshman, Hi-Los Quartet, Bill Pearce, and more. I am also influenced by listening to various conductors and the orchestras they are conducting. This gives me a broad spectrum of orchestras. Of course, Chicago is great; and I must point out that when I took my first sabbatical, I lived in Vienna with my family for almost a year during which time I heard the Vienna Philharmonic 40 or 50 times. Fantastic experience!

### **Who inspired you to play your instrument?**

No one really. I liked the looks of the Trombone, as I stated earlier, in the store window at Christmas, and that peaked my curiosity. However, my father and mother would tell of "Homer Rodeheaver" who they listened to on the radio long ago. I now know that Homer Rodeheaver was an amazing player specializing in religious music. He had grown up listening to folk music and negro spirituals and transformed those into trombone solos for religious gatherings and radio. Doug Yeo did a wonderful study of him. Though I did not know it at the time, I was probably greatly influenced by him because my parents would have him on the radio. Without really knowing it, I played a lot of solos in church when I was a kid and played meaningful tunes like he did.

### **What are some of your favorite solos written for another instrument?**

Perhaps not the usual answer, but I am a big fan of Piano Concertos and the piano literature. I think some of the great music ever composed was for the keyboard.

Great composers I guess were challenged by the capabilities of the keyboard and composed some of their most amazing works. It is safe to say that most of the Solo Trombone Literature does not measure up in quality. Of course, there are a few exceptions, but apparently most composers either are not inspired to compose great works for trombone solo or they do not know the instrument well enough. The exceptions in my opinion are the Hindemith Sonata for Trombone, Serocki Sonatina, Creston Fantasia, Bozza Ballade, David Concertino, and probably a few more.

### **Do you have any tips on becoming better at transcribing?**

I try to be practical. By that I mean I try to keep the ranges playable, the technical aspects also playable, and the texture useable. I have transcribed many, many pieces for Trombone and Trombone Ensemble, and I would say that mine are practical and still sound good. I do a lot of writing also for Symphony Orchestra, and that has had a great impact on how I transcribe for trombone. I have something like 100 arrangements of Pop things for Symphony Orchestra played by my various professional orchestras, and again I make them practical and playable.

### **How have your practice habits changed over the years?**

My practice habits have certainly changed over the years. I suppose when I was younger, I did not think about warming up but probably played some hymns and familiar folk songs. BUT, when I studied with Mr. Emory "The Chief" Remington, things changed. Since the 1960's I spend a considerable amount of time with Remington Warm-ups—often several times a day. And when a passage comes along that is giving me difficulty, I refer back to the Remington Warm-up that addresses the problem I might be having.

### **As a young player, what did you struggle most with your playing?**

I do not recall that I struggled at all with my playing as a young player. I just played naturally according to what I was playing. For example, every Sunday morning my wife would play the piano and I the trombone on Hymns. Though I never thought about it at the time, but that was probably made playing trombone natural as if I were singing or whatever.

### **Do you like to sing when you practice? Why or why not?**

I am an advocate of singing to help with trombone playing. I grew up as a child singing with my family; therefore, singing has always been a part of my life. Even in



College I sang in the A Cappella Choir and in a male quartet. And all of that can transfer to the trombone in a remarkable manner. Countless times if a student is having difficulty with a passage I have them sing it, and it seems many. Problems can be fixed without even going into technical considerations on the instrument

### **What qualities do you think are important for being successful in life?**

WOW. Such an important question. I guess to be a genuine, caring, loving g person. This can be manifest in countless ways.

### **What do you want your legacy to be?**

I just answered this question for an award I am nominated for at the University of Oklahoma. I want my legacy as an educator to be that "I TAUGHT PEOPLE AND NOT TROMBONE" Or one could say, I taught people through the Trombone. And maybe I should say on a larger scale that "I HELPED OTHER PEOPLE ACHIEVE. THEIR GOALS AND DREAMS." I do more than teach Trombone—I work in my church, I conduct Orchestras in many places, I entertain, I work in the Community, and play professionally.

### **What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?**

I love to travel especially to foreign locations and have done so for many years. I have performed and taught on every continent except Antarctica. And I have traveled the USA having been in all 50 states except Alaska. By the way, on my first Sabbatical from the University of Oklahoma, I lived with my family in Vienna, Austria for 9 months studying old Trombone Music. On my second sabbatical I traveled completely around the world on behalf of the International Trombone Association (at my own expense)—at the time we called ourselves the International Trombone Association, but most of the members were Americans, and it was my objective to organize National Chapter of the Association in other countries which I did in such as Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Israel, Greece, Norway, England, and more.

On a more daily situation, I like to put puzzles together, I love to practice the trombone, I really enjoy spending time with my family who are the best, I like to jog and exercise, and occasionally read a book.

## **How do you stay motivated when you get frustrated or down? Do you have any tips to help stay motivated?**

I do not get down at all. I have always lived my life devoted to the Creator and always seem to have that in my life. Motivation is not really an issue as I am always eager to do whatever is available on a given day from family, friends, teaching, performing, helping, being positive, and more.

## **Do you meditate? If so, what benefits do you get from meditating?**

No—not in the sense that I sit and go through some process. But Yes---I consider my whole life to be a mediation event. Helping other people, teaching students from one's heart, praying, caring about others, lending a hand when someone is in need of mental or physical assistance, and on and on. Meditation is a way of life. And most people do not live as this.

## **With whom did you study**

Mr. Emory "The Chief" Remington at the Eastman School of Music is most significant.. But I consider myself fortunate to have had high quality teachers all along the way from my beginning Band Director (Dallas Finch), my parents (Orval and Florence Wagner), my High School Band Director (August San Romani), my undergraduate professor (Roger Thorstenberg), and then Mr. Remington for my Master's and Doctoral Degree programs.

## **What qualities do you think are important in a student?**

Important qualities in a student are a desire to learn and be involved with the activities and opportunities that are present in the Educational System. Having an inquisitive mind and wanting to explore what can be learned. Some of the most successful students and people are not always the most talented but the ones who have a desire to excel and be of service. One of my favorite examples is a friend of mine who was not a great player, but played 40 years in a high level Professional Symphony Orchestra and continued to play for 15 years in a voluntary Orchestra of high level.

## **Discuss your early musical experiences. Why did you pursue music?**

First, my family were farmers, but in the evenings sang a lot for something to do. They were good enough that we had a Quartet which sang often in Church or School. I was only 5 when I used to stand on a Chair and sing the Bass Part an octave higher

because my voice had not changed. My Mom played guitar. As I look back, we were pretty good. Then in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade they had me start playing trombone in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and probably piano before that. I just grew up doing musical things, and it was beautiful in my memory. I guess it was only natural that I continued to pursue music.

***Do you remember when you decided that you were going to be a professional musician?***

I remember telling a so called “girl friend” in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade that I was going to be a Band Director. That was the first. Then to make a long story short, I probably never thought of anything else EXCEPT I was also an athlete. All through High School I played sports along with music. I played Football, Basketball, and Track on the High School Teams while also being the Band and Vocal Music. I was the most successful at Football being named an All-Conference (All-State) Tackle two years running in High School and had Football Scholarship offers to the University of Kansas and Oklahoma State University. I turned both down in order to study music at McPherson College. I might point out that in High School during the Track Season where I was involved with doing the Shot Put, Javelin, and Discus; so I would put my track stuff on and head to the Band Room to play some Dixieland and talk to the Band Director—it should be noted that I did take 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the discus throw in the conference track meet in site of spending time in the Band Room.

**How much do you practice on a typical day?**

I get in normally 2 or 3 hours a days of some sort. With teaching I cannot commit to a regular routing, but I get in a lot. When I was young, I always enjoyed during the Springtime practicing 8 to 10 hours a day. Sometimes on the weekends I would see how long I could practice, and my record was 15 hours

**Do you have a website? If so, what is the address?**

Yes I do, but I do not use it much. You can just google Irv Wagner and you will get a lot of stuff.

**What are some of your favorite etude books?**

I utilize the standard books:

Bordogni/Rochut  
Blazhivitch

Melodious Etudes for Trombone  
Clef Studies



Method for Trombone  
Clef Studies  
Complete Method  
Orchestral Excerpts  
Lots of Solos

Simone Mantia  
Reginald Fink  
Arban  
Various sources  
Marcello, Galliard, David, etc

### **Do you use any apps when you practice?**

Rarely! Sometimes I use tuning or metronome apps and once in a while record myself.

### **What are some ways to improve one's rhythm?**

Feeling the music. Rhythm comes from having a feeling in the body of being musical

### **What is your favorite place that you have traveled to?**

I have traveled so much. I think stated in another question that I love traveling. SO--my favorite place in the whole wide world is Venice, Italy. This is for several reasons: 1. It is so unusual and interesting with only canals and pedestrian walkways. 2. It is so historic musically with St. Mark's Cathedral being one of the great places in the History of Music. The Acoustics are magnificent which lead to innovations in music that changed the world of music. I list St. Marks and Venice as the Birthplace of Bands, Orchestras, and Choirs that we enjoy in the Western World. All because of the acoustics and great innovative composers like Gabrieli. NOTE: I have given 15 concerts inside St. Marks Cathedral which is amazing. 2. Venice is also the place where a government as we know it started with a President, two houses of elected officials, a supreme court. The only difference is that the elected officials had to be business men, but that is not much different than now either.

In 1984 I was in Venice 9 times just during the course of the year. I know it as well as I know the city I live in. I love Venice and the Venetian people.

### **Who are some of your musical heroes?**

So many, but I guess I would have to list Doc Severenson as a hero. I learned to know Doc and worked with him in the 1960's and had many, many contacts over the years. I even taught him to change the way he played spoons. He was and still is a great musician, a model to follow in practicing, never missing notes, and showmanship.

I also admire Arther Pryor, Gardel Simon, Tommy Dorsey, Urbie Green, Gordan Pulis, Michel Bequet, Jacques Mauger, Bill Reichenbach, George Roberts, Phil Wilson, Bill Watrous, Bill Pearce, Bill Booth, Achilles Liarmakopoulos whom I gave a lesson when he was just beginning, Charlie Vernon, Glenn Dodson, and more players.

Conductors include: Leonard Bernstein, Barenbaum, Solti, Dudamel, Howard Hanson, and more.

### **How old were you when you first began transcribing solos?**

I was pretty young when I first started transcribing and writing music totally. I was always doing programs and when I wanted to do a particular piece, I just made an arrangement or transcribed something. This goes for Trombone as well as Symphony Orchestra. I have about 100 arrangements of various things for Symphony Orchestra, and I have a Trombone Ensemble series called the Irvin L. Wagner Series. I have many publications which are standard pieces in the Trombone Choir literature and are played all over the world.

### **How do you suggest balancing life with being a musician?**

For me, I do not see that as an issue. Music is so balanced in itself, that if one uses it as a tool of sharing life with other people, there is no better option. It is such a joy to bring good feelings and fulfillment to others. Music is used in every important moment in the lives of all people, and be able to be a part is such a joy. It is fulfilling to be a part of weddings, funerals, ceremonies, religious experiences, important events, and on and on. Music is a part of every monumental occasion in life and to be able to be part is wonderful.

### **Please give some tips for freelancing.**

Show up on time, be prepared, be dependable, play your part, be cordial to the others, and enjoy the experience.

### **What are your feelings about students majoring in music education versus music performance?**

Music is a great career, and I fully want to see students majoring in Music and Music education. Such a great profession if you do it correctly and with passion. If you do not have that passion for music and people, you will not be successful, however.

### **Is anyone else in your family a musician?**

No other career musicians before me, but my parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts and all were always interested while being farmers. Now, my offspring being 2 daughters are all musicians—two of which play violin in the Oklahoma City Philharmonic Orchestra, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> is a fine trombone player but is a minister in a church.

### **What are some of your favorite places that you have performed?**

I am so lucky. I have given a recital in Rachmaninoff Hall at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music in Moscow; at the Rimsky-Korsakoff Conservatory of Music in St. Petersburg; the Central Conservatory in Beijing, China; The Concert Hall in Almaty, Kazakhstan; The Academy of Fine Arts in Hong Kong; Symphony Hall in Singapore,; and more. NO. 1 is St. Marks Cathedral in Venice—15 times.

I must also add, that though these locations are so monumental, playing for people in nursing homes, churches, service organizations, hospitals, and the like mean as much to me because I am reaching people in need.

### **Do you have any suggestions for working on one's range?**

Practice low notes, get a rich full tone, and gradually working ones way up. Good high notes come from fantastic low notes.

### **What are you most proud of in your life?**

Being a caring husband and father, being a good person, helping others, teaching several generations of students, being a cooperative colleague, working in my church, bringing music and fulfillment to countless thousands of people.

### **Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

Probably dead!

## **What are your favorite things to do that make you happy?**

Playing trombone, teaching, being around family and wonderful people, doing positive things, and living a positive life. Actually, I am happy 98% of the time and only sad when others have misfortune.

## **Do you practice visualizing yourself performing?**

Not really, but I visualize being in a specific location when practicing in order to make a piece sound better. For example, I always play my best in church, and I imagine often when practicing that I am playing a particular solo in church. Another location is to imagine I am performing a recital while practicing so that I am getting the most out of my time.

## **Do you prefer to learn solos by ear or by transcribing or both? Why?**

Not sure what you mean, but I learn classical solos by reading and memorizing, I try to visualize the music in my mind while performing then. A backup is to rely on playing by ear, and the last resort is that by playing something so many times that the slide and lip just go to the correct place by repetition.

## **What advice would you give to someone interested in majoring in music in college?**

Go for it! Music is an awesome profession; and if one is interested in the art, there is no place better to find a niche. Music is such a broad field so the possibilities are endless—performing, recording, technicians, piano tuners, composers, arrangers, teaching, administrating, entertaining, agents, ushers, medicine, and more.

## **What are you listening to currently?**

Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony. I am conducting it which is a sizeable undertaking—plus I really enjoy studying his writing for Trombones in the last movement. His use of the trombones is very creative and forward looking.

## **Do you have a favorite genre of music?**

I enjoy many, many styles of music. Better to say that the only one I dislike is "Rap." I do not even consider that music. Another observation is that so many modern uses of electronics in music is really "old fashioned." It become novel at times, but the successful experiments in that idiom already happened in the 1960s and 1970s.

## **What non-music courses in college helped you with being a musician?**

History is a great one outside the normal music courses. Of course, Music Theory, Music History, Conducting, Instrumental techniques, Counterpoint, Form and Analysis and the like are fantastic. But general History helps put some of the basic Music courses in perspective.

## **What projects are you working on right now?**

I am trying to edit some Trombone Choir compositions and arrangements that I have done in order to publish them. For example, I did an arrangement of a Spiritual, "Peace Like A River." which I have performed several times and sent it to some others who needed such a piece for a special occasion. They have liked it and thought it was so appropriate for some specific functions; consequently, now I need to make sure all the markings are correct and easy to follow before I send it to my publisher. It will be a nice addition to our literature.

I also do a lot of conducting and am presently preparing to conduct Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony (Ode To Joy), and that is a major work to analyze and conduct. It requires some superior conducting skills to communicate with 150 musicians. A big challenge.

I am also selecting pieces to play on my next solo recital. My recital is not until the end of January, but I like to devote several hours of practice a day from Thanksgiving on for two months until the performance.

## **Please list some of your favorite websites for musicians.**

I do not use many, but YouTube is great in order to listen to recordings of pieces. Such a great tool the modern generation has at its disposal. I also sometimes looks at Orchestral Excerpt sites to get ideas for practicing. Very useful. Otherwise, I have no websites that I go to.

## **Do you have any tips for preparing for auditions?**

This is a big topic. I have 5 students at the moment preparing for Orchestral Auditions, and they are really nervous. I try to tell them that over-preparation is the answer. They need to know the required excerpts from memory and play them several times a day to almost become bored. It is best to go to an audition so well prepared that it is just fun to play the requested material for other people. This is the best mind-set.

## **Do you ever get anxious for a performance? What advice would you give for dealing with nerves?**

I used to many years ago, but I trained myself to overcome this by practicing being demanding of yourself. For example, I start by playing, for example, one page of a solo 5 times in a row perfectly; and if I mess up on the 5<sup>th</sup> time, I make myself start over with all 5 times. Sometimes, I have had to play the page 30 or 40 times demanding myself to be play without dropping a note. I gradually increase this to the entire piece 5 times in a row without dropping a note. The performance thus is a "piece of cake." I only have once chance in the performance, and I either do it or not; but the severity of the practicing makes the performance a "breeze."

## **To become a great musician, what are things that you think a young musician should focus on when they practice?**

Fundamentals of the instrument and the most basic things. For example, I have in my office 5 rules for playing well. Rule No. 1 is to "play the notes correctly at the right time." Rule 2 is "to see rule No. 1." Rule No. 3 is "to have fun." Rule No. 4 is "to make it enjoyable for the listener." And Rule 5 is "to see the previous 4 rules."

Of course, knowing the fundamentals of the trombone are critical—tone, tuning , timing, and technic. The 4 "Ts" of playing well!

## **What advice can you give about mental wellness?**

Just being a good person who has a desire to help other people takes care of most mental wellness. Fulfillment in life comes from giving oneself to a higher cause and caring about other people more than yourself. Simple to say, but not easy for some to follow.

## **What life lessons have you learned through music?**

Discipline, Self Confidence, Sharing, Working as a Team, Putting your Heart and Soul into what you are doing, Remembering that Life is a Gift as is Music, and probably many more.



## **Do you promote the idea of learning licks and patterns in all keys to become better at improvising?**

No—I wish I could do that, but when I am improvising I just try to play something interesting to me that is from my heart and not a memorized lick.

## **If you couldn't have a career in music, what would you do instead?**

Not sure of what that would be. I made the decision so long ago to be in music. If I had another thing, it would certainly be something where I could be of help to others.

## **Who are your favorite composers?**

I am always impressed by genius---Beethoven, John Williams, Sammy Nestico, great pop arrangers, Mozart, Ravel, Rayburn Wright, Pat Williams, George Gershwin, Leonard Bernstein. Nelson Riddle, and more. I put arrangers in this category as well as composers because I can be moved by the arrangements done by some of the greatest.

## **How could we make music education better?**

I will think on this one, but off the top of my head more attention to expressing oneself through music rather than so much ensemble participation. Also, most often too much philosophy and not enough just making music.

## **Do you like to teach? Why or why not?**

I love to teach. When I was a young man, the "church fathers" asked me to become a Preacher (Minister), and I remember my quick answer being that I could minister more by teach than preaching. In hindsight, I was right. I, of course, teach trombone, but really I am "teaching people." I care for their well-being as a person, and then they can communicate with their instrument. There are literally hundreds of people I have taught, and without exception after the years roll on so many express what I gave them as a person was equal to the music skills I tried to convey. A good musician must have something in their hearts to reach people.

And I guess I must have had some success because I have received the "Humfeld Award for Outstanding Teaching" by the International Trombone Association, a "David Ross Boyd Professorship" from the University of Oklahoma for Superior

Teaching, and a "Regents Award for Superior Teaching" by the University of Oklahoma.

### **What are your favorite solos for your instrument?**

WOW! This can be a long, long, long list: Quickly off the top of my head:

Concertino for Trombone.

Lars Eric Larsson

Ballade

Eugen Bozza

Sonatina

Kazimere Sorcki

Sonata in F Major

Benedetto Marcello

Concertino

Ferdinand David

### **What are some of your favorite books that are helpful for musicians?**

I am not much into books on mind control or meditation. Living a good and caring for others is better than books.

### **Do you have any tips on forming a chamber group?**

I guess first start by getting friends together for people with some similar interests. Be enthusiastic and get others involved. Most people will be happy to join if someone takes the initiative.

### **Do you have any tips on learning how to improvise?**

Learn basic tunes and play so many times that you start to add notes. Pretty soon you only add notes while keeping the original tune in your head without even thinking about it. That is how jazz and improvisation started anyway. Imagine playing, for example, "The Saint's Go Marching In" 50 times in a row, and human nature is such that one gets bored and adds notes. That is the birth of improvisation.

### **Do you memorize your music? Do you have any advice for young players on how to memorize?**

I strive to memorize all music. It is more difficult with age, but I still do it. I played all recitals in my college days and first 50 years almost entirely from memory. Now sometimes, though I have pieces memorized, I have music in front of me for security. Memory is an important ingredient. I think one does not know a piece of music unless it can be done from memory. This is akin to playing by ear also. You get something in your head AND HEART, and the playing then comes from your soul and not from a

mechanical process. I practice often hours on end playing a large repertory from memory. I guess I hate to drag music around.

### **What advice can you share about physical wellness?**

A very good and important question. Physical wellness comes from a healthy mind. Helping others at all stages from assisting elderly, teaching all ages, performing for the smallest of occasions such as a nursing home, and respecting others. I have always found that a compliment to someone is more important than being critical—most people are trying their best and sometimes a compliment encourages them to do better. Having ones life devoted to helping others is very important is the answer to physical wellness, and regular physical exercise without headphone is really basic. I cherish the long days I had throughout high school and college driving a tractor for hours on end WITHOUT A RADIO, TEVEVISION, ANYONE TO TALK TO, AN iPHONE, ETC. That let my mind be clear and focus on God and simple living.

### **What is your favorite food?**

That is a tough one because I like most everything, BUT I love Peanut Butter on and in anything. Beyond that I like eggs of all types, hamburgers, ice cream, and sauerkraut. When I am in Germany of Austria I love to eat Weiner Schnitzel.