



## Bronstein Music Profile: Dick Leland

This message is a continuation of our series of profiles about the people who work and teach at Bronstein Music. This time we present one of our teachers, Dick Leland. I think you will enjoy reading about his rich history of performing with some of the top stars.

Regards,  
Don Edwards

### **A Profile of Dick Leland**

Dick Leland is a brass teacher at Bronstein Music School. He teaches trombone, trumpet, French horn, baritone horn/euphonium, and tuba. He has been teaching here for 20 years.

Dick could write a book about all of the vocal artists, orchestras, show bands, jazz bands, and small groups he has played with, including Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Maynard Ferguson, Ella Fitzgerald, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, the Oakland Symphony, the 49er's Big Band, the Nelson Riddle Orchestra, the Monterey Jazz Festival, and much more (we'll get to that in a moment). He has been a professional musician since 1959 and a teacher for more than 50 years.

Dick says that he got a "late start" in music. He was in the 9th grade at Burlingame High School when he began to play the baritone horn. In his sophomore year, Dick told his band director that he wanted to play at the solo festival. At first, his teacher was skeptical, but quickly realized that Dick was serious (and talented), so he encouraged and coached Dick to a very successful performance.



Dick also learned how to play valve trombone while in high school. When he was 21, he learned how to play the slide trombone, and in the years that followed learned bass trombone, trumpet, tuba, and French horn. Of all of these, his favorite one to play is bass trombone.

Dick attended the College of San Mateo from 1952 through 1955, where he earned his A.A. degree in music and stayed on to play in several ensembles. In the late 1950's, Dick served in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Germany. He returned to Burlingame and made a career as a music performer and teacher.

As a teacher, Dick describes himself as a "brass therapist." His approach is to show each student the absolute fundamentals of playing in order to help them achieve a strong and centered tone, good endurance, strong attacks in the high and low range, and more. He emphasizes good body posture, the proper way to hold the instrument, the correct shape of the lips, and the best tongue placement to maximize the airstream - all through the simplest of exercises.

Many of the top trombone players in the Bay Area studied with Dick, and several have gone on to successful musical careers with groups including the Boston Pops, the Stan Kenton big band, the Ray Charles travelling band, the Harry James orchestra, and at Disneyland.

In 1967, Dick was offered a job playing bass trombone for the "Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour" TV show at the CBS studios in Hollywood. He turned it down because he didn't want to live in Los Angeles. Instead, he went on to have an amazing career in the Bay Area.

One of Dick's favorite venues was the Circle Star Theater, which was located in Redwood City. This theater-in-the-round featured the top names in show business and Dick was a member of the orchestra there for 9 years. He appeared with Judy Garland, Sammy Davis, Jr., Johnny Mathis, Jerry Lewis, Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gormé, Milton Berle, Jack Benny, Dianne Carroll, Pearl Bailey, Lena Horne, Billy Eckstine, Glen Campbell, Roger Williams, Phyllis Diller, Ben Vereen, and many others.

Dick also appeared at many other locations around the Bay Area, and performed with John Williams, Mel Tormé, Steve Allen, Perry Como, the King Sisters, Joel Grey, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Harry Belafonte, Burt Bacharach, Dionne Warwick, the Oscar Peterson trio, Jack Jones, Roy Orbison, The Animals, Charlie Pride, Etta James, Rosemary Clooney, Sonny and Cher, and many others (it would probably be shorter to list the stars that Dick hasn't performed with!).

In addition to the above, Dick has been a member of several long-running music groups over the years. Here's a partial list:

- Earl "Fatha" Hines big band and 6-piece jazz ensemble
- Full Faith and Credit big band (member for 17 years)
- Don Piestrup big band (member for 53 years and still going strong)
- Ice Follies, Holiday on Ice, and Ice Capades orchestra (for 18 years)
- Bay Bones trombone choir
- Skyline College jazz band and symphonic band
- San Andreas Brass
- Cantare con Vivo orchestra (member for 20 years)
- St. Cecilia's Church brass ensemble (member for 30 years)
- Robert Shaw orchestra at St. Mary's Cathedral

On a personal note, Dick has been married for 53 years and has 6 great-grandchildren. He's also somewhat of a collector. He owns just over 200 trombones and has a couple of thousand model airplanes. (He's making the local self-storage business very happy!)

Dick is available for lessons on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday. For scheduling information, come into the store or call us at (650) 588-2502.

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