
Notes from the Other CoEditor: A Tribute to Trevor, Lessons from Linden

Chris Trinidad

"I sometimes think his biggest legacy won't be as a hockey player but as a person." – Lane Linden, father of Trevor Linden

He was the face of the Vancouver Canucks. A recipient of the Order of British Columbia for his tireless work in the community, Trevor Linden's demeanor both on and off the ice revealed a man who was resilient to adversity, someone who always exhibited character and class in each situation, and a person who possessed humility and heart. Though Trevor Linden was no longer the captain of the Canucks during the latter part of his career, everyone in the dressing room, on the bench, and on the ice unofficially looked to Linden for leadership. There are many lessons that we can take with us into the music rehearsal room from the way Trevor Linden carried himself. We can impart these lessons with our student-musicians in the best way that Linden did: in leading by example.

Drafted second overall in 1988, Linden was a towering forward with skating speed and scoring touch. Linden could kill penalties, take punishing hits in front of the net on power plays, and win crucial defensive zone face offs. Three years later at age twenty-one, the captaincy of the Canucks was handed to Linden, who at the time, was the youngest player in the National Hockey League ever bestowed with that honour. In another three years, he would lead his team to the Stanley Cup final against a dominant New York Rangers with Mark Messier and coach Mike Keenan at the helm, two people who would figure greatly in Linden's Canuck career later on. Linden was viciously hounded on the ice throughout the hard fought series but he was able to transform that adversity into two goals in the seventh and deciding game. Though Messier, Keenan, and the Rangers won the cup that year, in my eyes, it was Linden and the Canucks who were the true champions.

Linden Lesson: Linden was a complete player. In the music rehearsal room, we should help our student-musicians develop into well-rounded people by empowering them with independent music skills, and the development of an ethic of hard work, and resilience to adversity. In the world of professional sports, the term 'clutch' refers to a player who is able to make the right decisions under pressure situations. In the Stanley Cup finals, Linden was a clutch player. As directors and conductors, when we are under pressure, can we handle adversity with the same resilience and grace? When, as teachers, we are criticized and questioned on the value of the arts and music in the public forum or the media, perhaps it is best to take the high road and let the music performance speak for itself.

Another three years following the cup final appearance, Mark Messier was signed by the Canucks as a free agent. While the

press considered Messier one of the greatest leaders in hockey history (a trait that I question), it was Linden who gracefully and quietly relinquished the captaincy of the Canucks to the elder player. The start of the season found the Canucks playing poorly. Later in the season, Keenan was hired as coach (and later as general manager) to turn things around and he proceeded to openly criticize Linden in the media, to question his commitment in the dressing room, and to generally blame him for the Canucks woeful play. Not surprisingly, Keenan later traded Linden away. Through all of these events, Linden proved with his actions that one can lead without the captain title. When adversity struck, Linden was resilient and he let his on ice performance prove his detractors wrong. And when he was constantly badgered and badmouthed by his coach, he took the high road and exited peacefully without uttering a bad word.

"I think the obligation of a professional athlete is to be responsible and make a difference. It's a great gift we have and to make a difference is not difficult to do." – Trevor Linden

While the Canucks ran into difficult times with Messier and Keenan effectively ruining the team into the ground with questionable player trades, it was the local community that truly felt the loss of Linden. It was his regular visits to BC Children's Hospital, the hospice Canuck Place, Camp Goodtimes, Ronald McDonald House or lending his name to the Canadian Cancer Society, the BC Cancer Foundation, and other organizations where he really made an impact with children and their families. Though he eschews the limelight, he brought attention to many worthwhile causes and charities using his profile as an athlete. In an age where some athletes might be better known for their selfish and ego-driven behaviour, Linden never used his celebrity status to garner public attention for himself. Instead, he went about doing things quietly and always placed a high priority on putting smiles on the faces of those he visited.

Linden Lesson: Community involvement is healthy and vital to the music education field. Regularly performing locally in retirement homes, shopping malls, and other community venues teaches student-musicians to give something of themselves back to the community. As music educators and musicians, we also have the opportunity to raise awareness of issues of vital importance to the community through our music making.

Here's an idea: Choose a concert theme that would help to highlight a particular issue of importance to the student-musicians and pick appropriate repertoire. Develop educational activities that complement the rehearsal process and tie-in to the concert theme. Contact community organizations who are active in supporting that issue and engage in a mutually supportive partner-

ship. Talk with fellow faculty about the project and the possibilities for cross-curricular educational opportunities. Issue a press release to local media about the concert. At every step of the way, mentor and empower your student-musicians to take active responsible leadership roles within the development of the project all the way to the production of the concert.

Linden also served his fellow players in his capacity as president of the National Hockey League Players Association. Through his eight years in office, he earned the respect and admiration of many players who saw Linden as someone who could effectively represent the players's interests and as a leader who could act tactfully and appropriately given the high pressure nature of the position.

Linden Lesson: Have you thought about serving the BC Music Educators Association or the Canadian Music Educators Association in some capacity? Maybe you've got a penchant for writing? The editors of the journals for both associations are always looking for more articles and ideas! (sorry for the shameless plug!)

Linden returned to the Canucks in 2001 after four years of exile. The team, at this point, had plenty of offensive dynamic players and Linden was called upon to provide leadership in a different way. Over the next seven seasons, he was tasked primarily with defensive duties. It was clear that he was no longer able to keep stride with the younger players, and yet he was still able to make a significant contribution to the team. He came to the rink everyday as a positive thinking team player looking to contribute in any way that he could. He mentored younger players on the road bestowing upon them the pearls of wisdom that come with playing in the league for a long time. Shortly after returning to the Canucks, he passed the 1000th game mark and the team was in the middle of fighting for a playoff spot. He asked the team to withhold any celebrations so that the team could concentrate on the task at hand.

Linden Lesson: A true team player, Linden was willing to do whatever it took for it his team mates to be successful. A selfless attitude, where one prizes the team above the individual, is a virtue that we regularly address through our ensemble music classes. Linden was a mentor to younger players. In classes where grade levels are mixed, encouraging more experienced student-musicians to mentor younger student-musicians can help to create a sense of bonding within the group. Have you ever considered hosting a student-teacher? The practicum experience is an important one in any young educator's career. Maybe you can make a difference in helping to guide the future generation of music teachers.

By early April 2008, the Canucks had already missed the playoffs and the final match of the regular season was meaningless except for the fact that it would turn out to be Linden's last game. Coach Alain Vigneault placed him on the top line and gave him all sorts

of ice time. Linden's teammates fed him the puck whenever he was in a scoring position. Picked as the first star of the game, Linden wasn't particularly spectacular: he didn't deliver any bone crushing hits, he fanned on a couple of shots, and he missed a few pretty plays. He was honoured because of the tireless contributions he made through the span of his career. The opposing team returned to the ice to shake his hand and the fans rose to their feet to honour the man who had given the city of Vancouver so much.

"I think when you get to a point where mentally ... you feel you've got everything you could it's time to look to other things. I am looking forward to what is around the corner. That's a good thing." – Trevor Linden

When Linden announced his retirement in June (twenty years to the day when he was drafted by the Canucks), he welcomed the change with gratitude. Though the fans honoured him with standing ovations at his last game and praised him on call-in sports talk shows, he took the time to step back and gain some perspective before making the official announcement. Surrounded by teammates, friends, family, the media, and the community, he thanked the people who helped him become the person he is today. Linden didn't look at life after hockey as a fade from glory. Rather, he looked at the opportunity with optimism: a new beginning.

For someone who never craved attention, Linden got it anyway. Though it is often him who salutes the fans, we are the ones who are thankful for everything he gave and for being the person that he is: an inspiration to all.

Linden Lesson: It is because of the people who cared for us, mentored us, and showed us the way that we are where we are. Let us never forget the contributions that these people have made in our lives.

Chris Trinidad's relationship with hockey began at an early age. He put on his first pair of make shift cardboard goalie pads at age nine and the first person to take a slap shot at him in the driveway was his grandmother. In the fourth grade, he wrote a long letter to then-Canucks GM Pat Quinn advising him of the off-season trades he should make to improve the team. To this day, that letter has still gone unanswered. A couple of years later, he met his hero Trevor Linden at a hockey card convention, an experience he fondly recalls to this day. In the eighth grade, before considering a career in music, Chris wanted to be a sports journalist covering the Canucks. He thanks you, the reader, in advance for allowing him the editorial space to fulfill one of his dreams. These days, Chris relationship with hockey is relegated to screaming at the television when the Canucks cough up the puck in the neutral zone or when the Canucks score a pretty goal.

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