TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards
Volume 4, No. 4. ~ April, 2024

Welcome!

Here is the next issue. Thank you to everyone who has subscribed so far. I'm always looking for ways to connect with trombonists and I love having the opportunity to share with people in a way I hope will provide benefit. If you are getting this pdf without having subscribed and would like to subscribe to future issues, simply follow this link. This little digital publication will evolve over time. If there's something you'd like to see included, please reach out to me: brad.edwards6251@gmail.com.
(IG: @brad_edwards_trombone)

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Enjoy!

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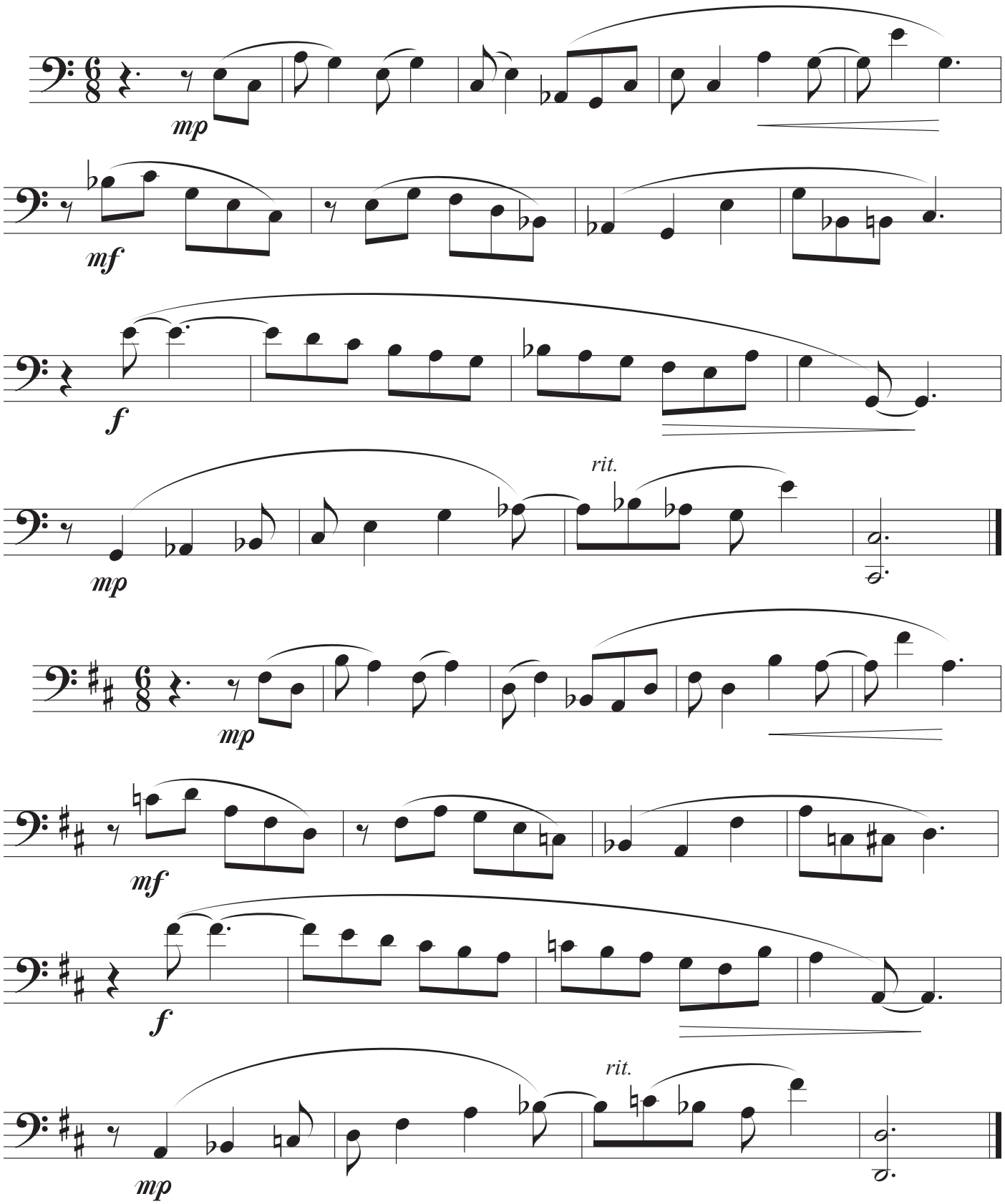
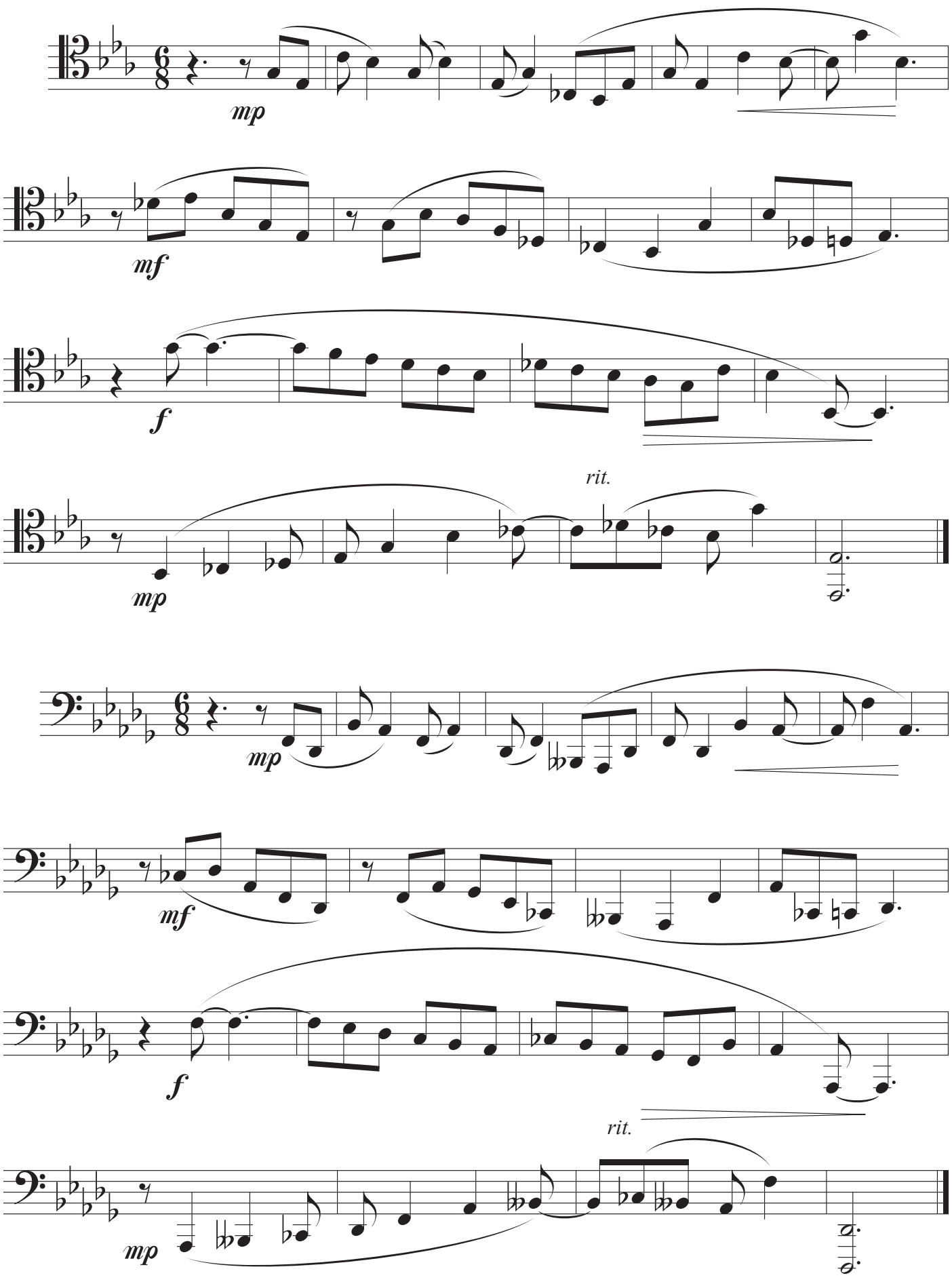
School of Music Dance and Theater
Websites:
Trombone Zone
Hornbone Press
Free Audition Solos
ASU Bones

TBZ MONTHLY

April 2024

A Pretty Good Melody

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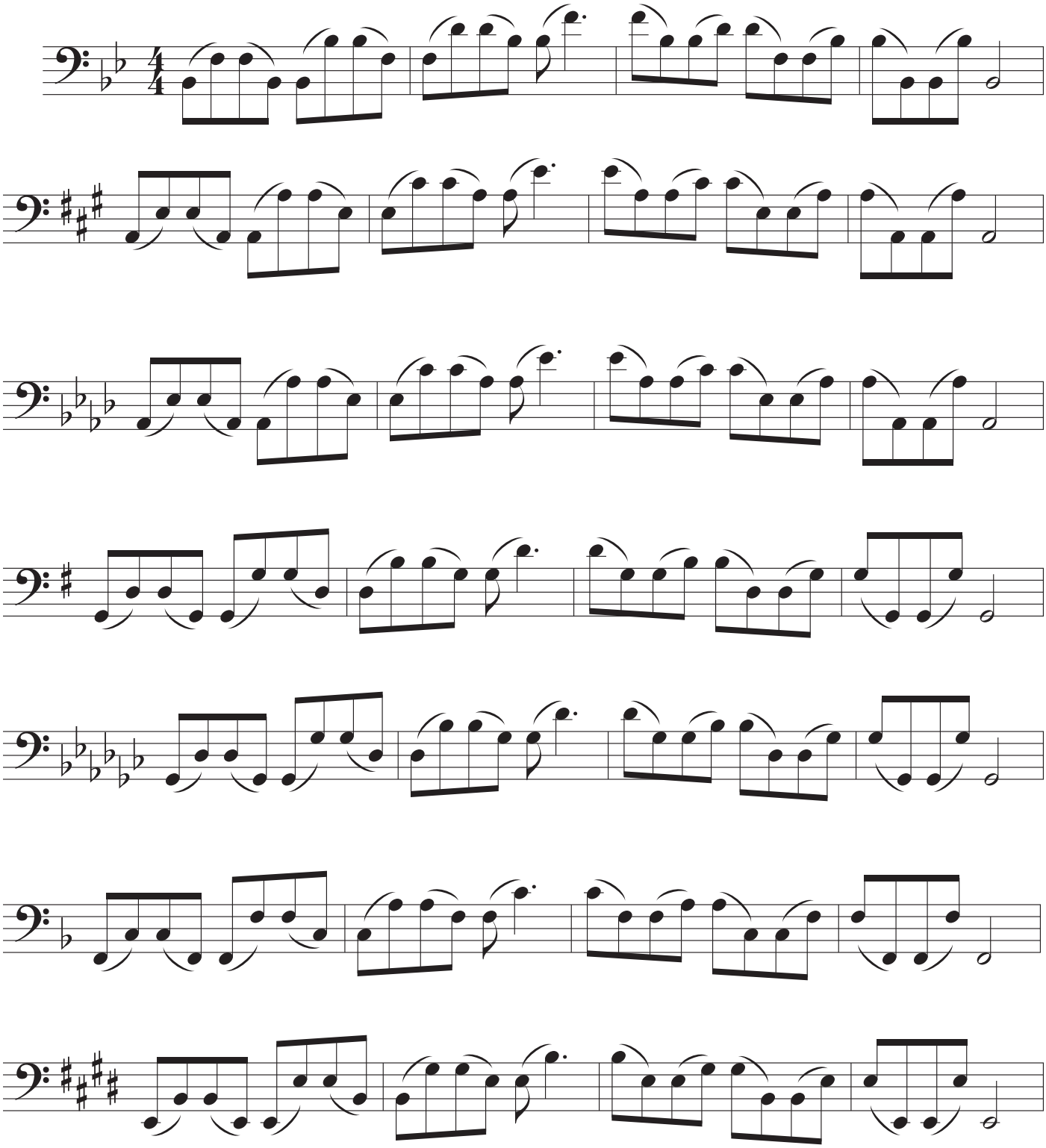
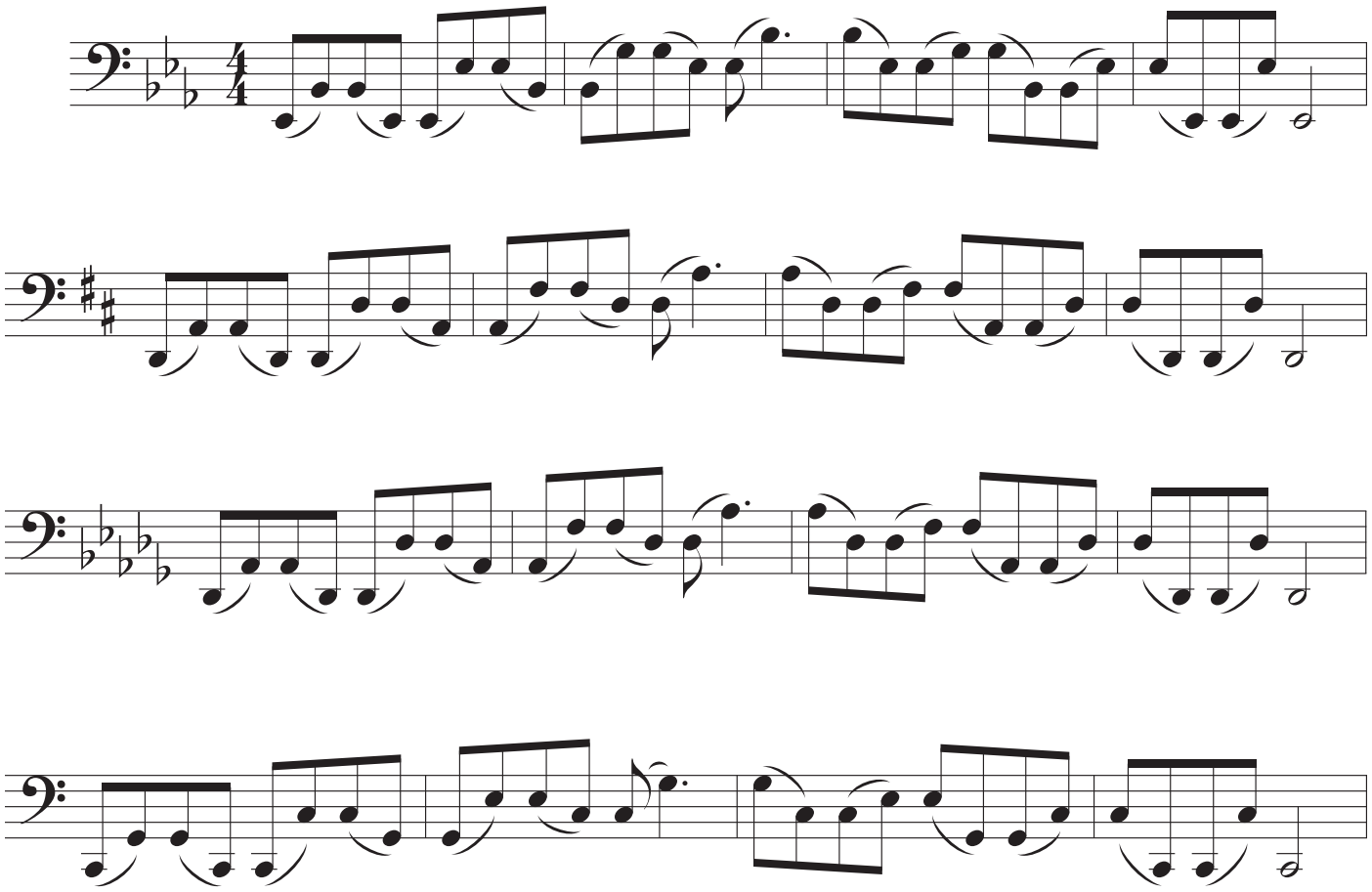
A Useful Lip Slur

April 2024

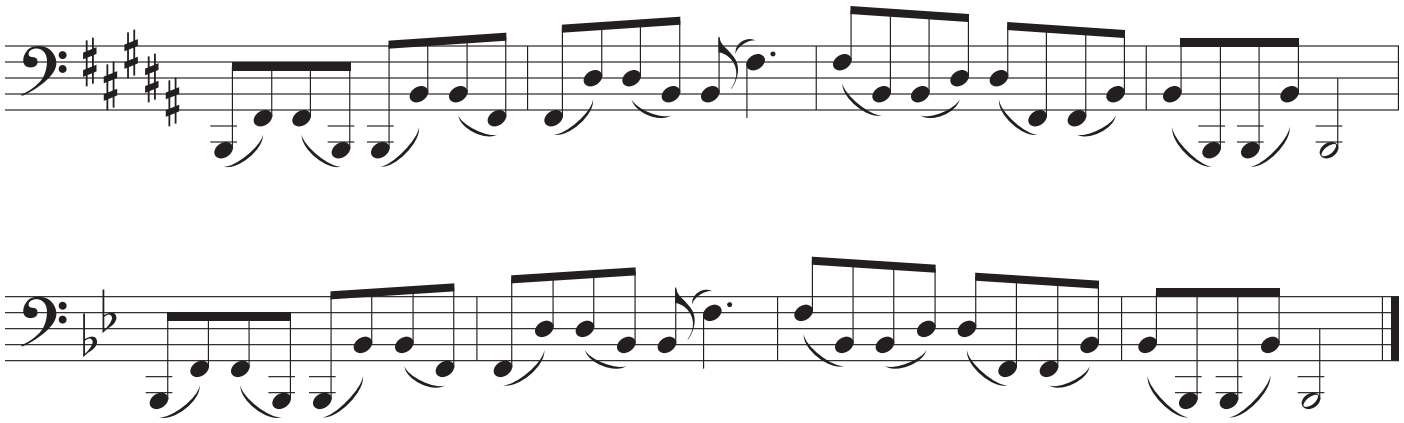
This one mixes slurs and tonguing.



Now these go beyond the overtone series and into the trigger range. You can either change slide positions or stay in the valve.



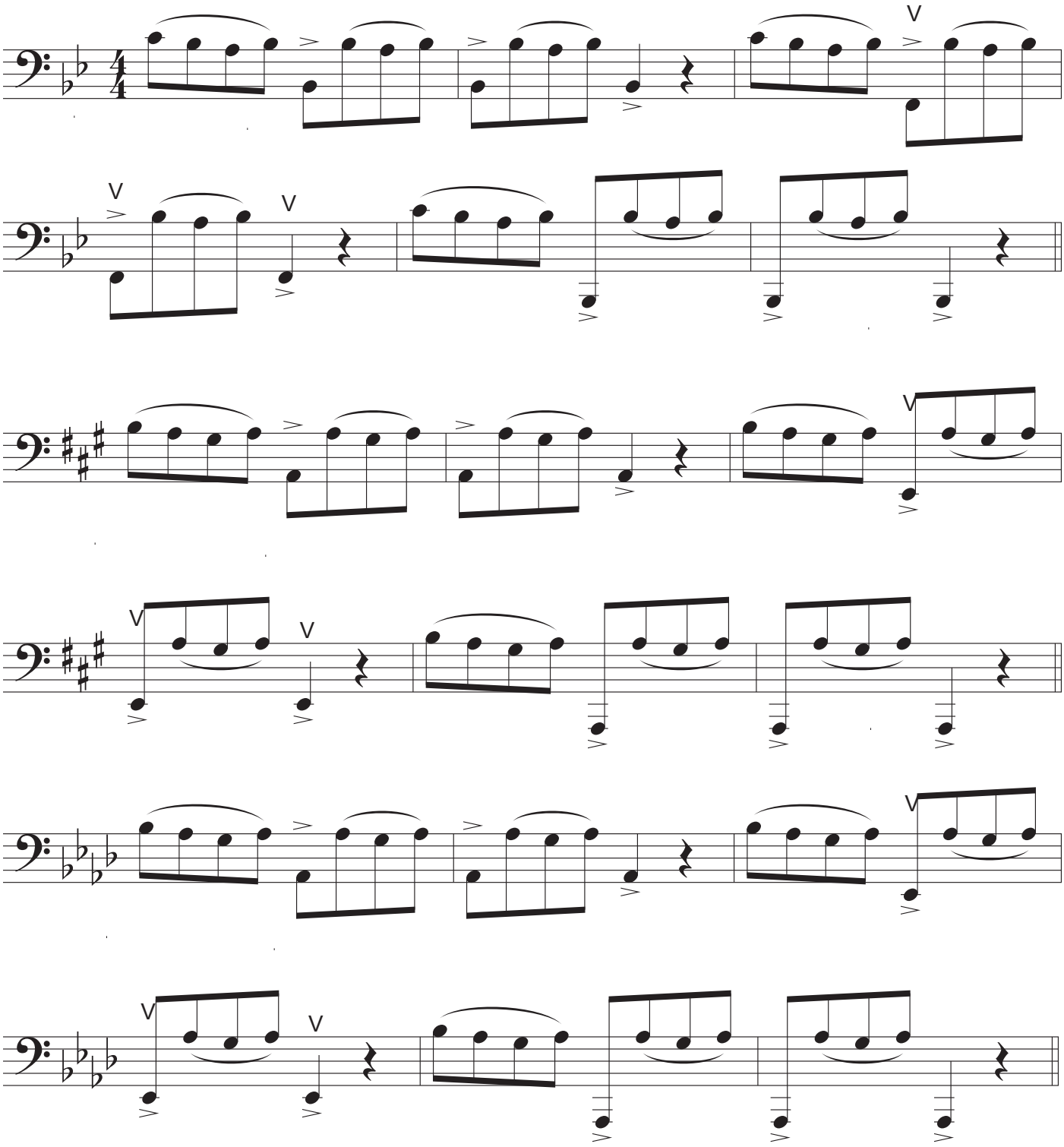
If a catch breath is needed, try to breathe between the slurs.

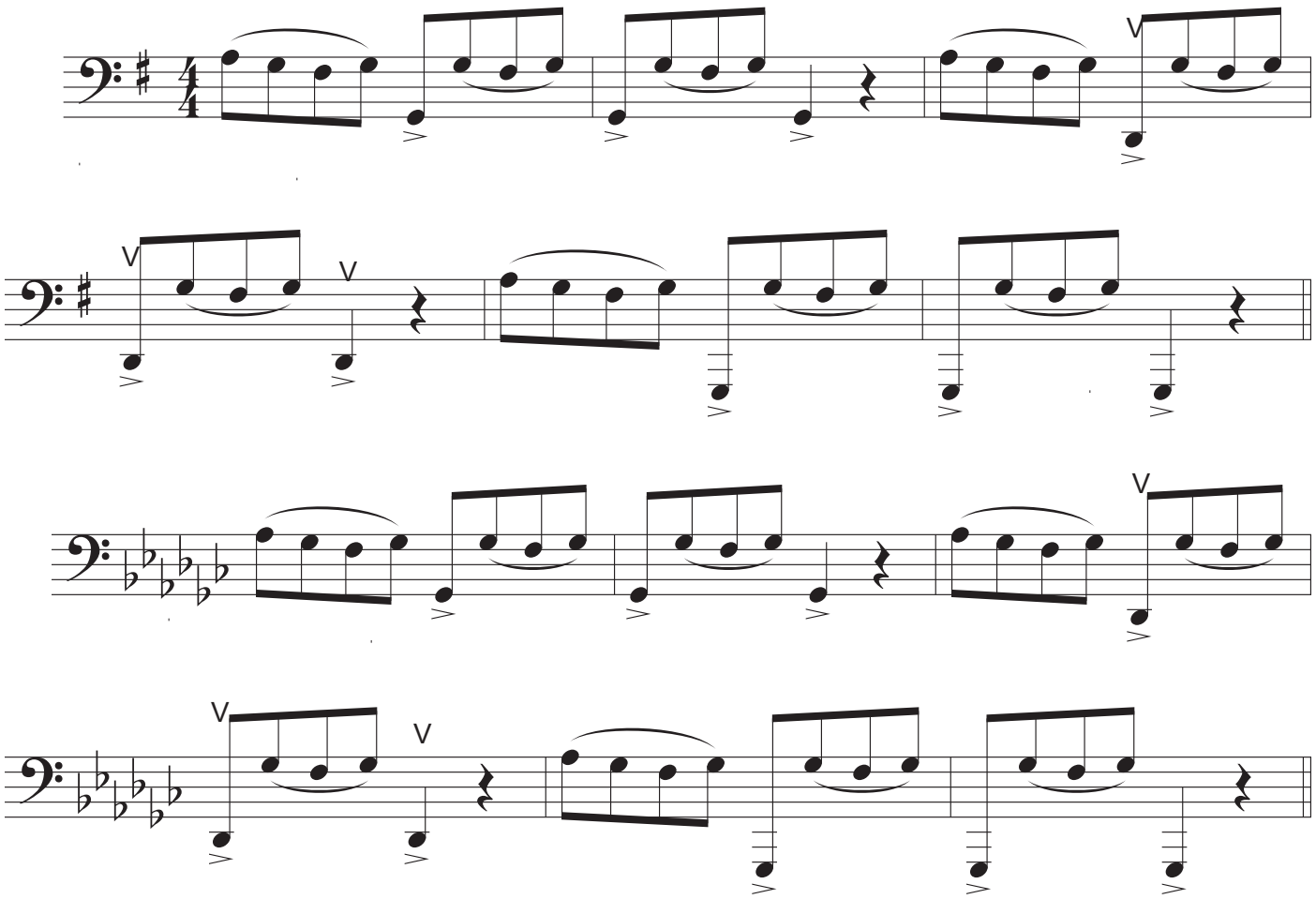


April 2024

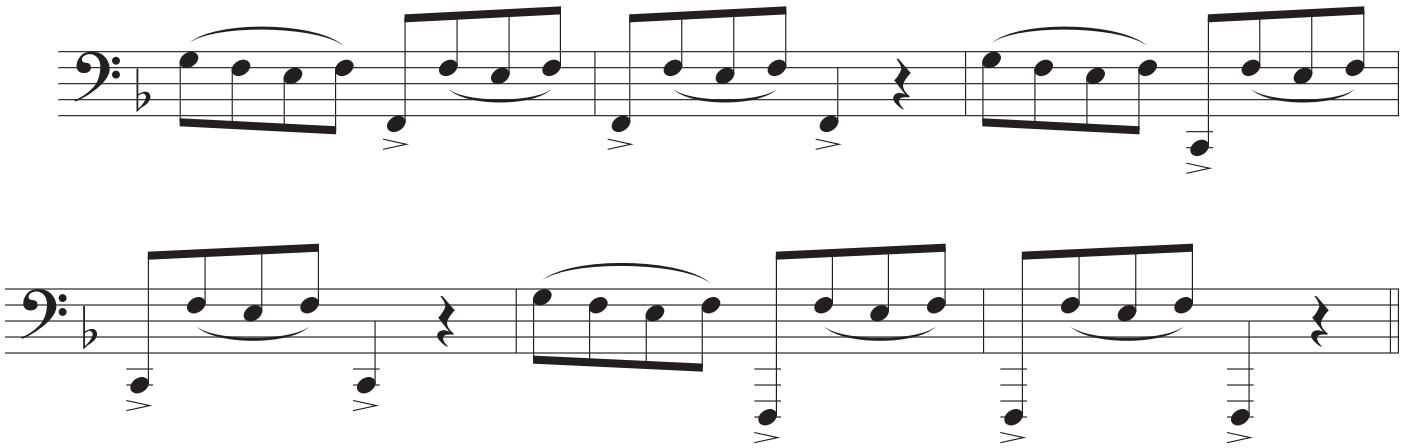
Technique / Rhythm Builders

This is something I'm not great at. Therefore, I've been practicing it more. I guess I'm inspired by the great Marshall Gilkes.





This could be done using longer positions or shorter. Try both!



Free book sample: Patterns and Snippets
Part One: #18
Minor Arpeggios

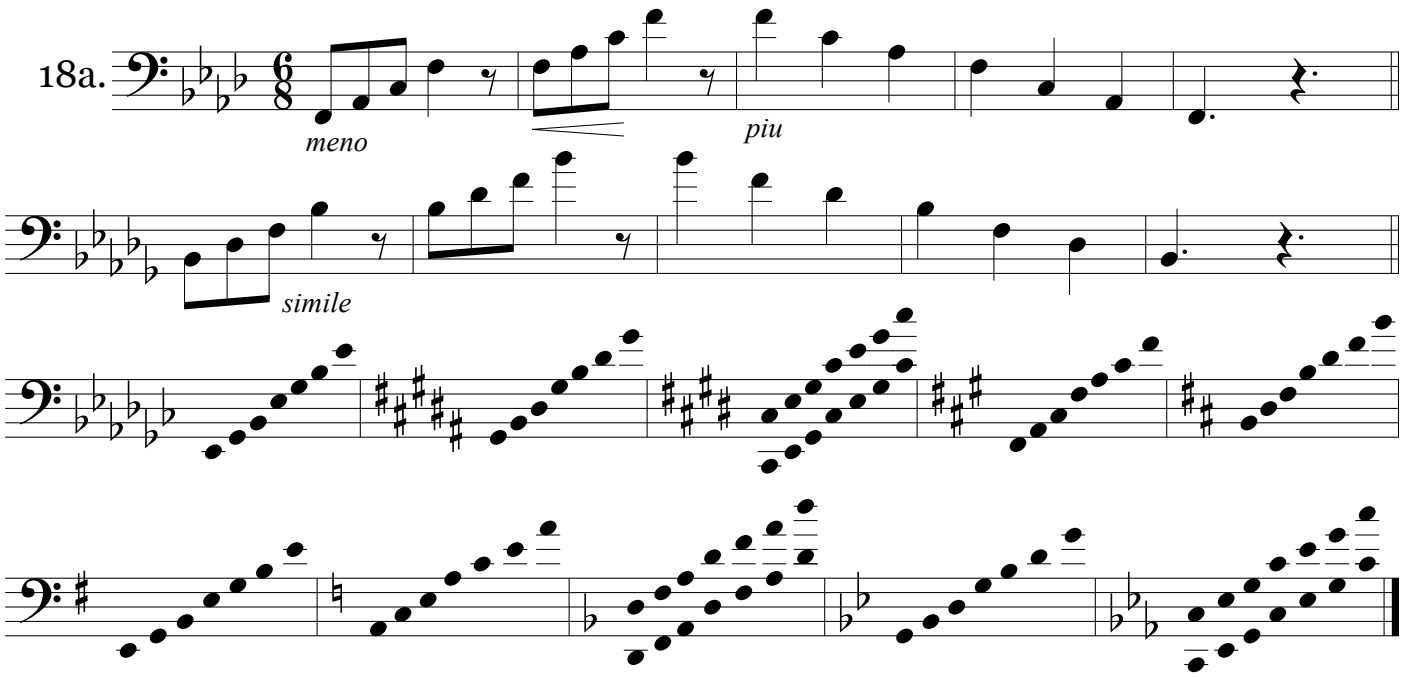
The whole idea behind this book is to help us think of scales and arpeggios as templates used to generate music. Instead of just playing the same scales/arpeggios up and down, apply them to a variety of patterns. In doing so, you will develop better musical instincts to master new material when it comes along.

All of the Part One patterns have three elements: (a) a fairly plain presentation of the pattern traveling through the circle of fifths, (b) a melodic variation ascending in half steps, and (c) a melodic variation descending in half steps.

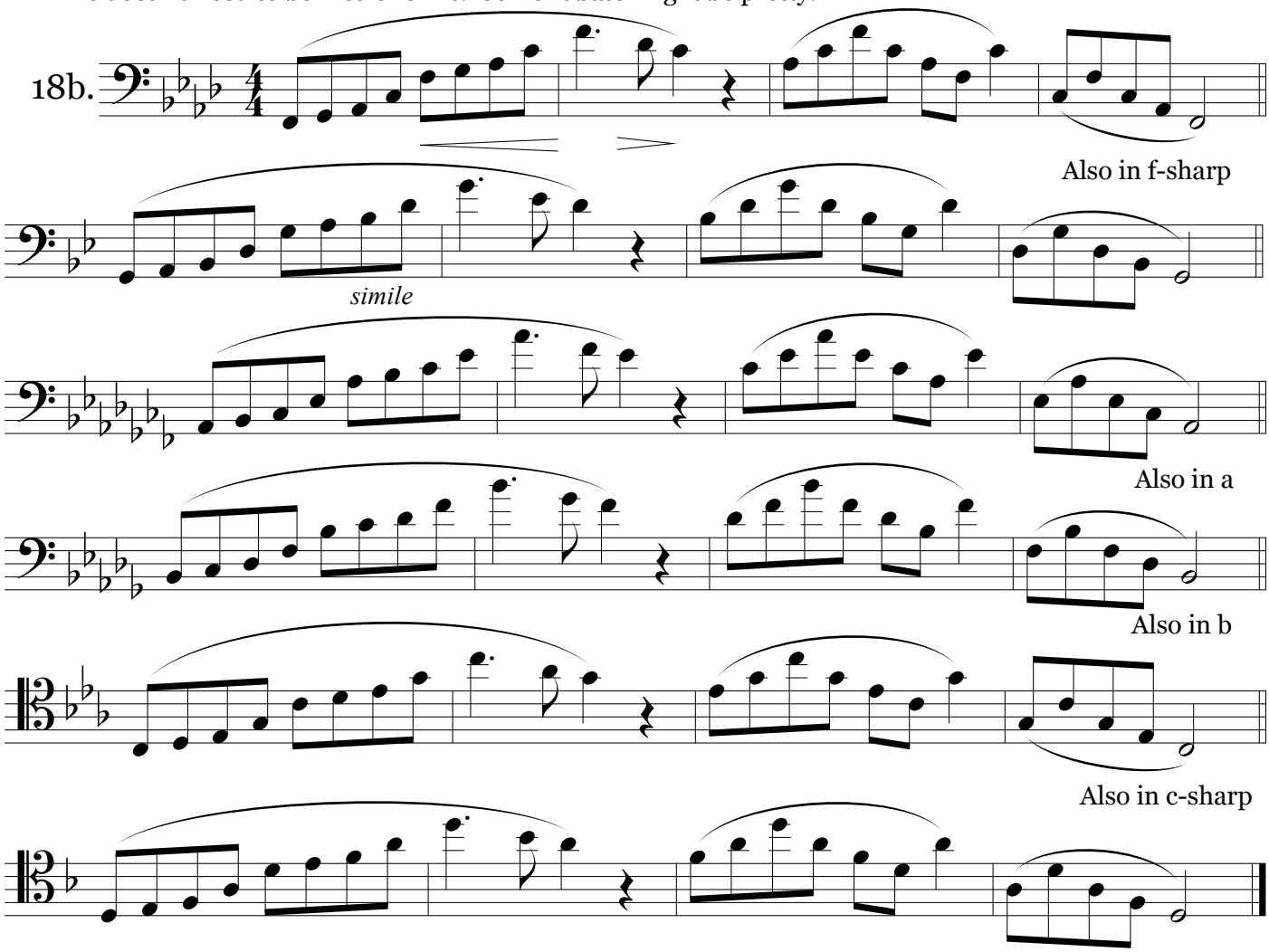
Enjoy!

#18. Minor arpeggios, two octaves

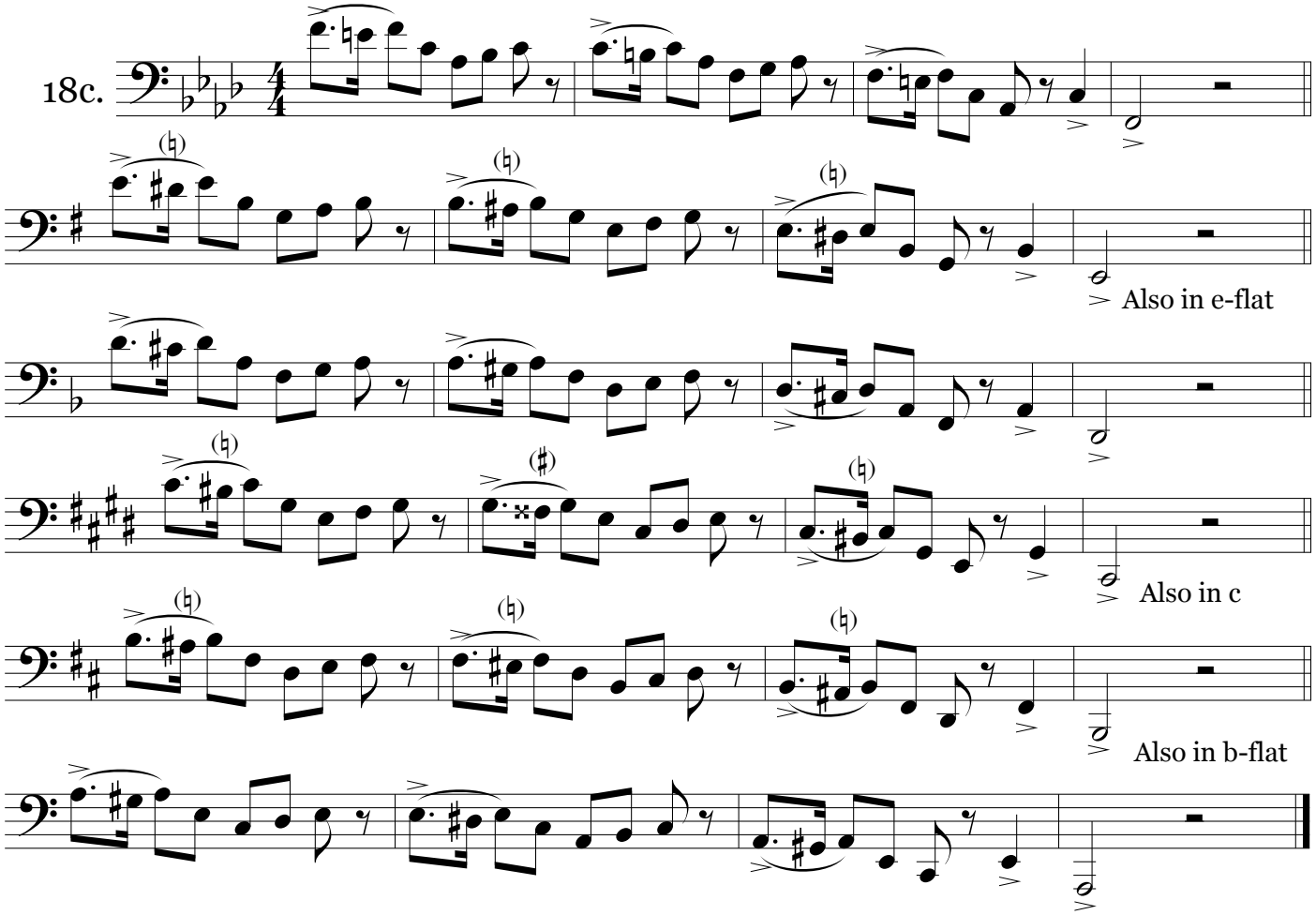
Be careful with the rhythm on the descending quarter-note triplets.



This doesn't need to be metronomic. Some rubato might be pretty.

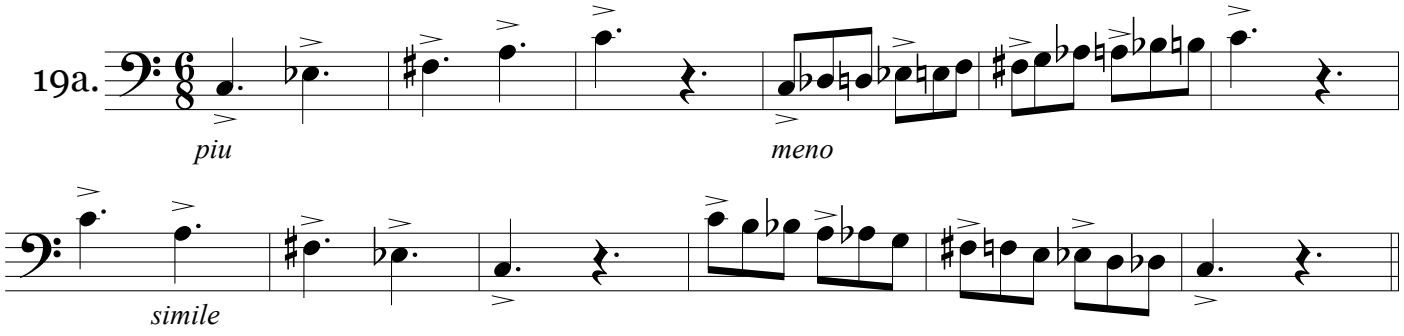


Before you plunge in, pause to think about the accidentals.

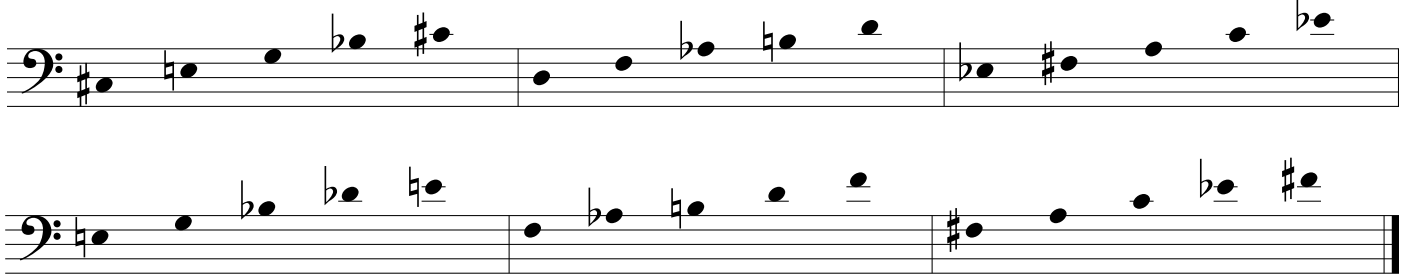


#19. Chromatic, triplets I

The downbeats of the triplets outline a diminished chord.



Apply to these sequences...



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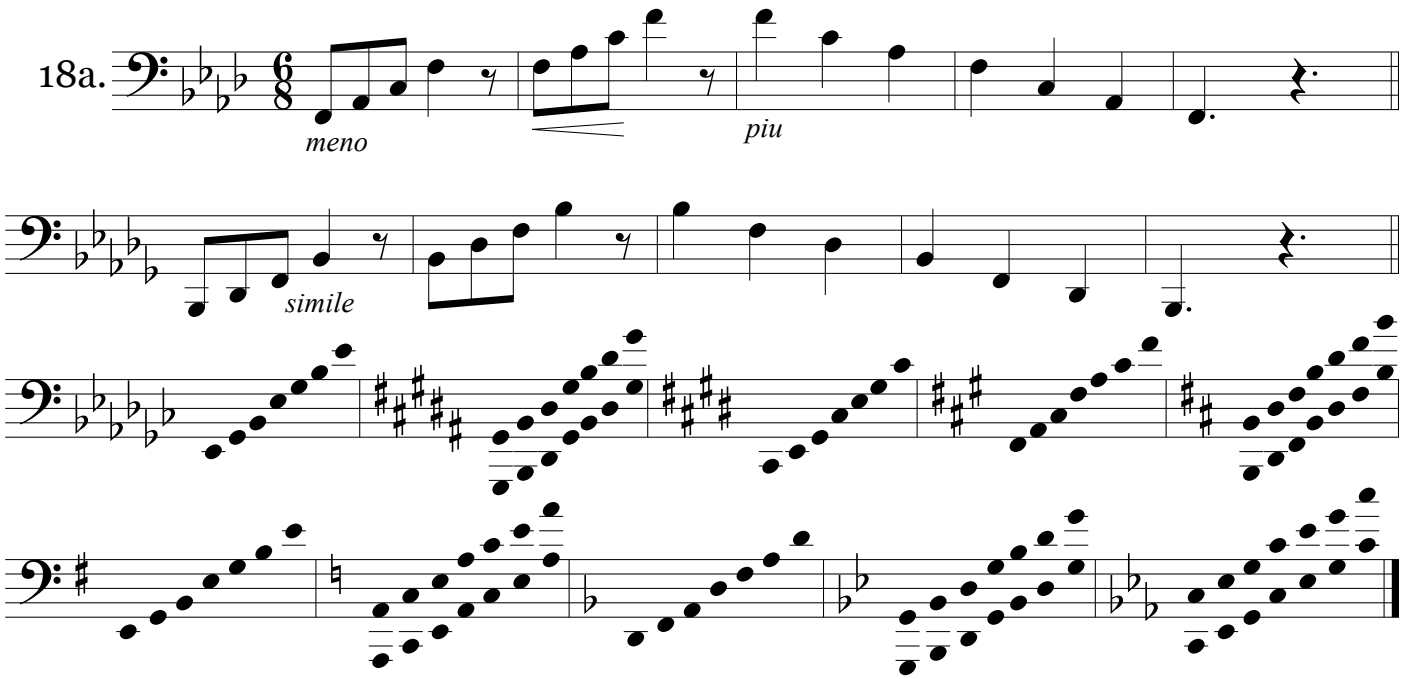

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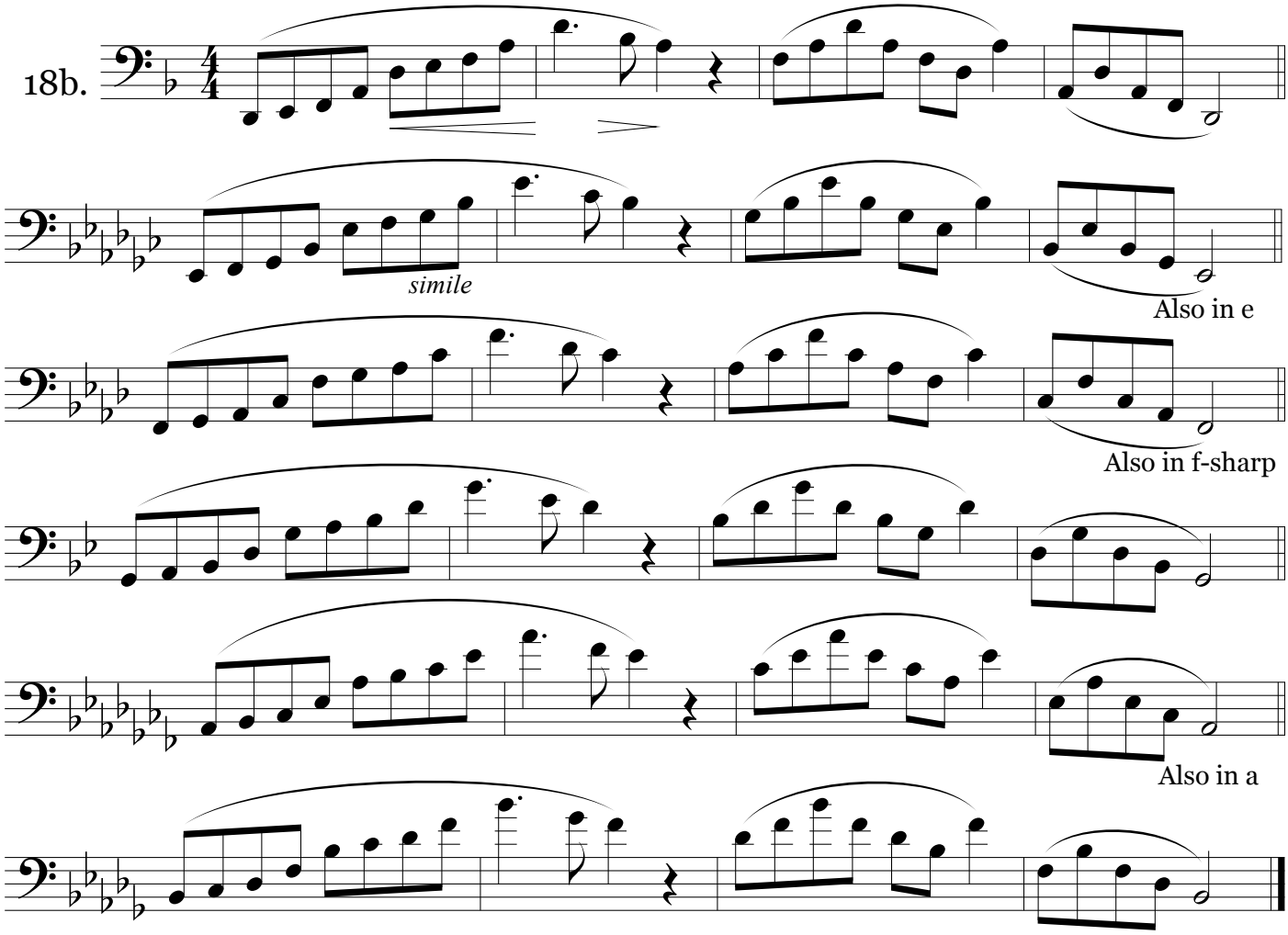

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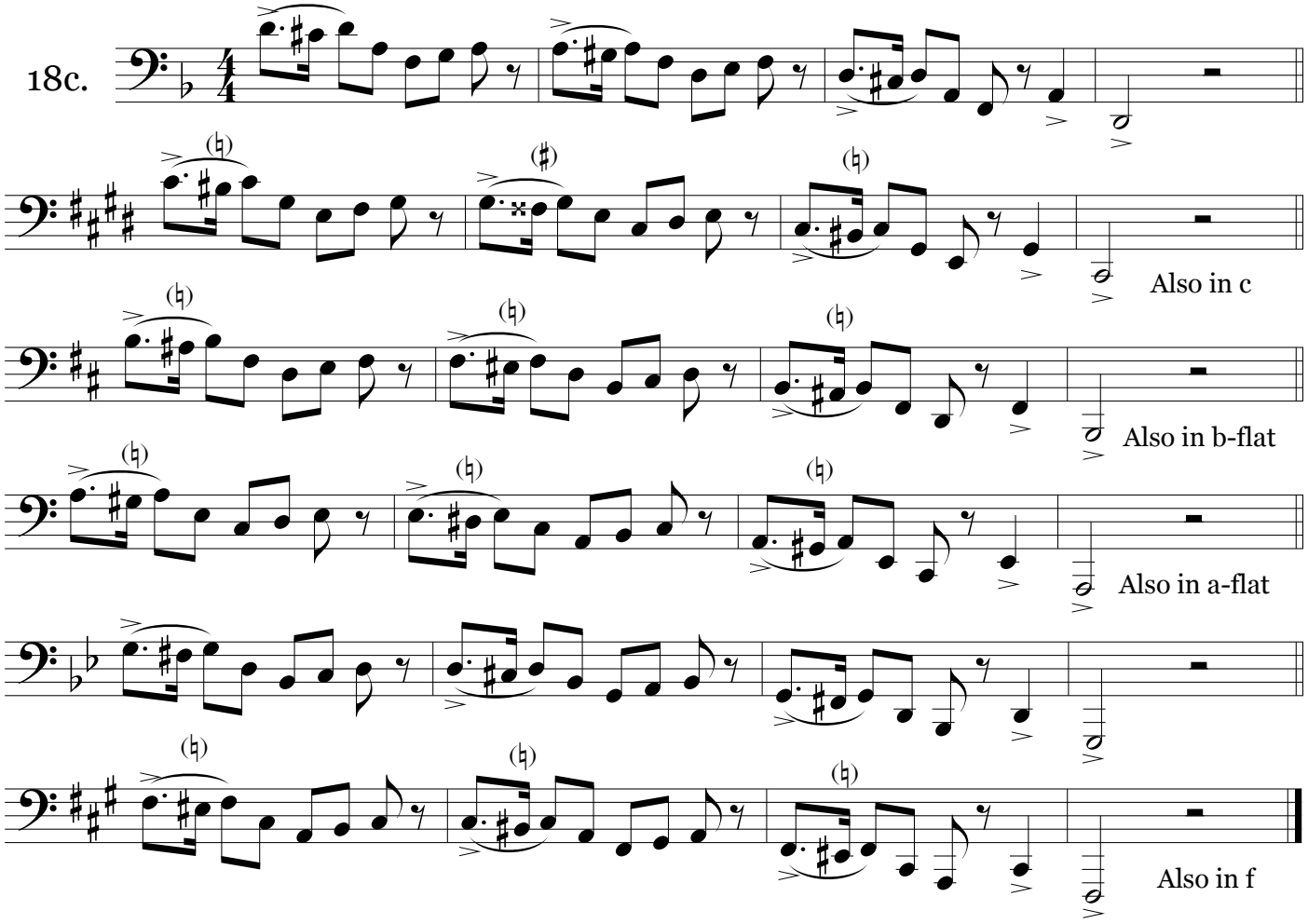

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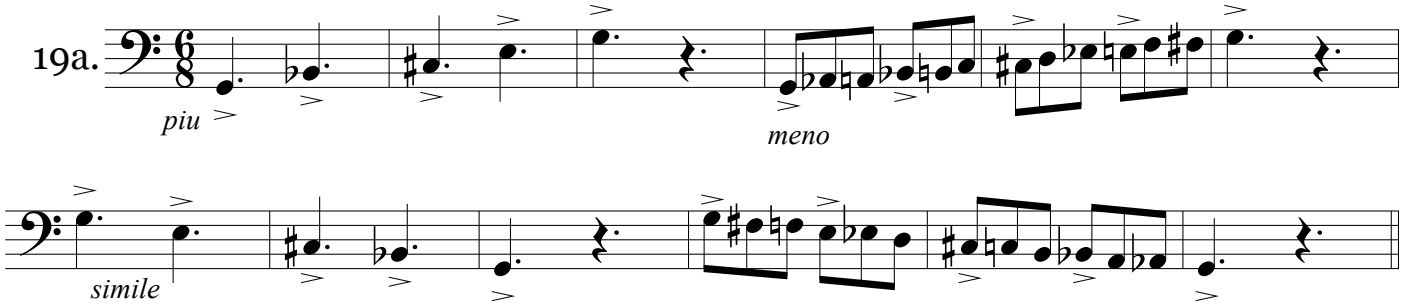

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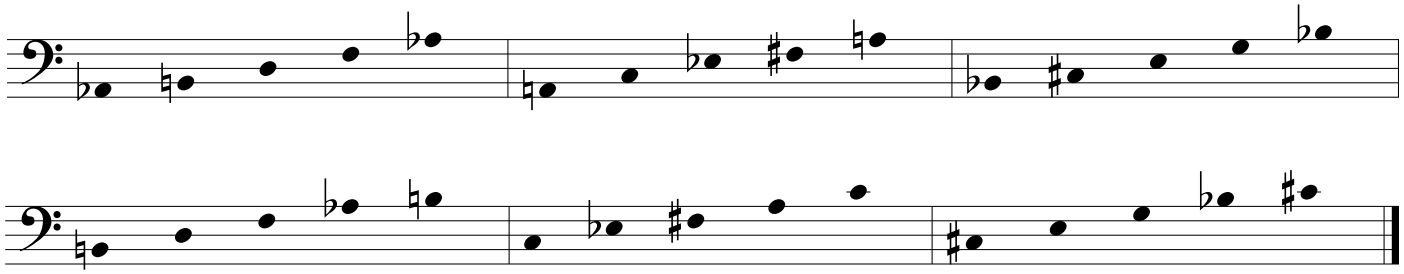
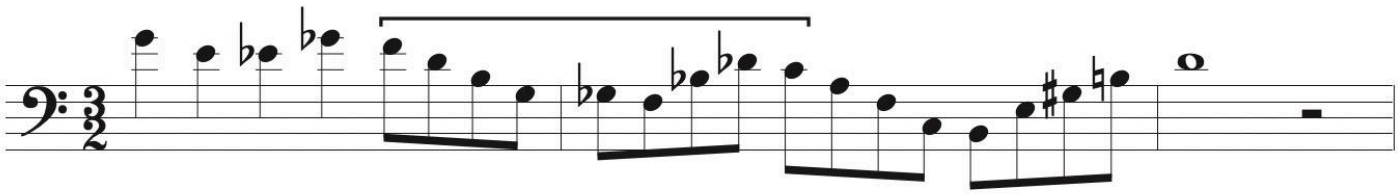


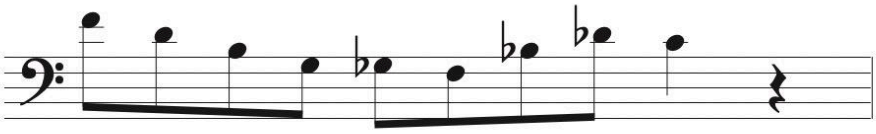
Playing Tip: Bracket Sliding

As I write this, the NCAA March Madness tournament is in full swing. While many of you may have filled out brackets (only to have them busted), I want to talk about a different kind of bracket: one you can use for efficient practicing.

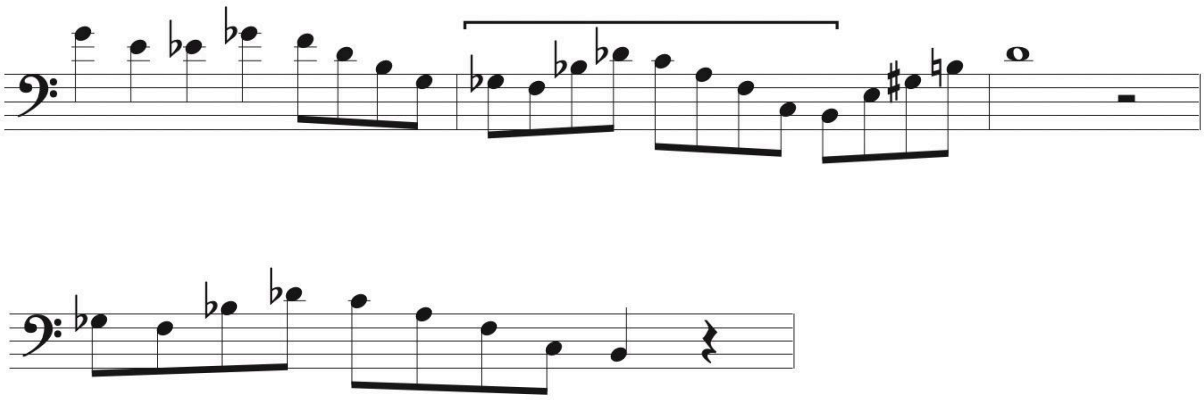
When you are seeking to break down a complex passage, you may want to break it into pieces. Here's a passage from the first movement of the Larsson Concertino for Trombone.



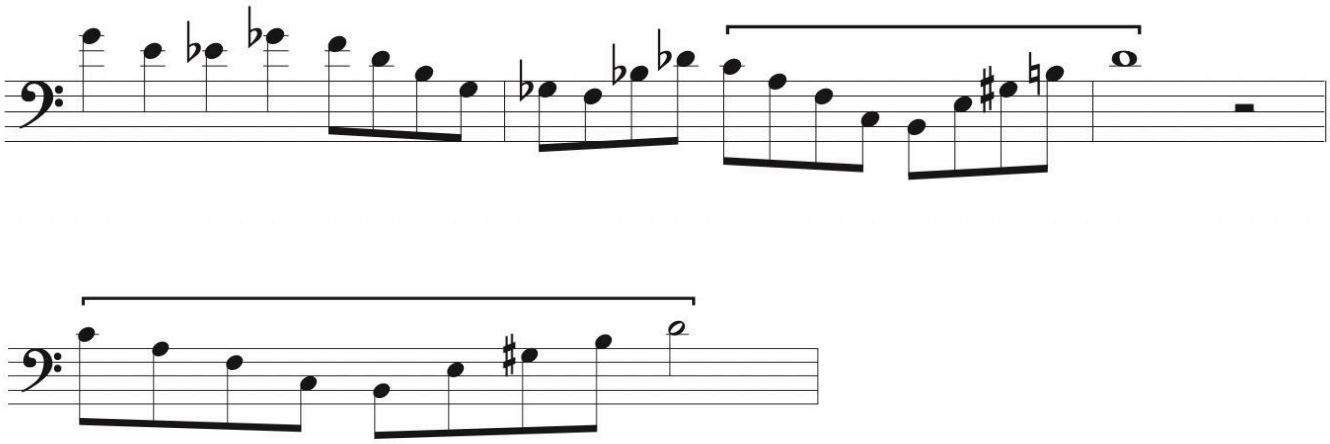
To help me conquer that fast string of notes, I bracket off nine notes and work on them. I always like to finish on some kind of meaningful downbeat.



Then I think of picking up that bracket and “sliding” it to the next logical batch of notes. Like this:



Finally, I pick up that bracket and slide it one more notch.

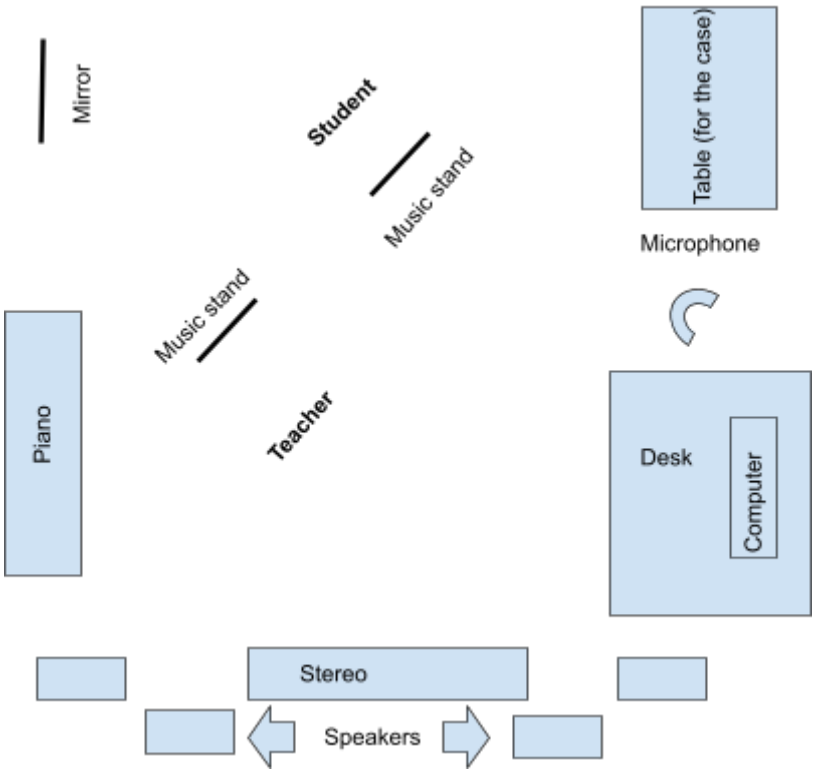


Working with these brackets will probably produce better results than working with these brackets:

On Teaching and Playing: The Floor is Lava!

Over the years, I've tinkered with where I would sit/stand relative to the student during lessons. All those years of private lessons in public schools were usually side-by-side. As we came back from Covid Zoom lessons (yecch!) I had to remain away from the student and fell into the habit of standing across the room from them.

This arrangement worked nicely for some aspects of imitation (hint: mirror neurons). However, it sometimes meant that the music stand got in the way so I couldn't see their slide and possibly their embouchure (depending on how tall they were). Lately I've been setting up in this manner:



This set-up gives me some advantages:

1. I can see what the student is doing with their slide and embouchure.
2. The student can easily turn around to look in the mirror when needed.
3. The student and I can easily rotate to face each other.
4. I can easily move to my desk (mostly to record or take notes).
5. I can easily move to the piano (to play chords or check pitches). Especially at the beginning of the semester, I spend a lot of time at the piano accompanying their sing-buzz-play exercises or their lip slurs.
6. I actually have two little Korg tuners in the room (not shown). One is velcroed to the wall in the student's line of sight, the other is on my music stand. I don't want the student to stare at the tuner but it's nice to point out a sour note here or there.
7. Actually, we now have a second microphone (Shure MV88) which most students plug into their phones to record lessons. The microphone shown in the diagram is for me to record and playback using Audacity on the computer.

Of course, in order for all this to work, the student needs to stand in the right spot and at the desired angle. Actually, this has been interesting since a number of students want to rearrange things. I considered getting those little footprint stickers.

Instead, I have a carpet square big enough to stand on. To "help" the student to stand on that square, I have lately begun to declare that the floor is lava and they must stay on the square to survive.
It's silly. It's weird.
It works.

The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy Reginald Fink, The Trombonist's Handbook

Sadly, Fink's book has faded a bit in popularity. I remember a time when it was considered quite standard. In one section, Fink talks about how to lower the pitch center for those students who habitually play sharp (just look at their tuning slide and you'll probably know).
He writes:

Lowering the tone Center.
To lower the pitch, place the tone in the center, and improve, deepen and darken the tone quality, follow these steps:
1 Warm up in a normal manner.
2. Tune the trombone with a stroboscope set to a equals 440.
3. Play several notes, check the intonation with the stroboscope, and establish a firm aural image of the proper pitch.
4. Reset the tuning slide so that it is extended only about 1/2 of an inch.
5. Play the tuning notes in tune with the stroboscope, by allowing the pitch to sag. Relax the lips, jaw, tongue and throat. Do not lip the pitch down. Do not blow the pitch down. Simply let the pitch go down. Check your throat adjustment and learn to control the pitch with a change in throat setting while relaxing your embouchure and jaw.
6. Recheck your new concept of pitch and tone with a stroboscope at least every week until it is an established habit. Recheck every few days at first so that you break your old habit of thinking "flat is out of tune and sharp is good." Remember that by chance half of the out of two notes in this world are sharp,.
Fink, Reginald. The Trombonist's Handbook. Athens, Ohio: Accura Music, 1977. p. 18-19

This is a fairly common practice. Many students learn to play on the sharp side of the pitch. The real trick here is "allowing the pitch to sag" as opposed to just lipping the notes down. I have heard of some teachers just instructing their students to push the tuning slide all the way in and learn to play in tune. That's a bit severe for day to day use but might prove interesting.

I have found that it isn't just the lips that send the pitch sharp. I also believe that many players tend to blow with an air pressure/speed that is too intense for the given note. By "releasing" the air more than just "pushing" the air, the more gentle blow can naturally lower the pitch. Why? As the air exerts pressure on the vibrating embouchure, the lips must maintain their structure, effectively resisting the air pressure. Too much pressure can mean that the lips overly tighten in response to all that pressure, driving the pitch sharp. Yes, the lips are pinched too tightly but the real source may be the pressure of air directed against them.

This reminds me, for some reason, of that phrase "batten down the hatches!" From Merriam Webster, we learn that:

"Batten" comes from the name for an iron bar
used to secure the covering of a hatchway on a ship,
which was especially useful in preparation of stormy weather.

If your air is presenting gale force winds, perhaps your lips are tightening up to protect themselves!

A Random Thought: Oh Those Lying(?) Eyes

I sometimes ask students to play music from memory in their lessons. As they do this, I've noticed their eyes tend to go off to the left. It happens almost every time. I came across this on the web:

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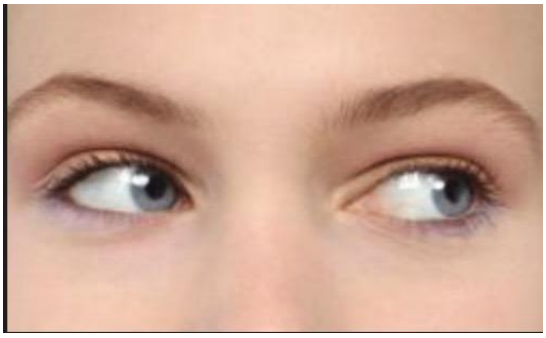
This association between eye movements and lying first came about with the emergence of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) in 1972. NLP founders John Grinder and Richard Bandler mapped out a 'standard eye movement' chart (Eye Accessing Cues). This chart depicts where our eyes move in relation to our thoughts.

=

- Up and Left: Visually remembering
- Up and Right: Visually constructing
- Left: Auditorally remembering
- Right: Auditorally constructing
- Down and Left: Internal dialogue
- Down and Right: Kinaesthetic remembering

===

(just to be clear, all the above text was mostly snipped from this website).

If they are correct, then it makes sense that students would look to the left when playing from memory or even by ear. I seem to remember an old cop show where an experienced interrogator told a rookie cop he could tell when someone was lying by looking at their eyes. If they were remembering, they would look to the left. If they were inventing, they would look to the right.

Cool, right? Unfortunately, recent research has largely debunked this notion. However, take a moment to look at your students' eyes as they play from memory. Let me know what you find.