

TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards
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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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A Pretty Good Melody

Just like Spring weather, this one is quirky and unpredictable. Pay close attention to the articulation marks!

Lively ♩ = 144+

The musical score is written in bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (D major). It consists of seven staves of music. The first staff begins with a *mp* dynamic and a 2/4 time signature. The second staff continues with a 5/8 time signature. The third staff features a 7/8 time signature and a *cresc.* dynamic. The fourth staff has a 5/8 time signature. The fifth staff is in 3/4 time. The sixth staff is in 3/4 time. The seventh staff concludes with a 2/4 time signature and a *f* dynamic. The score includes various time signatures (2/4, 5/8, 7/8, 3/4, 6/8, 3/8) and dynamic markings (*mp*, *cresc.*, *f*). Articulation marks, such as accents and slurs, are present throughout the piece.

Lively ♩ = 144+

mp

cresc.

f

Lively ♩ = 144+



mp



cresc.



f

A Useful Lip Slur

This is useful for building consistency. Don't overextend yourself.

The image displays eight musical staves, each containing a lip slur exercise. The exercises are arranged in a sequence of keys and time signatures, starting with a 4/4 time signature and moving to 3/4 time signatures. The key signatures progress from one flat (B-flat) to three flats (E-flat), then to one sharp (F#), and finally to three sharps (C#).

- Staff 1: Bass clef, 4/4 time, one flat (B-flat).
- Staff 2: Bass clef, 4/4 time, two flats (B-flat, E-flat).
- Staff 3: Bass clef, 4/4 time, three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat).
- Staff 4: Bass clef, 4/4 time, one sharp (F#).
- Staff 5: Bass clef, 4/4 time, two sharps (F#, C#).
- Staff 6: Bass clef, 4/4 time, three sharps (F#, C#, G#).
- Staff 7: Bass clef, 3/4 time, one flat (B-flat).
- Staff 8: Bass clef, 3/4 time, one sharp (F#).

Higher?

Descending sequence - gliss when needed.



Lower?

Technique / Rhythm Builders

This can be done either as a duet or you can just play one part or the other.

Start with a metronome. If you have access to some multi-track recording software, try laying down both tracks. (Bandlab is online and free - not too bad, either).

The first system consists of two staves in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The top staff features a melodic line with quarter notes and eighth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure. The bottom staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes and quarter notes, also featuring triplet markings.

The second system continues the piece with similar melodic and rhythmic patterns. The top staff has a melodic line with quarter and eighth notes. The bottom staff continues the accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes, including triplet markings.

The third system introduces a more complex rhythmic pattern in the top staff, featuring sixteenth notes and eighth notes. The bottom staff continues with quarter and eighth notes, including triplet markings.

The fourth system concludes the piece with a final melodic phrase in the top staff and a corresponding accompaniment in the bottom staff, ending with a double bar line. Triplet markings are present in both staves.

*Free book sample:
The Intermediate Trombonist*

This book is divided into a number of sections, one of which is “Varied Articulation.” These two items (#35 and #36) help students to deal with changing note groupings, helping students to become comfortable with uneven note groupings.

Sometimes, students try to rapidly tap their feet on each eighth note of a grouping. This can be a Dead End (see the Playing Tip) because eventually they will encounter a tempo too quick for this approach.

Enjoy!

Three pieces in odd meters

Try this little counting/clapping exercise to become comfortable with uneven groups.
Count very steadily and clap on the big numbers:

1 2 3 4 5 **1 2 3** 4 5 **1 2 3** 4 5 **1 2 3** 4 5 **1 2 3** 4 5 {pause}
1 2 3 4 5 **1 2 3 4** 5 **1 2 3 4** 5 **1 2 3 4** 5 **1 2 3 4** 5 {pause}

Yes, 'a' and 'b' should sound the same.

#35 a. **Allegro** (♩ = 160)

mf

p

f

b. **Allegro** (♩ = 160)

mf

p

f

With time signatures like 5/8 and 7/8, it is often wise to mark in groups of two and three 8th notes. Use a line for a group of two and a triangle for a group of three.

Allegretto (♩ = 100)

#36

mf

f *p*

cresc. *f*

dim.

What?? Changing time signatures???

Don't worry, just keep the 8th notes steady from measure to measure.

Allegretto (♩ = 100)

#37

p

mp *cresc.*

f

Playing Tip: The Dead End Road

I'd like to describe two "dead end" scenarios. Both of them involve playing solutions that may work at first but ultimately lead to **Dead Ends**.

#1 Fast Tonguing

The first one concerns multiple tonguing. Some of you out there are blessed with really fast single tongues (you know who you are). As a result, you *never* learn to double tongue or triple tongue. You put it off. In all of your music, you manage to get by with your lightning fast single tongue.

But, *BUT* someday you will meet your match. You will encounter fast notes that are beyond the reach of your single tongue and then you're stuck. You've reached a **Dead End**. For all those years, you avoided developing a usable multiple tongue. Now a performance is bearing down on you and there isn't time to work it up.



#2 Note Groupings

Some of you (you know who you are) try to tap your foot for each eighth note to navigate a 5/8 or 7/8 bar. Here's an example from Stravinsky's Soldier's Tale (L'Histoire du Soldat):

The image shows a musical score for Trombone 2 from Stravinsky's L'Histoire du Soldat, measures 10 through 14. The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is 5/8. Measure 10 starts with a *mf* dynamic and a *z* (accents) marking. Measure 11 starts with a *f* dynamic and a *z* marking. Measure 12 continues with a *z* marking. Measure 13 has a *z* marking and a large number '4' below it. Measure 14 has a *z* marking and a large number '2' below it. The score ends with a *lunga ad libit* marking and a *mf* dynamic. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and articulation marks.

Instead of frantically tapping my foot to each eighth note I learned to feel the larger groups, tapping the sometimes changing beat. In the free book sample, I included some mixed meter material from The Intermediate Trombonist. This can give you practice in avoiding the **Dead End** of trying to tap your foot for each eighth note.



On Teaching and Playing: The Happy Treadmill



A colleague I respect has had wonderful success with his studio. Once, while I was chatting with him, I asked about his approach. He said something interesting: *keep the students learning new material each week*. Assign them new things even if the past week's material wasn't great. Keep moving forward.

I think this is a great idea. Especially when I consider new undergraduate students. All too often in high school, they would pound away rehearsal after rehearsal on the same music until they've become numb. Similarly, that year's all-state music often received months of repetition before the audition. I believe this approach impedes learning. The skill of acquiring new material and having to efficiently get it in playable condition is vitally important.

At the college level my students want to know early what their jury piece will be. Once they know that piece, they want to practice it obsessively and exclude other things. I have found, if they start it too early in the semester, they usually get tired of it with a month left to go. Their overall improvement reaches a point of diminishing returns.

From this previous semester, I'm more satisfied with my efforts to avoid this limited musical diet. Of course, near the end of the semester, we are all-in on the jury piece. But prior to that I want them to have a nice varied diet. It seems they get less burned-out and improve faster this way.

Here's a hypothetical (and I do mean *hypothetical*) idea: what if the freshman curriculum consisted of nothing but sight-reading? Each week I would give them a pack of related things to sight-read. Then, in the lesson, they would sight-read something similar.

Week One:

- 8th note syncopations in common time.
- Keys of 1-2 sharps.
- Range from E2-G4
- Tenor clef in a limited range

To be clear, a daily routine would precede all this. But each practice session would have maybe 4-6 pages of music to read. Over six days, maybe that would be 24-32 pages of practice material. The 7th day would be lesson day with yet more sight-reading related to the week's assignments.

Ok, that might be crazy (or is it?). Even if I never go that far, I do like to keep students on a "happy treadmill" of material to learn. In order to accomplish that, the difficulty ramp needs to be the right degree of incline.

We are always looking for that sweet spot of challenging a student without overwhelming them. Keep them in that Flow state of learning.



The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy *Charlie Vernon - A “Singing” Approach* *to the Trombone*

I own an older copy of this book (in the photo on the cover, Charlie actually has hair!). Very early in the book (p.1 in my copy) , there is a section called “Concept of Sound.” The exercise appears to be very simple.



Vernon writes,

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“Starting with middle F, try to hear your “imaginary sound” playing that note. Then recreate on the trombone the sound you hear in your head. While playing the note, do not try to listen and change the sound of the note as it is being produced. Simply concentrate on the sound you hear in your head. Then, during the rest, recall what the note you played sounded like, and repeat the note, trying to make it sound closer to the sound in your head.”

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He then goes on to suggest that one should repeat this exercise on every note in the range concluding with this advice,

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Remember - while working on this and all of the following exercises, that the END PRODUCT (beautiful sound and music) is to be the predominant thought while playing. CONCENTRATE ON EVERY NOTE!

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Vernon, Charlie. A “Singing” Approach to the Trombone, Revised 1986. Atlanta Brass Society Press.

The book is currently titled, [“The Singing Trombone.”](#)

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This is fascinating! I am especially intrigued by his advice to not listen and adjust the note you are *currently* playing. This reminds me of some of the principles set forth in the Inner Game of Tennis (a favorite of mine). Keep your mind focused on the sound you want and let the body adjust on its own.

I once watched a master class by Dave Taylor in which he talked about doing similar, seemingly simple exercises for extremely long periods of time (multiple hours). I think we move so quickly to playing harder material and especially, **PLAYING BY FEEL** instead of concentrating on our desired sound.

Do you **REALLY** know what you want to sound like?



A Random Thought: Of Mario Kart and Life



Recently, I did a guest artist visit to another school. The teacher invited his students over to the house where they played some Mario Kart. I attempted one race (I did not win). As I watched the high speed, confusing split-screen images of the racers, I noticed that - here and there - a racer might get sidelined by hitting an obstacle or even getting “bombed” by another racer.

As I traveled home, I reflected on this game. All those racers at the starting line. Only one will win. Other racers might have excellent skills but then something comes along and knocks them behind in the race.



This reminds me of the audition process. For each person who wins that audition, there are others who didn't. I don't want to imply that dirty tricks played a role (nobody's throwing bombs at each other ... I hope!).

Still they got sidelined:

- Flight delays and cancellations
- Getting sick the week before the audition
- Troubles getting a good breakfast that morning
- Having a big loud concert right before the audition (like me playing Copland Symphony No. 3 the night before an Atlanta Symphony audition...).

Or maybe they hit obstacles that kept them from even getting to the audition at all:

- Not using a high-end microphone for the pre-screening recording.
- Having to work nights while taking classes so they can afford college.

Or maybe the obstacles came earlier in life:

- Not being able to afford quality private instruction
- Not being able to attend summer musical festivals
- Not being able to afford a top-tier instrument.
- Their gender or race triggering biases against them.

In that race, they might be running hard but they don't win the race. Can they overcome these obstacles? Sure. But many don't.

Just as lots of factors contribute
to the winner's ultimate success,
other factors serve to delay
or sideline others in the race.

