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)

In this issue:

Enjoy!

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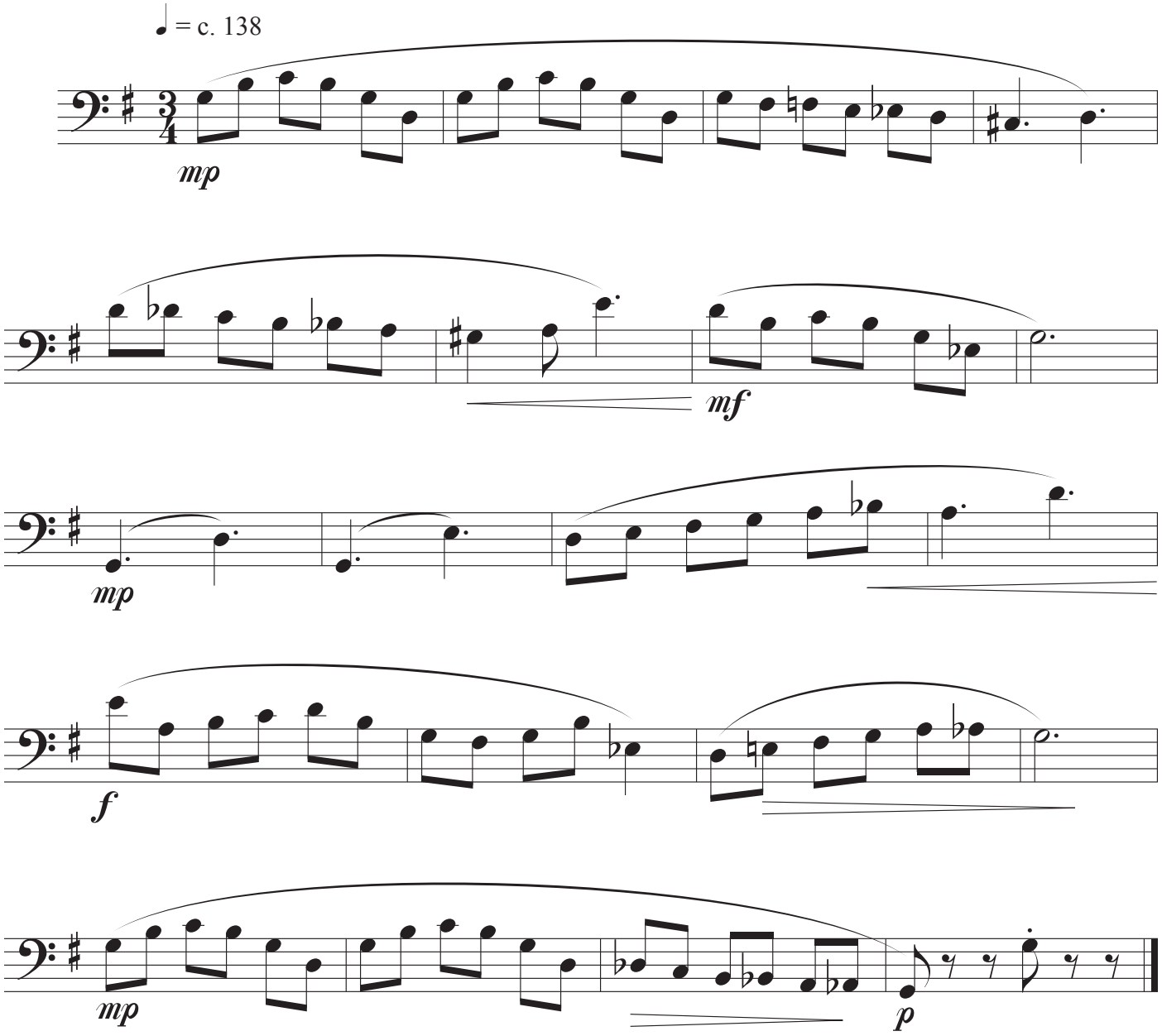
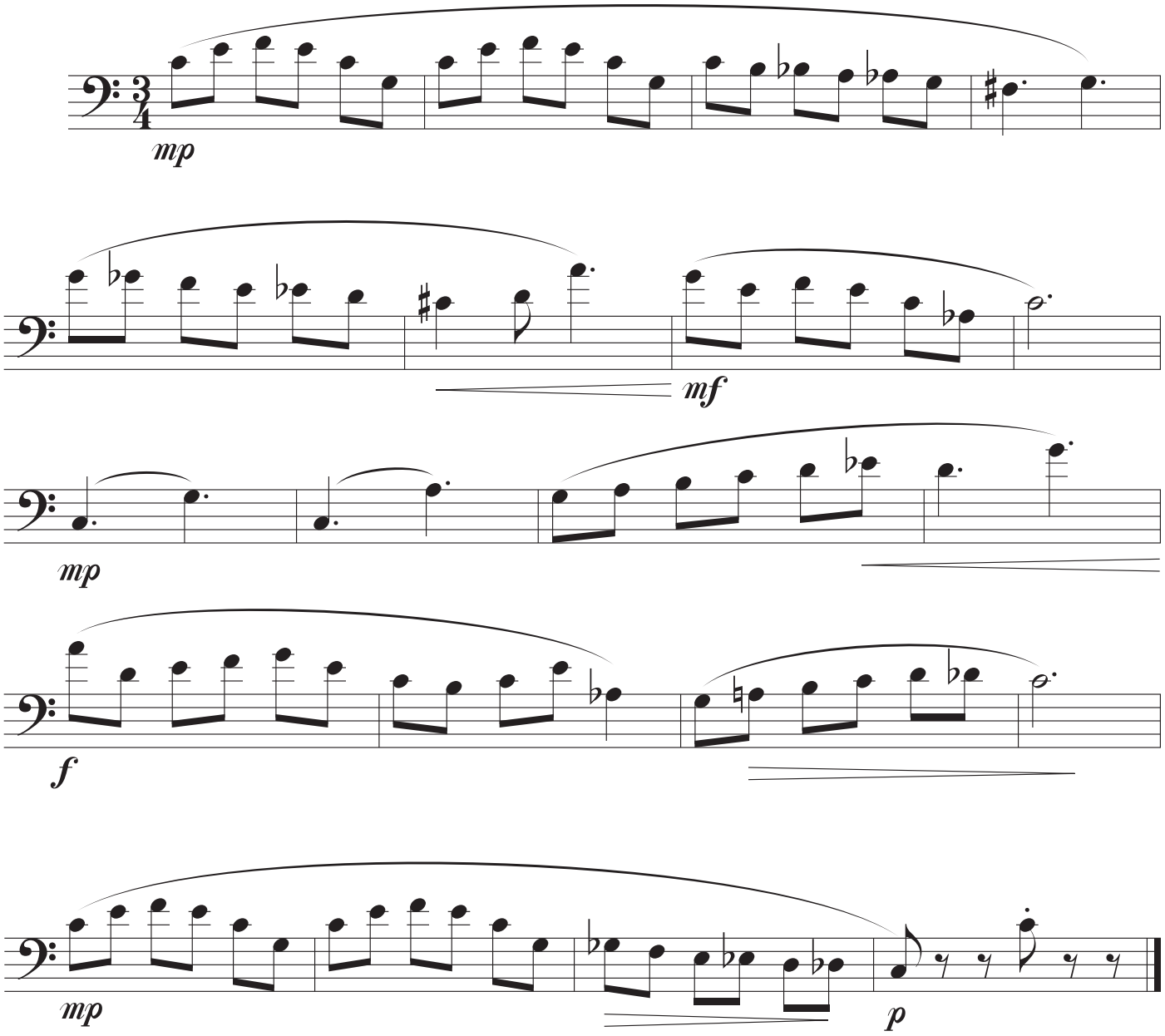
School of Music Dance and Theater
Websites:
Trombone Zone
Hornbone Press
Free Audition Solos
ASU Bones

June 2024

A Pretty Good Melody

This one has elements of 3/4 and 6/8. Let if flow along with ease.

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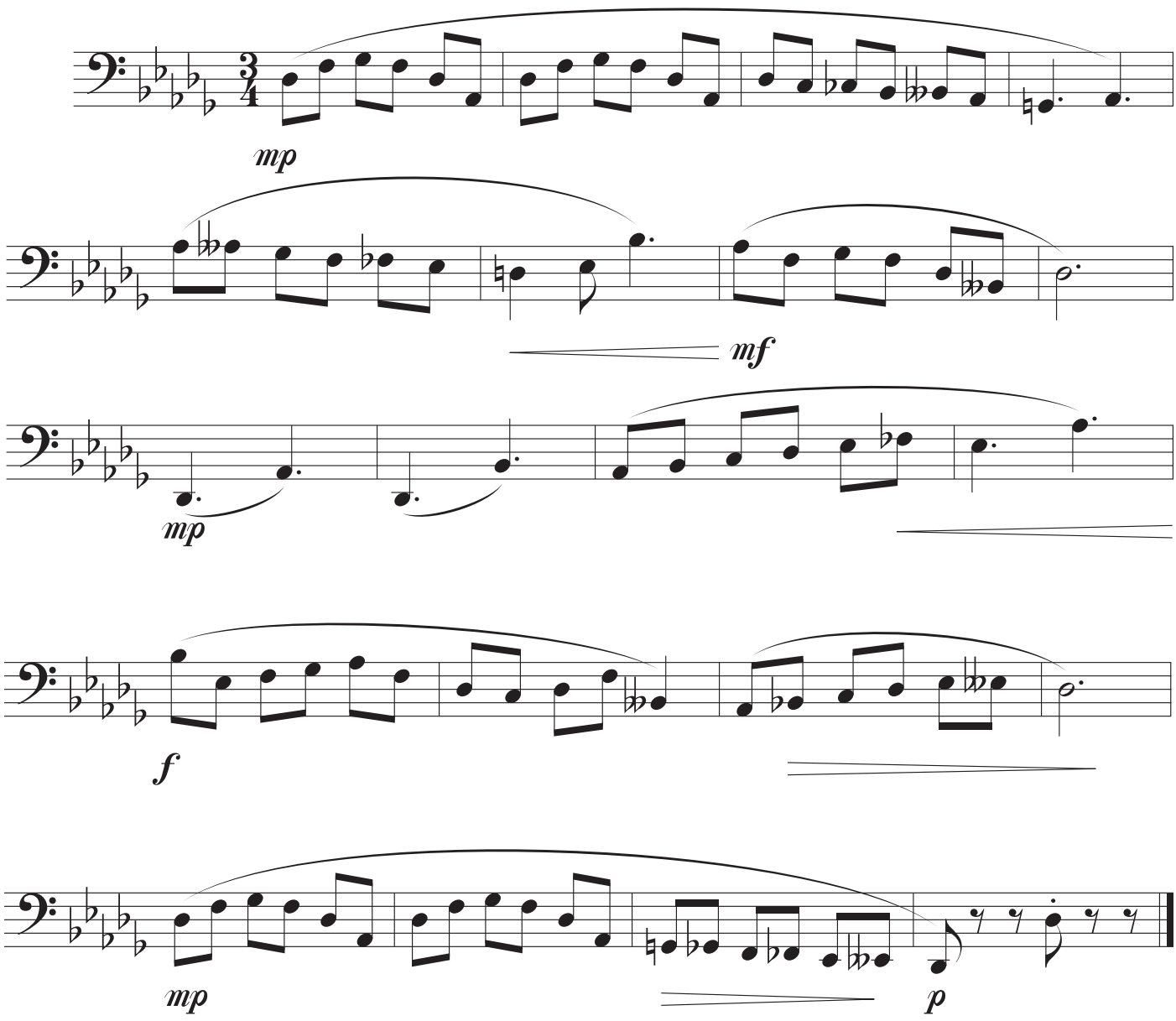
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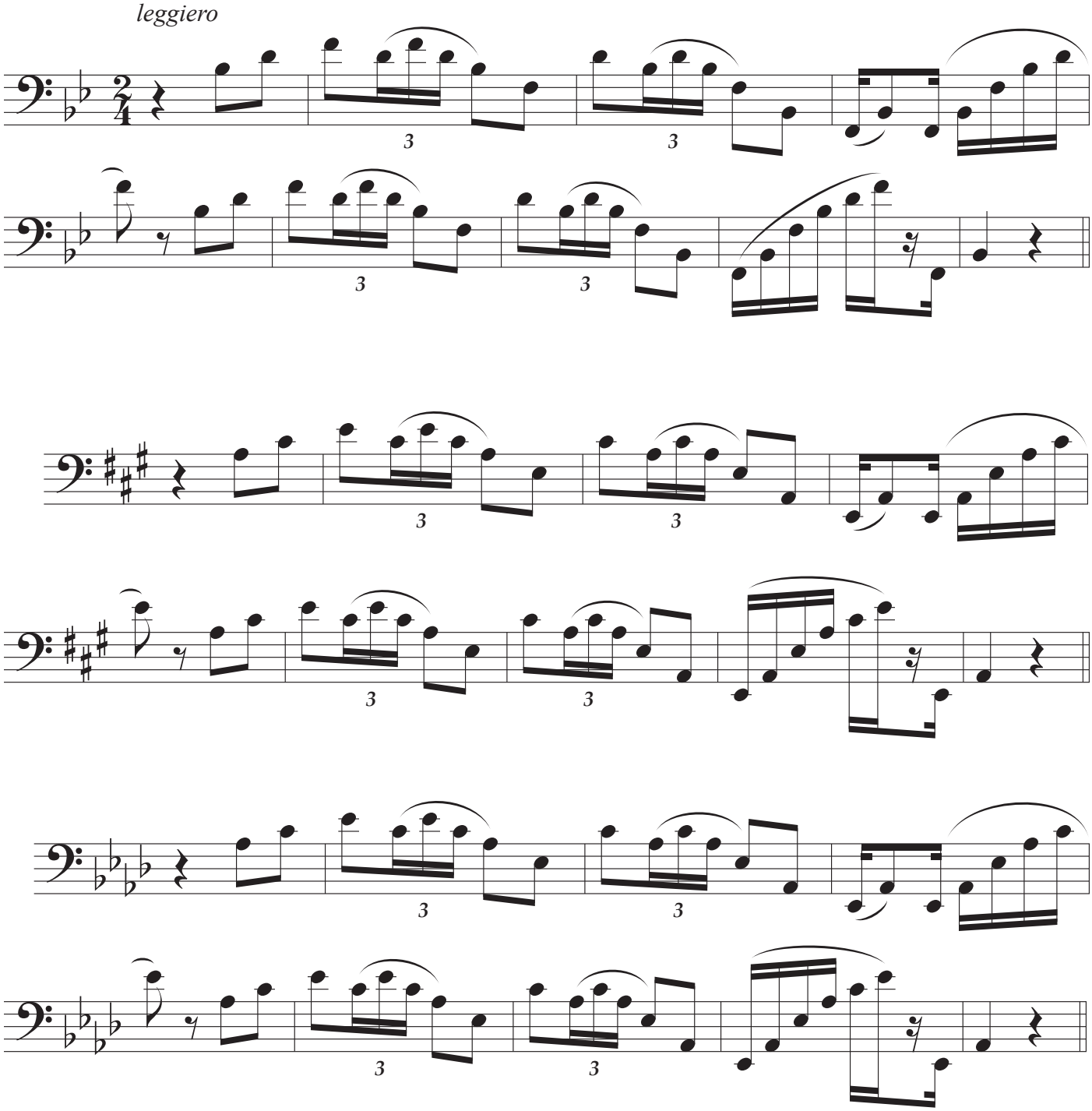
A Useful Lip Slur

June 2024

This mixes slurs with tonguing. Keep it light and playful.



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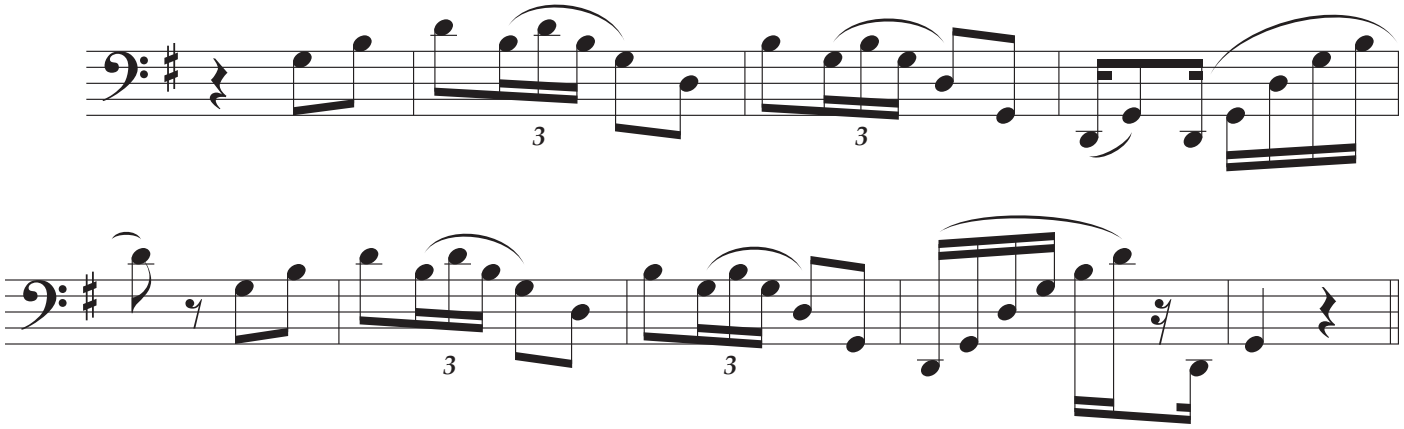

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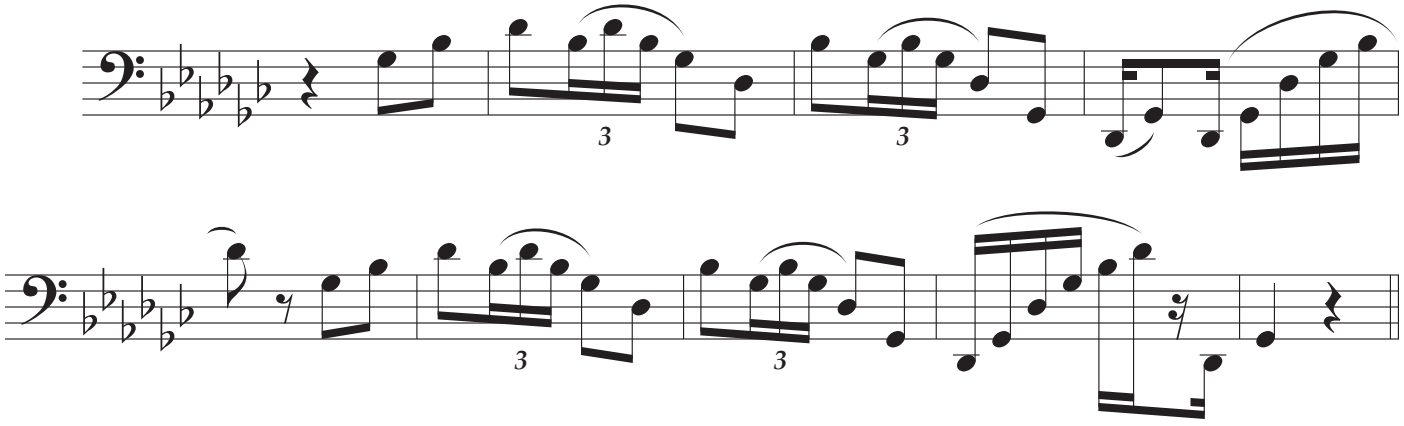

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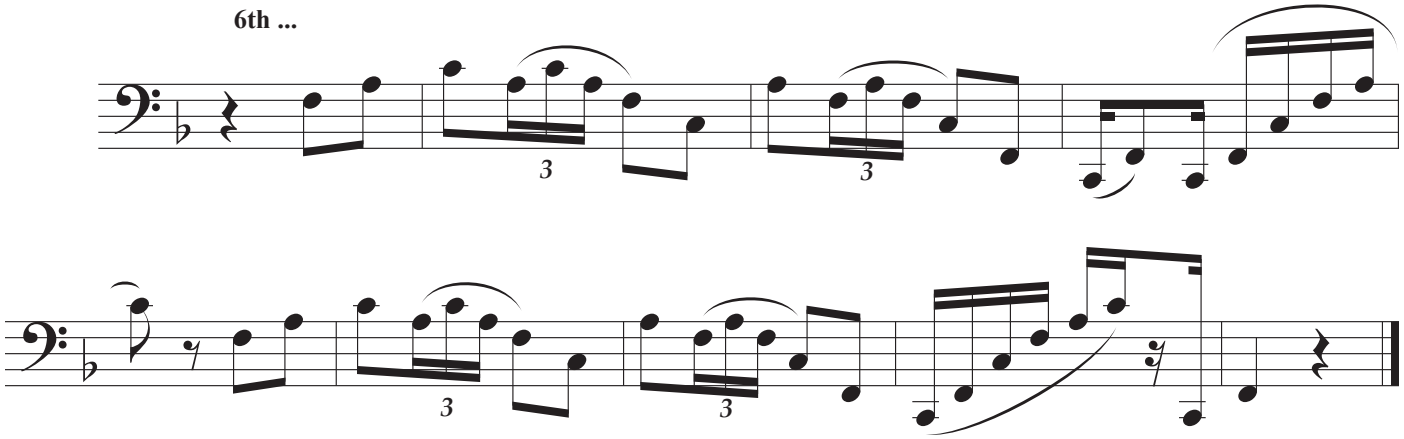
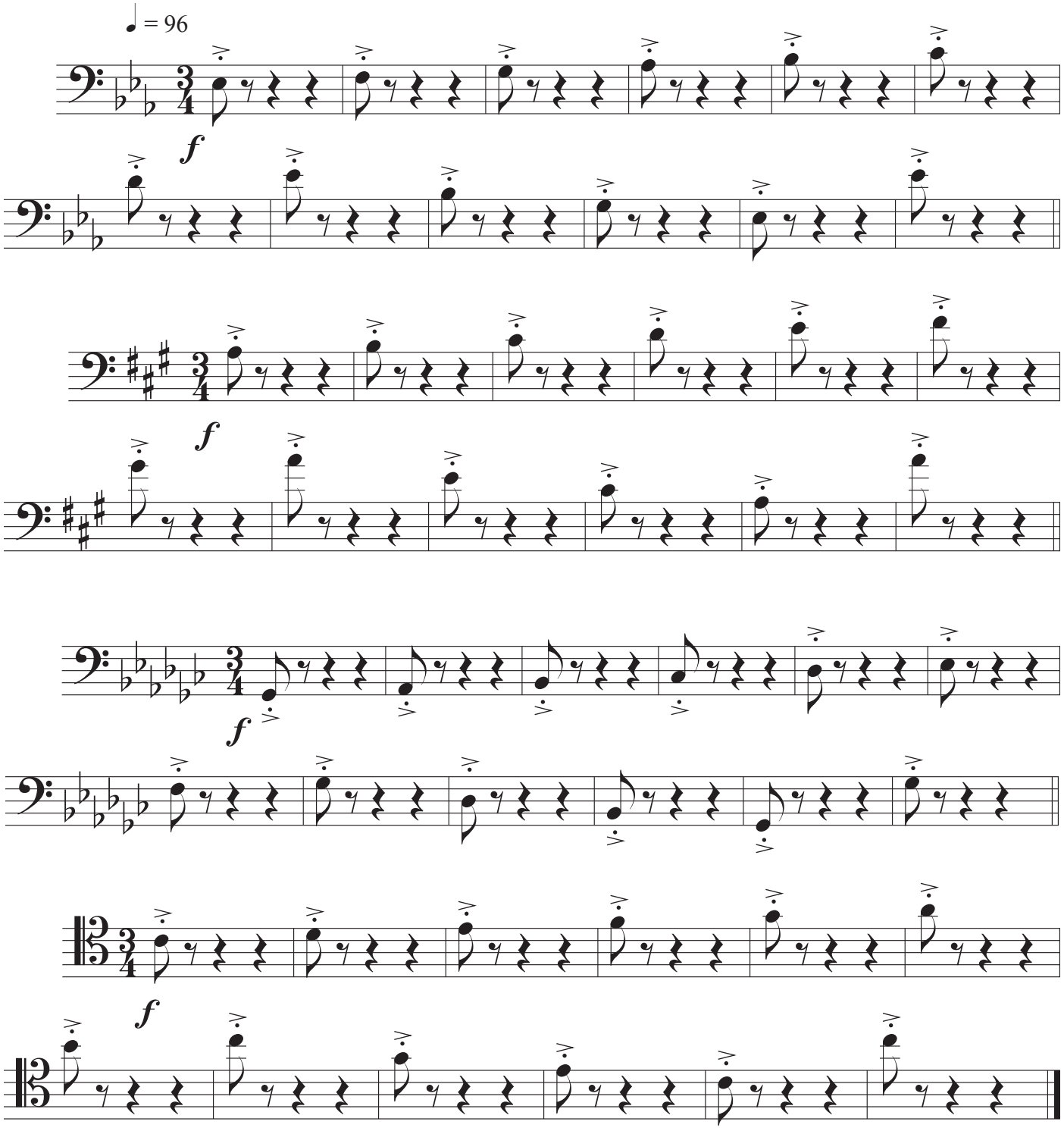


June 2024

Technique / Rhythm Builders

This is quite basic but very useful for building consistency. The secret to this one is keeping the embouchure corners ***engaged and not moving between attacks!*** Don't relax and reset. If you miss a note, jump back to the previous note.

Of course you can do it in other keys/registers. Do use a metronome.



Free book sample:
"Lilting Syncopations" from
Simply Singing for Winds, Part One
"Building a Foundation"

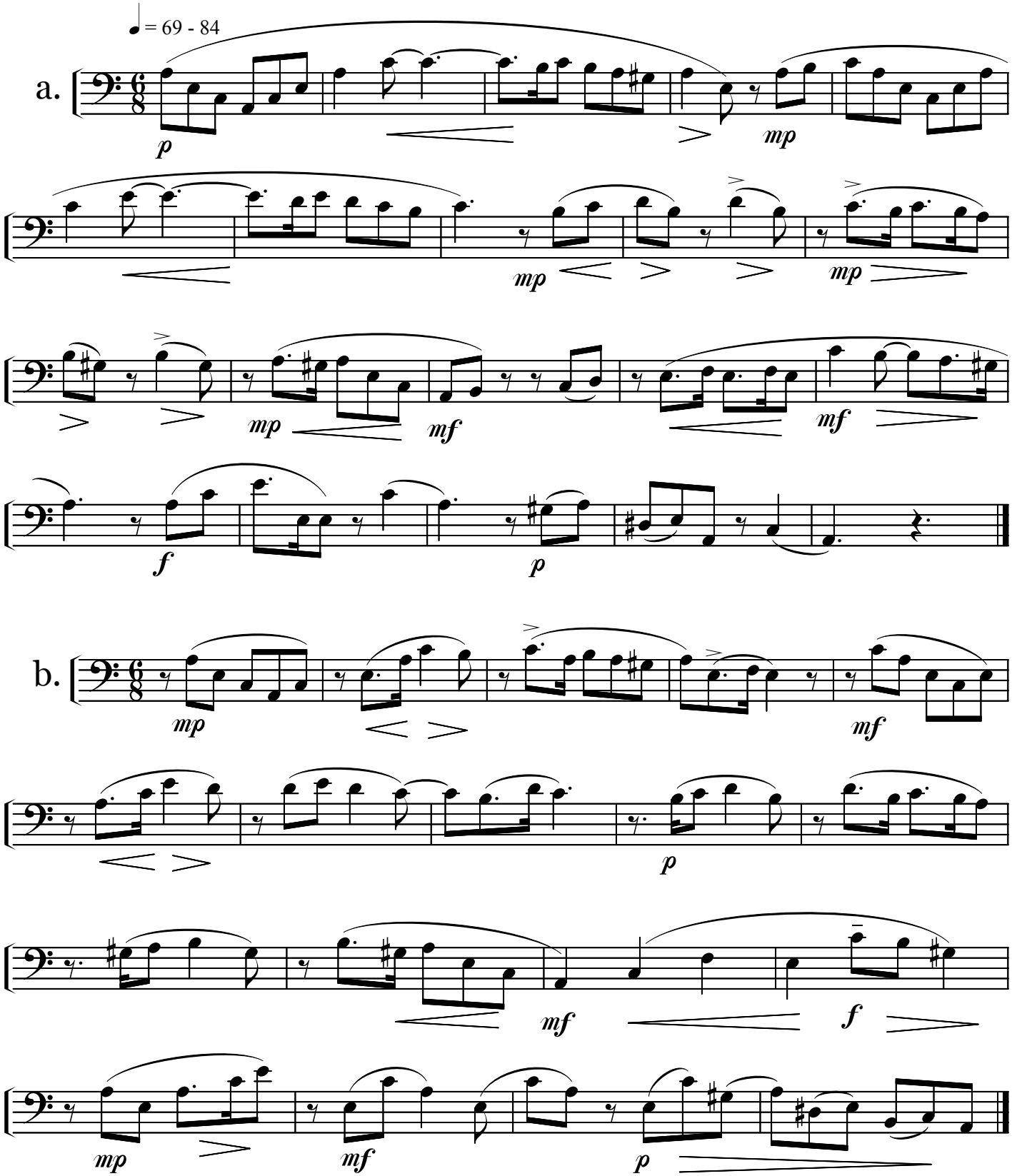
This book starts with 30 'foundation pieces.' These pieces were actually originally a separate book that I used with my students. However, I did not think they were substantial enough to be published separately so I rolled them into the larger book, Simply Singing for Winds.

In this section of the book, usually the same piece appears in two different keys. However, for this one, the key remains the same while the rhythms change. These can be good for improving rhythmic accuracy. Included here are the versions for tenor and bass trombone.

Enjoy!

#29. Lilting Syncopations in 6/8

This is another etude in which the rhythms change instead of the key. Give it an easy, dance-like quality. If you're confused by the rhythms, first count them slowly in six.



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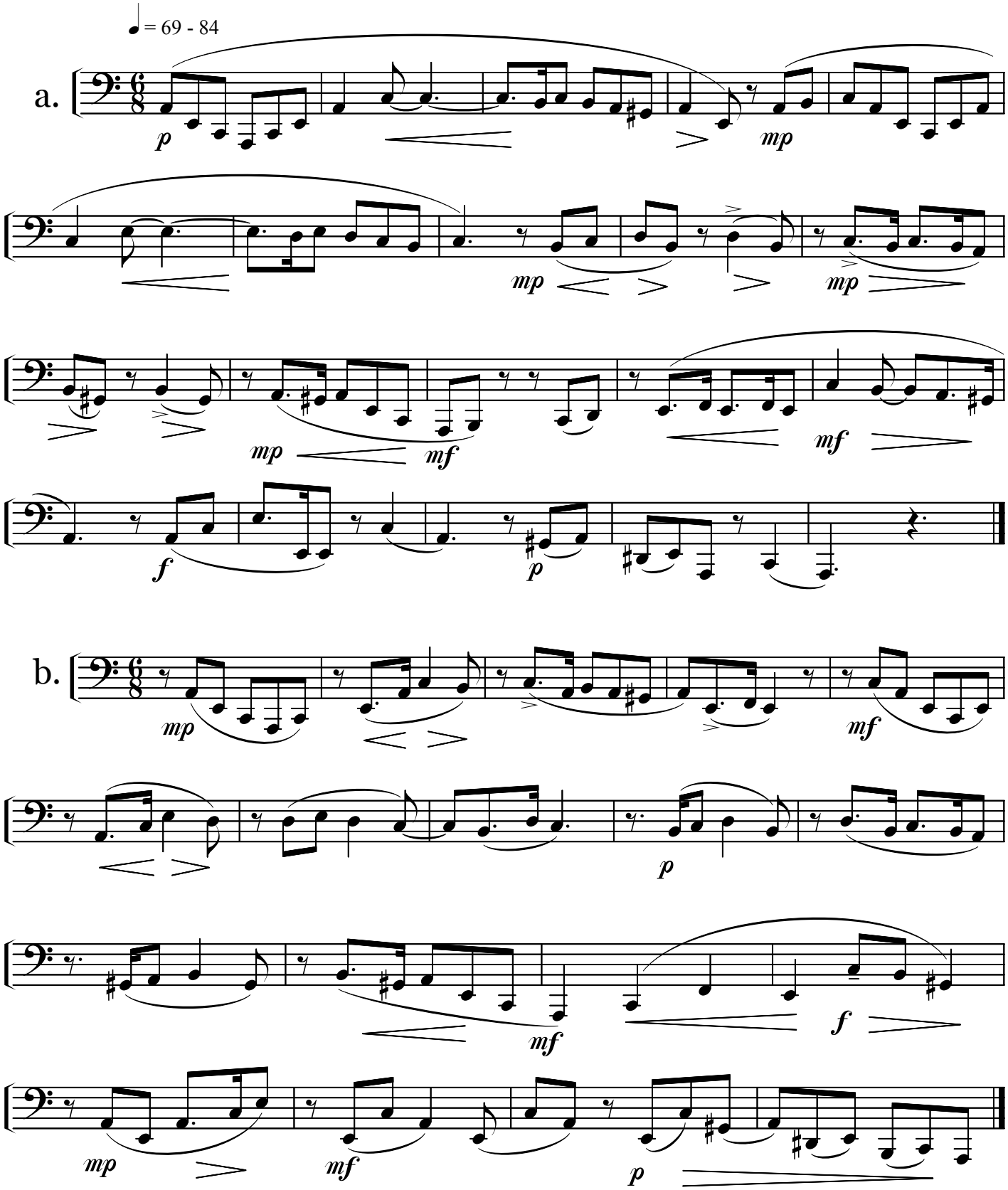

Playing Tip: Goals

There is a lot of great advice out there about goal-setting. I would like to differentiate between two types of goals: External and Internal.

Sample External Goals

- Win an audition
- Be a finalist in a competition
- Give a great recital

It seems to me that Internal Goals really boil down to two:

- Expanding your potential
- Reaching that potential under pressure

With external goals, there are factors beyond your control. With respect to auditions, you seek to have as many factors under control as possible:

- What is the performance space like?
- When will you arrive for the audition?
- What will you eat for breakfast that day?

But there are factors you likely can't control:

- When do you play?
- What is the committee listening for?
- Who played right before you?

Likewise, with preparing recordings, there are factors you can (somewhat) control:

- Quality of your microphone.
- Acoustics of the space in which you record.

With internal goals, all factors *should* be under your control. Here are some reasonable internal goals you can set for yourself:

- I will do a mock audition for people every other day.
- I will record passages and listen in detail.
- I will eat a healthy diet.
- I will keep up with my exercise (stretching, cardio and strength).
- I will wash my hands regularly to avoid getting sick.
- I will keep a practice journal.
- I will visualize playing well under pressure.
- I will listen to varied excellent recordings of the music I am preparing.
- I will include mental run throughs in my preparation.
- I will keep up with my fundamentals.
- I will start recording long enough before the deadline.
- I will seek out feedback from an experienced instructor/performer.

After asking, I also got the following added goals from Facebook Trombone Pedagogy & Repertoire group:

Joshua Hernandez:

- I will remember the "why" (what's internally motivating me to do what I do)
- I will take breaks and be kind to myself.

Sonya Leonore Stahl:

- I will have good sleep habits.

Harold van Schaik:

- I will listen to non-trombone music/artists/soloists/ensembles.

Austin Pancner:

- I will track my hydration and consistently hydrate based on my individual needs.
- I will clean or maintain my instrument once a week.
- I will clean my mouthpiece after my last practice session in a day.

Richard Strauch:

- I will turn off my email/social media/phone during my practice session.

I believe it is most productive to set for yourself these kinds of internal goals. Nobody can guarantee a win for you. But at least you can achieve internal goals that plausibly should bring you closer to that external goal.

On Teaching and Playing: 10,000 hours

Anders Ericsson (1947-2020), popularized by Malcolm Gladwell, was a psychologist who became known for the "10,000 hour" rule. In short, in any discipline, 10,000 hours of dedicated practice should bring someone to a high level of proficiency. That's about 90 minutes of practice daily for 20 years.

As with most ideas that have been popularized, this one has entered the popular imagination without any of the caveats, including those mentioned by Ericsson himself. For one thing, that number is more of an average than a magical point in time. Ericsson also talks about the importance of dedicated practicing as opposed to casual practicing. In this interview, Ericsson states:

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> "I would argue that the key thing that people have misinterpreted is that it's not just a matter of accumulating hours. If you're doing your job, and you're just doing more and more of the same, you're not actually going to get better. There's a lot of research to really prove that."

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Later in the interview, he states:

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> "We know that in order to get benefits from training, you really need to be fully concentrated."

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Even with that in mind, here's my concern: when we practice, we are reinforcing habits. Some habits help us, and some hinder us. If, for example, you habitually play with a lot of tension, it might be argued that a two-hour practice session will make you a worse player since you just reinforced a bad habit. You might be fully concentrated but not internally aware.

Ultimately, I confess that I should read more deeply about all this. Perhaps then I reach a more informed and nuanced opinion. Still I do hear people tossing around this 10,000 hour rule rather casually.

Yes, quality takes time. But more importantly, quality takes quality.

The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy

Will Kimball's article: 10 Ways to Improve Breathing

Every now and then, I have to refresh my thinking about things. Take breathing, for example. For years, I just went with the assumption that the *only* muscle used to inhale was the diaphragm. I never really researched it - I just took it as a matter of faith. Nope, I was wrong. The intercostal muscles play an active role in breathing. The ribs don't just react to the expansion of the lungs, they help cause it.

OK, stop laughing. I'm sure you all knew that and I was the only ignorant one. Here's a rather long quote from Dr. Kimball's article:

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5) Allow full expansion

Though sometimes a foreign concept to musicians, it is a common piece of workaday knowledge among physiologists that the bellows of the human respiratory system consists of two parts: the diaphragm and the rib cage (Tobin 31; Johnson 256). Using only the diaphragm, as is sometimes advocated by musicians, eliminates approximately one third of the vital capacity (Sebel 28); other studies indicate that this loss could even be higher than a third (Bergofsky). There are clearly many cases in which musicians require a full vital capacity breath, not just two thirds of their vital capacity. Also, since maximum expiratory flow is possible only near total lung capacity and decreases progressively as lung volume decreases, the matter of full expansion obviously affects lung function as well as lung volume (Johnson 263). Movement of the rib cage portion of the bellows occurs mechanically through what physiologists often call the "bucket handle" motion of the rib cage, wherein the rib cage (a series of bucket handles connected at the spine and sternum) moves upward and outward upon inhalation, downward and inward on exhalation. If the rib cage remains fixed (whether in an upward position, downward position, or anywhere along its range of motion), its mechanical purpose is obviously thwarted. That is to say, the rib cage must move up and down, in and out, in order to work as a bellows (Johnson 263). At no point, whether through training, concentration, or superhuman effort, can a person cause the diaphragm (not to mention the lung itself, which is passive and completely without muscle) to simply take over the rib cage's portion of mechanical movement, whether during inhalation or exhalation.

If rib cage motion is inhibited and only the diaphragm is used during inhalation, the efficiency of the entire respiratory system is compromised. Respiratory physiologists have shown that the respiratory system works best as a whole, not through isolation of individual muscles like the diaphragm (hence the term respiratory *system*). Studies demonstrate, for example, that respiratory muscles other than the diaphragm do not simply offer mechanical assistance to the diaphragm. Rather, these muscles actually work together and "coordinate so as to *optimize* diaphragmatic function" (Goldman and Mead) (emphasis added), with "substantial coupling" between the muscles of the rib cage and the diaphragm (Boynton et al.). In other words, the diaphragm does not work as efficiently by itself as it does in combination with the other respiratory muscles. Again, it is a respiratory *system,* a system that uses many muscles and interlocking movements.

Finally, there is no physiological evidence that rib cage motion causes tension or restriction in any way, contrary to what musicians occasionally claim. In point of fact, motion more often relieves tension than causes tension. Think of

the last time your neck was stiff—did you relieve the tension by keeping it as fixed as possible? If your arms are tense do you relax them by holding them as still as possible? If your torso feels tense, relax and let things move!

In my clinics and workshops at more than 20 universities and conservatories around the nation, this has probably been the most common problem among the hundreds of musicians whose vital capacity I have measured: they are afraid to relax and let everything move when they inhale (possibly because they are afraid they might do something wrong). When they do finally relax, take a big breath, and allow everything to expand and do its job naturally without trying to isolate muscles or execute involuntary actions, their vital capacity measurements invariably improve.

Will Kimball, 10 Ways to Improve Breathing. KimballTrombone.com.
https://kimballtrombone.com/breathing/10-ways-to-improve-breathing/

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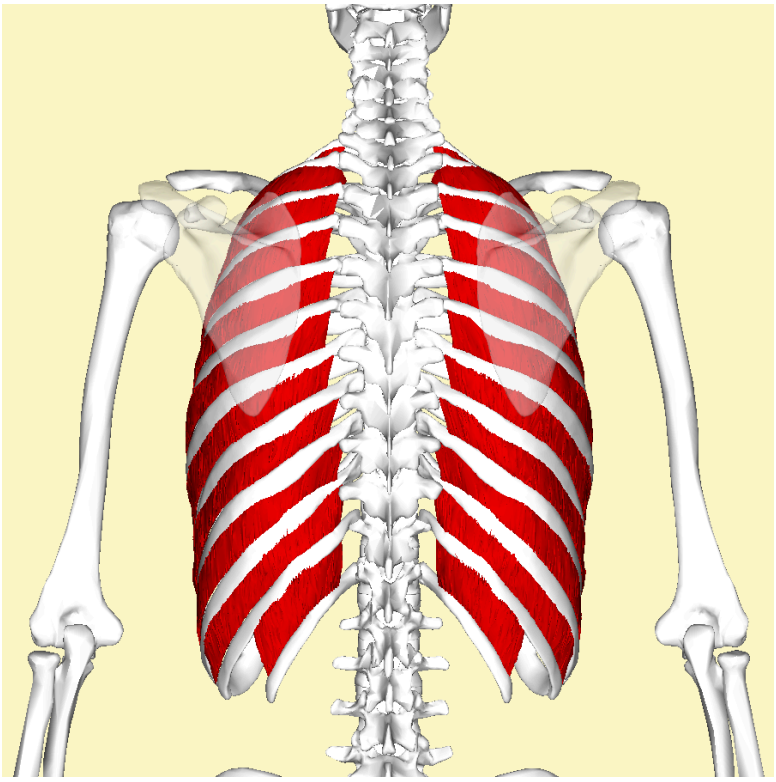
So now you know. However, is there something we can actually do differently once armed with this knowledge? I still prefer the mindset of (1) tall/balanced posture, (2) air rushing in, and (3) letting the body naturally do what it knows.

Still, maybe it's good to know a more complete explanation of what we do as we breathe in.



A Random Thought: Who's the most famous trombone player?

Sometimes I ask my students, "If you walked up to a person on the street in the 1940's and asked them to name a trombone player, what would they probably say?" What surprises me is how many of them really have no idea.

Let's try to remember that time (no, I wasn't alive then!). No internet. No TV (at least not widespread - broadcasts started roughly in 1939 but weren't widespread until the mid 1940's). But there was radio, definitely radio.

Since people didn't have such a wide variety of information sources, it was possible for a large number of people to all know and listen to the same stars (think George Burns and Gracie Allen). *And* this was the era of the big bands.

As to trombone, I think two names clearly stand out above all the rest: Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller. Older readers of this "newsletter" likely won't hesitate in knowing those names.

But younger trombonists? Not so much. I regularly ask my freshman, "Who was Tommy Dorsey? Can you name one recording by him?" I'm surprised at how many have never heard of him.

Here's a thought exercise: who's the most famous trombone player today? Not among trombonists but among the general public. So, I think we can let go of such names as Joe Alessi and Christian Lindberg. I'm not doubting them as players but do you really think the average person on the street knows those names?

Some people *might* say Wycliffe Gordon and a small contingent will probably mention Commander Riker from Star Trek. Others might mention James Pankow from Chicago.

Still, my money would be on Trombone Shorty (Troy Andrews).