

## *TBZ Monthly*

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards  
Volume 3, No. 8. ~ August, 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](mailto:brad.edwards6251@gmail.com). (IG: [@brad\\_edwards\\_trombone](#))

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### **Enjoy!**

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# A Pretty Good Melody

Freely

The first system of the musical score is written in bass clef, 4/4 time, and C major. It consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a *mp* dynamic and features a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff starts with a *p* dynamic. The third staff includes a *cresc.* marking, a *f* dynamic, and four triplet markings. The fourth staff concludes with a *mp* dynamic. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Freely

The second system of the musical score is written in bass clef, 4/4 time, and D major. It consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a *mp* dynamic and features a triplet of eighth notes. The second staff starts with a *p* dynamic. The third staff includes a *cresc.* marking, a *f* dynamic, and four triplet markings. The fourth staff concludes with a *mp* dynamic. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Freely

*mp* *mf*

*p*

*cresc.* *f* *mp*

Freely

*mp* *mf*

*p*

*cresc.* *f* *mp*

## A Useful Lip Slur

I call this one a lip bend. It can be really helpful when you find yourself playing on the high side of the pitch, probably with a pinched sound.

The secret is to (1) keep the sound as full as possible and (2) not precisely control when you drop a partial. Just focus on bending as far as you can and let the instrument decide when you drop down.

Be alert to any tensing in the throat. Many people try to 'generate' lip slurs by clenching the throat.

For the gliss, don't move your slide. Bend as much as possible with the lips.

Slowly

1st ...

mf

mf

mf

mf

mp

mp

2nd ...

mf

mf

mf

mf

mp

mp

Continue down by slide positions.

### Technique / Rhythm Builders

This is connected to the month's Playing Tip. Try it in other keys. Probably best to use a metronome.



*Free book sample: First Habits*  
*“Happy Chops” - melodic warm down*

Near the end of the [237-page book](#) (only available as a PDF), I have section on warming down. Play slowly and gently, striving for maximum resonance in your sound.

My wish for your August? Happy chops.

Enjoy!

3 Melodic Warm-Down

The image displays nine musical staves, each representing a different key signature for a warm-down exercise. Each staff is written in bass clef and 4/4 time. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The exercises consist of a sequence of notes with slurs and ties, and a dashed oval highlights a specific intervallic pattern in each staff. The key signatures are: F major, A major, Bb major, C major, Eb major, E major, F# major, G major, and A major.

"Happy Chops" Warm-Down Exercises

Melodic Warm-Down (continued)

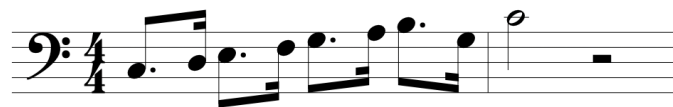
The image displays nine musical staves, each representing a different key signature for a melodic warm-down exercise. All staves are in bass clef and 4/4 time. Each staff begins with a key signature change: Staff 1 (B-flat major), Staff 2 (C major), Staff 3 (D-flat major), Staff 4 (E-flat major), Staff 5 (F major), Staff 6 (G major), Staff 7 (A major), Staff 8 (B-flat major), and Staff 9 (C major). The exercises are composed of eighth-note runs, often grouped with slurs and dashed lines. Some notes are marked with a sharp sign (#). The exercises conclude with a whole note chord and a final whole note rest.



## Playing Tip: The 8th-Dotted 16th rhythm (part one)



Few rhythms are as vexing as this one! Most young performers have only a vague sense of how this should sound. In the middle tempos, that sense *might* work if the rhythm is by itself. However, when given a string of these in a row:



Many young performers allow the 16th to float slower, feeling closer to a triplet. This is especially true when the tempo is faster. In the brain, perhaps they are thinking, “Long-Short, Long-Short” and that’s good enough.



When the tempo is slower, the 16th note often ends up being too fast. Like this:



It’s almost as if the 16th note is the same speed no matter how fast the tempo. I sometimes compare this to a cheap, one-size-fits-all tube sock that doesn’t really fit anyone!



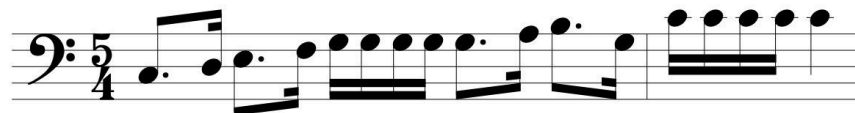
Here’s an exercise that can really help with rhythmic accuracy. Practice it at a variety of tempos (and on different notes).



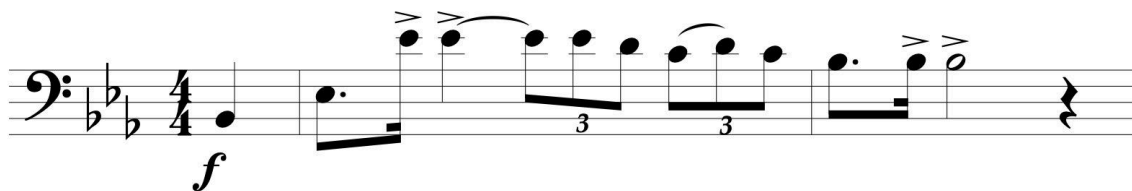
I like this one because that 16th pickup leads directly into a string of 16ths. If you play the pickup too fast or too slow, it won’t mesh with the following notes. You can also insert this as a little practice exercise into other music. For example, consider that first example above.



Here’s an adaptation to ensure that the 16th pickups are accurate.

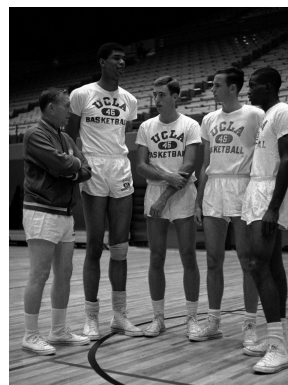


However, all of this ignores an annoying little detail. Sometimes, for musical reasons, we choose to *stylize* the 16th note for dramatic effect. In the example below, most performers will opt to play the 16th a bit too late and too fast. Mathematically, it may be wrong but, *musically*, it feels so right.



In the next issue, I want to talk about this rhythm in 6/8 time.

## *On Teaching and Playing: John Wooden*



John Wooden (1910-2010) was one of the most successful NCAA basketball coaches of all time, winning 10 championships with the UCLA Bruins. He was also a source of great wisdom.

*“If you don’t have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?”*

~~

*“If you’re not making mistakes, then you’re not doing anything.”*

~~

*“If you do enough small things right, big things can happen”*

~~

*“Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.”*

The list of amazing quotes goes on and on. Want to be a better teacher, learn from Wooden’s approach. Admittedly, not everything translates. Wooden would create a detailed plan in advance for each practice. I do find in my own teaching that I must be able to react to each unique student in the moment and rely on my instincts built up over years of teaching. Here’s an [old video](#) showing the exercises they would work on.

*“Many people have been surprised to find out that at UCLA we work more than half our practice on fundamental drills. Even on the last practice of the season.”*

Wooden thought of himself more as a teacher than a coach.  
We can learn a lot from him.

## *The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy*

### *David Vining, What Every Trombonist Needs to Know About the Body*

Dr. Vining shares a wealth of accurate and detailed information in this 134-page book. Much of his writing draws from the world of [body mapping](#). The following passage comes from the book's final section, "Explorations."

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#### Exploration 10:

##### *Slide Technique*

To move the trombone slide with accuracy and efficiency, trace a straight line with your right hand. The only way to do this is to use all of the jointed areas in your arm in various combinations. Look at figure 11.16 to review where the jointed areas are: fingers, wrist, elbow, upper arm joint and SC joint. All of these joints are important to a trombonist. a preoccupation with any one area, such as the wrist, is detrimental to your slide technique because it denies you the use of all five jointed areas.

Stand up and hold your trombone up to your face as if you are going to play but keep the slide locked. Let your right hand dangle at your side in order to establish its neutral position. Bring your right hand up to the slide preserving its neutral position and move along the bottom tube all the way out to 7th position and back. Notice that in order to trace the straight line of the slide, you must use all of the jointed areas of your arm in different combinations depending on how far out your hand is.

Vining, David. [What Every Trombonist Needs to Know about the Body](#). Flagstaff, AZ. Mountain Peak Music, 2010.

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In this section of the book, Vining provides a detailed skeletal drawing of the arm and follows this text with a playing exercise.

For me, what is particularly helpful here is the exercise of moving the hand along the bottom tube of the trombone slide while noticing the action of the joints. In other portions of the book, he details the importance of the sternoclavicular (SC) joint, located where the collarbone meets the sternum. Many younger players don't realize the potential of using this joint for natural arm extension.

I also like his emphasis on preserving the neutral position of the hand as one brings it up to meet the slide. I have so many players twist the wrist into an unnatural position, potentially causing problems.

If you are interested in building a better understanding of the role of the body in playing the trombone, you won't find a better book.

## *A Random Thought: Showing Up*

“80 percent of success is showing up.” - Woody Allen

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“90 percent of success is showing up on time.” - me

“95 percent of success is showing up on time, prepared.” - also me

As I write this, we are on day 2 of the 2024 Paris Olympics. I have always drawn inspiration from the Olympics. Young athletes devoting their lives training for a brief shining moment in the sun.

Two quick stories. In the 1972 Munich summer games, two sprinters, Rey Robinson and Eddie Hart, missed a qualifying heat for their sprint event. They were disqualified. They had both bested the world record times for the 100-meter sprint. However their coach, Stan Wright, was unwittingly using an outdated schedule and failed to deliver them to the track on time. Let that sink in.

In the 1988 Seoul Olympics, boxer Anthony Hembrick missed his bout because of confusion over the start time and an overloaded shuttle bus system taking athletes from the Olympic village. He was disqualified as his coaches ran through the facility, looking for him.

All that training. All that hope. Only to lose for not showing up on time.

It seems so simple. Almost not worth mentioning, really.

In high school I took private lessons with Dr. Henry Schmidt at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania. From my house, it was roughly a 45-minute drive. Once I had my driver's license, my dad wasn't eager to keep shuttling me over to the lesson so I was allowed to drive myself. I would guess that for most of those lessons, I left about 43 minutes before the lesson, showing up a bit late. Dr. Schmidt would always point out that I was late. I would chastise myself with promises that next time, I would leave earlier. I usually didn't. Dumb high school kid.

In Air Force basic training, my drill sergeant, Thomas J. Lyden would often repeat, “If you’re not 15 minutes early, you’re late.” That still echoes in my mind.

As a freelancer in Washington D.C., I was paranoid about the D.C. traffic. I set for myself the goal of being 30 minutes early for a rehearsal and 45 minutes early for a performance. That (almost) always worked. Ask any freelance musician and I’ll bet they’ll tell you about a recurring nightmare titled, “Late for the Gig.”

If you are evil, send someone a text at 7:30pm saying, “Where are you?”

[I have never done this.]

When my students are late, I message them with, “Is everything OK?” Once I arrived late to conduct a trombone choir rehearsal. Yep, I received 20 text messages saying, “Is everything OK?” A well-choreographed bit of snark from my students. Good times.

A simple trick. Count backwards in your planning. In other words, think:

- I want to be walking in the door at this time.
- In order to do that, I have to park by this time.
- In order to do that, I have to leave by this time.
- In order to do that, I have to [finish eating/brush teeth/get dressed] at this time.

FWIW, the point of failure is often in underestimating all those little things you do to be ready to walk out the door. Packing your horn. Filling your water bottle. Using the bathroom, etc. We tell ourselves all that will only take a minute or two when in truth it takes longer.

Don’t let something simple come along and ruin your moment in the sun.

Sprinter, Eddie Hart who got another chance at gold anchoring the 4x100 relay in the Munich games.





We founded **The Trombone Tutors** in 2023 to offer top-notch instruction to all young trombone players! Our program includes eight live virtual masterclasses each month with Dr. Eric Henson and Dr. Justin Isenhour. Classes cover all the essential skills middle and high school students need to achieve their personal musical goals. Can't make a live session? No worries! Members enjoy unlimited archive access!

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