TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards
Volume 3, No. 9. ~ September 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!

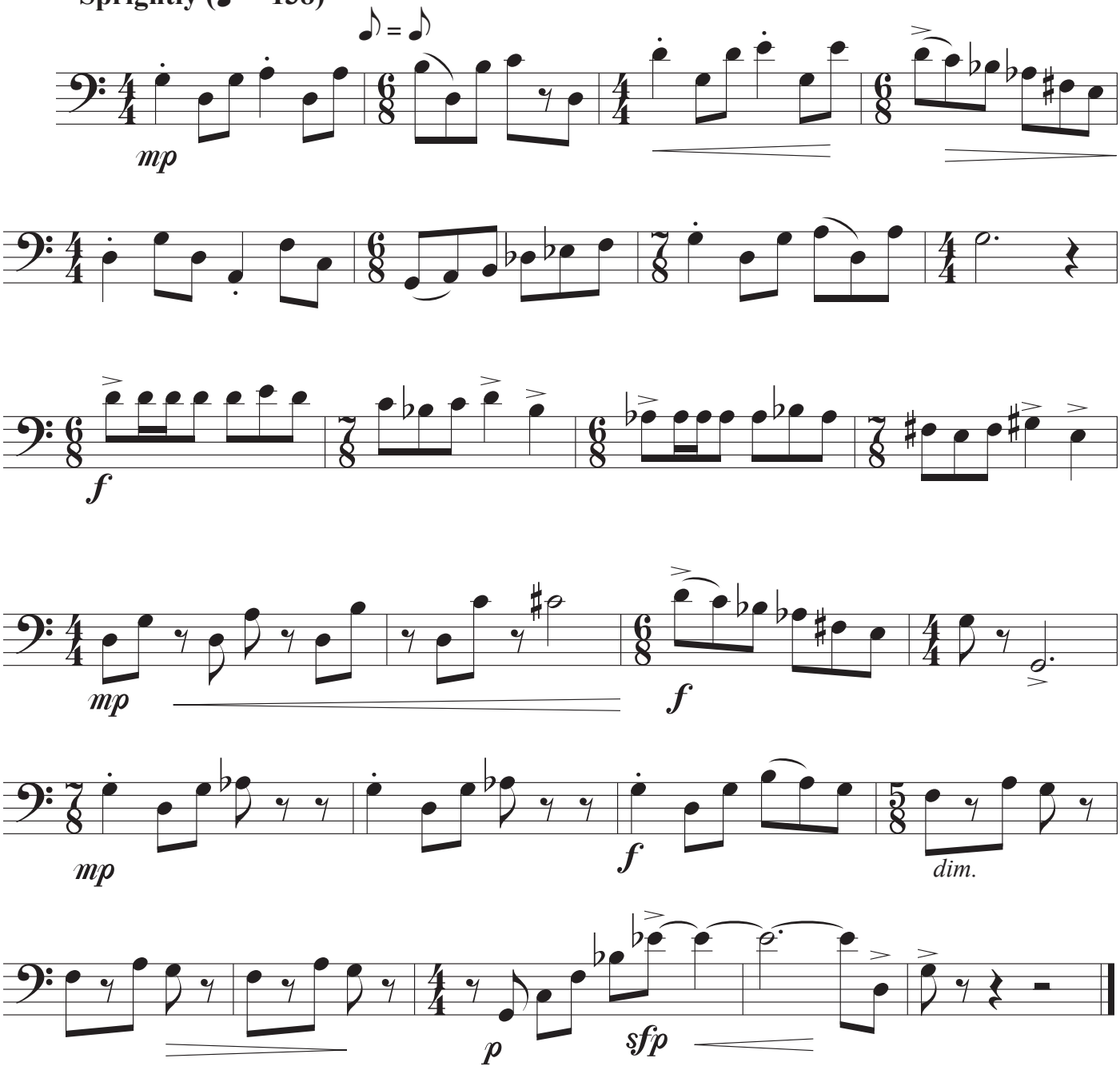
Brad Edwards
Trombone Professor, Arizona State University
School of Music Dance and Theater
Websites:
Trombone Zone
Hornbone Press
Free Audition Solos
ASU Bones

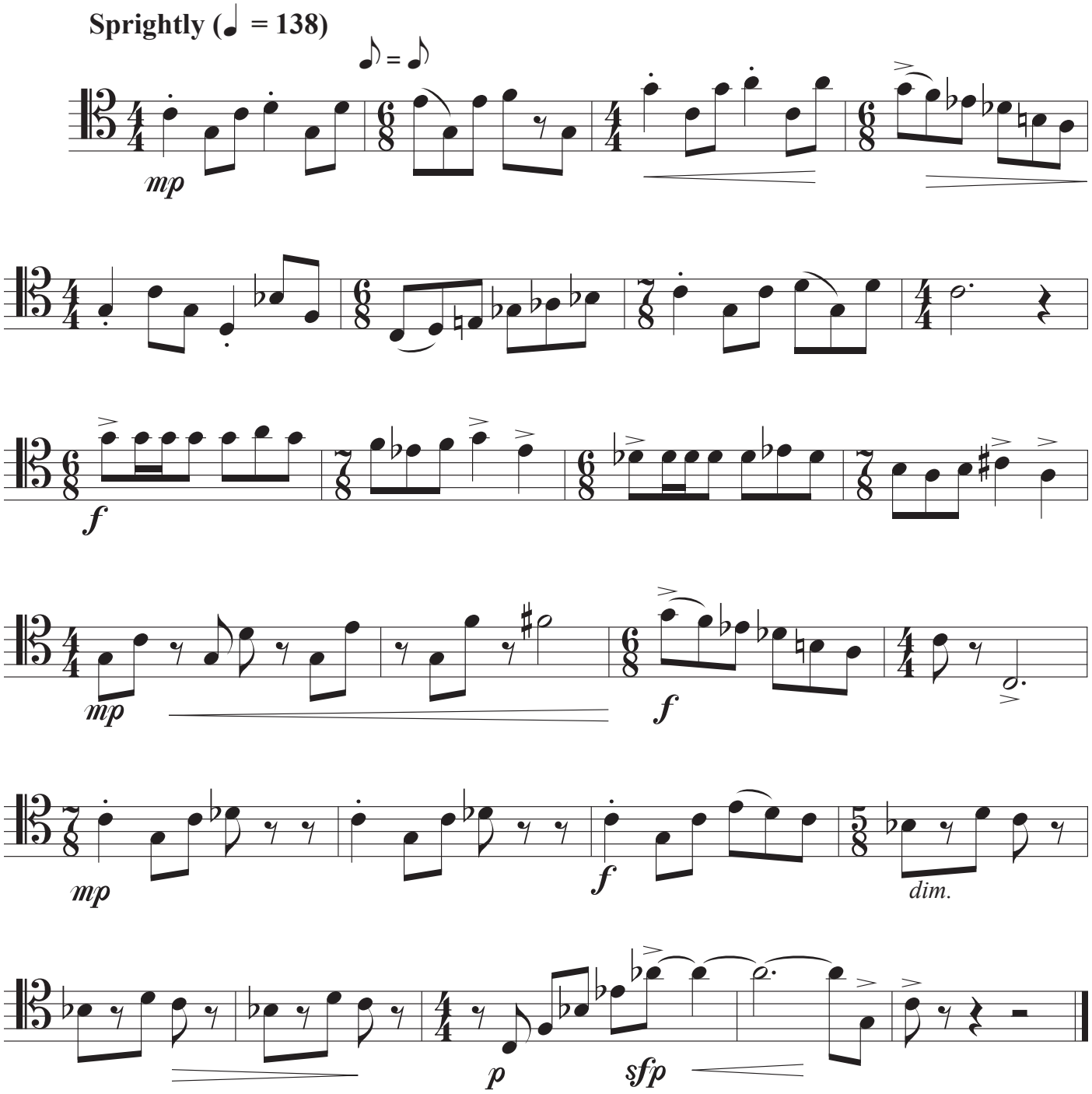
TBZ MONTHLY

September 2024

A Pretty Good Melody

Sprightly (♩ = 138)




Sprightly (♩ = 138)
♪ = ♪
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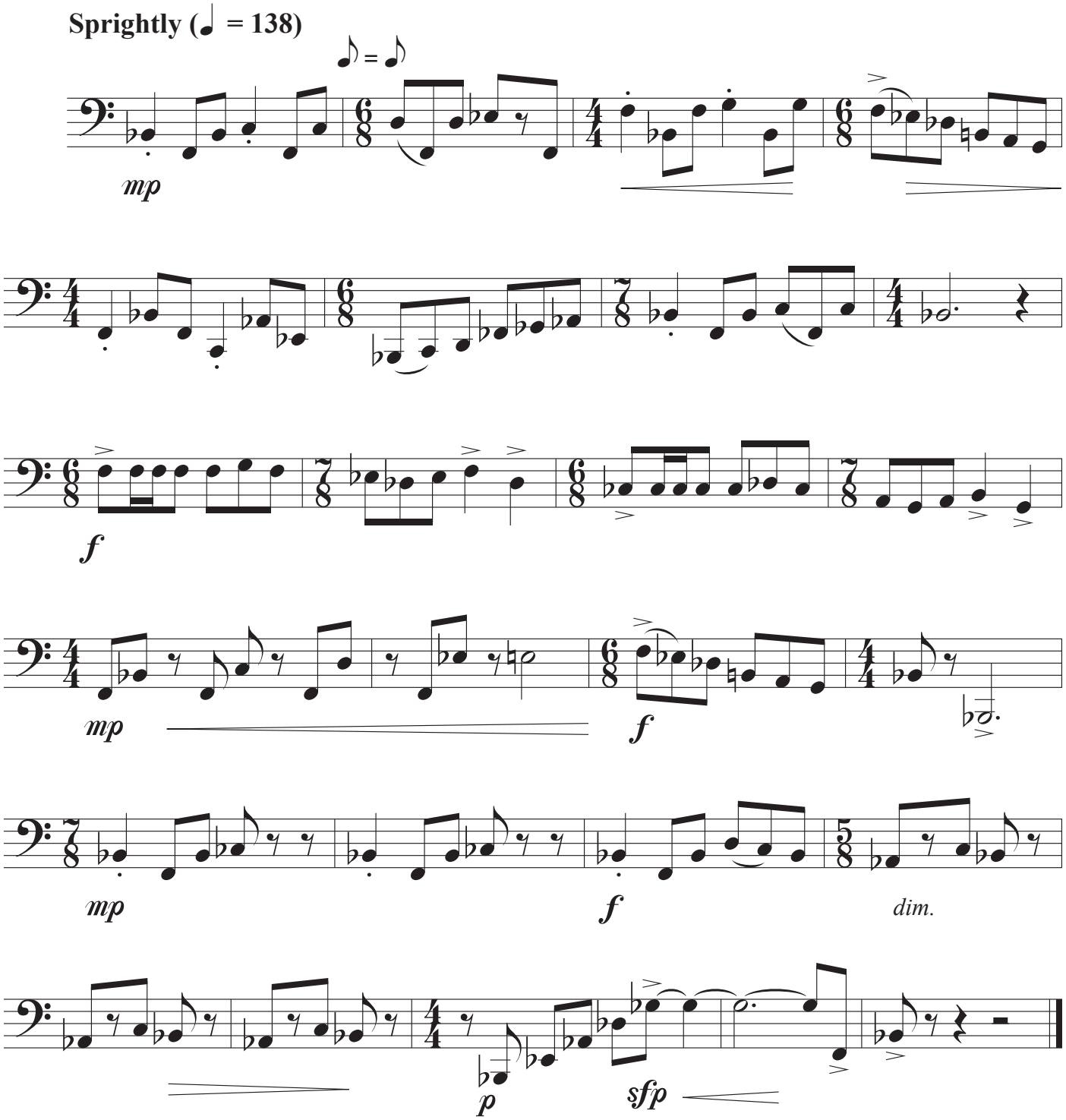
Sprightly (♩ = 138)
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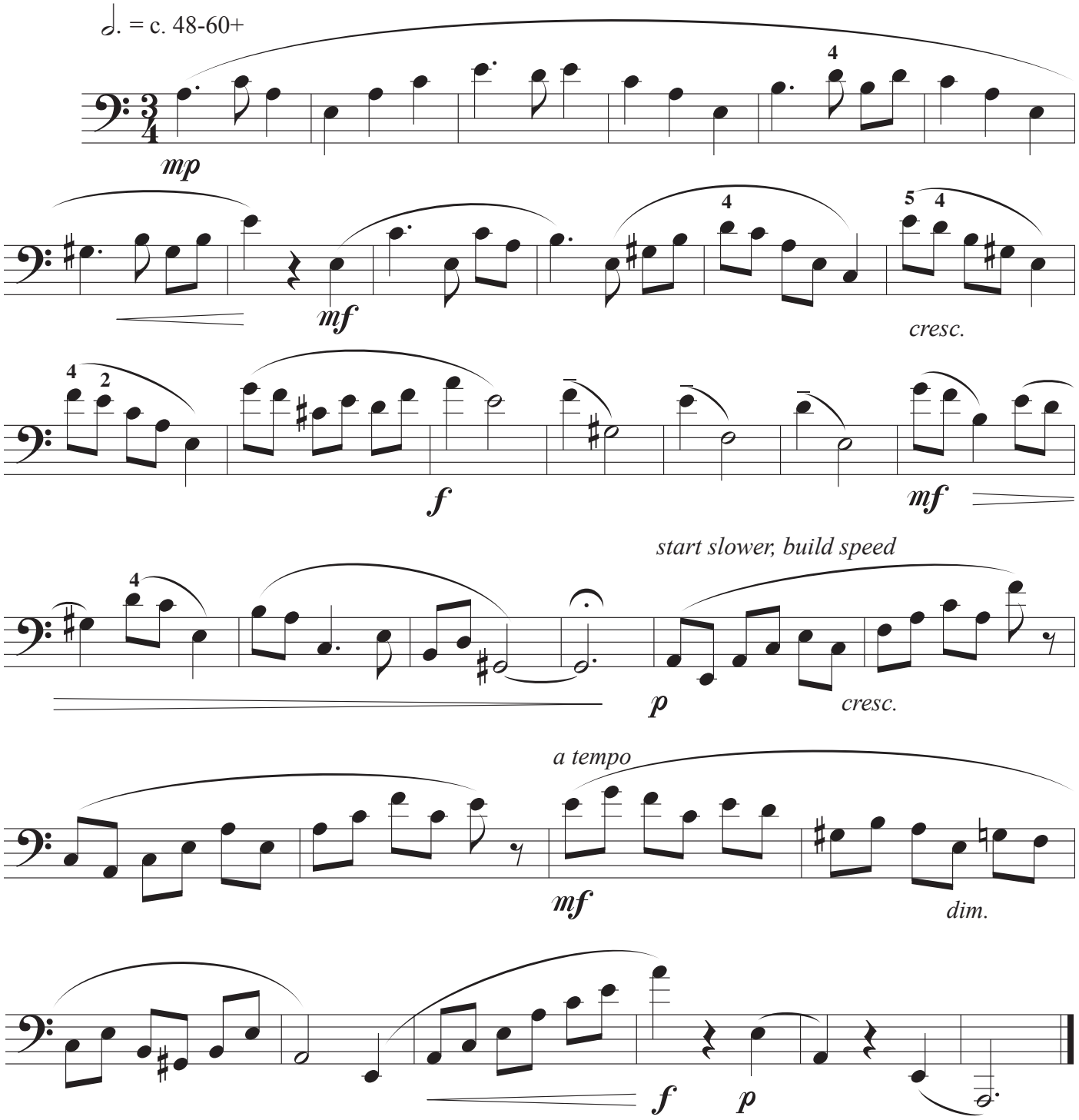
September 2024

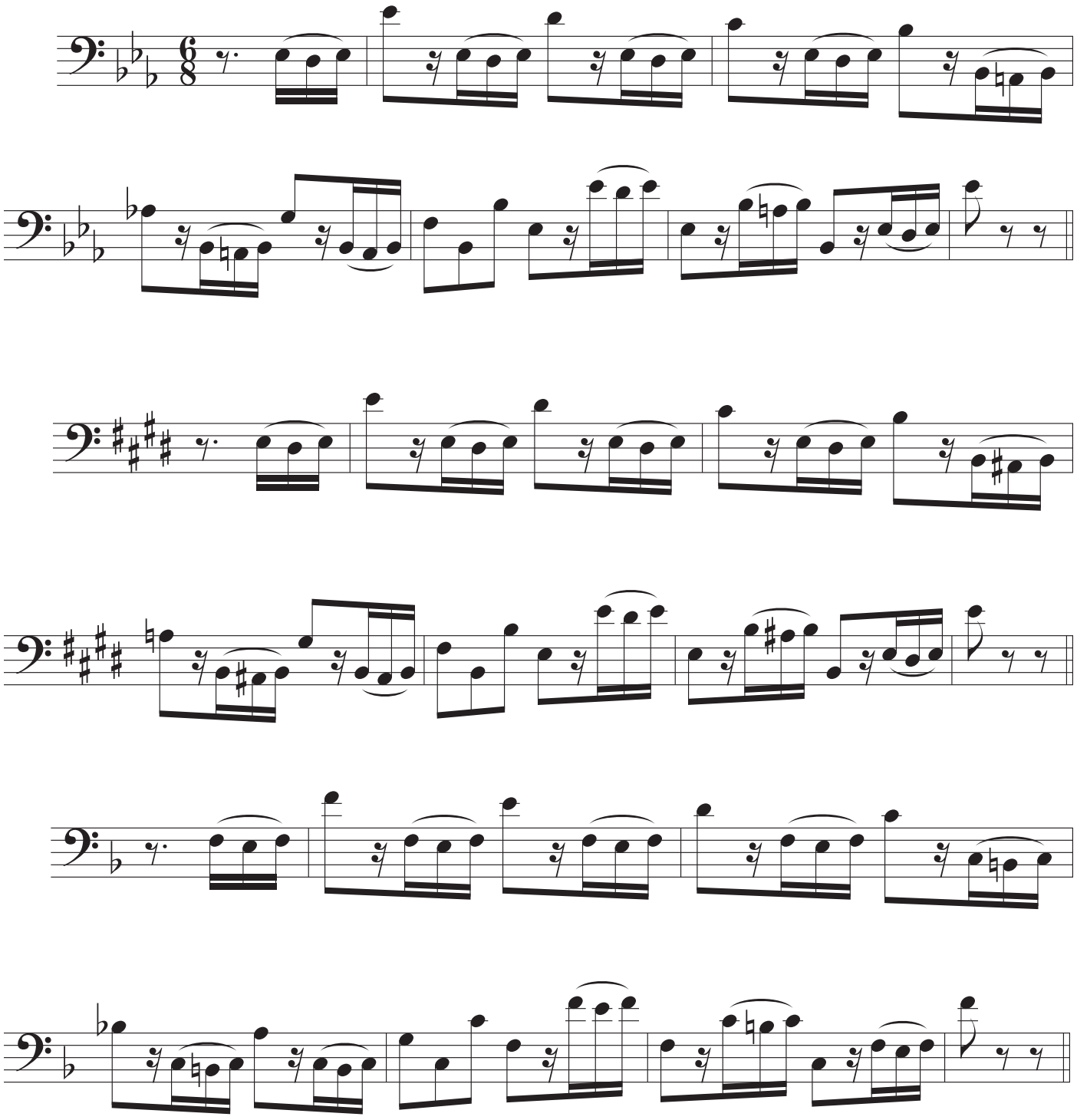
A Useful Lip Slur (melody)

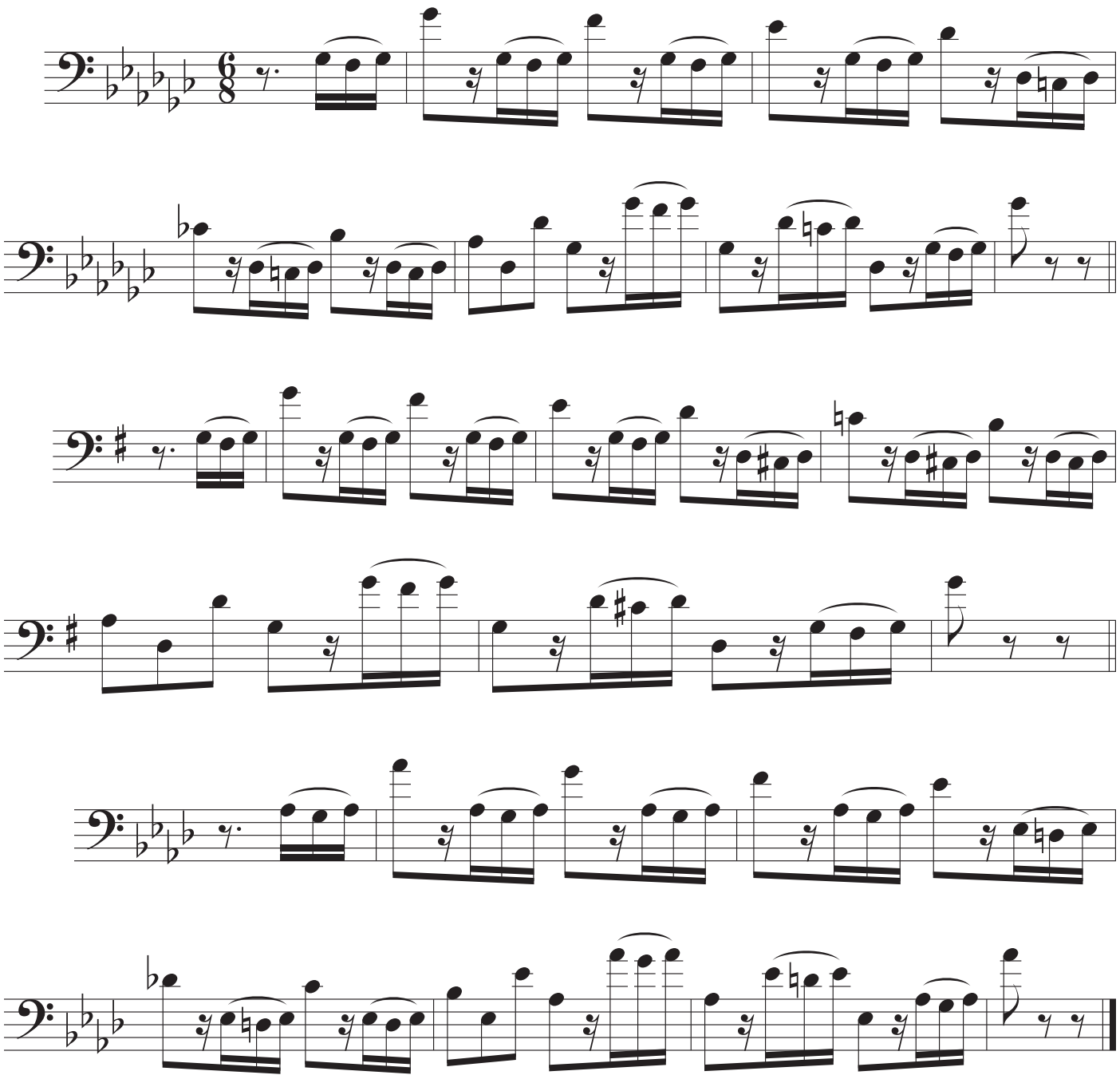


September 2024

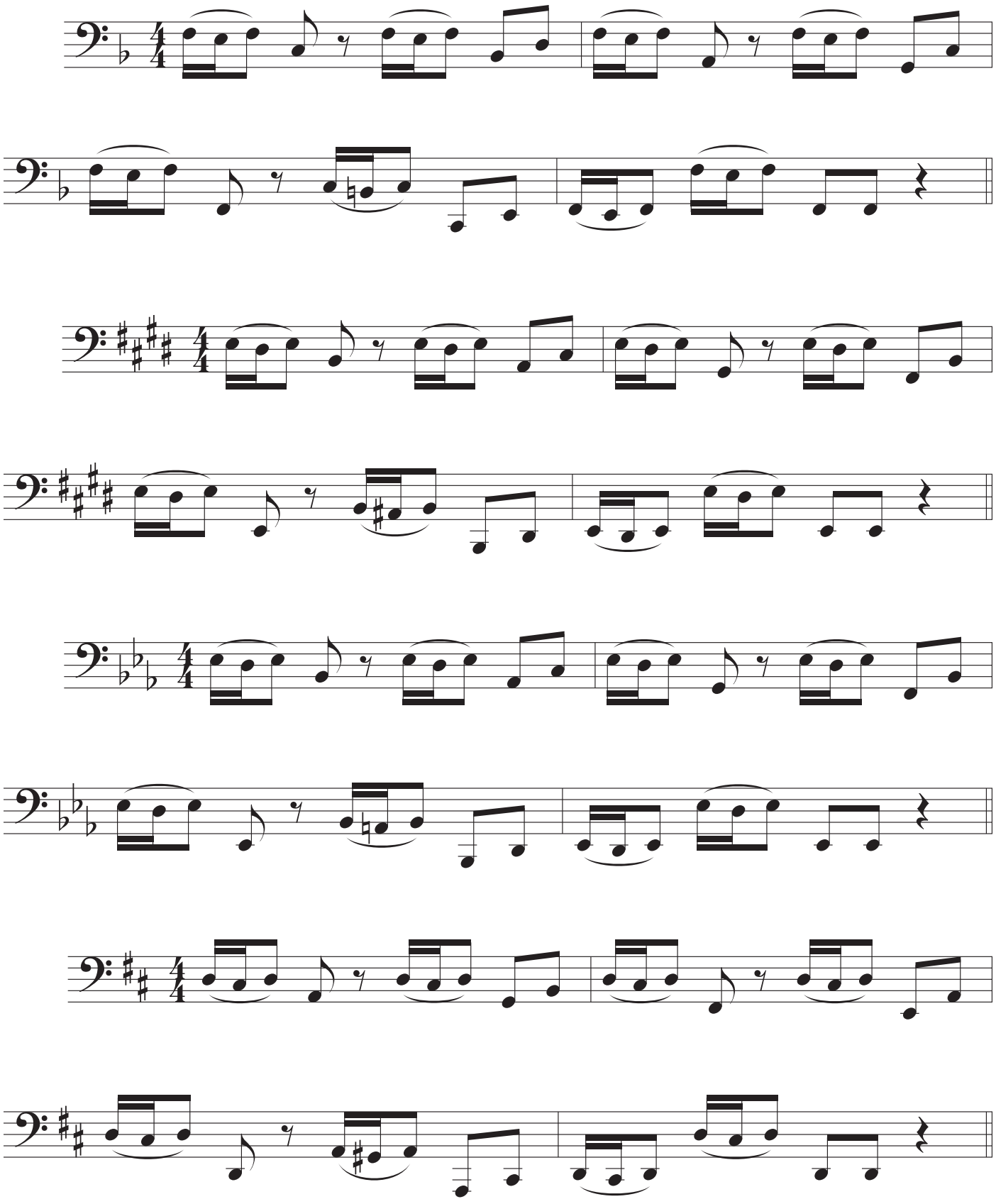
Technique / Rhythm Builders

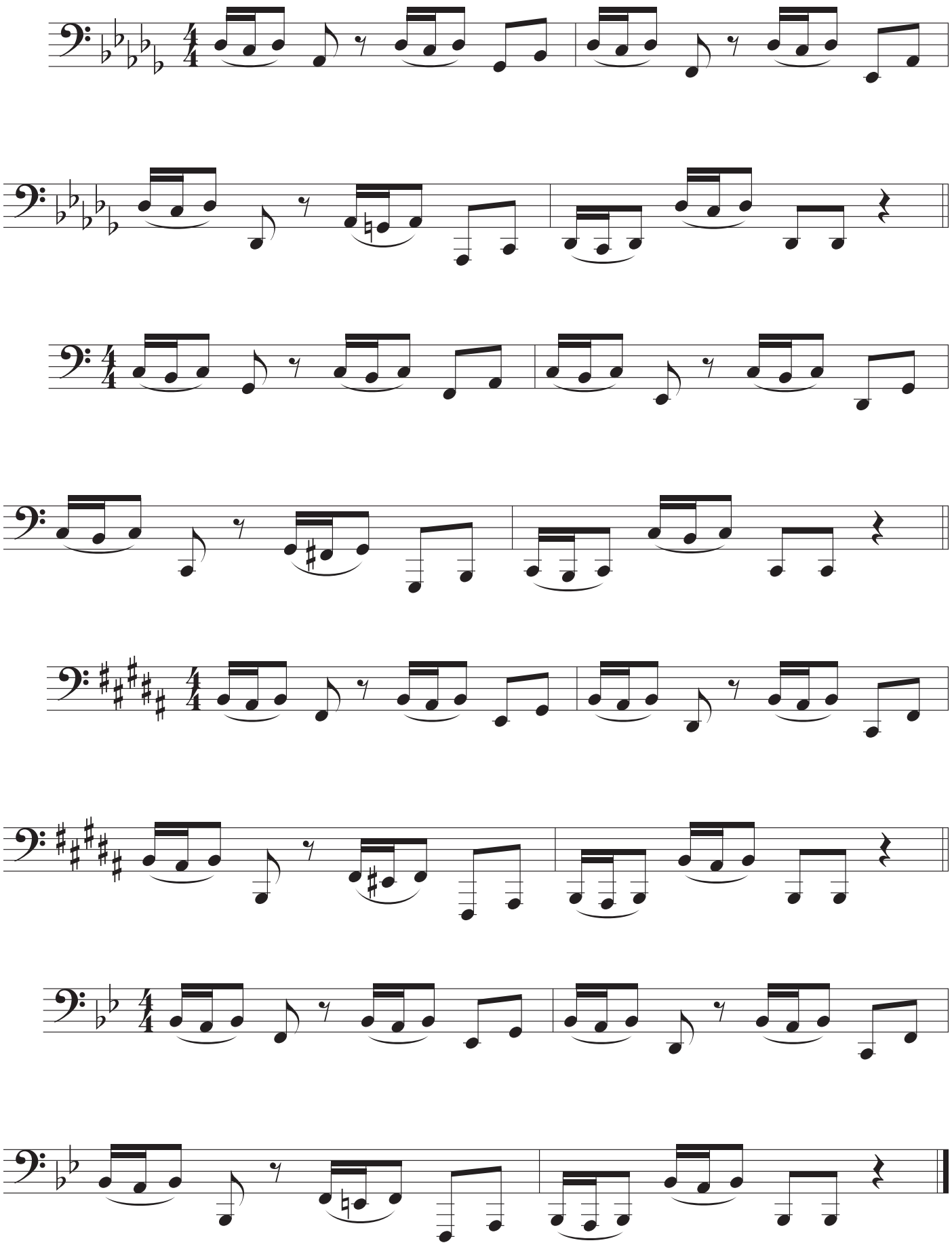
Ascending Sequence





Descending Sequence

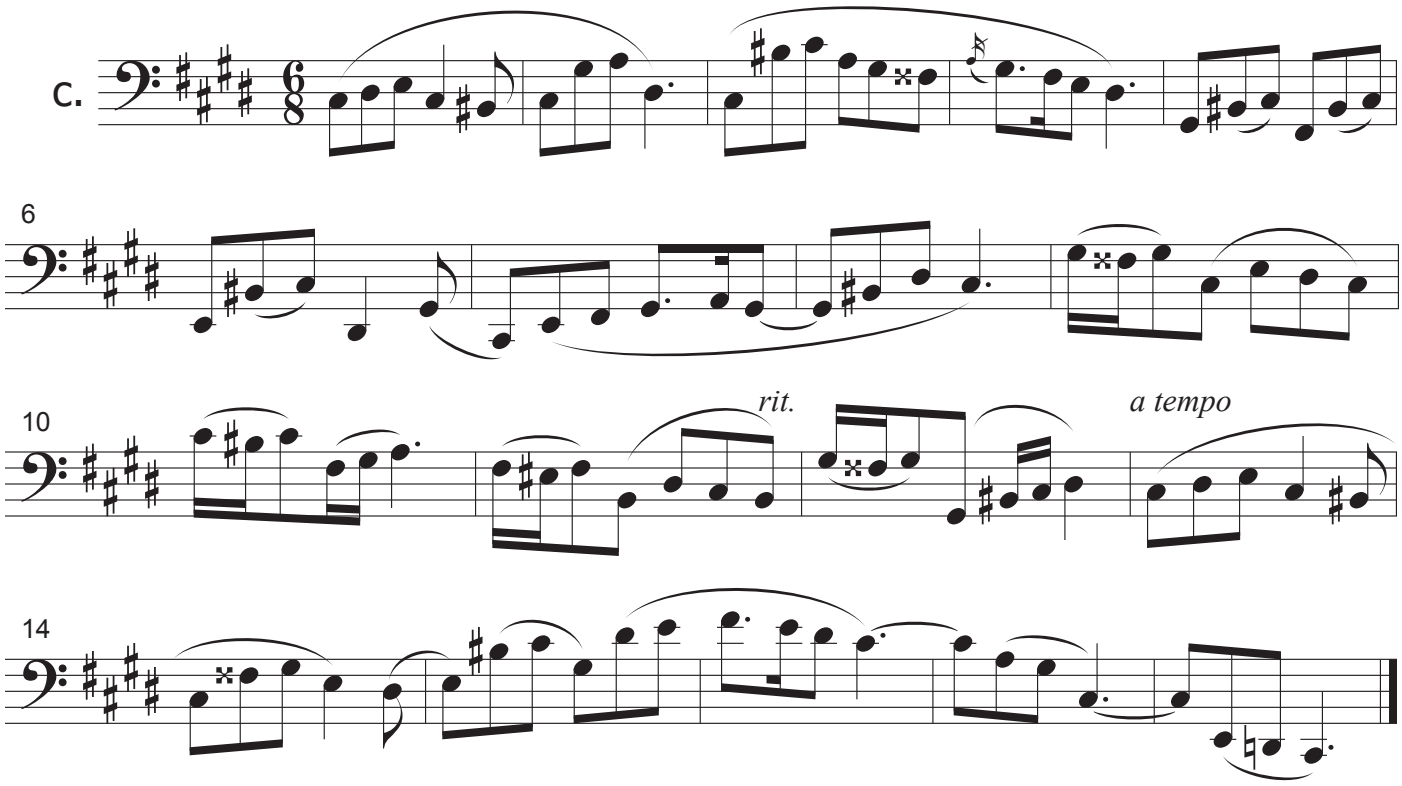




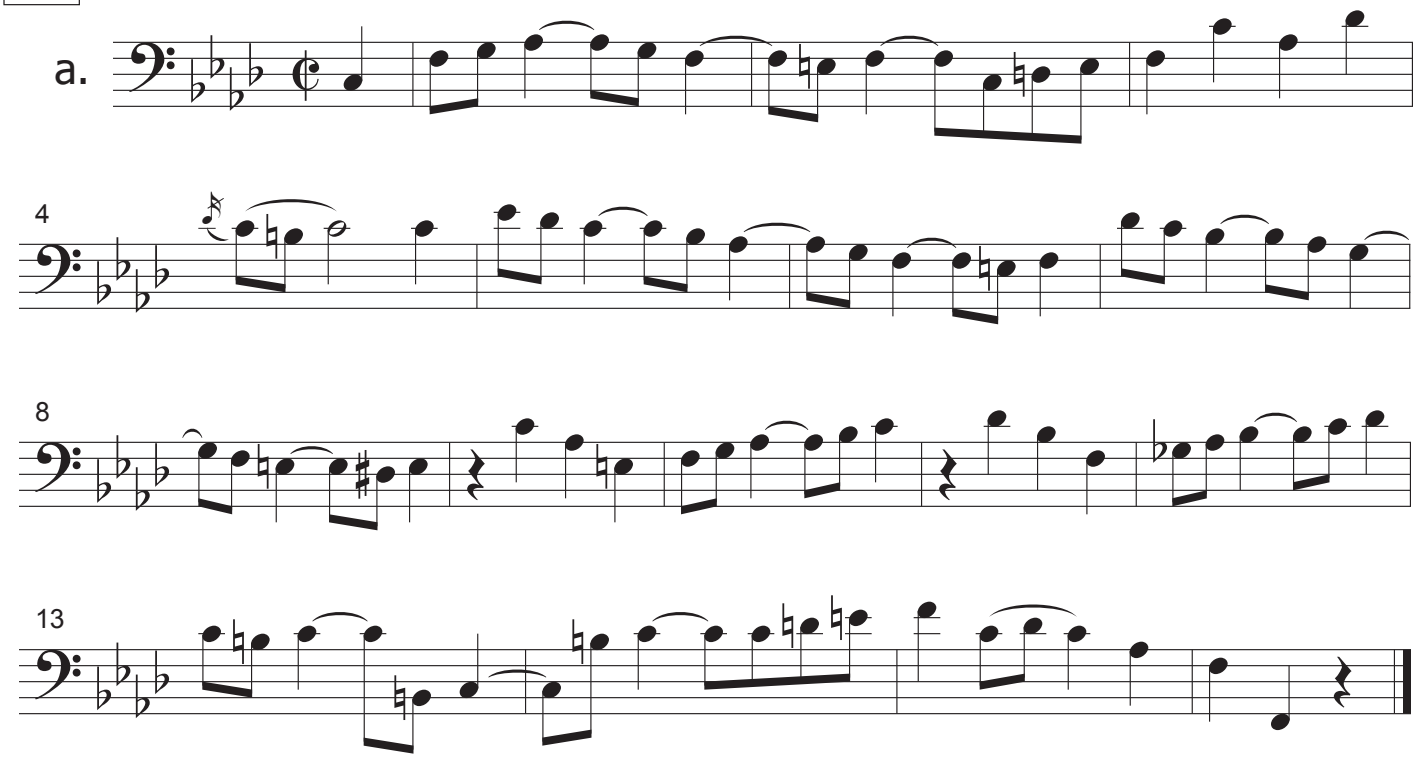
Free book sample: 60 Vignettes
#48 Faustian

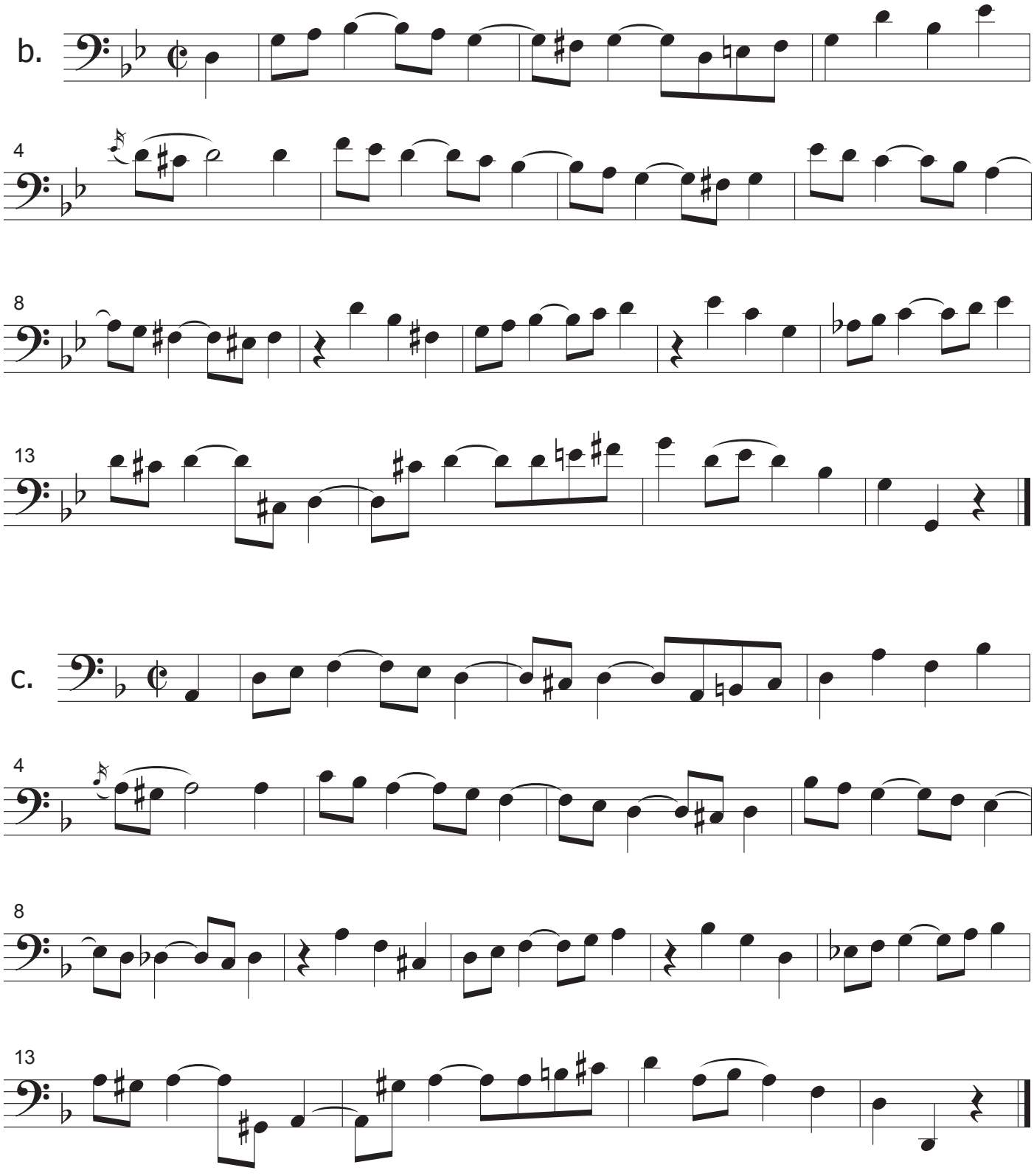
Any relationship between these little vignettes and any famous piece is purely intentional.

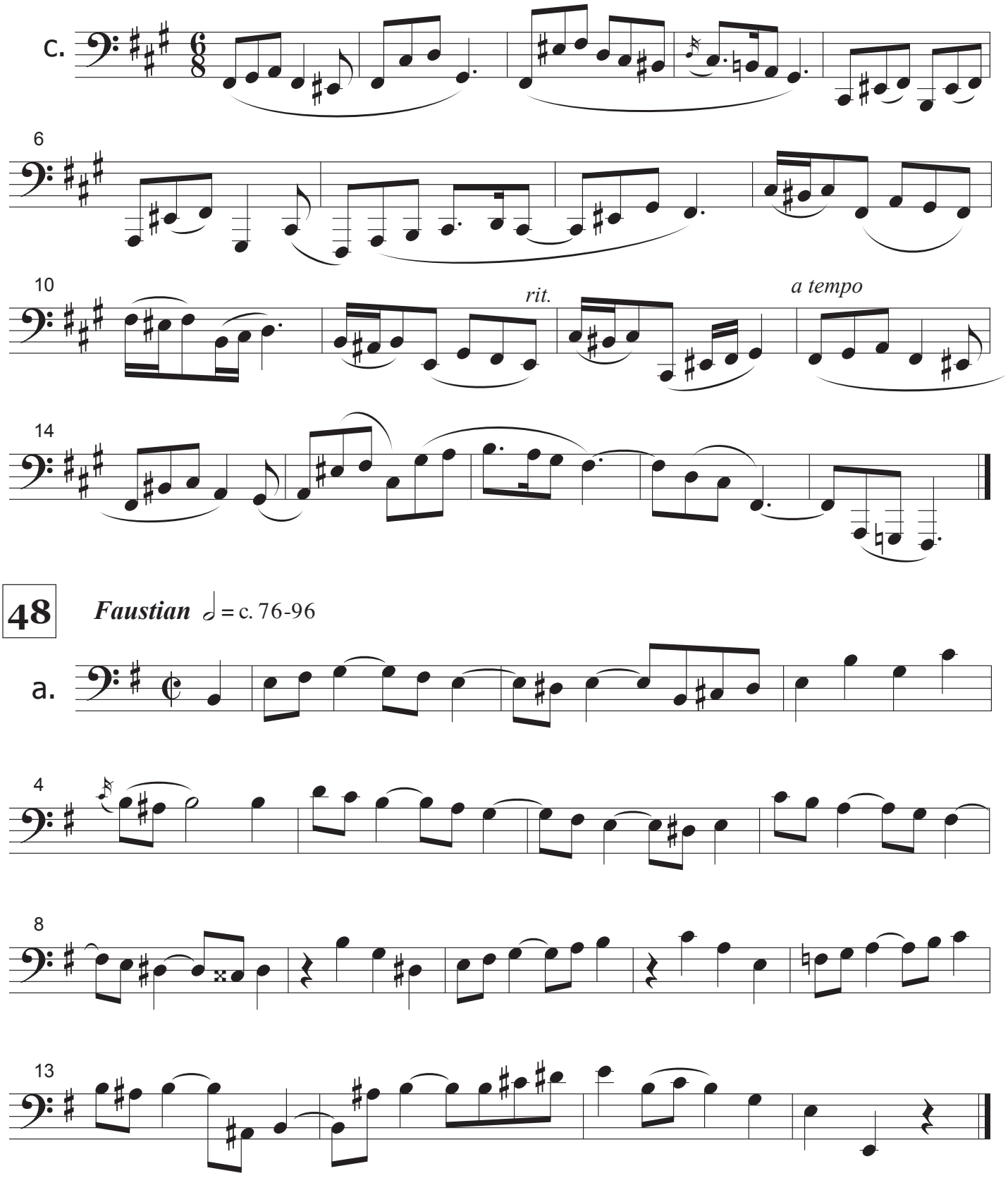
Enjoy!



48 ***Faustian*** ♩ = c. 76-96




b.
4
8
13
c.
4
8
13


c.
6
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a tempo
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Faustian
= c. 76-96
a.
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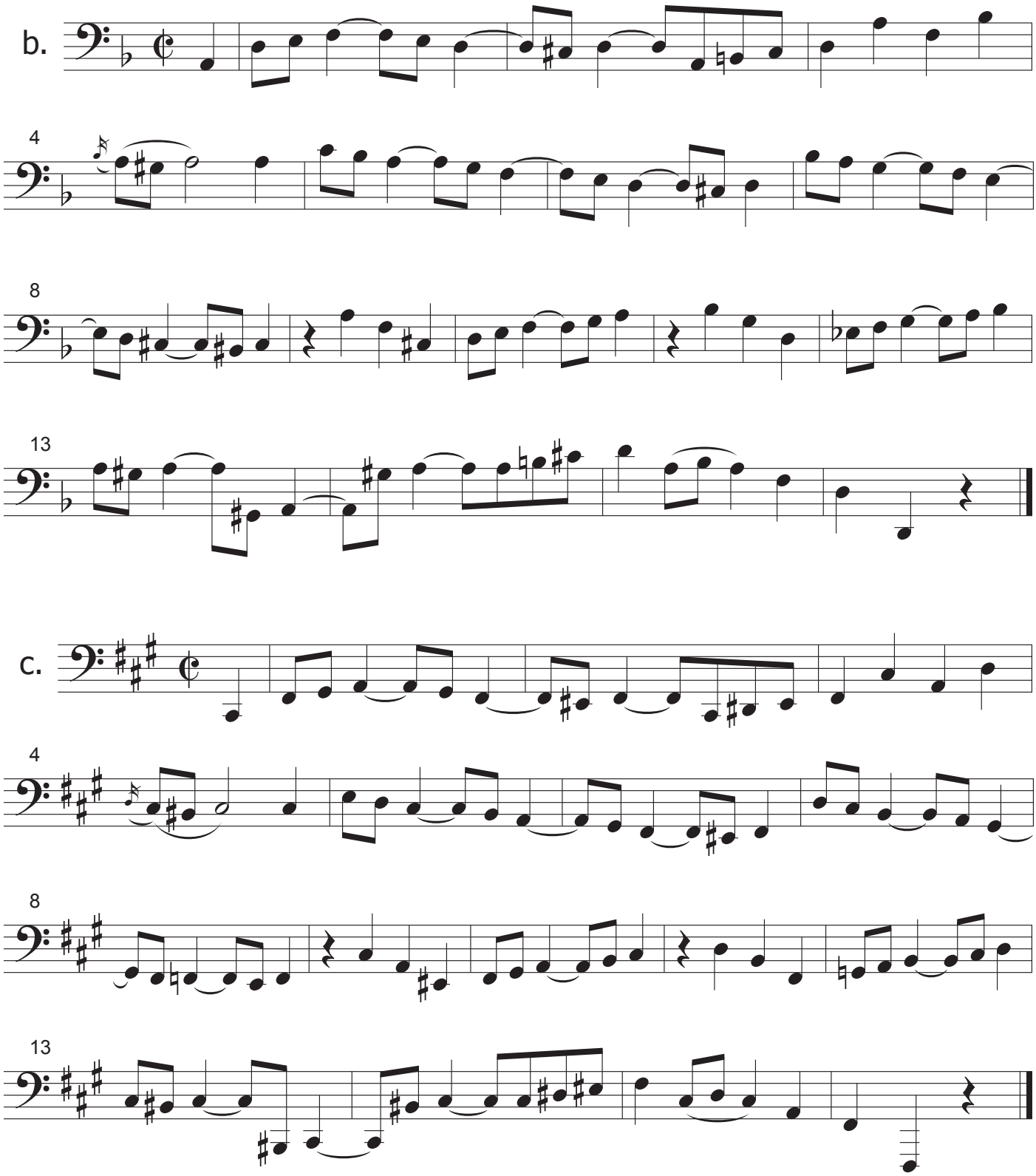
b.
4
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c.
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13

Playing Tip: The Dotted 8th-16th Rhythm

(part two)

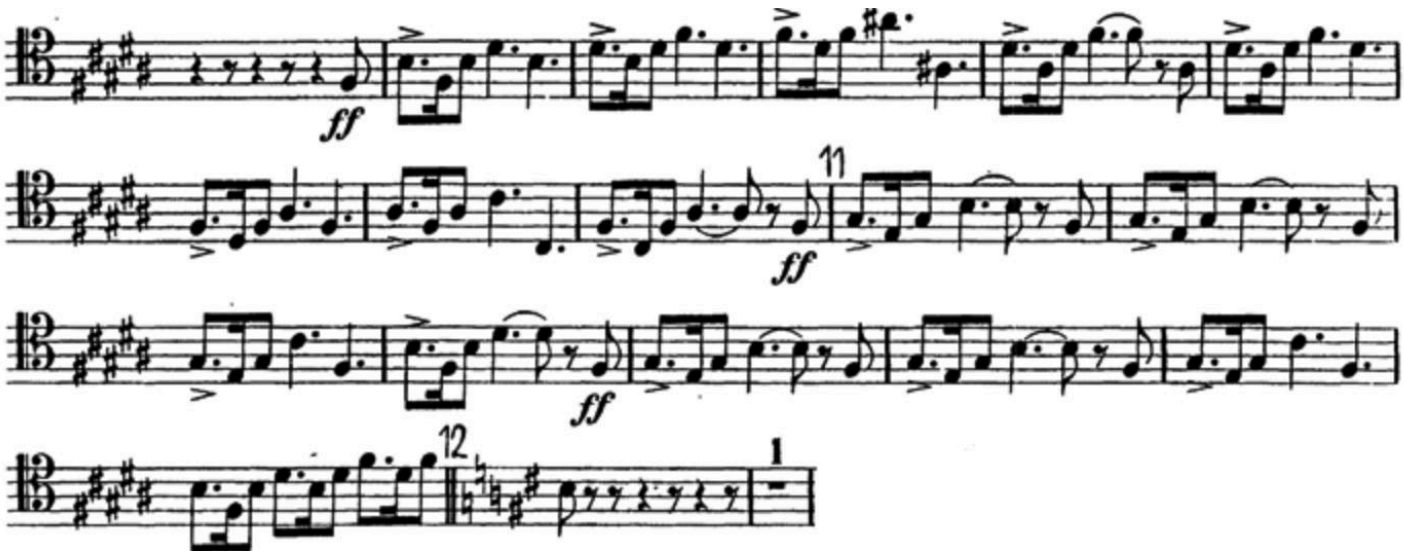
Ah, the Ride of the Valkyries. Everybody's favorite excerpt. I believe it is a staple of our audition playlists because:

1. It is well-known (and socially iconic)
2. It hovers around the tonal center of B (major or minor).
3. It sits in the mid-upper money range and must be projected cleanly with energy.
4. It moves along fairly quickly.
5. Annnd it has that lovely dotted rhythm.

Years ago, at one of these trombone conventions I heard the trombone section of a major symphony talk about a recent audition. This was one of the real biggies as auditions go. After two days of prelim rounds, they said they had only heard 2-3 people play The Ride with the correct rhythm.

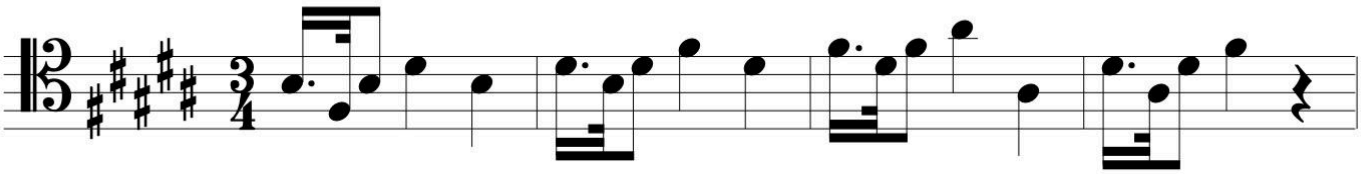
Think about that!

All those years in the practice room. All the money spent for an education. All the money spent to travel to this big audition. And yet, most of the people *still* weren't playing The Ride with the correct rhythm.

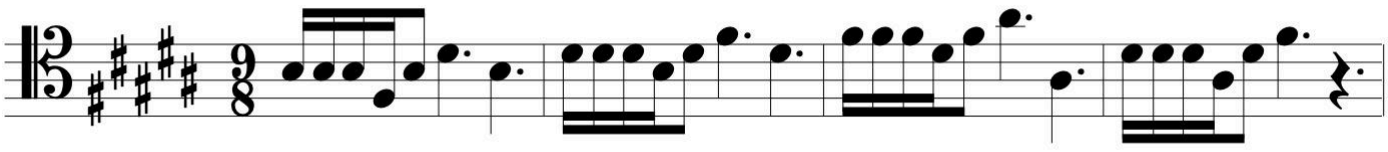


I wrote about this in the February 2024 issue of TBZ Monthly. In that issue I talked about starting the excerpt in 3/4 time (and in the key of B-flat major).

I'd like to say a few more things here. Much of the trouble arises as we strive for higher speeds. The dotted rhythm changes slightly into something more like this:

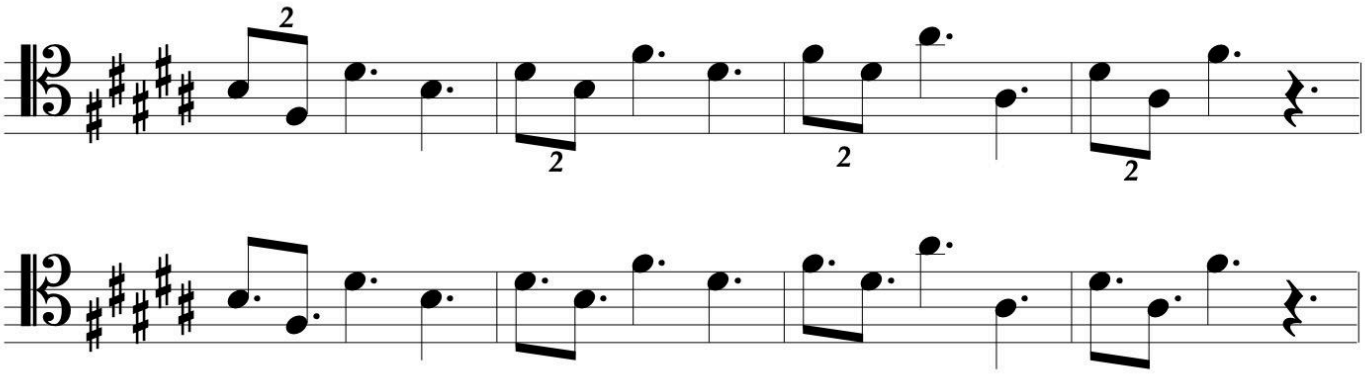


The note that is supposed to be the third part of a triplet (B in the first gesture) ends up falling directly on the upbeat. I've seen many tips for working on this. There is the "subdivide the 16ths" approach.

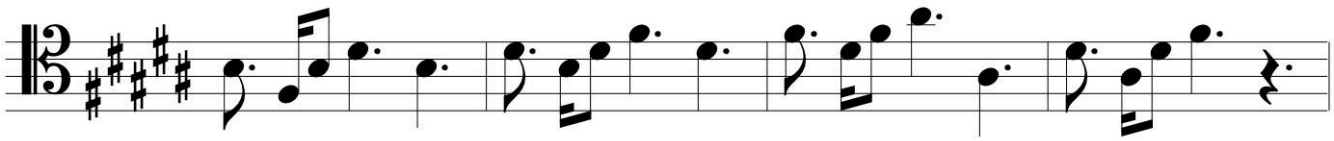


I've never loved this one even though it is accurate. I tend to get tongue-tied at the faster tempos.

Then one arrives at the realization that the 16th note falls on the duplet upbeat. This is dangerous stuff because it flirts with the deadly duplet placement of the third note. However, it *is* accurate. Here it is written in two different ways.

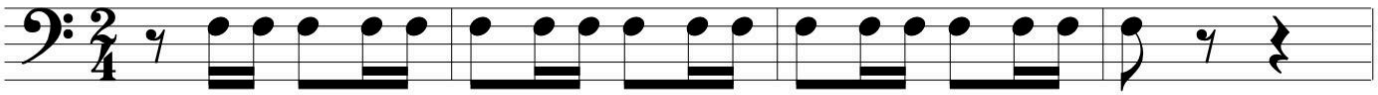


That of course can lead to notating the original excerpt in this novel manner:



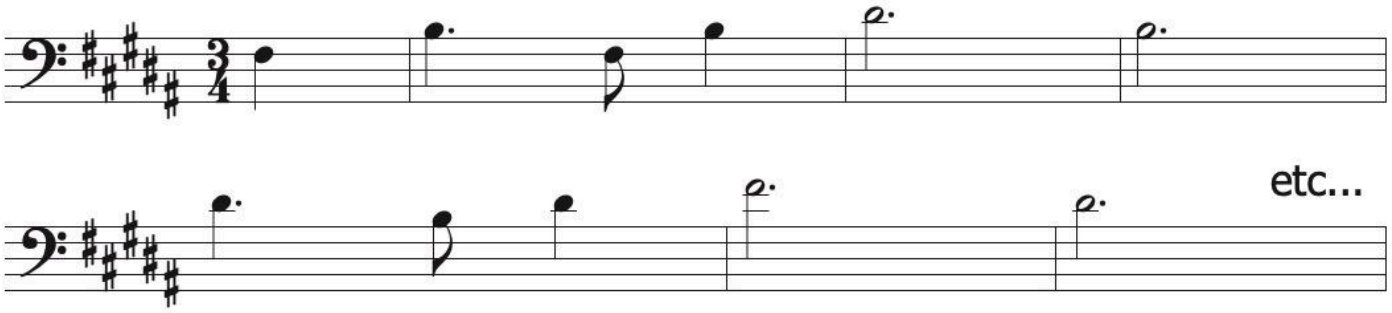
Here is an interesting recording of George Szell conducting the Cleveland Orchestra. The link should lead to roughly the 1:51 mark in the recording. As I listen to this, my ear hears more duple than triple.

Still, I instinctively resist forming a duplet conception of this piece. To me, the dotted rhythm is reminiscent of horse hooves. By the way, I tried to look up "horse galloping sound effects" on YouTube and discovered that they almost had this rhythm.



That's a bit closer to William Tell Overture, isn't it? Perhaps Wagner wasn't thinking of horses or had limited experience with equestrian events.

OK, one more thing about this lovely rhythm. Using a program like Audacity, try recording it with a metronome as it were in 3/4 time.



Then play it back at double speed so the passage moves at the right speed. For me, this has been a weird experience. Having recorded it slowly with a metronome, I know it is mathematically correct. But somehow it feels wrong.

Likewise, play it at full speed and play it back at half speed while you conduct along with yourself.

These are all useful practice tricks. At the end of the day, patience and persistence will help you solve the rhythmic puzzle that is The Ride.

I mean, if I *really* knew the answer, I guess I would be rich!

Well, *trombone* rich.
That plus 8 bucks will get you a cup of coffee.

On Teaching and Playing: Zoom (yuck)

The pandemic is largely in our rearview mirrors. Still, from time to time someone reaches out wanting an online lesson. Often it is a prospective student. I still struggle to be nearly as good a teacher online as I (think I) am in-person.

When I'm in person, I like to sing along, conduct along, play piano along. All of that is taken away. Also, I have to make sure that my gestures are visible.

Even with tweaking the settings, Zoom is never great and is sometimes horrible. I have tried Google Meets, Facebook Messenger, and Skype. Admittedly Skype was a while ago. They all have moments when they fall short but Facebook Messenger (FB) has been the least bad of them. Also, using FB, it isn't necessary to "friend" the other person. This is important to me because I'm not FB friends with my current ASU students. I generally avoid political posts but I really don't want them to be influenced by me, politically.

Here are some workarounds that have been a bit better for me:

- Have them send me recordings in advance that we can listen to together using screen share.

- Have them send me PDF's of their music in advance. Using a PDF program that allows me to mark up the music as I talk about it can be helpful. I use Wondershare PDF Element which is pretty good for marking up the music and quickly resizing.

- I have had good luck with live Audio quality in CleanFeed. It doesn't have a video element but you can mute something like Zoom and use CleanFeed for your audio. You can make a free account. Then you type in the other person's email address and they get an email to link using a browser. One drawback for me: my sound to them often comes out of the left or right channel only. I can get rid of this apparently if I paid for a pro subscription but I'm too cheap for that.

- This may be overkill, but when we were deep in the Covid lockdown, we did a lot with BandLab. It is a web-based DAW (Digital Audio Workstation). I expected it to be terrible but, surprisingly, it wasn't. This is how we did overdubs for projects at ASU. Students could use it to submit recordings that we would review in lessons.

All of these solutions are imperfect and are poor substitutes for in-person lessons. However, I noticed one small advantage: when students are tasked with preparing recordings in advance of the lesson, they would have to record, listen to their own work, and realize that a better job could be done! Under this challenge, some thrived, some wilted.

So, in lessons, I will still ask students to prepare recordings to review together.

The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy

Donald Knaub, Trombone Teaching Techniques

Donald Knaub taught at the Eastman School of Music and the University of Texas. This book, re-released in 1978 has some useful insights. Here are two separate passages.

Producing a Sound

The first factor in producing a sound is air or breath. Take more than a normal conversational breath by opening the mouth and throat to the position they would be for a yawn and inhale deeply as you do when yawning. This should automatically fill the chest cavity and lower abdominal area to capacity. The diaphragm muscle will play an important role in breathing, but do not mention it at this time. If you feel the student is filling with air and doing it in a relaxed manner, it is unnecessary to confuse him with a technical discussion about the diaphragm's part in breathing

Knaub, Donald. Trombone Teaching Techniques. Athens, OH. Accura Music, 1978. p. 5

There are some interesting points here. Emory Remington, who taught at Eastman from 1922 to 1971, sometimes used the phrase “conversational breath.” Knaub seems to be aware of this, suggesting something larger. Knaub also talks about the mouth and throat position for a yawn. Honestly, I feel conflicted about this advice since, for me, a yawn involves opening the jaw very wide, creating tension in the TMJ (temporomandibular joint).

However, the real nugget of wisdom in this passage is Knaub’s advice to not overload the student with technical details of breathing. If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. Sometimes we as teachers try to over-teach to show off our hard-won knowledge. This doesn’t always help the student.

Producing a Slur

One note is selected (small F or B flat would probably be easiest); this note is imagined as a whole note as far as breath is concerned. On the four beats comprising this whole note the tongue is brought forward into the airstream to the position for the syllable "doo." It must be a very rapid, almost snake-like movement, for, during the interval the tongue is in the airstream opening, the air supply is shut off, causing a gap or separation. If this separation is too great, there is no feeling of a slur; the notes sound detached and individually attacked.

Knaub, Donald. Trombone Teaching Techniques. Athens, OH. Accura Music, 1978. p.7

What I really like here is the concept of tonguing while imagining a whole note as far as the breath is concerned. I also like his imagery of a rapid, snake-like movement for the tongue. In lessons, I have sometimes tried to demonstrate this with my hand almost showing a cobra strike movement (or at least what I imagine a cobra strike might look like).

Random Thought: Finale and Focal Dystonia

I had actually planned a different random thought and then along came the ***thunderclap*** news that Finale was going away.

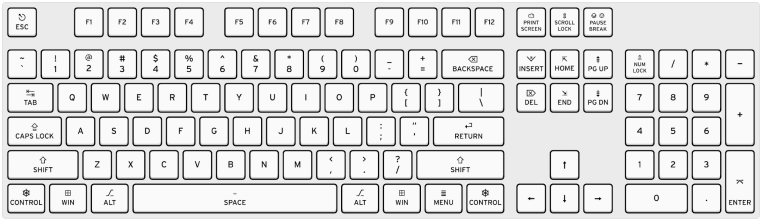
Wow. I didn't see that one coming! I have used Finale exclusively since, well, since I've used *any* notation software. For now, I can cling to my current copy until some new MacOS update breaks it. And I suppose I could buy a used Mac, install only Finale and make it my little time capsule.

But, to be honest, I stuck with Finale because I *knew* Finale. My logic was simple:

The best feature of any software
is that you already know it.

And, in my own way, I really *know* Finale. Of course I know it for the specific things I do, which is mostly writing books. I have a wonderful add-on called Keyboard Maestro which lets me automate all kinds of keystrokes. I have a nice Bluetooth extra number pad (with extra Function keys!). My fingers just know where to go, allowing me to move so quickly!

I have my nice little templates with all of my custom articulations. I'm particularly proud of my articulation shortcuts to indicate slide positions…



… if I type 3 and click, it indicates 3rd position above the note. Right below that 3 is E. If I type that, it gives me flat 3rd. Below that (diagonally) is D. That gives me trigger flat 3rd. And below that is C. That gives me sharp 3rd. I laid it out for all 7 positions and, boy, did that save a lot of time!

And now it's all going away. I mean, I'll still have Finale and will probably wrap up the most immediate book projects with it. The day is nigh when I'll have to leave my bubble.

In the back of my mind, that little voice has been saying, "You know, Dorico is probably a much better program." But I resisted, whining, "But I already know Finale so well!" But then there are all those stupid Finale headaches like horribly drawn slurs and the headaches with marking triplets. I could go on and on.

And so the re-learning process begins. I've been warned that, with Dorico, you know to abandon your Finale way of thinking and develop a new approach. From scratch. Hmm, sounds a bit like the intensive re-learning that people must go through when recovering from focal dystonia. Square one. Baby steps. Build new habits.

I haven't suffered from focal dystonia for which I am eternally grateful. But the next year (or two) of building Dorico habits is going to require a lot of patience and letting go.

Let the journey begin! (as soon as I free up some space on my hard drive!)

THE TROMBONE TUTORS

Est. 2023

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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