

TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards
Volume 4, No. 2. ~ February 2025

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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Websites:

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A Pretty Good Melody

Here's a sentimental little tune with Valentine's Day in mind. Yes, that's a West Side Story quote at the beginning. There are also hints (not entirely intentional) of E.T. and Sound of Music ("Something Good").

Andante amabile

mp

5 *mf*

9 *f* rit

13 *p* *cresc.* *a tempo* rit..

Andante amabile

mp

5 *mf*

9 *f* rit..

13 *p* *cresc.* *a tempo* rit..

A Pretty Good Melody

Andante amabile

mp

5

mf

9

f

rit...

13

a tempo

p

cresc.

rit..

mp

5

mf

9

f

rit..

13

a tempo

p

cresc.

rit..

A Useful Lip Slur

Quick Ascending Figures

That transition away from the 2nd partial of the overtone series can really hang people up (myself included).
This is a good test to see how things are going chop-wise

The image contains 12 staves of musical notation in bass clef, 4/4 time. The notation includes various ascending and descending figures, slurs, and triplets. The first staff shows a simple ascending figure: G2, A2, B2, C3. The second staff shows a triplet of G2, A2, B2. The third staff shows a simple ascending figure: G2, A2, B2, C3. The fourth staff shows a triplet of G2, A2, B2. The fifth staff shows a simple ascending figure: G2, A2, B2, C3. The sixth staff shows a triplet of G2, A2, B2. The seventh staff shows a simple ascending figure: G2, A2, B2, C3. The eighth staff shows a triplet of G2, A2, B2. The ninth staff shows a simple ascending figure: G2, A2, B2, C3. The tenth staff shows a triplet of G2, A2, B2. The eleventh staff shows a simple ascending figure: G2, A2, B2, C3. The twelfth staff shows a triplet of G2, A2, B2.

Technique/Rhythm Builder: Downward Gestures

Remember that lower notes require different air. Crescendos into them from higher notes can be an interesting and challenging transition. If the low note wobbles, let your body figure out how to adjust air speed and embouchure setting.

The image displays ten musical staves for bassoon, each containing two measures of music. The first measure of each staff features a sequence of notes with accents and a dynamic marking of 'f'. The second measure features a downward gesture (a slur over notes descending in pitch) with a dynamic marking of 'f'. The staves alternate between different key signatures and time signatures: 1) B-flat major, 2/4; 2) B-flat major, 2/4; 3) B-flat major, 2/4; 4) D major, 2/4; 5) D major, 2/4; 6) D major, 2/4; 7) B-flat major, 2/4; 8) B-flat major, 2/4; 9) B-flat major, 2/4; 10) D major, 2/4. The downward gestures in staves 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 include a triplet of notes.

Technique/Rhythm Builder:

4th position

4th position exercise in G major (one sharp), 2/4 time. The exercise consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a series of quarter notes with accents. The second staff includes a triplet of eighth notes and a slur over a group of notes. The third staff concludes with a key signature change to F major (two flats) and a 2/4 time signature change.

5th position

5th position exercise in F major (two flats), 2/4 time. The exercise consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a series of quarter notes with accents. The second staff includes a triplet of eighth notes and a slur over a group of notes. The third staff concludes with a key signature change to E major (one sharp) and a 2/4 time signature change.

6th position

6th position exercise in E major (one sharp), 2/4 time. The exercise consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a series of quarter notes with accents. The second staff includes a triplet of eighth notes and a slur over a group of notes. The third staff concludes with a key signature change to D major (two sharps) and a 2/4 time signature change.

*Free book sample:
Four Little Tonguing Etudes from
Simply Singing for Winds*

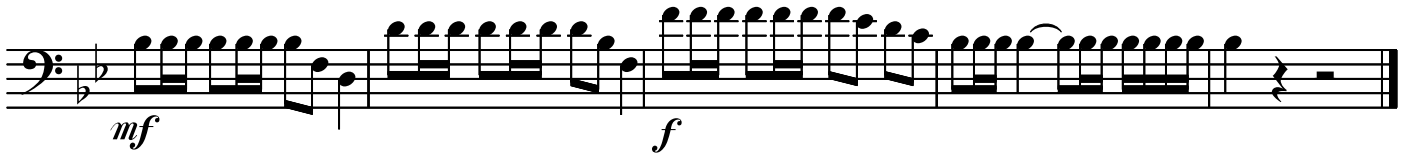
Written in the spirit of the Arban's Method (see "On Teaching and Playing") strive for an effortless lightness and bounce with these. [Medium bass clef and low bass clef](#) versions are shared.

Enjoy!

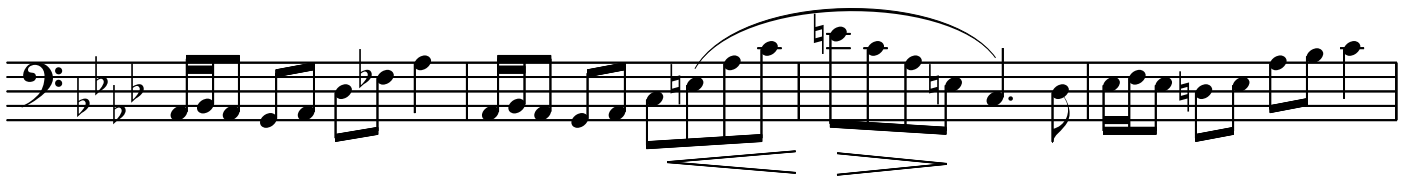
#14. Four Little Tonguing Etudes

B.E.

a. 



b. 



Four Little Tonguing Etudes (cont.)

c.

mp

f

p *mp*

mf

d.

mf

mp *f*

p *cresc.*



f *mp* *mf*

#14. Four Little Tonguing Etudes

a. 



b. 



Four Little Tonguing Etudes (cont.)

c.

mp

f

p *mp*

mf

d.

mf

mp *f*

p *cresc.*

f *mp* *mf*

Playing Tip: Power Posing



In 2012, Amy Cuddy presented a TED talk titled, “[Your body language may shape who you are.](#)” That video has (of the time of this writing) racked up over 74 million views making it the second most-viewed TED talk of all time. In short, Cuddy described an experiment in which our choice of posture had a measurable effect on our blood chemistry. This talk led (possibly) to the term “power posing.” Stand confident, be confident.

Since it exploded onto the internet, disagreement has followed. Cuddy’s co-researcher, Dana Carney stated in 2016 that she (Carney) no longer believed in the validity of the original research. The TED website even has a short follow-up article which includes this paragraph:

In the five years since Cuddy’s talk, [much research](#) has been done investigating the power pose effect. Some studies have failed to replicate what Cuddy et al. found in the original study, particularly [whether power poses could affect hormone levels](#). But other studies did find [beneficial impacts from expansive posture](#).

So, it isn’t a for-sure thing that power-posing works. But still my gut says that Cuddy has been onto something here. Let me share some personal stories, hardly scientific.

While living in South Carolina, I was giving private lessons to a fine high school trombonist. I had just learned about power-posing and was filled with inspiration. I described it to this student who had his all-state band call-back audition in a few days. Sure enough he decided to try it, standing outside the audition room while striking a variety of ‘Superman’ poses. He got first-chair in the all-state band that year. Did that power-posing have anything to do with it? I’ll never know. However, the student scheduled after him decided to try the same thing. And the next one. And the next one. Apparently these high school trombonists went on striking hero poses for quite some time!

Another story. A college-level percussion student spoke to me about feeling nervous before going on stage to play in front of an audience of his peers throughout the music school. I suggested that maybe he could be an actor playing the role of a super confident bad-ass player. I asked him to imagine he would stride onto the stage, bow, and take his place before the marimba. Did it help? He thought so. He strode confidently onto the stage and proceeded to nail the piece to thunderous applause.

In both these cases, no amount of power-posing or confidence role-playing would ever replace the many hours of careful preparation. However, maybe just maybe these mental tricks helped them to get out of their own heads and play with less fear.

The brain is fast-moving and quite clever. Those fears and doubts can find ways to circumvent any strategies you put in place. Perhaps we end up with a long-running battle of measures and counter-measures all revolving around the question of playing our best when it counts most.

I still find one of the most powerful tools is our *own memories* of good playing experiences. If you have *ever* had a small victory playing under pressure, even if it's just a couple phrases from a piece then you have a memory worth treasuring! You can always say to yourself, “Just remember that time I played pretty well even though I was nervous. If I could do it then, I can do it again.” Latch onto that memory. It isn’t a lie. It isn’t a guarantee but it isn’t nothing.

*You may not feel confident
but you can imitate someone who is.
Sometimes that works.*



On Teaching and Playing: The Essential Dichotomy

OK, this may be an artificial division but I find it useful. We can categorize materials into:

1. Stuff that builds you up.
2. Stuff that challenges what you've built.

What I find so interesting is the almost religious reverence which people have for certain sections of the Arban's method. This one in particular lives in a place of high honor for so many trombone players:



Why? People will return to it over and over as if going to a temple of good trombone health. It's fairly simple (but deceptively challenging if your standards are high enough). This is the quintessential example of "Stuff that builds you up." Playing this carefully just has a way of invoking those good habits you've built over the years. Heaven knows, in my own books I've tried to channel that Arban's vibe again and again.



For example, in [Simply Singing for Winds](#) I include little things like this:

76.
#7. Light Tonguing Circle B.E.
You can also run through this circle using sharp keys: C#, F#, B, etc.

Look familiar? I go back to the Arban's well in other books like [Patterns and Snippets](#) and [60 Vignettes](#). I'm not trying to rip off Arban but, instead, to *riff off* Arban. Or at least chase down the same goals he may have had in mind.

The Bordogni Vocalises (Rochut book) hold a similar place of high honor but I find it once again interesting how trombonists keep returning to the same earlier ones in the book: #2, #4, etc. A somewhat lesser-known book but revered by some elite players is the *Cimera 55 Phrasing Studies*. Far more simple than Bordogni (and shorter), they provide a way to bring simple beauty back into one's playing.

Andante $\text{♩} = 76$ **1** JAROSLAV CIMERA

It should come as no surprise that, once again, I try to capture that simple melodic essence with my own stuff, especially (once again) [Simply Singing for Winds](#).

32.
#1. Riverbanks B.E.

a.  V I V

 IV I V I V I

b.  I V I V

 IV I V I V I

#2. The Praties, They Grow Small Irish

a.  i VII i VII i i VII i

 III VI iv i VII i

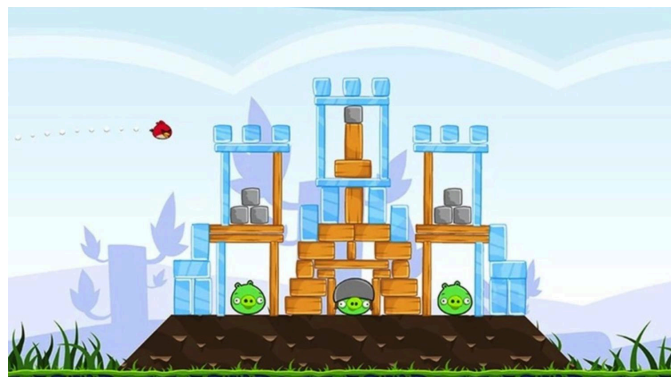
b.  i VII i VII i i VII i

 III VI iv i VII i

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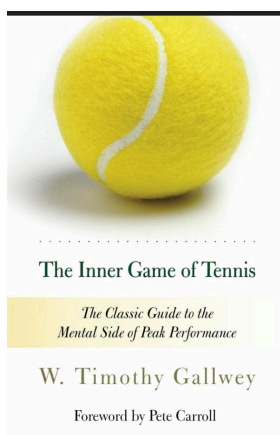
We all know about those really tough books, especially what I like to call the “killer B’s”: Bitsch, Boutry, Blazhevich, Bozza. I found it interesting that when I was working on my Master’s, I asked my teacher, Tony Chipurn about maybe doing some Bitsch etudes. Tony, (who in no way was lacking technical chops!) made an interesting reply, “I think those books do more to tear you down than to build you up.” (That said, my etude diet was pretty heavy in Kopprasch!) I get his point.

For some reason, this makes me think of that video game, Angry Birds. Those pigs keep building fortresses and we launch our little birds at the fortress, trying to knock it down. I guess in this analogy, we build our own fortresses of relaxation and resonance and our repertoire gets launched at us to knock us down.



The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy

Timothy Gallwey - The Inner Game of Tennis



There are few better books about teaching and learning than this one. In a way, I think the best feature of the original book is that it *isn't* about music. We are left to make our own connections. I don't want some other author trying to connect the dots for me.

In short, Gallwey puts forward the notion that within us are two selves: Self 1 and Self 2. Self 1 is the 'talker.' He calls it, "...the ego-mind, which causes interference with the natural capabilities of Self 2."(p.12) Self 2 is the doer.

Try this experiment:

1. Stand up.
2. Toss some small object in the air and catch it.
3. Sit down.

Congratulations. You just performed a miracle! Imagine for a moment trying to program a robot to do this. Think about all the muscles you just used in precise coordination to achieve your goals. In fact, just standing up was enough of a miracle to prove my point. Which muscle to contract first? How many signals are needed from the inner ear so you don't tip over? We don't think about it **and that's the point**. Self 2 does this for us. Self 2 is the doer. Self 1 might be thinking, "Well, this is dumb. Why is this guy asking me to do this?"

Self 1 (the talker) largely serves to get in the way and Gallwey began to notice this in his tennis lessons as he watched players chide themselves for blowing shots. He writes: "Listen to players talk to themselves on the court: 'Come on, Tom, meet the ball in front of you.' We're interested in what is happening inside the player's mind. Who is telling whom what?" (p.9)

Consider this passage:

I too admit to overteaching as a new pro, but one day when I was in a relaxed mood, I began saying less and noticing more. To my surprise, errors that I saw but didn't mention were correcting themselves without the student ever knowing he had made them. How were the changes happening? Though I found this interesting, it was a little hard on my ego, which didn't quite see how it was going to get its due credit for the improvements being made. It was an even greater blow when I realized that sometimes my verbal instructions seemed to decrease the probability of the desired correction occurring.

Galley, Timothy. *The Inner Game of Tennis*. New York. Random House, 2008. p.5

Another passage:

When a tennis player is "in the zone," he's not thinking about how, when or even where to hit the ball. He's not trying to hit the ball, and after the shot he doesn't think about how badly or how well he made contact. The ball seems to get hit through a process which doesn't require thought. There may be an awareness of the sight, sound and feel of the ball, and even of the tactical situation, but the player just seems to know without thinking what to do.

Galley, Timothy. *The Inner Game of Tennis*. New York. Random House, 2008. p.12

I think back to my high school trombone teacher, Dr. Henry Schmidt (an Emory Remington student). I now realize how most of his comments were on the sound he desired, not on the means of getting to that sound. He sang a lot.

As teachers we can be proud of ourselves for our expert analysis but we must pause to ask ourselves, "Am I just showing off my knowledge or I am helping the student in the most effective way possible?" I *try* to make most of my teaching comments along the lines of the musical results. There are some exceptions - correct posture, pointing out an over-active embouchure, etc - but for the most part I'm conducting and singing and giving the student's Self 2 a chance to figure things out. One last passage from Gallwey's amazing book:

It seems as though Self 1 thinks Self 2 doesn't hear well, or has a short memory, or is stupid. The truth is, of course, that Self 2, which includes the unconscious mind and nervous system, hears everything, never forgets anything, and is anything but stupid. After hitting the ball firmly once, it knows forever which muscles to contract to do it again. That's its nature.

Galley, Timothy. *The Inner Game of Tennis*. New York. Random House, 2008. p.10

If you play it right even once, you possess within yourself the ability to do it that way every time. Sometimes it's just a matter of getting your Self 1 out of the way. It will resist.

So, you have to give Self 1 something to do. It can focus on the sound you hear in your mind. It can study each musical gesture to identify nuances. Heck, it can imagine a flight of birds across a lake. Whatever works to allow the musical result to come through.

Here's a [nice video](#) of an older Gallwey teaching a tennis lesson using the “bounce-hit” exercise which is a way of giving the student's Self 1 something to do.

What about the Inner Game of Music? Well, I'm not a fan. If it works for you, fine, but I found the book to be quite frustrating.

I even took an Inner Game of Music class with Barry Green while I was studying at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

Suffice to say that, for me, the experience left a lot to be desired. My advice: stick with the original and draw your own conclusions.



A Random Thought: The Book Idea Graveyard

I've written something like 16 books now. Actually, it's hard to do the math. Do I count each version of *Simply Singing* as a separate book? Probably not. However, *Bass Trombone Craft* is different enough from *Trombone Craft* that I think it should count as a different book.

Here's the thing: for each book I've completed writing, there are incomplete books in a sort of "book graveyard." Books that I started writing and then realized, "Nope this one isn't going to work out." I sometimes joke that in my mind I have a "suck meter."



I continue pressing ahead but that little voice starts to say, "I'm not so sure about this one. It's starting to suck." I've gone as many as 30 pages into writing a new book before that gauge went fully into the red and I abandoned the project.

I never delete the files though. Sometimes they reemerge in a different form. That graveyard has thousands of files! I should know: when *Finale* announced they were throwing in the towel, I went through and converted all my files to the compressed format that hopefully could be opened by other software. It was over 30,000 files. Geez, I need to get a life!

Sometimes, other people send me books hoping for a positive endorsement. Also, I'm still on the ITA Literature Review Committee. All too often the books I see feel like an excited first draft that isn't fully fleshed out. I totally get it. It's very exciting seeing your work laid out in book form. You have a real feeling of accomplishment.

“Hey, look at this thing I made! It’s so exciting.”



It’s a *LOT* less fun to go back to tweak it but that’s where the real value comes in. I’ve seen so many books that had a good basic idea that wasn’t well worked-out. And sometimes, I actually get angry when I see a book that is just lame. The biggest offenders, I think, are these scale books where someone discovers the power of simply pasting a pattern into a bunch of keys. Conceptually, I guess it’s OK and it certainly fills a lot of pages but there are SO many books like this.

When I launch a book, I fear that I will fall into this very trap. That was especially true with *Patterns and Snippets*. I knew for years I wanted to write a scale book but I was afraid of that ‘suck meter.’ Quite a few false start scale/arpeggio books sit in that graveyard. Did I succeed? That’s for someone else to judge.

The little voice is now telling me that this post can be seen as extremely arrogant. “Everyone else’s books are half-baked and only mine are good enough.” No, I’ve seen some *great* books come out and some of the classics are still amazing.

Sometimes I see a book and think, “Damn! Why didn’t I think of that?” I don’t know how many more books I have left in me. There are a few still floating around that need to see the light of day. The very first book I wrote has long since gone unpublished and the files for it don’t exist. I don’t even remember what music notation software I used. Was it early Finale?

I don’t want to say what that book is for fear that someone will jump in and create basically the same thing before I can get to it. I can say that, in order to do it well - *really well* - I will need a lot of time and resources. It won’t be the same as anything I’ve done yet but I do believe there is a real need for it. It may have to wait until my retirement. A sabbatical, sadly, just isn’t financially feasible for me.

OK, enough stream-of-consciousness writing. Please know that, if I don’t like a book written by someone else, I won’t pull any punches in my opinion. The same finicky, ever-tweaking mindset that I use on myself I will use on other books or, for that matter, compositions! *I’m becoming a curmudgeon!*



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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