

TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards

Volume 1, No. 2. ~ April 2022

Welcome!

Here is the second issue. Thank you to everyone who has subscribed so far. Mailchimp tells me there are over 350 of you. 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](#).

Chances are 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 first issue:

1. Pretty Good Melodies
2. Useful Lip Slurs
3. Free Book Samples
4. Playing Tips
5. Favorite Musical Moments
6. Thoughts on Teaching and Performing
7. Spring Trombone Day, 2022
8. Random Thoughts

Enjoy!

Brad Edwards

Trombone Professor, Arizona State University

[School of Music Dance and Theater](#)

Websites:

[Trombone Zone](#)

[Hornbone Press](#)

[Free Audition Solos](#)

A Pretty Good Melody

♩ = c.60

The musical score is written in bass clef with a 6/8 time signature. It consists of eight staves of music. The tempo is marked as ♩ = c.60. The key signature changes from C major to B-flat major (two flats) in the fifth staff. The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, often grouped with beams and slurs. There are several rests, some marked with a 'y' symbol. Accidentals include natural signs, sharps, and flats. The piece concludes with a double bar line on the eighth staff.

A Useful Lip Slur

Many people find it more difficult to slow down than to slur up. I don't know why but my guess that muscles contract more smoothly than they relax.

Also, we must remember that the blowing action eases off as we go lower. Basically, on lower notes we use a greater quantity of air but under less pressure (like blowing air against your hands to warm them up in winter).

Can you get a big, centered fat sound on the low note? Remember: it's very easy to allow the pitch of that note to sag. For tenor trombones, that first position trigger F will possibly be flat. For now, let it sit where it wants.

If the full slur is too challenging, just do portions of it.

The hardest slur, I think, is the move from the trigger note down to the pedal. If that is also the case for you, try lip bending down before attempting to jump to the pedal partial.

Freely

1 V

3 1 V

5

6

7

2 V

3

5

6

7

simile

Sheet music for bass clef, featuring six systems of musical notation. Each system consists of two staves. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and fingerings (e.g., 3, 5, 6, 7). The key signature changes across the systems: the first two systems are in B-flat major (two flats), the next two in D major (two sharps), and the last two in B-flat major (two flats). The systems are labeled with Roman numerals and accidentals: $\flat 3$ V, $\sharp 5$ V, $\flat 6$ V, and $\flat 7$ V. The music is written in a style that suggests a specific instrument, likely a double bass or tuba, given the bass clef and the range of the notes.

Free book sample: Lip Slur Melodies

Many people are familiar with one of my early books: Lip Slurs. The third section of this book was a collection of legato melodies which were worked out in such a way that all the note changes could be done with natural slurs. I called them lip slur melodies. People liked them and wanted more so later on I wrote an entire book of these lip slur melodies (and duets, too).

Here's a sample of a lip slur duet. Both parts can be played without tonguing when you move from note to note.

If you like this sample, you can find some more free sample pages for this book [at this link](#). The book can be purchased [at this link](#).

When playing this keep a steady air stream (steady blow) as you move from note to note. Of course you change the air to reflect the music but avoid “huffing” with the air when you move from note to note.

Another important detail: move your slide at just the right movement. We are all sometimes guilty of moving the slide too early, anticipating the next position before it is time!

Enjoy!

Flowing

9.6 a

mp *cresc.*

mp *cresc.*

mf *dim.*

mf *dim.*

p *cresc.*

p *cresc.*

mp

mp

mf

mf

Dynamic markings: *mp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *dim.*, *p*, *mf*.

Articulations: *#5*, *1*, *2*, *#5*, *#4*.

Playing Tip: Embouchure - Calm Corners

When I first work with a new student I have a sort of “mental checklist” of things to keep an eye out for. I’ve encountered enough new students at this point that this list is somewhat unconscious. Usually after they’ve been playing for a few seconds, I already see 4 or 5 things that could be refined to help them play better. The trick for me as a teacher is deciding what to address first. Of course, that student is likely doing some positive things too and I want to point that out as well!

One problem I see a lot: ***the corners of the embouchure move around quite a bit***. This can take various forms. Here are some common ones:

- corners inflating with air
- corners moving with each articulation (sometimes the jaw also moves so it appears that the student is chewing as they articulate).
- corners relaxing and resetting between attacks.
- corner raising up into a “smile” for higher notes.

Think of a clarinet. The metal ligature serves to hold the reed in place:



Good clarinet players are very careful about exact placement of the reed. The corners of our embouchure work somewhat like that ligature. They provide stability to our “lip reed” so it vibrates consistently and predictably.

This photo may help:



Look in a mirror as you articulate notes. Starting notes happens with a small backward movement of the tongue, releasing the air. Many students have too much facial activity, sort of like a ligature that allows the reed to move around. The result: more missed notes and notes that don't speak.

This may be a strong habit with you. **Strong habits don't give up easily.** They are happily camped out in your brain and don't want to leave!

With time, careful observation and patience, you can build a habit of stability that will serve you for years to come. Here's a simple exercise to get started. As you play this, look in a mirror. Do the corners move more on the staccato notes? They shouldn't!



Here's a [helpful video](#) that shows Sarah Willis, a professional horn player who volunteered to sit inside an MRI machine so we can see inside her mouth as she plays. Notice how the tongue pulls back for the attacks but everything else is super stable! Inspiring!

If you follow me on Instagram, I posted a Trombone Tip Tuesday video about this on March 29th, 2022.

A Favorite Musical Moment

Duke Ellington first recorded *Mood Indigo* in October, 1930. Originally titled, *Dreamy Blues*, it became one of his biggest hits. Some of the tune is original with Ellington but some was adapted from a tune by clarinetist Lorenzo Tio.

Eventually Mitchell Parish added lyrics, leading to a spectacular recording by [Ella Fitzgerald](#) in the 1950's. (Here's an [NPR story](#) about the piece).

Wycliffe Gordon recorded an amazing overdub of this piece on his album *Slidin' Home* 2004. In between solo breaks and one multiphonic section, he lays down [harmonized passage](#) that has such a great feel to it. Listen to how laid back the swing is with extra weight on the upbeat notes. I love the buzz coming off the bass note at [1:35](#). If you know any of his playing, you know Wycliffe is capable of real fireworks (and there are some in this recording), I love his willingness to not constantly tear it up in this recording. He picks his moments wisely!

By the way, there is an unreal moment at the [3:19](#) mark in which he lays down an overdub hoquet like I've never heard before.

Seriously, you need to listen to the entire recording to capture everything that's in here!



On Teaching and Playing: Which Habit Are You Building?

We repeat an action, we build a habit. Some of these habits help us and some hinder us.

Suppose you practice for an hour but spend that whole time reinforcing a habit which hinders you, such as playing with too much tension.

Are you a better player at the end of that hour?

Imagine that! Practicing for a whole hour and being WORSE than when you started! Hardly seems fair, does it?

You can't break a habit by focusing on it. Here's a classic trick:

For the next 10 seconds,
DO NOT THINK OF A YELLOW SCHOOL BUS!

(waiting)

So, how did it go? Here's a variation on that trick:

For that upcoming passage,
DO NOT TIGHTEN UP AND MISS THAT HIGH NOTE!

What was the first thing you thought about?

The secret is to build a different habit and nurture it while you ignore the bad habit, letting it wither away while the new habit gets stronger.

How about this:
For that upcoming passage,
IMAGINE THAT HIGH NOTE RINGING OUT WITH A LOVELY SOUND!

I'm not saying it will work every time but at least your mind is now focused on pursuing the positive rather than avoiding the negative.

Oh yes, about that whole yellow school bus thing. One way to win at that game is to focus on something else...



Now, this bus?
It's only thinking about nailing that high note!

Which habit are you building?

Spring Trombone Day 2022

With guest artist: Tim Higgins (San Francisco Symphony)



On Mar. 27th, the ASU Trombone Studio was able to resume our annual Spring Trombone Day event. The one-day event started with a group warm-up followed by coaching of low brass sections and individuals and finishing with a 6pm concert.

We were joined by the trombone studios of the University of Arizona and Northern Arizona University. Our evening concert also featured the local jazz group, Bones Southwest. Tim played a solo with the ASU Trombone Choir, Andrew Cadima's *Distance*.

As Tim taught, I managed to type down some notes. Remember these are just me paraphrasing what I thought I heard!

Concerning the Brahms Symphony No. 4 chorale...

- *I want you all to make a new sound together* (rather than just fitting into each other) [tenor and bass together]
- I would describe Brahms as *always resonant, always warm*.
- When we start this (the chorale) it should be like turning on a light bulb (with a warm light).
- He worked out the first two chords in great detail:
"Each chord needs this level of detail"
- When someone is playing in a way that is not expressively clear, often it is because their fundamentals are blurred. "*Once you've cleared up your fundamentals, you better have something to say!*"
- What do you want the audience to feel when you play this? We're going to talk about the fundamentals but they need to serve a musical purpose.
- The acting trick: *if you're not living it, the audience won't get it*.
- If I'm the tuba, I'm getting the information from the bass trombone. Likewise, the bass trombone gets information from the 2nd trombone. And so on. "Information has to travel down."
- What should the note shape be after you articulate it? In America, that's something we don't think about enough. The great thing about the strings is that ring of sound after they have bowed a note. After the sound, there's still life happening (That's very German)
- *If you want great articulation, have great air*. Let the air push the tongue out of the way.
- You should be drawn not to the quality of the "tah" but to the quality of the "ah"

Concerning Bruckner Symphony No. 4...

- When I was watching the CSO they were like this (he demonstrates sitting really far away from the stand). When the stand is farther away, your awareness goes side to side.
- When I breathe, *I breathe in the manner that I'm going to play.*
- The name of the game is *life and vibrancy.*
- The tendency in this passage (Mvt 4) is to slow down. Usually that happens during the triplets.
- Bruckner's instrument is the organ. An observation from conductor, Herbert Blomstedt (who could conduct Bruckner 4 from memory in his 90's): The marcato marks - in Bruckner's time on his organ, you really had to stomp to make the note sound.
- The tendency in American Bruckner is that we tend to hit unimportant notes (no knuckle dragging).
- The whole goal of an orchestra is to *blend to create a whole new sound.*
- *If you want to learn to blend, go play duets with a cello.*
- In a big orchestra, the tuba might be the 9th string bass. In other cases it might be the 4th trombone.

Concerning Bartok Miraculous Mandarin...

- Bass trombone - the long notes (at the opening) are less important than you think.
- The marcato accents are not Bruckner - hit and get out of the way.
- The best compliment you can get paid on this piece is to be called thugs.
- To the tuba during muted passage: you've got to match the trombone in spite of the mute.
- Don't be confused by the amount of sound you hear and translate that into force. The second you constrict, you feel like you're playing louder but you're producing less sound. *Let the air do the work.*

It was a great day!
Let's do another one next year!

A Random Thought: Screens

We live in a time of screens.
Phone . screens . Tablet . screens .
Computer . screens . TV . screens



Some think we should put on goggles
and enter a virtual world completely mediated by screens.

What did we learn during Covid-19?
Screens are still a poor substitute
for being in a room together
and making music together.

AI continues its inexorable march.
I have read that AI will replace lawyers and truckers alike.
Some predict an AI will know you better than you know yourself.

Will an audience, wanting to be together, file into a performance space
to watch AI performers dance the Nutcracker?

*Let's celebrate real people.
Imperfect as they are.
Doing real things together.
For other real people.
Imperfect as they are.*