

TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards

Volume 1, No. 9. ~ November 2022

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](#).

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](#))

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Enjoy!

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[Trombone Zone](#)

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A Pretty Good Melody

Yes, it may be November but I'm still feeling Halloween energy as I write this! Pay close attention to the accents, they can make or break it!

♩ = 120 (straight 8ths)

mp

mf

f

mp *sfz* *f*

♩ = 120 (straight 8ths)

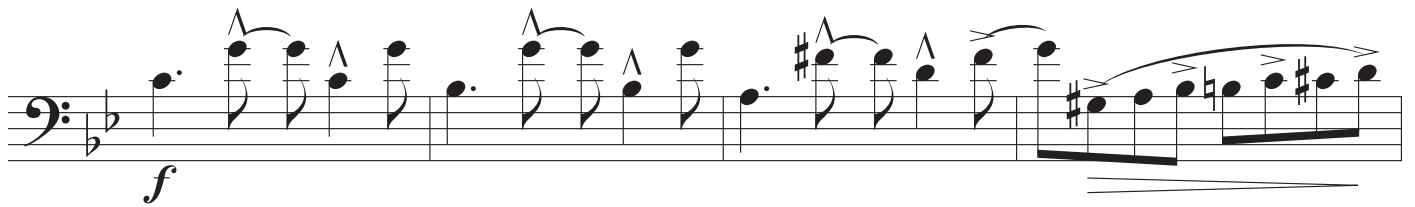
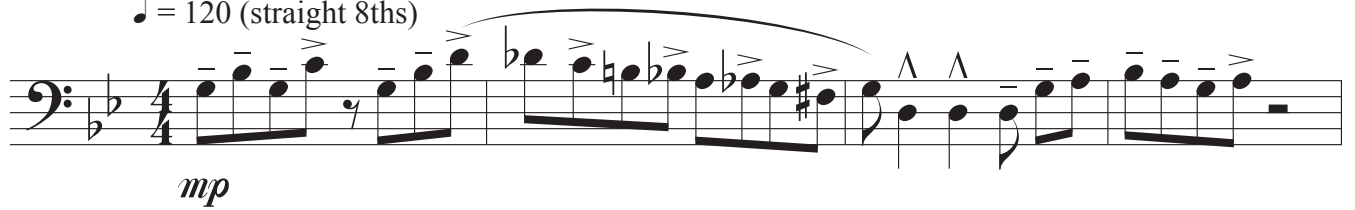
mp

mf

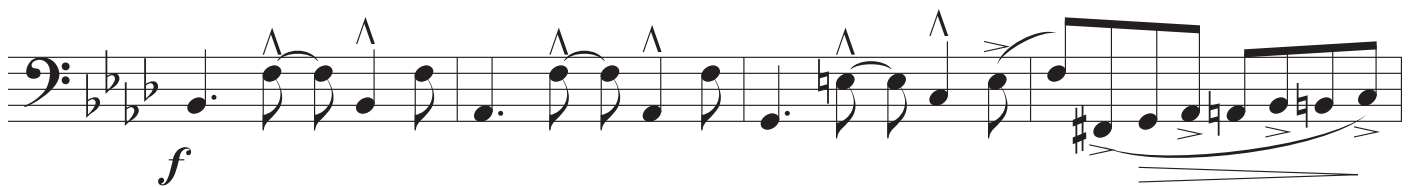
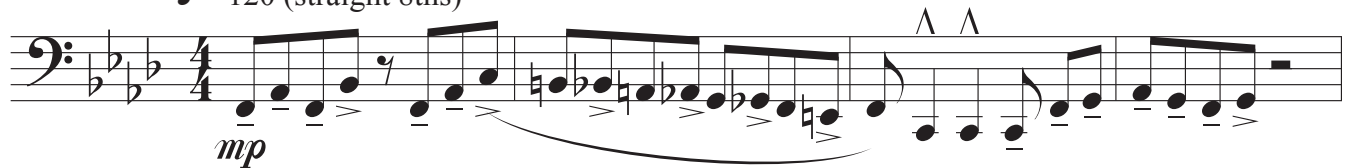
f

mp *sfz* *f*

♩ = 120 (straight 8ths)



♩ = 120 (straight 8ths)



A Useful Lip Slur

November 2022

The sequence goes both down and up. Allow a gliss when a natural slur isn't possible.

The exercise consists of eight staves of music, each representing a different starting note and key signature. The key signatures are D major (two sharps), B-flat major (two flats), and D major (no sharps or flats). The starting notes are D2, E2, B-flat2, C3, D3, E3, F3, and G3. The exercise is designed to be played both downwards and upwards. Each staff begins with a half note, followed by a quarter note, and then a triplet of eighth notes. The triplet pattern is repeated on each staff, with a glissando indicated by a curved line connecting the notes.

This musical score is written for a bass clef instrument. It consists of eight staves of music. The first five staves are in the key of B-flat major, indicated by two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The last three staves are in the key of A major, indicated by one sharp (F-sharp). The music is composed of eighth and sixteenth notes, frequently beamed together in groups of three, which are marked with a '3' above the notes. Slurs are used to group notes across measures, often encompassing these triplets. The piece concludes with a double bar line on the eighth staff.

Free Book sample: 60 Vignettes

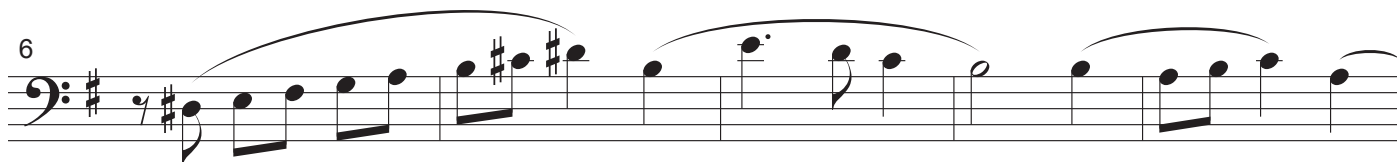
This little piece, Gliding, is a nice study for polishing your legato technique. It uses a melodic minor scale and, at one point, hints at tonalities both a half step below and a half step above.

I've offered up versions both for tenor and for bass trombone.

Enjoy!

11*Gliding* ♩ = c. 120-138**a.**

6



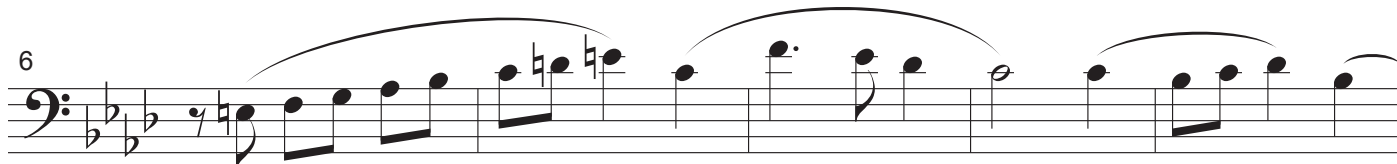
11



16

**b.**

6



11



16



11**Gliding** ♩ = c. 120-138

a.

6

11

16

rit.

b.

6

11

16

rit.

Playing Tip: bAH!

bAH is the syllable I like to use when articulating notes. Why?

Most people use “tah” or “dah.” These syllables are perfectly fine but they do focus attention on the tongue. ‘bAH’ focuses attention on the lips, the source of the actual vibration!

If you alternate between singing a passage with a “bAH” syllable and playing it on your instrument, chances are you’ll see some nice results.

What about the odd capitalization (bAH)? This brings attention to the important thing: the AH, the flowing air.

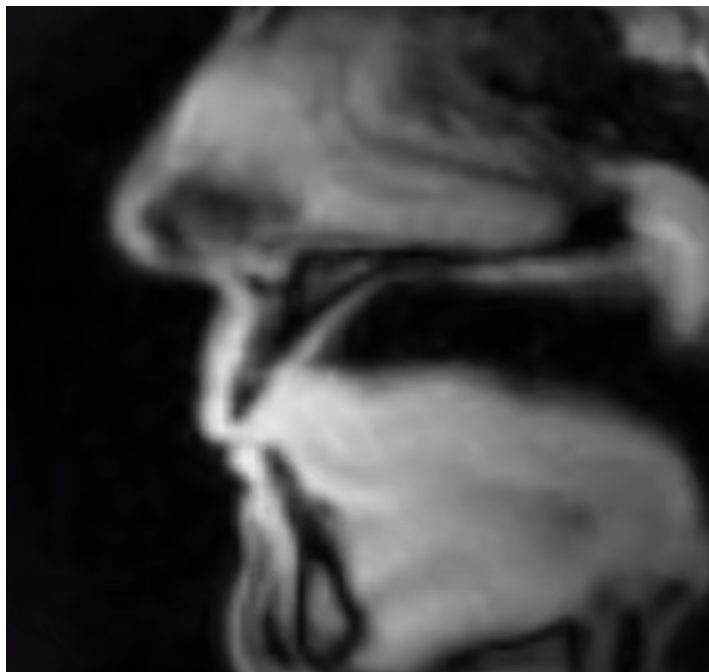
One of my previous teachers used to say “***Get right to the ah of tah.***” In other words, make sure the air is flowing immediately. A nice variation I’ve heard is, “***Put the vowel on the downbeat.***” This comes from choral pedagogy. If people are singing the Hallelujah chorus, you don’t want them getting stuck on the H: Hhhhhallelujah. For immediacy of sound, it should be: Aaallelujah. The same concept applies to brass playing. The air (usually) needs to be moving fully, right away!

[OK, truth be told, all of these words - tah, dah, bah - are just analogies and not exact representations of what we are really doing. The closest I’ve been able to come is a sort of simultaneous b/d which might be spelled: bdAH. But that’s pretty weird...]

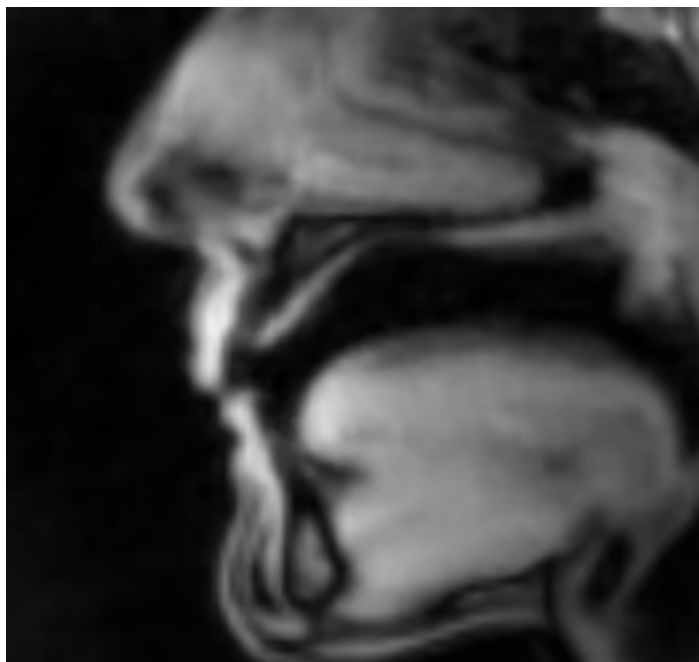
This is not a small point. The air releases when the tongue *retracts*! If that tongue retracts slowly or sluggishly, you don’t get immediate air. The lips are not usually fond of this.

So often I find myself going to that video of professional hornist, Sarah Willis. She is inside an MRI machine playing a partially-plastic version of a natural horn. The video shows what goes on inside of her mouth as she plays. So many interesting things to see here. For our purposes, take a look at this [one moment in the video](#) when she is articulating. Notice how the tongue retracts as the note. (Also notice how still and stable the jaw is! I need to get better at that!).

Right before...



Right after...



That said, this is all TONGUE focused. I still like to focus on air making the lips vibrate: bAH.

Quick retract = immediate air (getting to the bah)

Favorite Musical Moment(s): How the Singer Does It

Trombonists often like to perform music originally written for voice. One popular example is the set of four serious songs by Johannes Brahms, Op 121.

The first movement, *It Befalleth Man and Beast*, is based on a liturgical text. Here's a translation of the opening originally penned by Martin Luther and further translated into English by Richard Stokes:

*For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts;
as the one dieth, so dieth the other;
yea, they have all one breath;
so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast;
for all is vanity.*

Pretty heavy stuff. Let's listen to two excellent singers. First, [Thomas Quasthoff](#). Listen very closely to how he gives different emphasis to certain notes. Second, Dietrich [Fischer Dieskau](#) who delivers a very different interpretation.



So, here's my complaint: Trombone players tend not to bring interesting inflection to these songs, opting instead for a pretty sound but not much variety.

I'm not saying these are bad players, but they do tend to limit their expressive palettes. Of course, we can't fully imitate singers in their enunciation of words but I do think we can be a little narrow-minded in our approach.

Another pet peeve, trombonists who don't think about the punctuation of the text in choosing where to breathe. If the text has a comma, that's usually be a good place to breathe, no? Listen to both recordings ([Quasthoff](#) | [Fischer-Dieskau](#)) at this point in the piece, both singers observe the commas because, of course they do! Trombone players? Not so much...

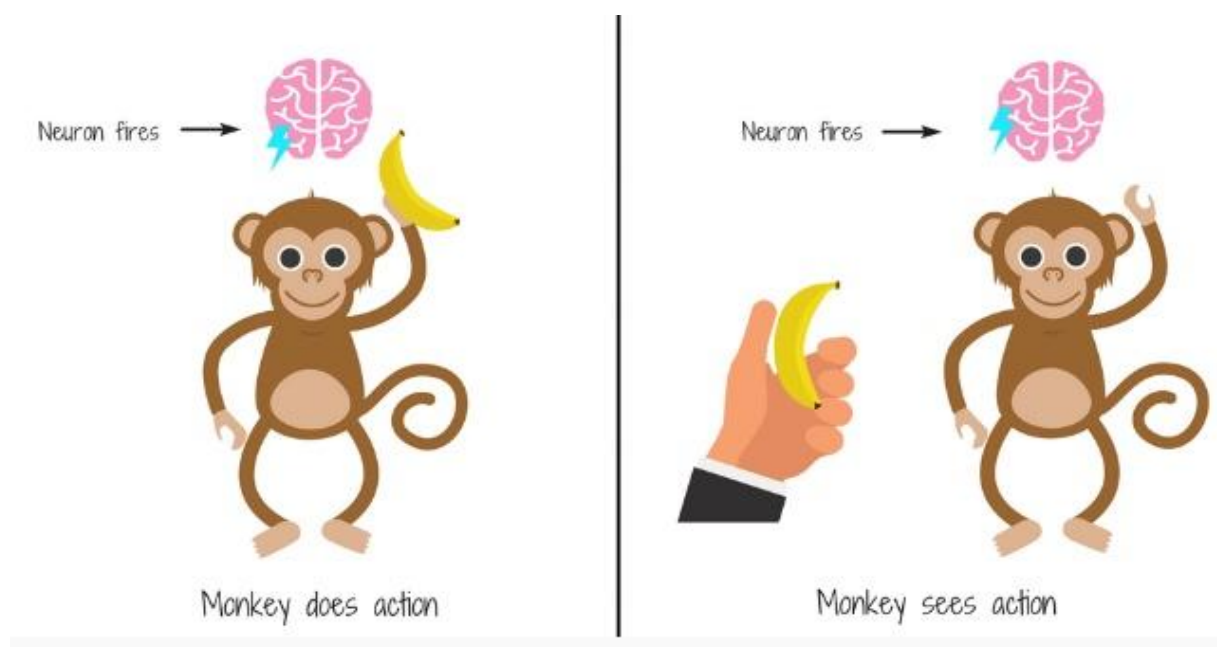
Andante

Da - rum - sa - he ich, daß - nichts bes - sers ist, denn daß der

s.v.

On Teaching and Playing: Mirror Neurons

In the 1990's, a team of Italian researchers discovered "...individual neurons in the brains of macaque monkeys that fired both when the monkeys grabbed an object and also when the monkeys watched another primate grab the same object." ([The Mind's Mirror](#), American Psychological Association, Oct 2005)



Neuroscientist Giacomo Rizzolatti, MD, who with his colleagues at the University of Parma first identified mirror neurons, says that the neurons could help explain how and why we "read" other people's minds and feel empathy for them. "If watching an action and performing that action can activate the same parts of the brain in monkeys--down to a single neuron--then it makes sense that watching an action and performing an action could also elicit the same feelings in people."

I believe this discovery has *profound* implications for how we teach. For starters, I now stand across from my students in lessons. If they watch me play one of their passages, it would seem that their own brains are “playing” the passage right along with me! Therefore, I try to do more back and forth imitation in my teaching. I want to be mindful of demonstrating a relaxed approach with good posture and a resonant tone.

I believe this may also explain why YouTube is such a powerful force in music education (both for good and bad). It is a rare student that begins learning a new piece without seeking out a recording of it. While I do wish students would devote more time to learning a piece by studying the score, I can't deny the power of mirror neurons.

Fire those neurons!



A Random Thought: Marionette Strings

The part of our brains that renders opinions on how we're doing (Self 1) cannot directly control the parts of our brains that actually DO the task (Self 2). We may fool ourselves into thinking we can directly control our bodies but all we really can do is think (Self 1) of the desired result and let the machine (Self 2) do it for us.

Consider for a moment the world of marionettes with these two videos:

▶ Mastering Marionettes: Marionette Performance Techniques - FREE CHAPTER

▶ Puppet Show (Macedonia)

Slight hand movements cause the puppet to walk or look around. So here's the question: if the goal is make the puppet shake its head, is the puppeteer thinking: "***move my hand just like so***" or are they thinking "***shake the head***" In other words, the puppeteer (Self 1) may be ***thinking*** "shake the head" but the ***actual*** command is "move my hand just like so" which in turn travels through the puppet strings causing the puppet to shake the head.

The control of the marionette is only indirect. Don't think of which strings to tighten or slacken, think of the goal movement of the puppet. ***This fascinates me!***

