TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards
Volume 2, No. 3. ~ March 2023

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)

In this issue:

1. A Pretty Good Melody
2. A Useful Lip Slur
3. Technique/Rhythm Builders
4. A Free Book Sample
5. A Playing Tip
6. Thoughts on Teaching and Performing
7. A Random Thought

Enjoy!

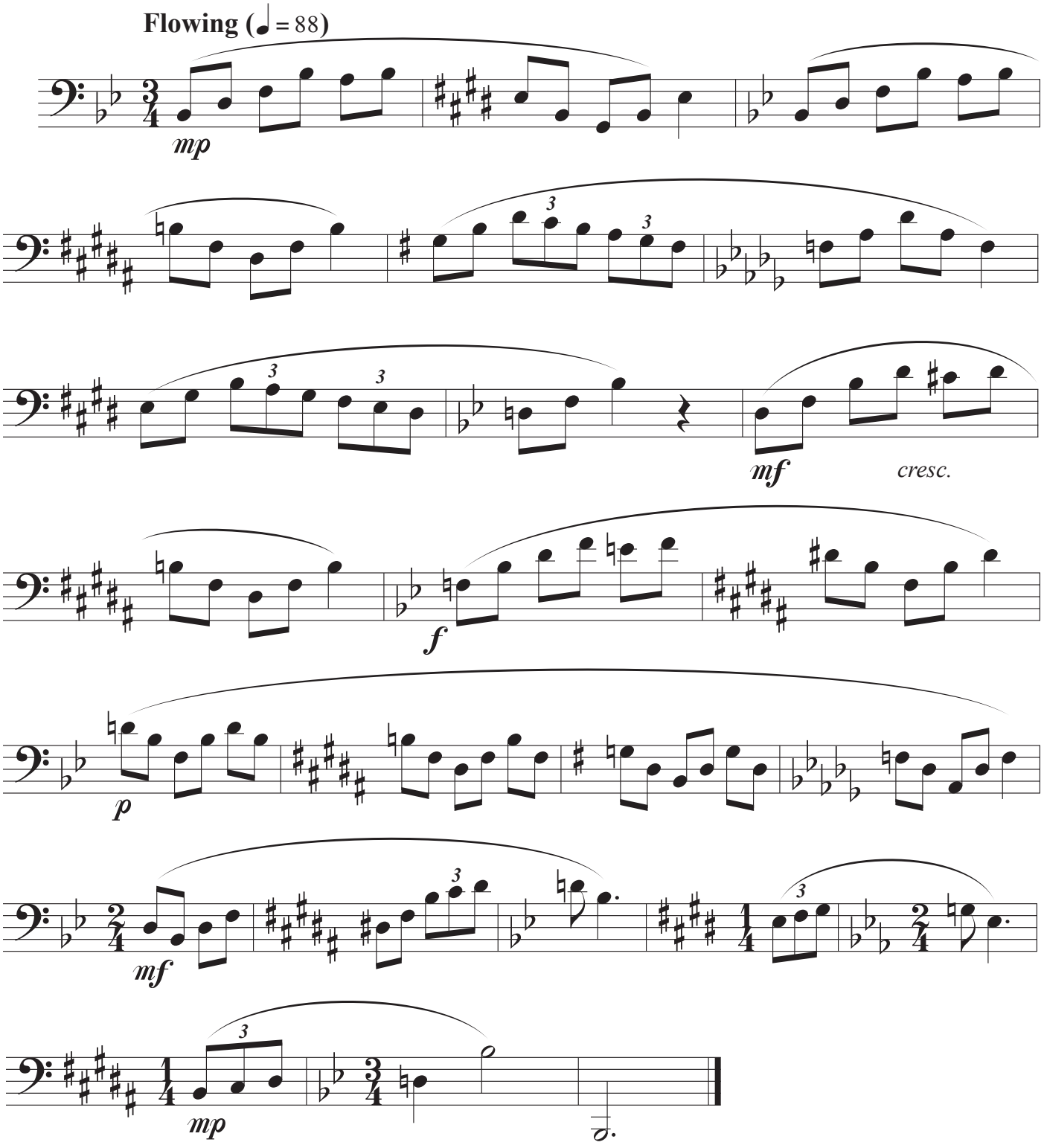
Brad Edwards
Trombone Professor, Arizona State University
School of Music Dance and Theater
Websites:
Trombone Zone
Hornbone Press
Free Audition Solos
ASU Bones

TBZ MONTHLY

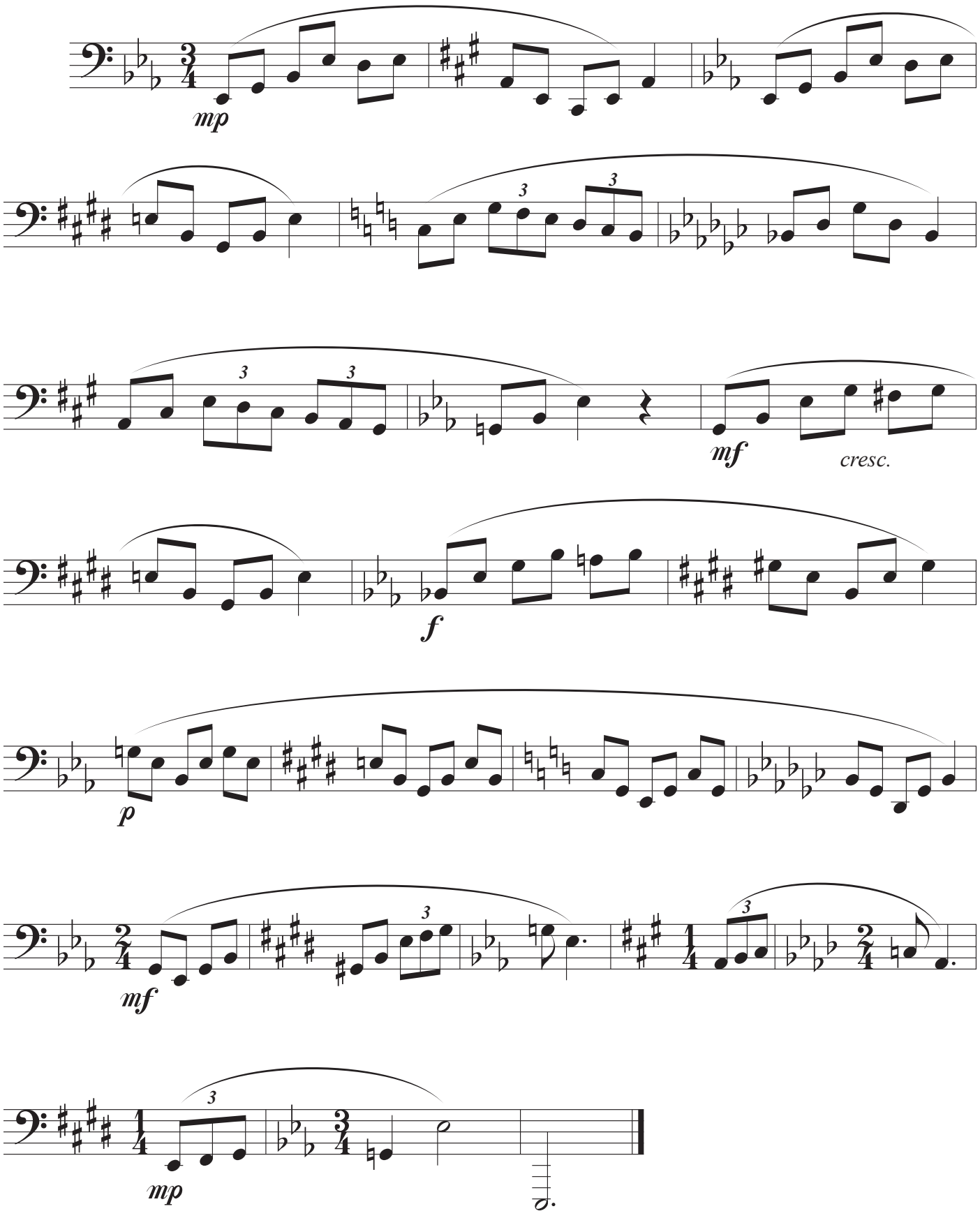
March 2023

A Pretty Good Melody

I just couldn't make up me mind what key to use!



© Brad Edwards, 2023

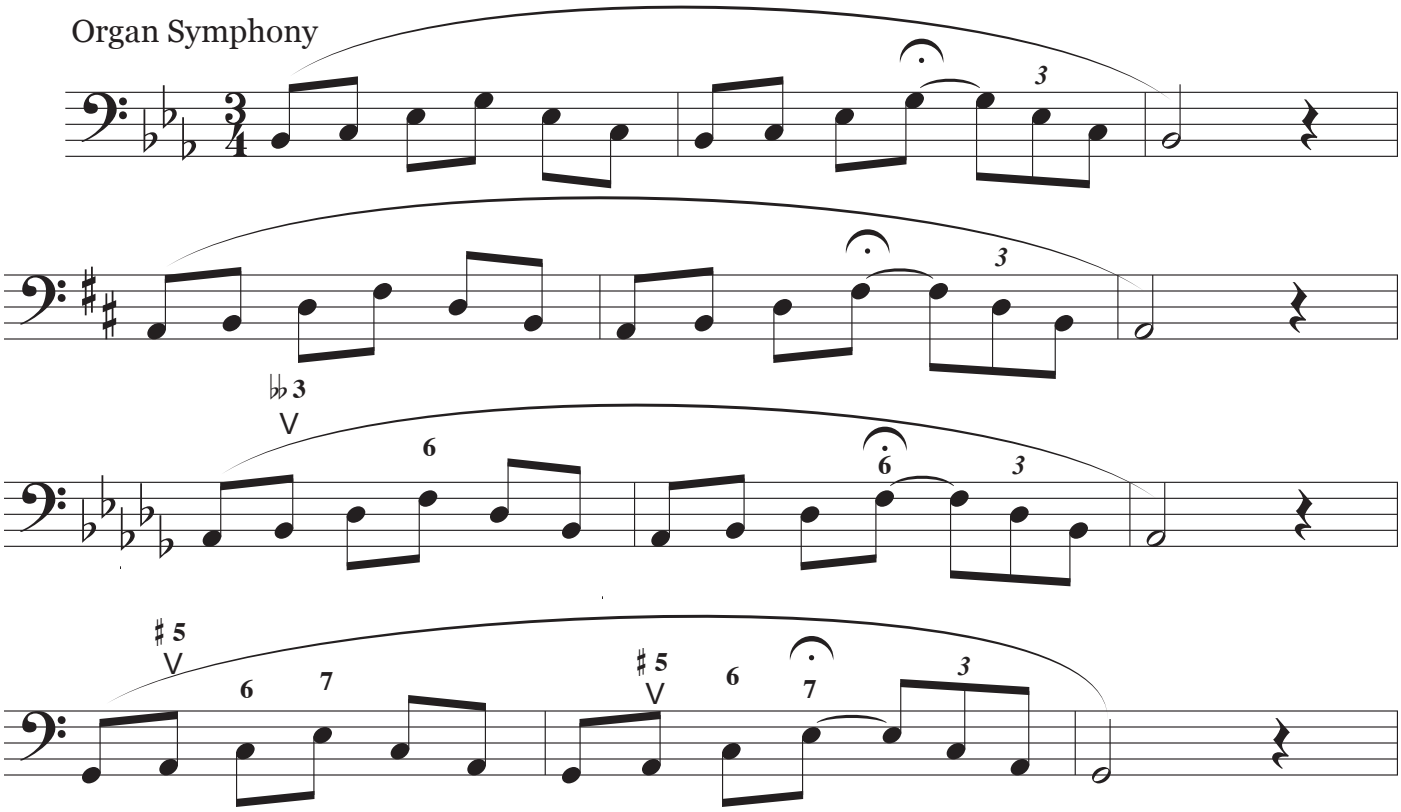

mp
3
3
3
3
mf
cresc.
f
p
mf
3
3
mp

March 2023

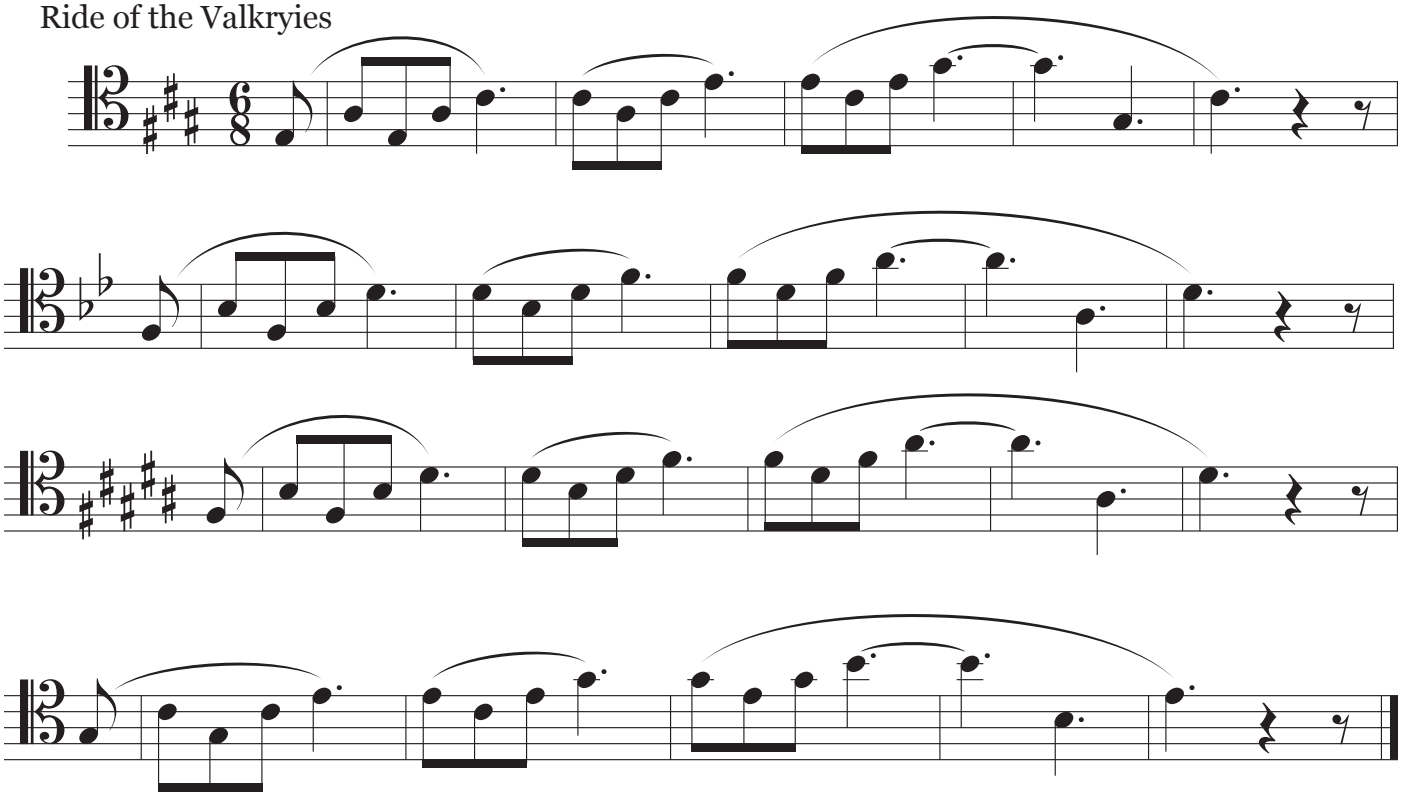
Some Useful Lip Slurs

This month, I want to share a few slurs that are connected to orchestral excerpts. My hope is that, by practicing these, the excerpts might become easier to play.

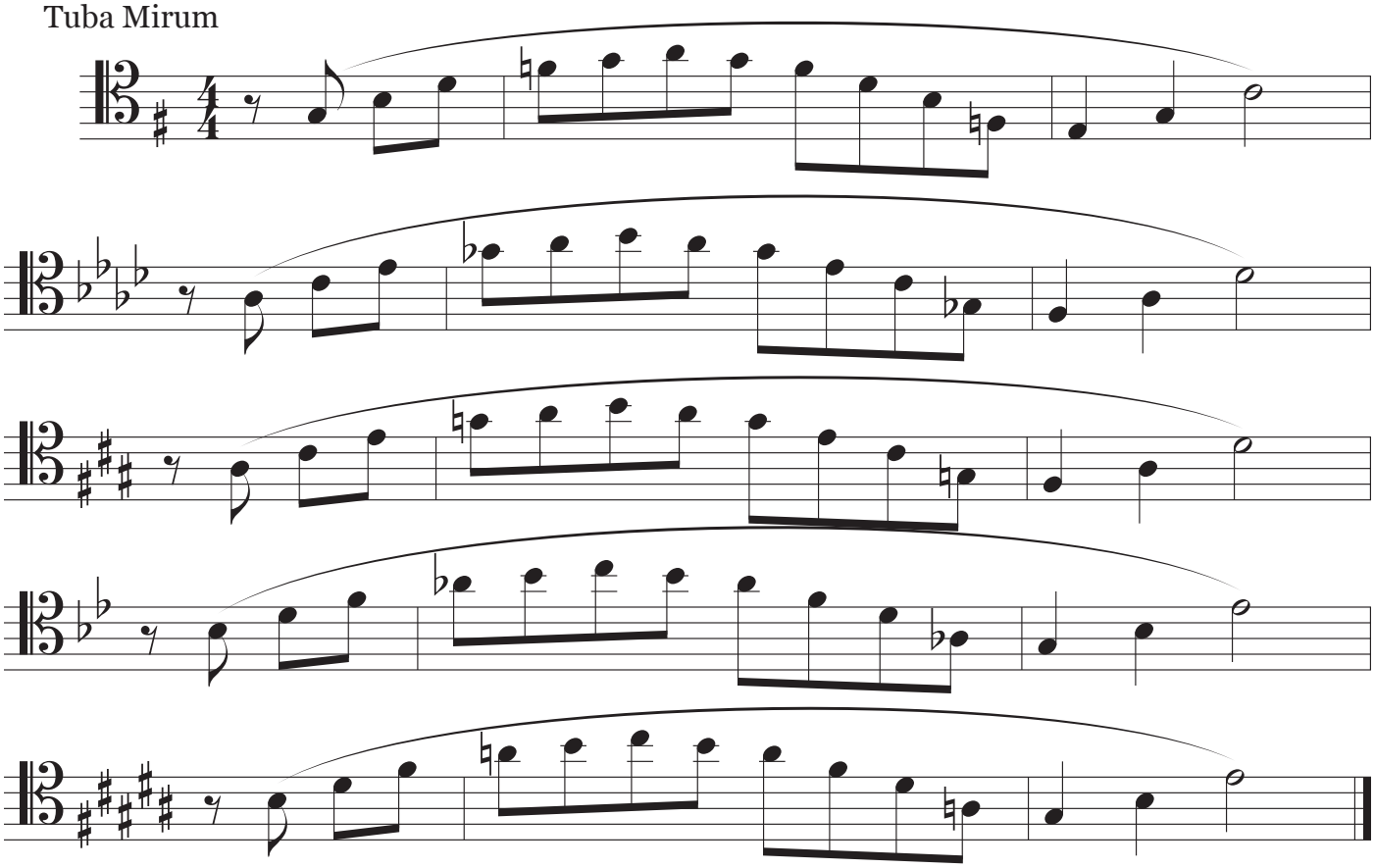
Organ Symphony



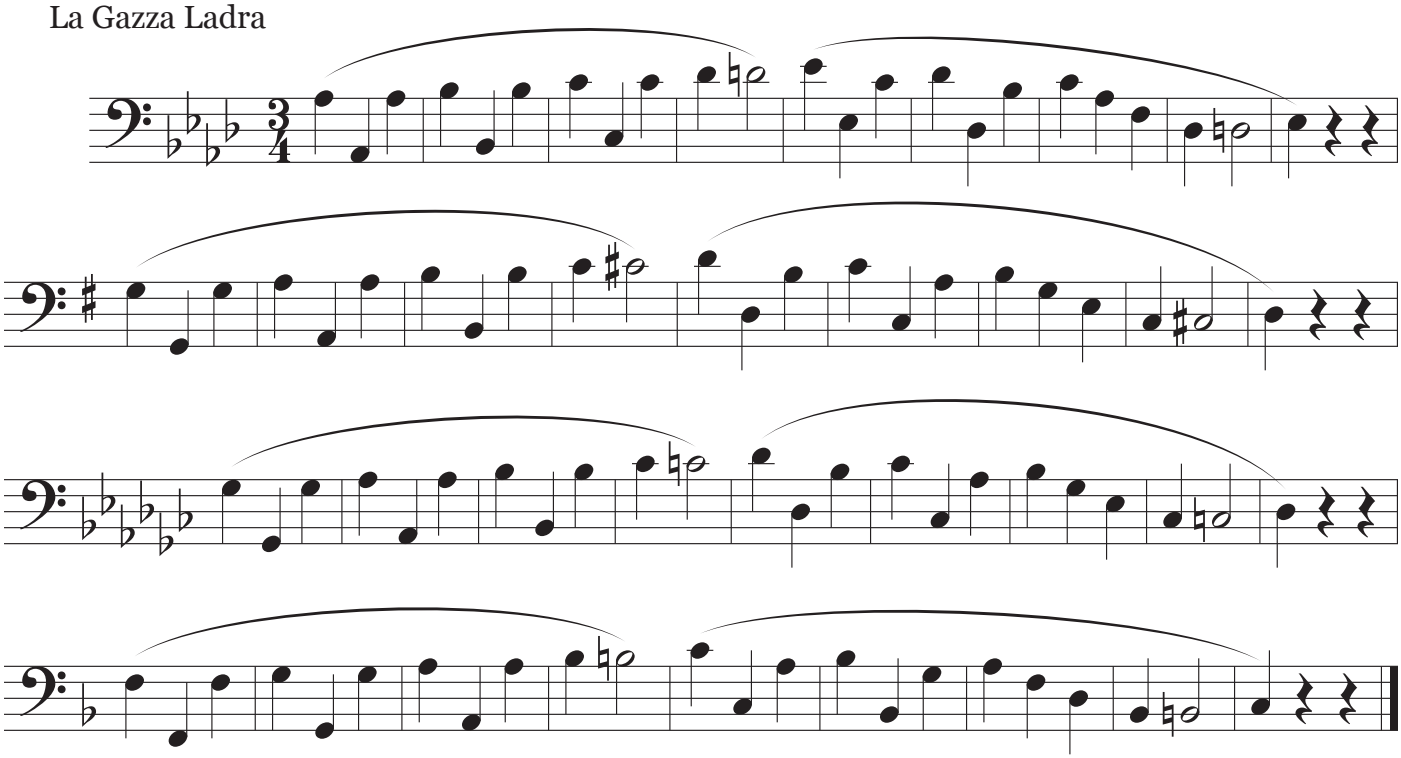
Ride of the Valkryies



Tuba Mirum



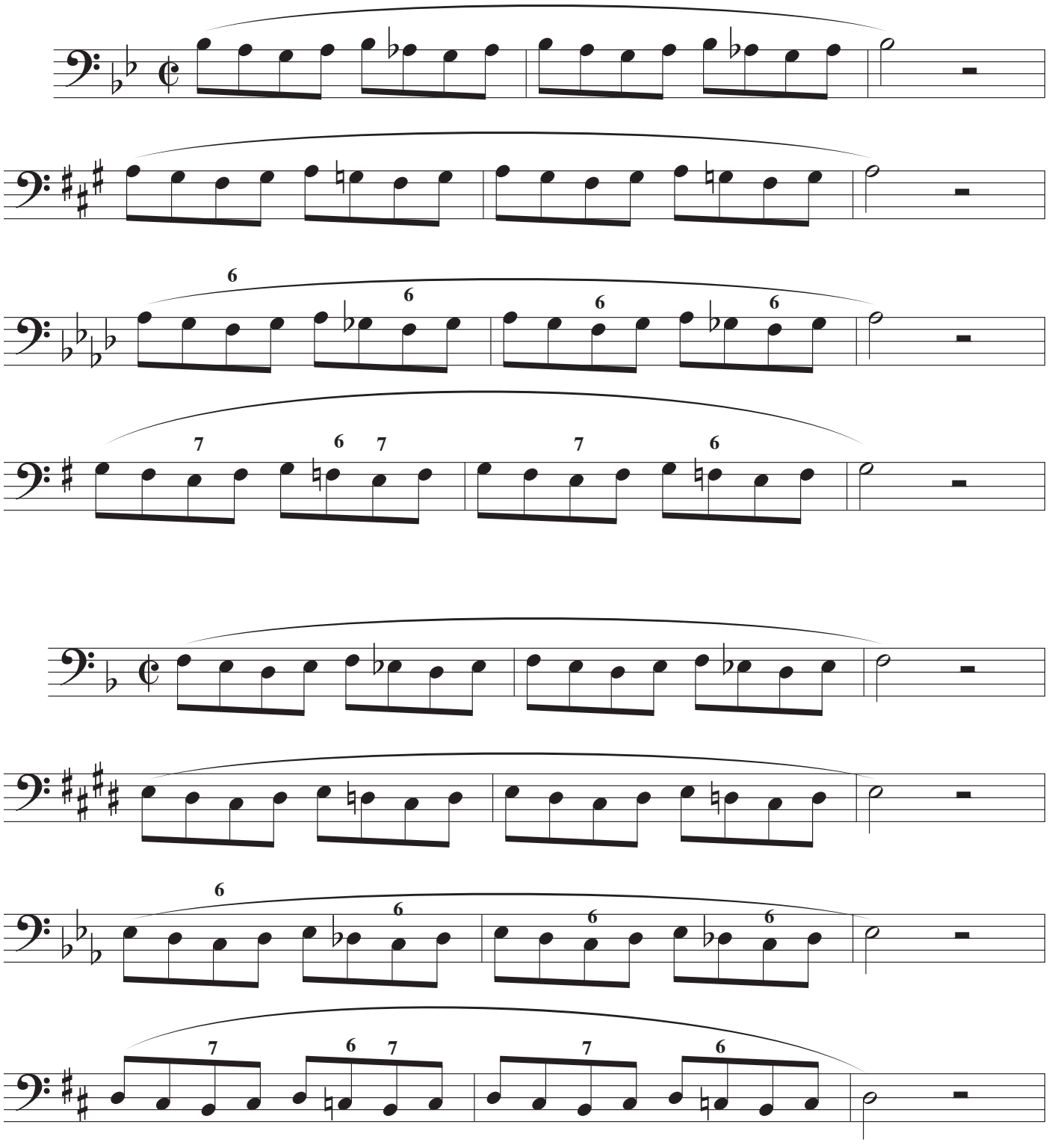
La Gazza Ladra



March 2023

Technique / Rhythm Builders

This one seems so simple but can teach a lot. We tend to average positions. For example, between B-flat and G we can easily be guilty of playing an A half-flat. This little exercise can increase awareness and accuracy with the "middle" positions between endpoints. Try recording this and playing it back at half speed!

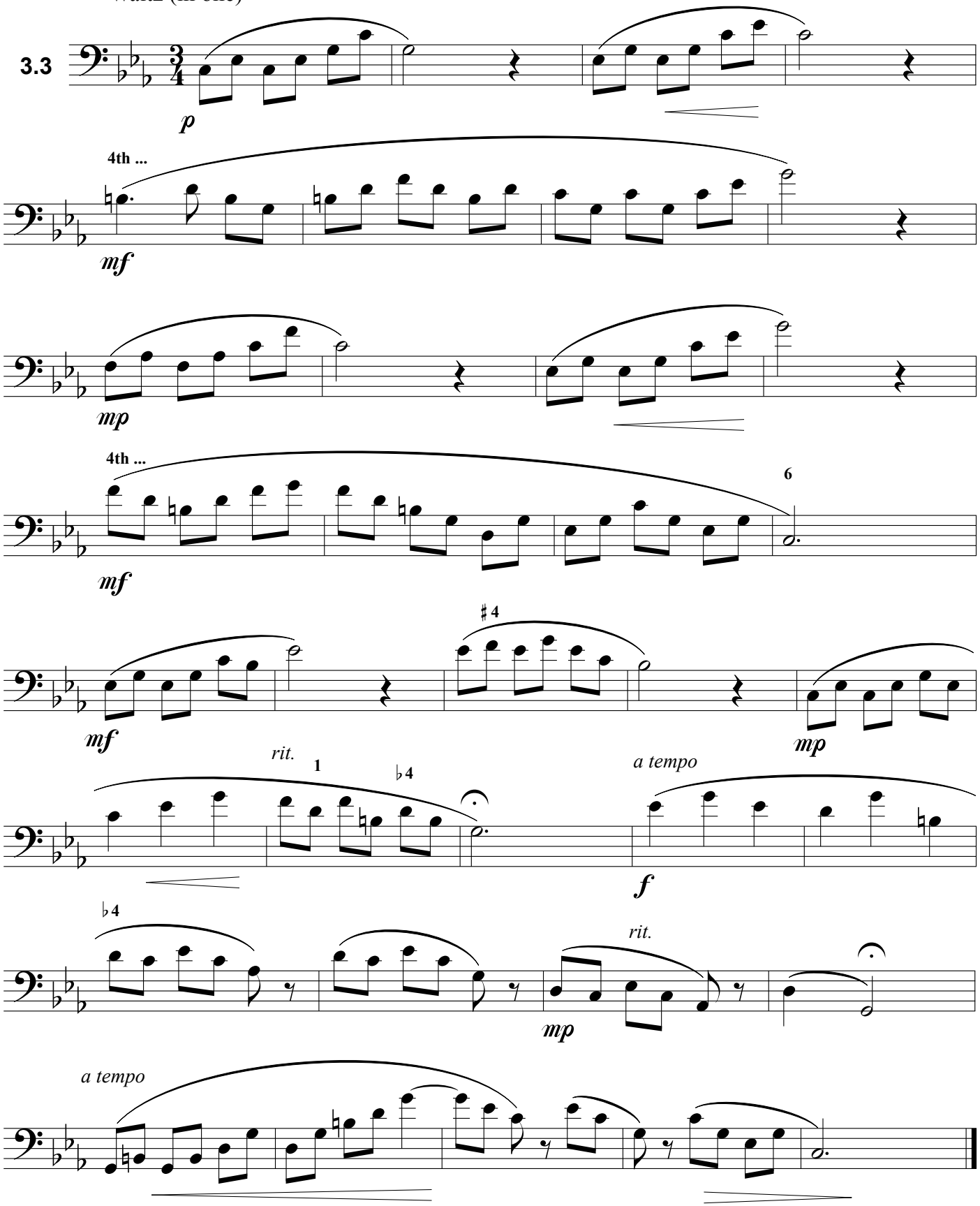


Free Book sample: Lip Slur Melodies

Since I released it in 2013, this book has been well-received. If you're not familiar with it, the whole idea is a graded collection of lyrical pieces for trombone where every legato connection can be achieved through a natural slur. This etude is from Part 3: "Soaring Higher." The etudes work their way up to higher and higher notes (extending up to C5). Part 6, "Soaring Even Higher" continues this idea extending up to F5.

Enjoy!

Waltz (in one)



Playing Tip: Expression is Variety

We throw around the term “expressive playing” or “musical playing” a lot. Mostly we have an intuitive sense of what this means. But if you ask someone to pin down a definition, it can get tricky.

I offer up this simple answer: **Variety**. Think of it this way: if a performer plays with no variety - everything is the same:

- dynamics
- articulations
- tone color
- vibrato (or lack of vibrato)

Just imagine Van Goghe’s Starry Night not like this:

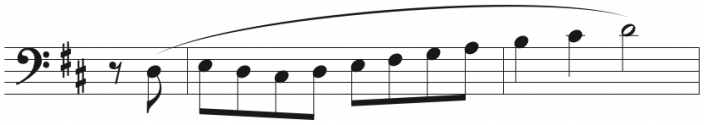
But like this:

Or worse, like this:

So, **musicality is variety that makes sense.**

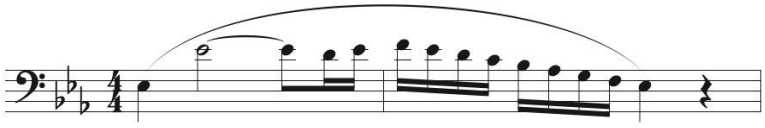
Some common sense applications:

- Most ascending lines crescendo (but it's pretty cool when you do the opposite).

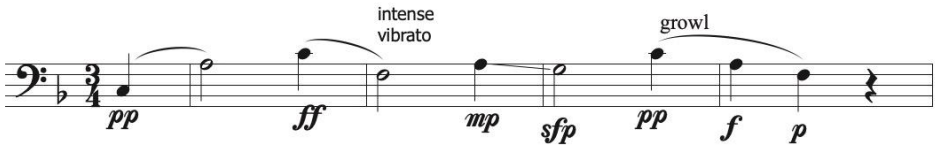


- A repeated note usually has greater emphasis on the 2nd or strong-beat note.

- A long note usually builds to moving notes.



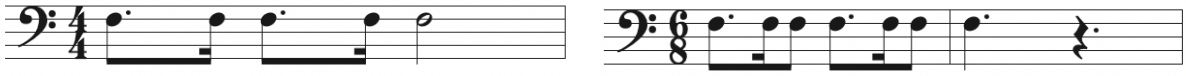
Of course, we can have variety that makes no sense…



That might be called insanity

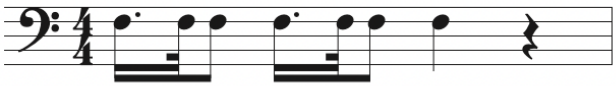
On Teaching and Playing: The Dotted 8th-16th Combo

Ah, so much gnashing of teeth over these seemingly simple rhythms!



Usually, these need to be played with strict accuracy. In the first example, the usual mistake is to use a one-size-fits-all 16th note that is too fast at slow tempos and too slow at fast tempos. Sorta like discount tube socks.

In the second example, a common mistake is to lose that sense of a triplet and end up playing this rhythm instead:



For the first example, the normal advice is to subdivide; something like this:

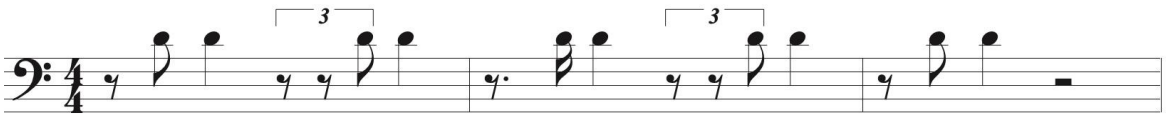
1-e-and-tah

There's nothing incorrect about this approach except that it does tend to cloud the brain with a bunch of subdivisions that may not ultimately be necessary.

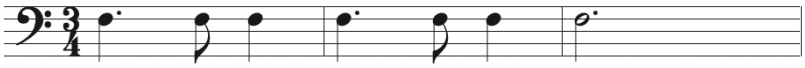
A fundamental musical skill (I think) is to develop a sense of subdivision just as we develop a sense of pitch.

1. Can you clap a steady beat?
2. Can you steadily say duplets (use "tah") while you clap?
3. Can you steadily say triplets while you clap?
4. Can you steadily say quadruplets while you clap?

Once you can do this at a variety of metronome speeds (usually slower is harder), try this little exercise:



For the second example, I have found speed to be the usual culprit. If you start with this rhythm…

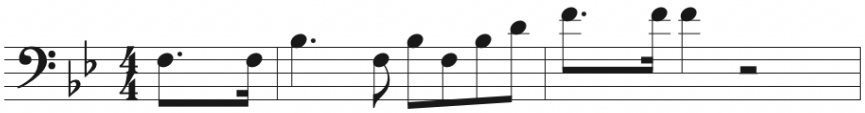


…you can just gradually speed it up and the triplet feel is more likely to stay in place. Maybe we should hand our students a copy of the Ride of the Valkyries written in 3/4 time to get them off to a good start!

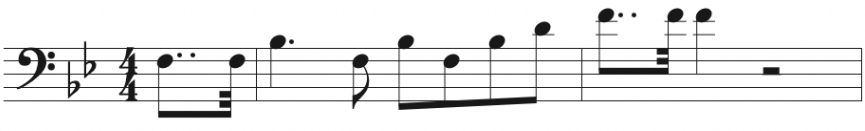
OK, so now we have some basic musical skills (that likely need refreshing!). But, it just isn't all that simple.

In many cases the dotted rhythm is not just a *mathematical* device but also an *expressive* device. What do I mean?

Suppose you're playing a rather dramatic solo at a somewhat slower tempo and you have this figure:



If you play with *mathematical* precision it will leave a little something to be desired. Many fine performers almost intuitively understand that, to bring out the best *expressive* intent, one would place the 16th note a bit late and play it a bit fast. Not quite this (but certainly moving in this direction):



Sometimes we refer to this as "double-dotting" (although it isn't exactly that, either). Many performers seem to have an intuitive understanding of the sound they want. Be careful if there's a piano part involved. Things do need to line up!

A Random Thought: Of Fairies, Fighter Jets and Dragons

Ahh, lip trills. So many high school trombonists get to something like the David Concertino and, wait what is that, a LIP TRILL???

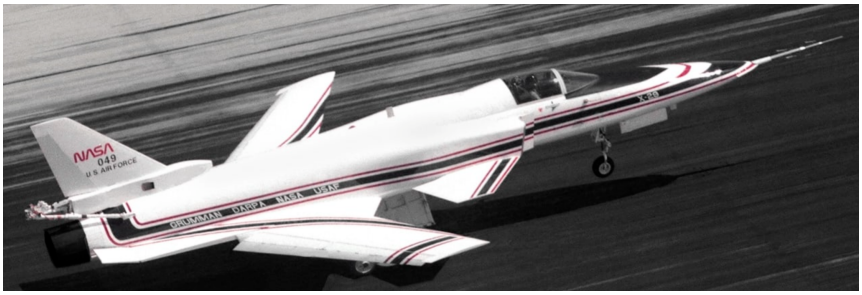
We've all heard flutists effortlessly execute these fast, tight trills and yearn to hear the same thing coming out of our own bells! But somehow, that trill just won't come out! We patiently do our lip slurs (doh-ee-oh-ee-oh) trying to go faster but tension creeps in and we just can't seem to fly.

Then one day, as if by miracle, you hear a trill come out of your bell. You're not quite sure how you did it but there it is for all the world to see (unless you're alone in a practice room!).

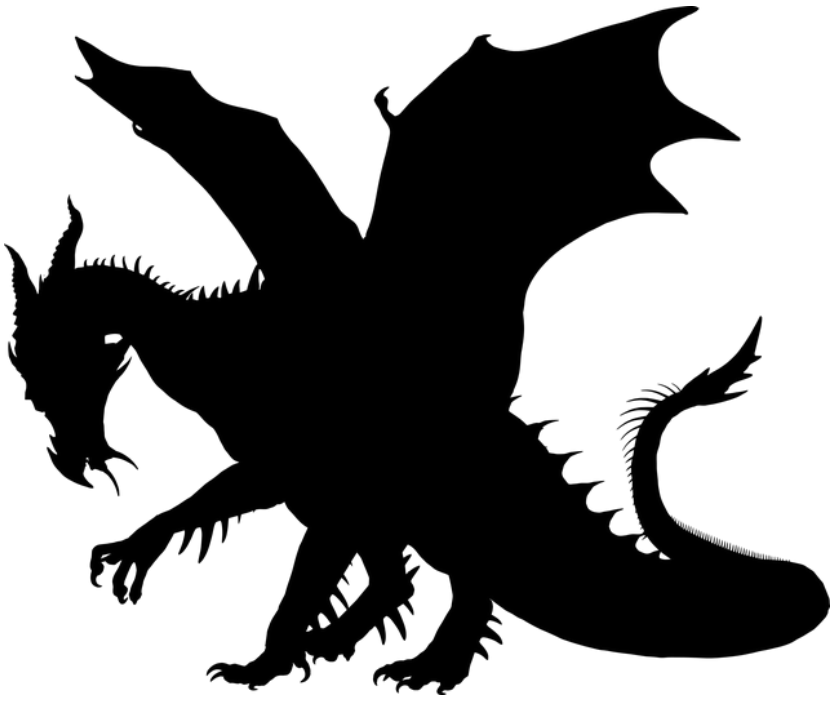
It's as if you were visited by the **"Trill Fairy"** and they sprinkled a little **trill dust** on your head. **Poof!** There's that trill that has eluded you for so long!

To me, what makes a trill magical is that it's moving quickly enough that I'm not thinking of individual notes anymore. It's sort of a "managed instability" in between two partials of the overtone series.

This (obviously) makes me think of the Grumman X-29.



This bizarre fighter jet had forward-swept wings making it stunningly unstable! In fact, an onboard computer had to Christian Gelzer, chief historian at the NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center, described it to CNN this way, “"It was unflyable -- literally -- without a digital flight computer on board, which made corrections to the flight path 40 times a second." OK, so why would you create such an unstable aircraft, one with a strong tendency to wobble? Well, if the plane is less stable, it can also change directions more quickly - this turns a bug into a feature. Gelzer goes on to say, “An F-18 fighter jet has an instability factor of only 5%. The X-29, on the other hand, was 35% unstable."

Oh yes, lip trills. If you want the trill fairy to visit you sooner, start working on them ***in the longer positions*** where your instrument is less acoustically stable and more likely to (wait for it) wobble!

Another glorious event in the life of a developing trombonist: the pedal note. Just as we are visited by the **“Trill Fairy”** we need some magical creature to visit us at the moment of our first pedal note. Hmm, somehow a fairy doesn’t seem quite right. I’m going to opt for the **“Pedal Dragon.”**