

TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards

Volume 2, No. 11. ~ November 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](#))

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Enjoy!

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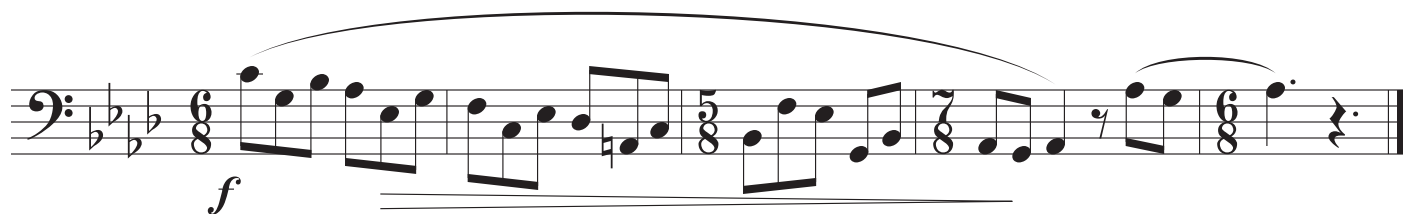
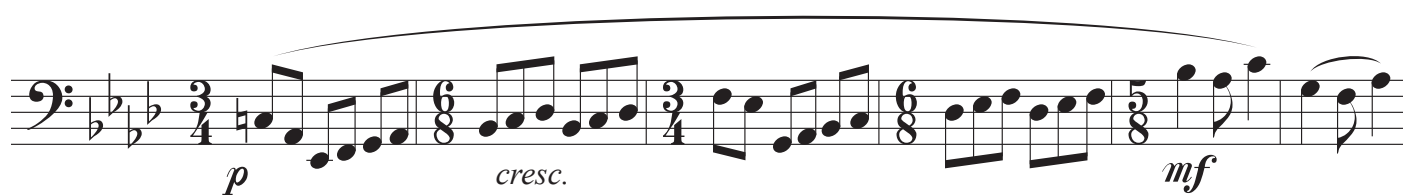
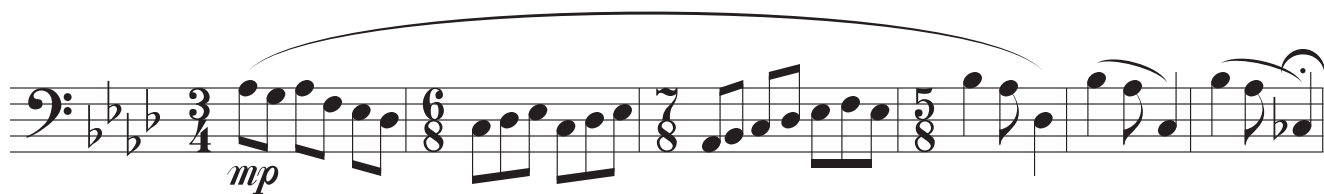
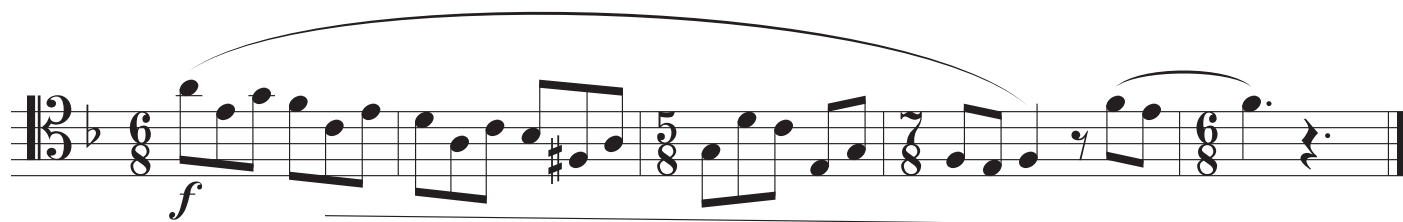
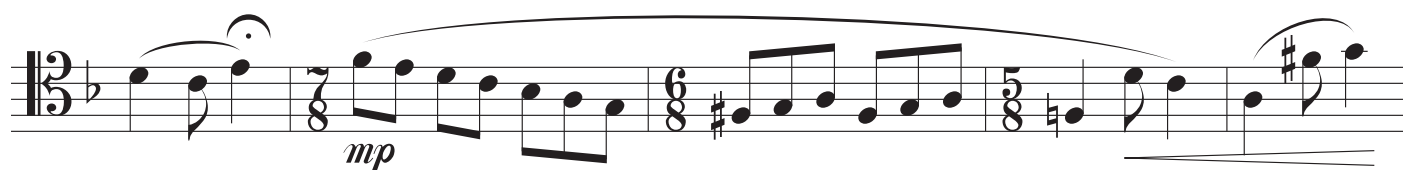
Websites:

[Trombone Zone](#)
[Hornbone Press](#)
[Free Audition Solos](#)
[ASU Bones](#)

A Pretty Good Melody

♩ = 126

The musical score for "A Pretty Good Melody" is written in bass clef and features a series of time signature changes: 3/4, 6/8, 7/8, and 5/8. The piece is divided into eight measures, each spanning a different time signature. The dynamics are marked as *mp* (measures 1, 3, 5, 7), *p* (measure 2), *cresc.* (measures 2, 4, 6), *mf* (measures 4, 8), and *f* (measures 6, 8). The melody is characterized by eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and includes various articulations such as slurs, ties, and accents. The key signature is B-flat major, indicated by two flats (B-flat and E-flat).



A Useful Lip Slur

Useful? Maybe. Easy? Hmm, not so much. This one might be too far up the ramp.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 52$

1
v

Technique / Rhythm Builders

Together, the two parts fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. The musical term for this might be *hocket*. This is similar to the duet from September.
(Hint: You might try thinking of that last measure in 3/4 time.)

Moving along (♩. = 88 or faster)



Moving along (♩. = 88 or faster)



Moving along (♩. = 88 or faster)



Moving along (♩. = 88 or faster)



*Free book sample:
Lip Slur Melody Duet*

In my book, *Lip Slur Melodies*, I composed a batch of duets in which both parts can be played using natural slurs on a trombone. It was a fun challenge working against the constraints of the requirement that every note connection be achievable through a natural slur.

In celebration of two things: (1) this book is now 10 years old, and (2) I have recently made it available for purchase through download, I thought I would throw in another duet. This comes roughly from the middle of a set of 33 such duets.

Enjoy!

Sempre dolce (slow 2)

9.13

Two staves of music in bass clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 6/8 time. The first staff begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and features a melodic line with slurs and a trill marked with a flat and a 4. The second staff continues the melodic development with slurs and rests.

To Coda Φ

Two staves of music. The first staff has a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes a double bar line. The second staff continues the melodic line with slurs and rests.

Two staves of music. The first staff includes a trill marked with a flat and a 4, and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The second staff continues the melodic line with slurs and rests.

Two staves of music. The first staff includes a forte (*f*) dynamic and a ritardando (*rit.*) marking. The second staff continues the melodic line with slurs and rests.

D.C. al Coda

Two staves of music. The first staff includes a piano (*p*) dynamic and a Coda symbol (Φ). The second staff continues the melodic line with slurs and rests.

Playing Tip: Consistency Part 1

**100%
QUALITY**

Man, this is such a huge topic! I don't even know where to start. I suspect I may fill the next few issues of TBZ Monthly Playing Tips just talking about this one thing. I'll start here: *slide placement and embouchure*.

On the next page is another small book sample from [Trombone Craft](#). I admit I don't go to this exercise very much. Still, done correctly, it can be quite useful.

If we play a note sharp or flat there can be two basic factors (honestly, there are more but I'll get into that in a future issue):

1. We are misplacing the slide.
2. The air/mouth is pushing the pitch sharp or flat (let's be honest, usually it's sharp)

So, you might try a bit of factor isolation:

1. Keep the mouth/air constant while you reset the slide.
 - a. Play a note, adjust as needed with the ear then tuner.
 - b. Keep the embouchure in place and move the slide around.
 - c. Return the slide to the (hopefully) same spot and play the note again. Check it.
 - d. Repeat several times on that note. (This can be useful for 5th position!)
2. Keep the slide constant while you reset your embouchure.
 - a. Play a note, adjust as needed with the ear then tuner.
 - b. Keep the slide in place while remove take the mouthpiece away from your lips and reset the embouchure from neutral.
 - c. Return the embouchure to the (hopefully) same spot and play the note again. Check it.

Tedious? It can be. However, you can adopt a meditative mind set to this practice. Effective? It can be very effective if done correctly. See the next page for an example.

Appendix 7: Tone and Tuning

App 7.2: Working with a Tuner

This collection of exercises is designed for a single player working with a tuner. When working with a tuner, remember some basic principles:

1. Listen first, then look.

Your ear is the real tuner. Use the little device to calibrate your ear.

2. Project a confident tone.

Don't develop "tuner tone": a weak, uncentered sound that often arises from staring at a tuner and second-guessing the note before it has had a chance to center.

3. Develop Inner Hearing

Before playing a note, hear it in your head. When you play the note, compare it with the note heard in your mind. Adjust accordingly.

These exercises use many fermatas. Over some fermatas, you will see the words, "look" or "listen." "Look" notes are reference pitches. Look at the tuner to make sure you are starting off well. "Listen" notes are meant for you to hear in relation to the preceding reference pitch. For "listen" notes: first, make needed pitch corrections without looking at a tuner. After a moment, glance at the tuner to confirm what you hear.

Between notes, you can either (1) minimize movement (both embouchure and slide) or (2) add movement (re-setting embouchure and/or slide). Both have value.

Building Consistency

This exercise uses the fourth partial but can be applied to any partial or group of notes.

a.

The exercise consists of seven staves of music, each in bass clef and 4/4 time. Each staff contains three measures. The first measure of each staff has a fermata with the word "look" above it. The second measure has a fermata with the word "listen" above it. The third measure has a fermata with the word "listen" above it. The notes are: Staff 1: B1, B1, B1; Staff 2: B1, B1, B1; Staff 3: B1, B1, B1; Staff 4: B1, B1, B1; Staff 5: B1, B1, B1; Staff 6: B1, B1, B1; Staff 7: B1, B1, B1.

On Teaching and Playing: Build a Ramp

Consider this statement:

As our students improve, we give them harder things to play.

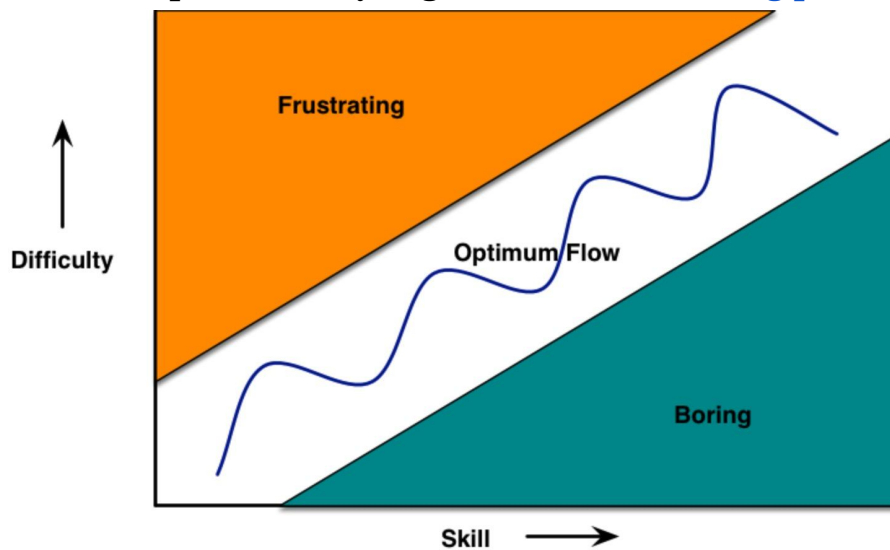
Obvious, right? But I think there's a lot of subtlety to be found there. It's human nature to find satisfaction in tackling harder and harder tasks. This is a fundamental principle behind the design of most video games. You start on a lower level, conquer it and tackle greater challenges on the next level. There is an implicit satisfaction in this for most people.

This leads to the notion of a “sweet spot” in learning:

Attempt something too easy = Boredom

Attempt something too difficult = Frustration

This chart sums it up beautifully! I grabbed it from a [blog post](#) by Clark Quinn.



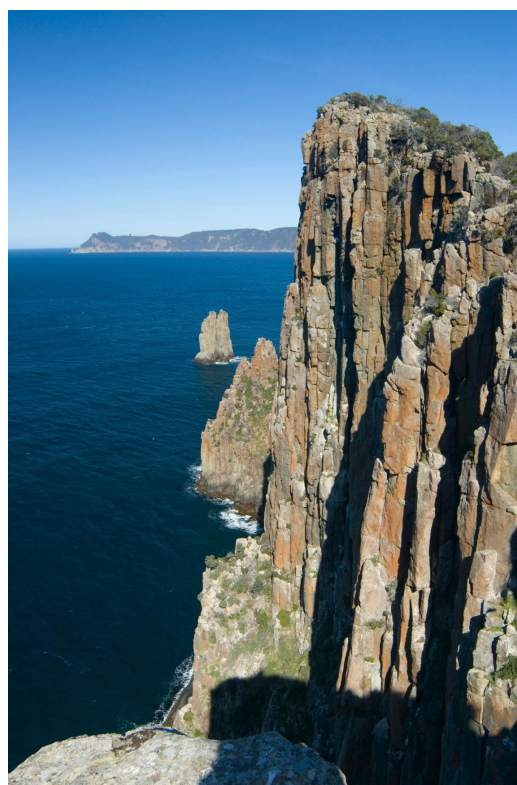
Notice that he uses the phrase “Optimum Flow” which may remind you of the brilliant book by the Hungarian-American psychologist, [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#). His book, [Flow](#) is a great read! Sometimes people refer to this sweet spot as being “in the zone.”

As teachers, our job is to assign our students material that keeps them in the zone, that sweet spot of learning. All too often, perhaps out of ignorance of the repertoire, band directors assign students a solo that is WAY above their ability level (I'm looking at you, Grøndahl Concerto for most high school students). Students show up to audition for college and, in their struggles to learn a piece that is too hard, have ingrained bad habits that will sometimes require years of rebuilding.

I also get frustrated with some étude books in which the “difficulty ramp” is too steep or is inconsistent. Why have I written so many books? One answer: frustration. I couldn't find materials that presented the right difficulty ramp.

Well-meaning teachers send their students off to the Rochut Book (Bordogni vocalises). The very first piece (Carl Fischer edition) uses grace notes and ascends to A4. If a younger player isn't ready for that, the étude will look more like a cliff than a ramp!

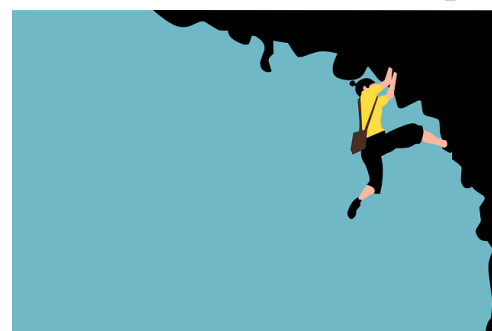
Side note: Bordogni [didn't actually compose this first one.](#)



As I write material for students - études and solos - that has been a guiding principle: **build a ramp**. In my latest book, *The Melodious Trombone*, I gave myself the goal of not going too high too early. Likewise, grace notes don't show up at first. I even used a spreadsheet to keep track of the book's design. Here's a partial screenshot (warning, this spreadsheet might not be totally up-to-date with late changes in the book).

Numbers	Keys	Upper	Details
01-02	Bb - g	Eb4	4/4 mostly stepwise
03-04	Bb - g	Eb4	3/4 waltz style
05-06	F - d	F4	6/8 quick
07-08	Eb-c	F4	4/4 medium with some 16ths
09-10	C - a	F4	4/4 largo and moderato (minor has sustains)
11-12	G - e	F4	2/4 with 16ths
13-14	F - d	F4	3/4 quick
15-16	Bb-g	F4	Common slow
17-18	C - a	F4	6/8 quick
19-20	Ab - f	F4	4/4 syncope
22-22	G - e	G4	2/4 16th's with 8th note pulse
23-24	D - b	G4	3/4 dotted; more leaps and 7th chords
25-26	Eb - c	G4	7/8 & 5/8
27-28	Bb - g	G4	6/8 with 16ths
29-30	F - d	G4	6/8 quick with some syncopes incl. quarter note triplets
31-32	C - a	A4	4/4 dotted and triplets
33-34	G - e	Bb4	6/8 with 16ths
35-36	Ab - f	Bb4	2/4 16th's with 8th note pulse (F minor breaks off into quick 6/8)
37-38	Bb - g	Bb4	4/4 with 5/8 section, mostly slow, uses quintuplets
39-40	D - b	A4	4/4 16th notes runs with syncopes
41-42	A - f#	A4	6/8 quick with some syncopes
43-44	Dh - bb	Bb4	3/4 quick

Yes, there's always that counter-argument: limited challenges produce limited players. And, yes, you will always find that young, highly-motivated student who just finds a way to get it done. They are the *cliff-climbers* who don't need no stinkin' ramp.



But for most students, a ramp isn't a bad idea.

A Random Thought: Singing the Praises of Boredom!

“I’m bored!”

That’s not something you hear much anymore. Since the advent of smartphones and portable video games, every nook and cranny of your time can be filled with some kind of stimulation.

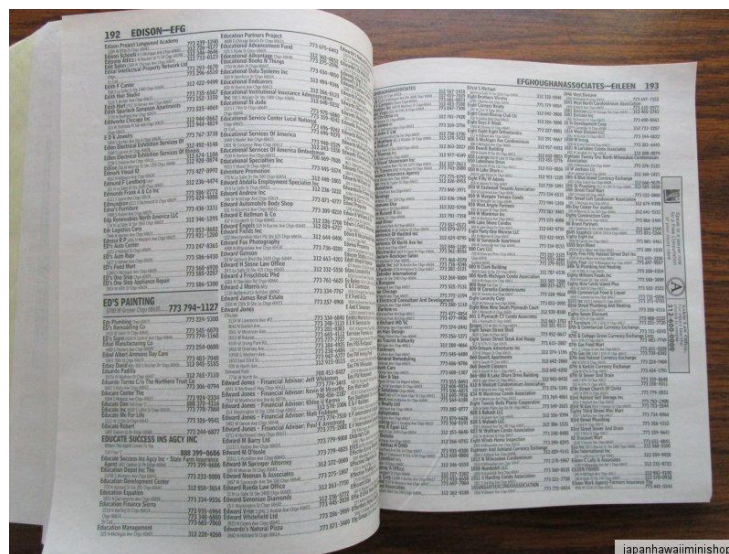
If there’s nothing going on, so many of us feel that irresistible urge to reach for the phone. The big winner of late is TikTok, whose algorithm so perfectly predicts what we like to look at. This app is projected to [reach 2 billion users](#) by the end of 2024.

No down time. Constantly filling up the brain with short entertaining videos. In *Psychology Today*, Jeffrey Davis writes, “If we want to achieve focus as well as consistent creative insight, we need to work on something counter-intuitive: our ability to be bored.”

At first, boredom may be painful. Try sitting quietly for 10 minutes. You don’t need to meditate. You can allow your mind to wander. Let it follow its own pathways.

Some of my best creative ideas pop into my head when I’m doing something else. Often when I am driving. However, I’m often just as guilty as others. Crossword puzzles, podcasts, little brain teasers on my phone. If I expended all my energy on those things, I don’t think ideas for books or compositions would have had a chance to compete.

The author Neil Gaiman wrote, ““You have to let yourself get so bored that your mind has nothing better to do than tell itself a story.”



In one [2013 study](#) by Dr Sandi Mann and Rebekah Cadman:

“...people were asked to carry out a boring task (copying numbers out of a telephone directory) for 15 minutes, and were then asked to complete another task (coming up with different uses for a pair of polystyrene cups) that gave them a chance to display their creativity.

It turned out that the 40 people who had first copied out the telephone numbers were more creative than a control group of 40 who had just been asked to come up with uses for the cups

The brain craves stimulation. Try providing it yourself. You may be surprised with what you find!

