TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards
Volume 4, No. 7. ~ July 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)

In this issue:

Enjoy!

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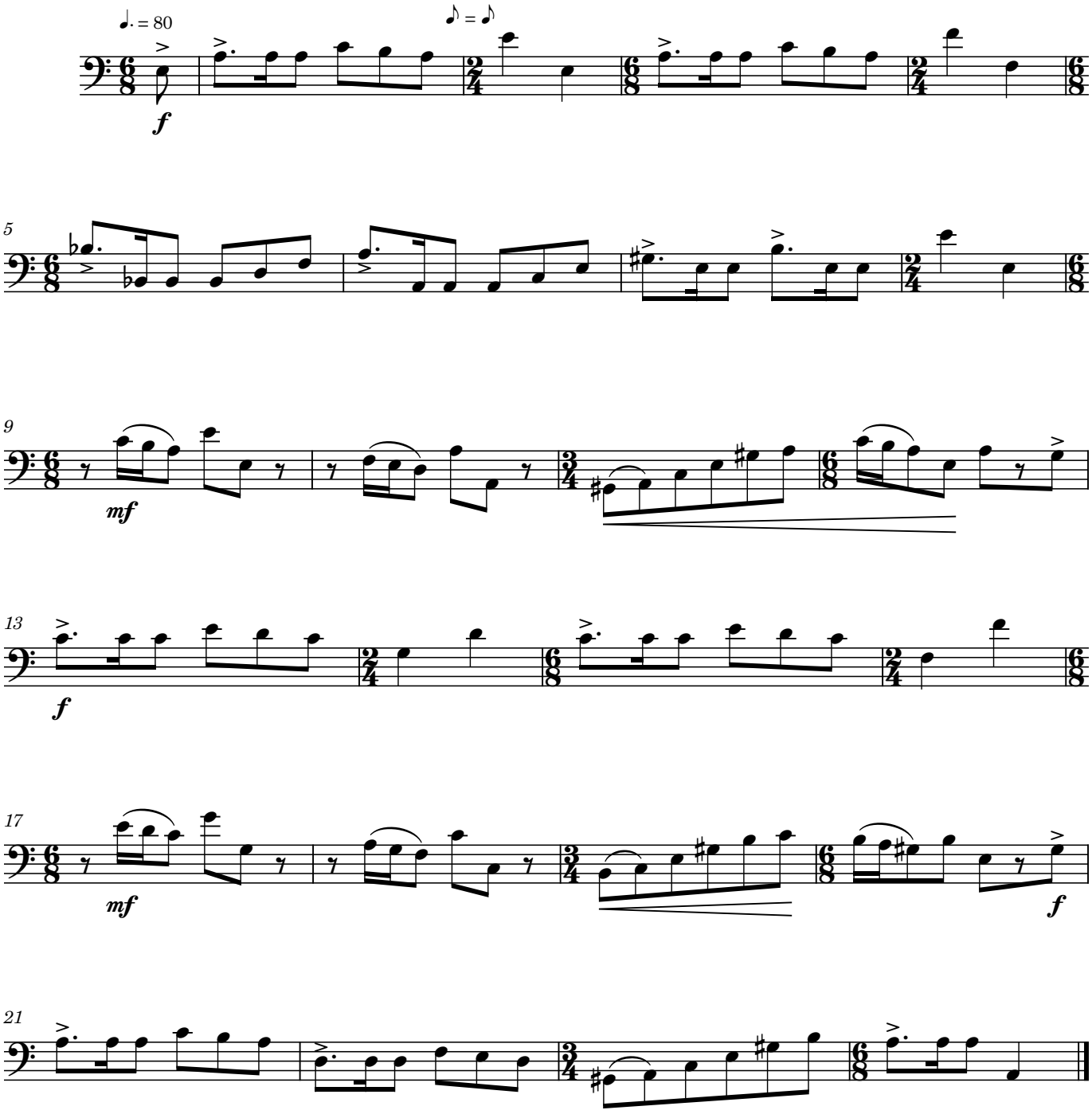
School of Music Dance and Theater
Websites:
Trombone Zone
Hornbone Press
Free Audition Solos
ASU Bones

TBZ MONTHLY

July 2025

A Pretty Good Melody



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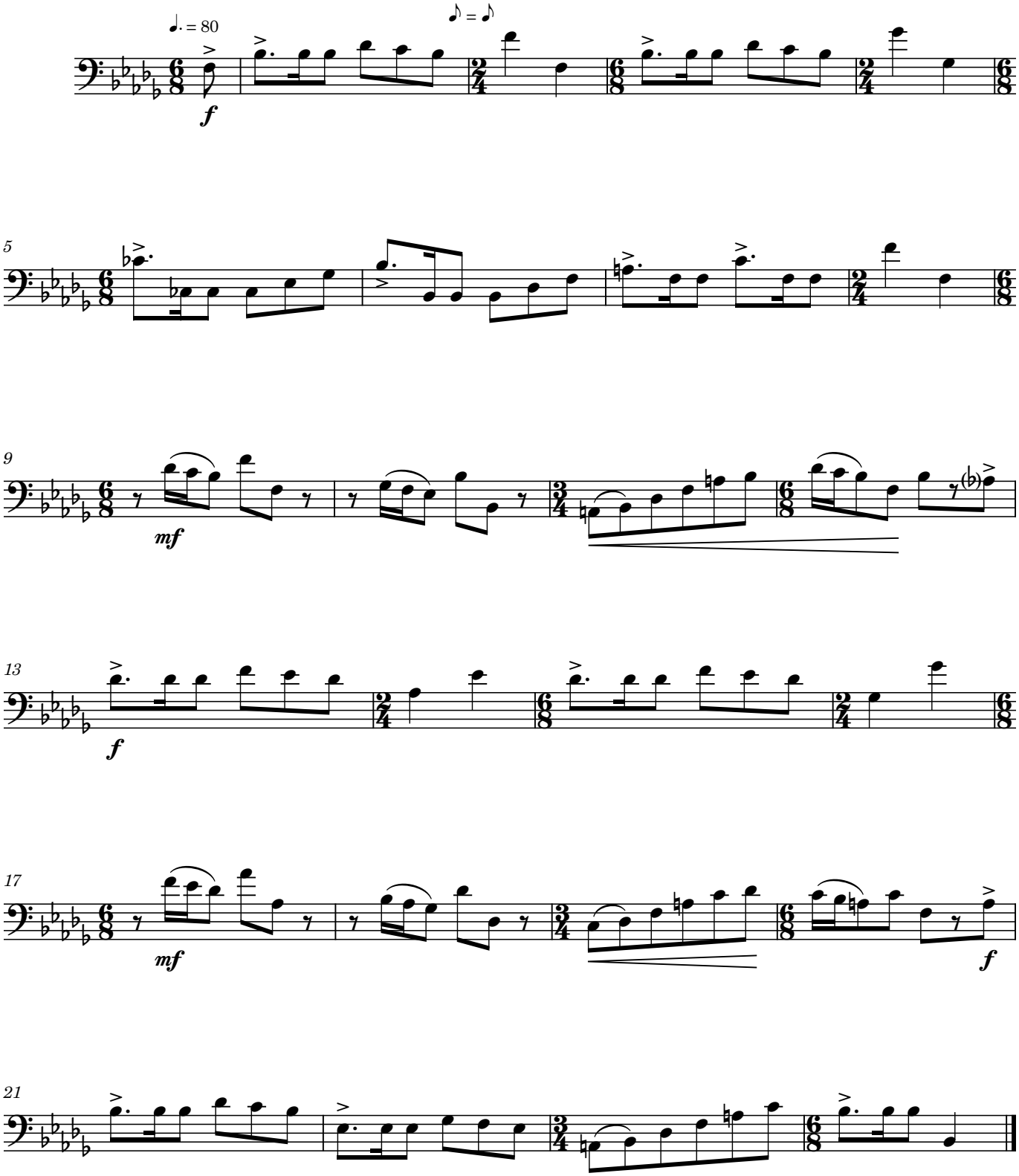

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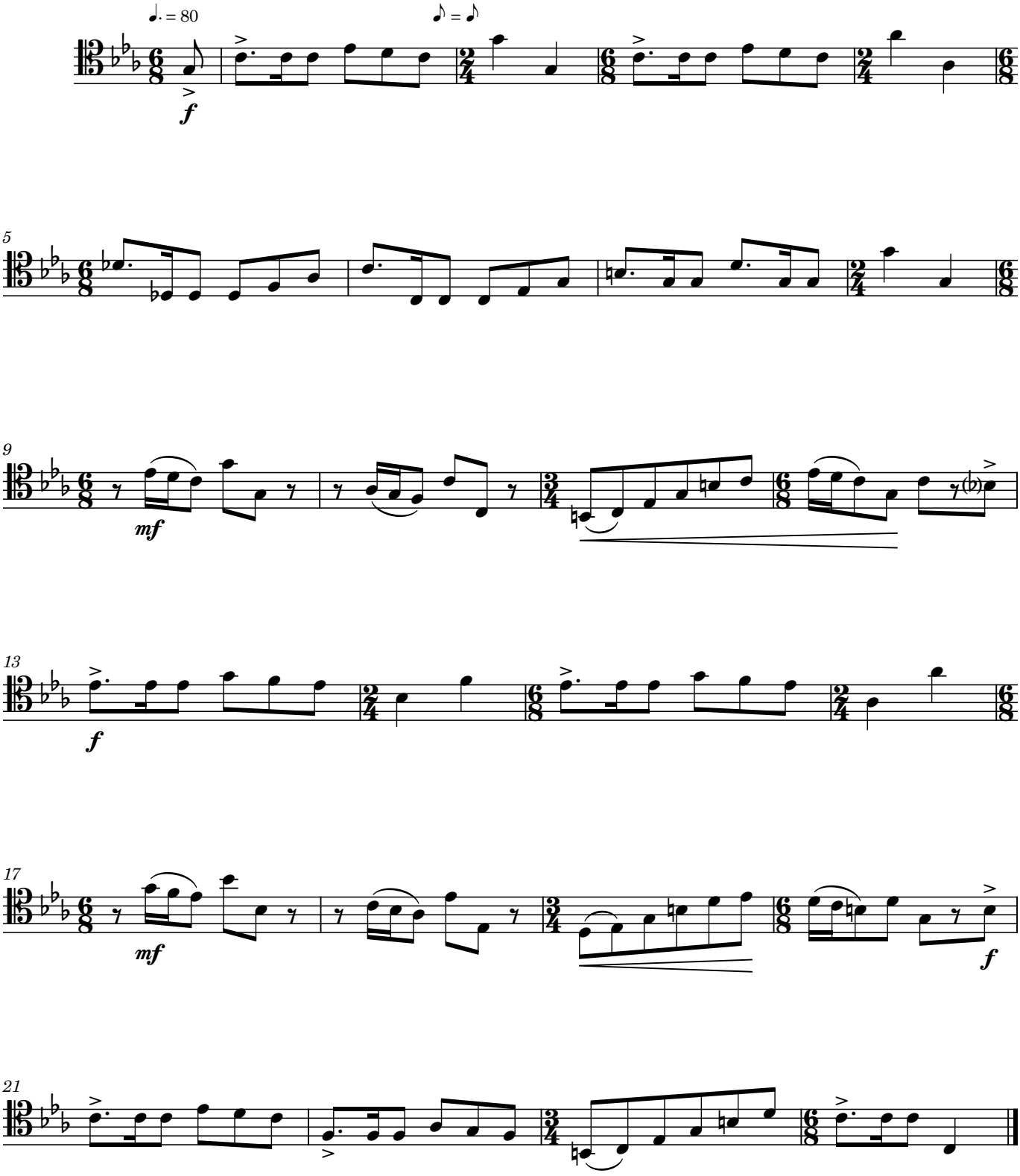

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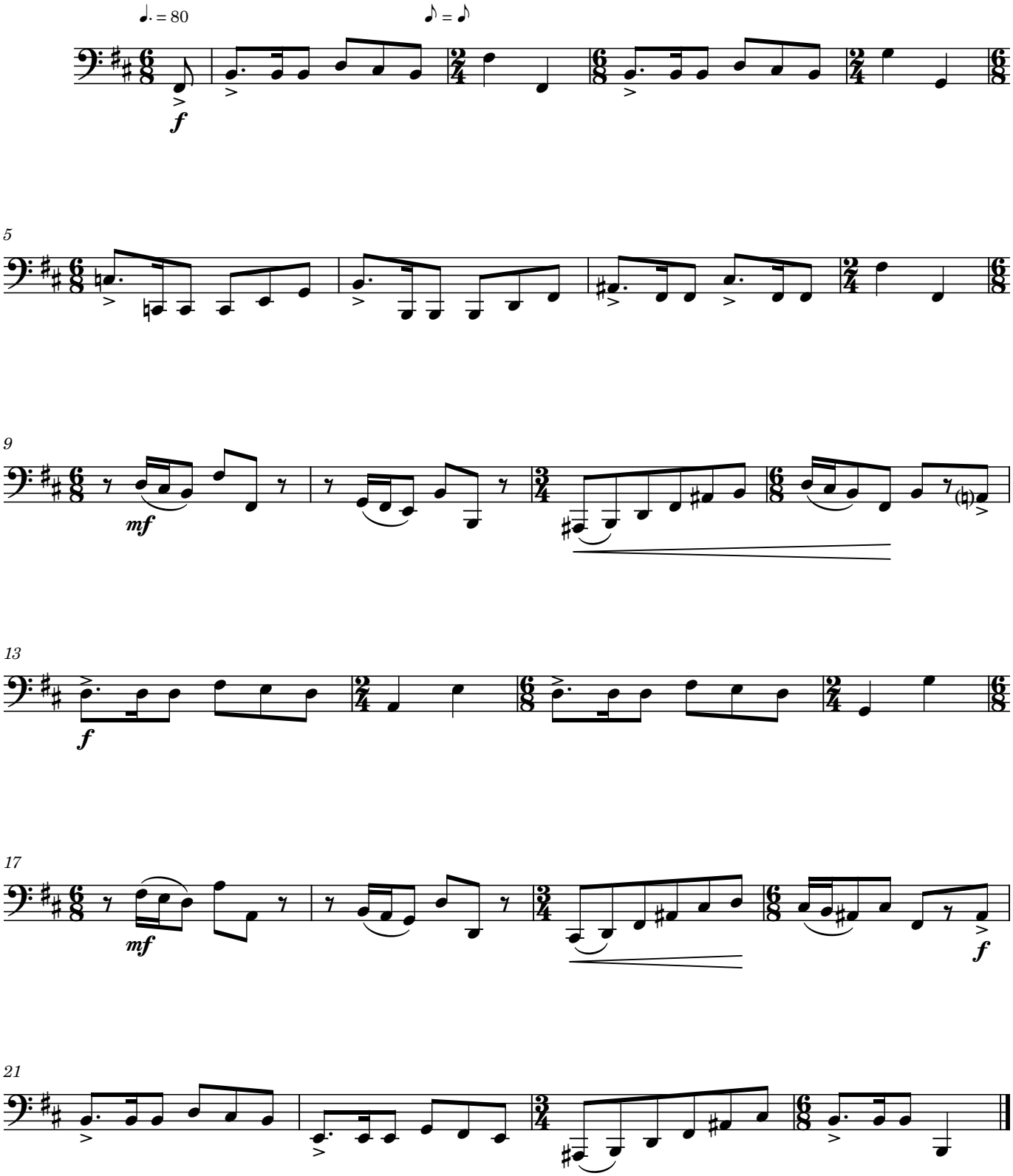


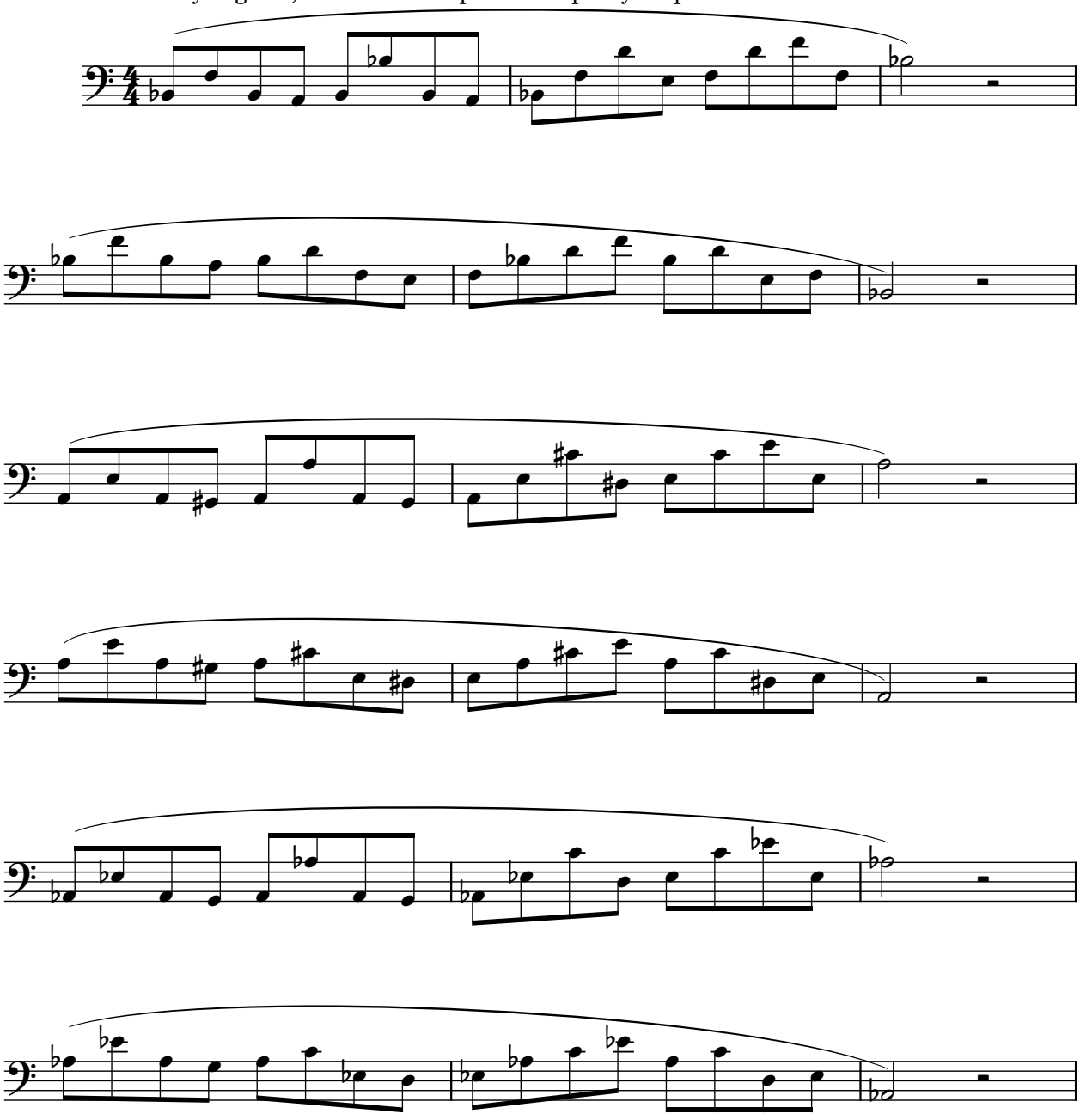
July 2025

A Useful Lip Slur

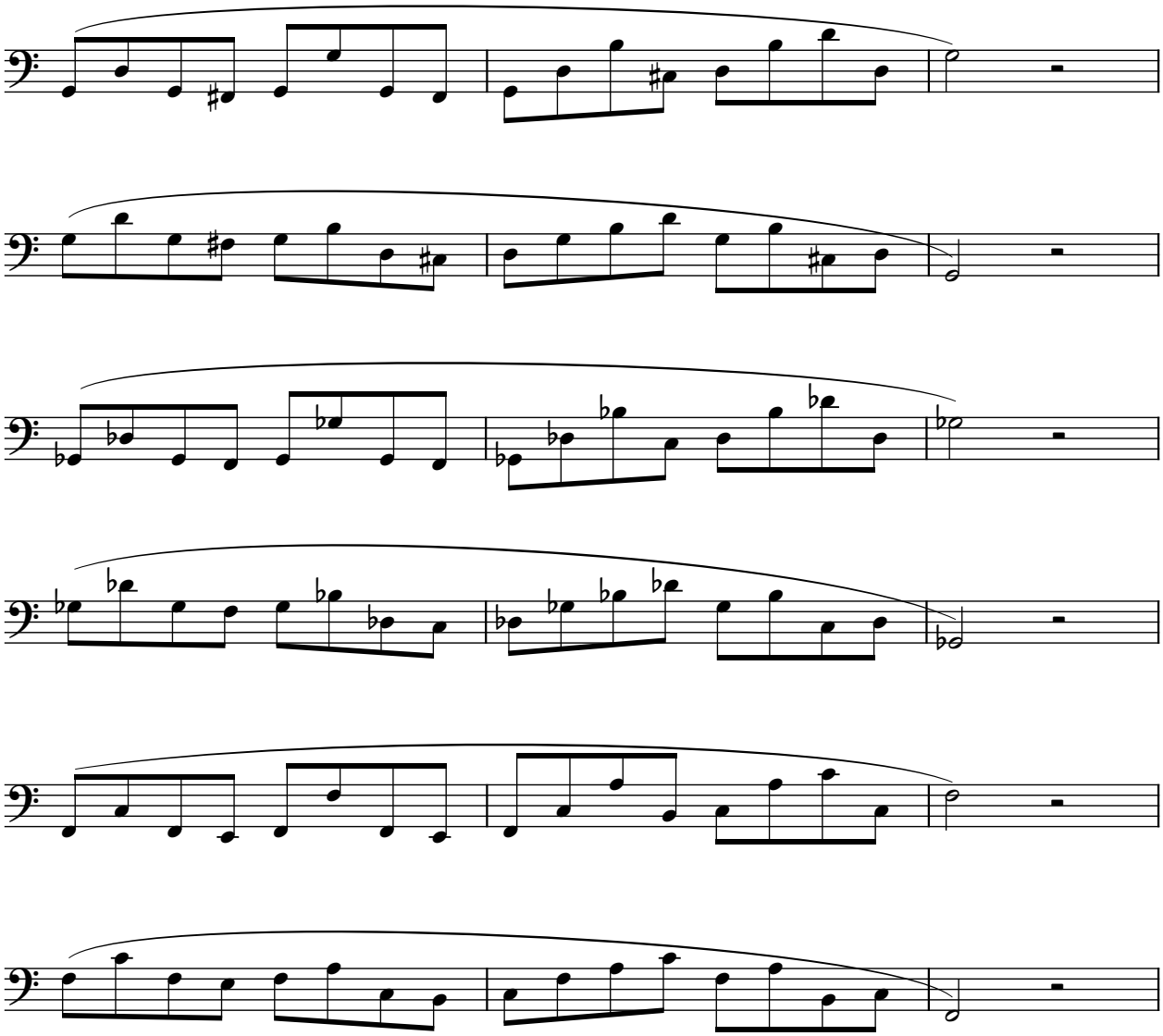
Wider Leaps with Neighbor Tones

It's always useful to work on wider leaps. This starts out close to the overtone series but then extends down.

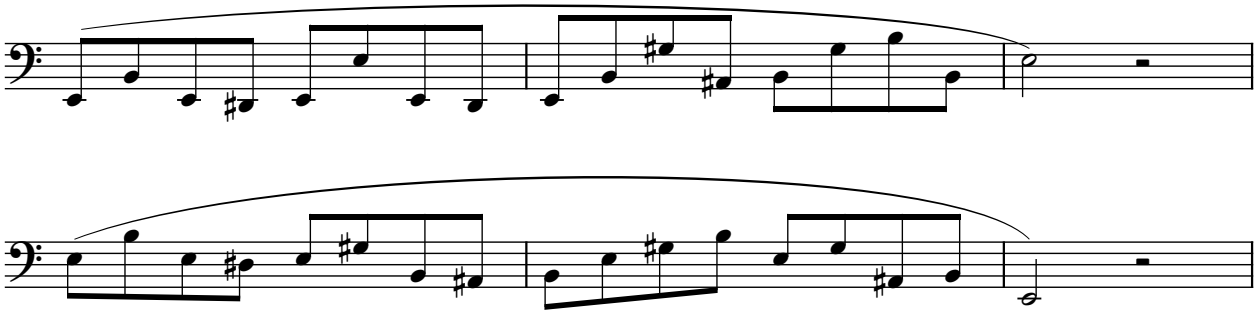
As you go on, this one will require some pretty deep breaths!



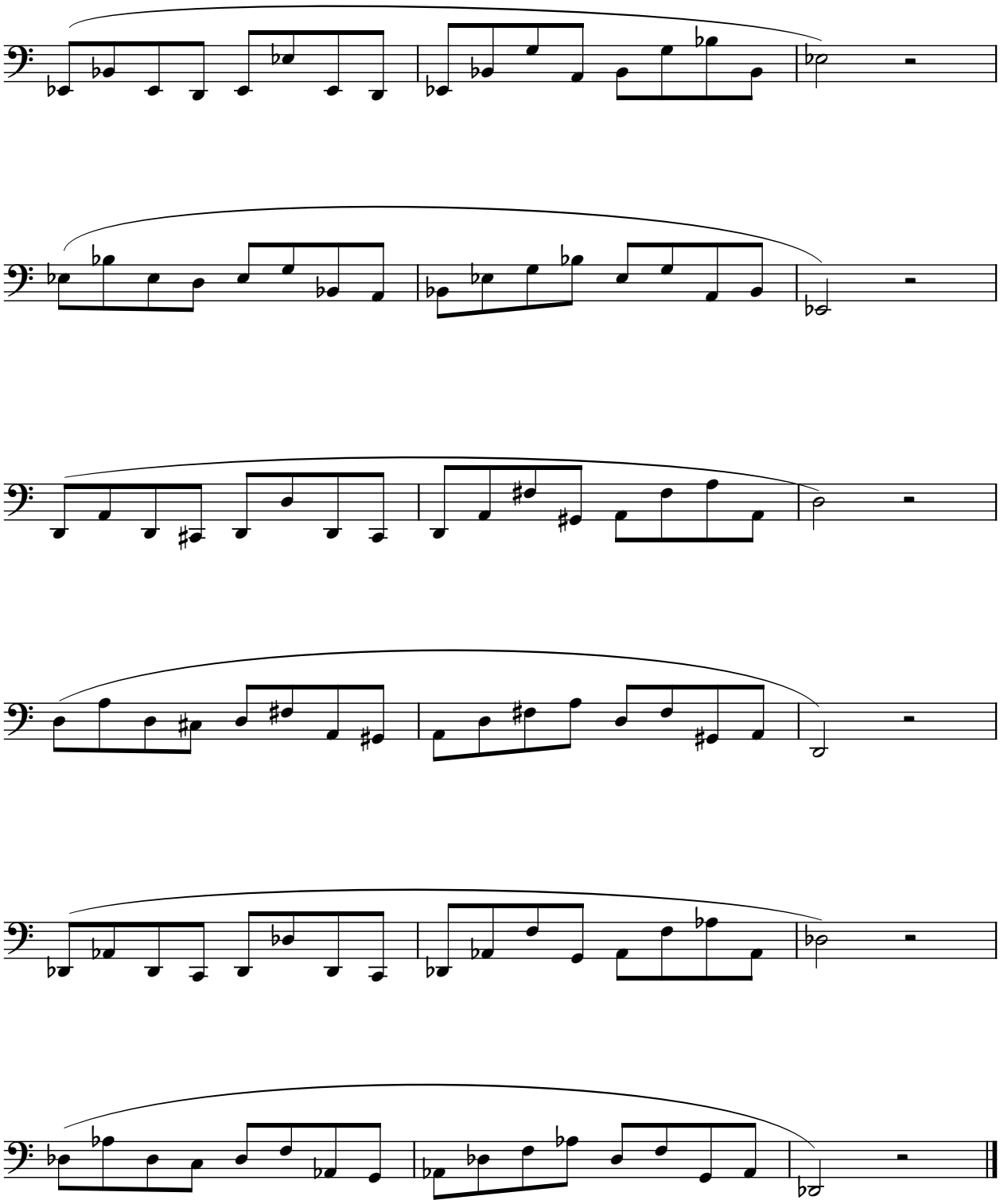
Wider Leaps with Neighbor Tones



At this point you have a choice: play everything in the valve or change more slide positions.

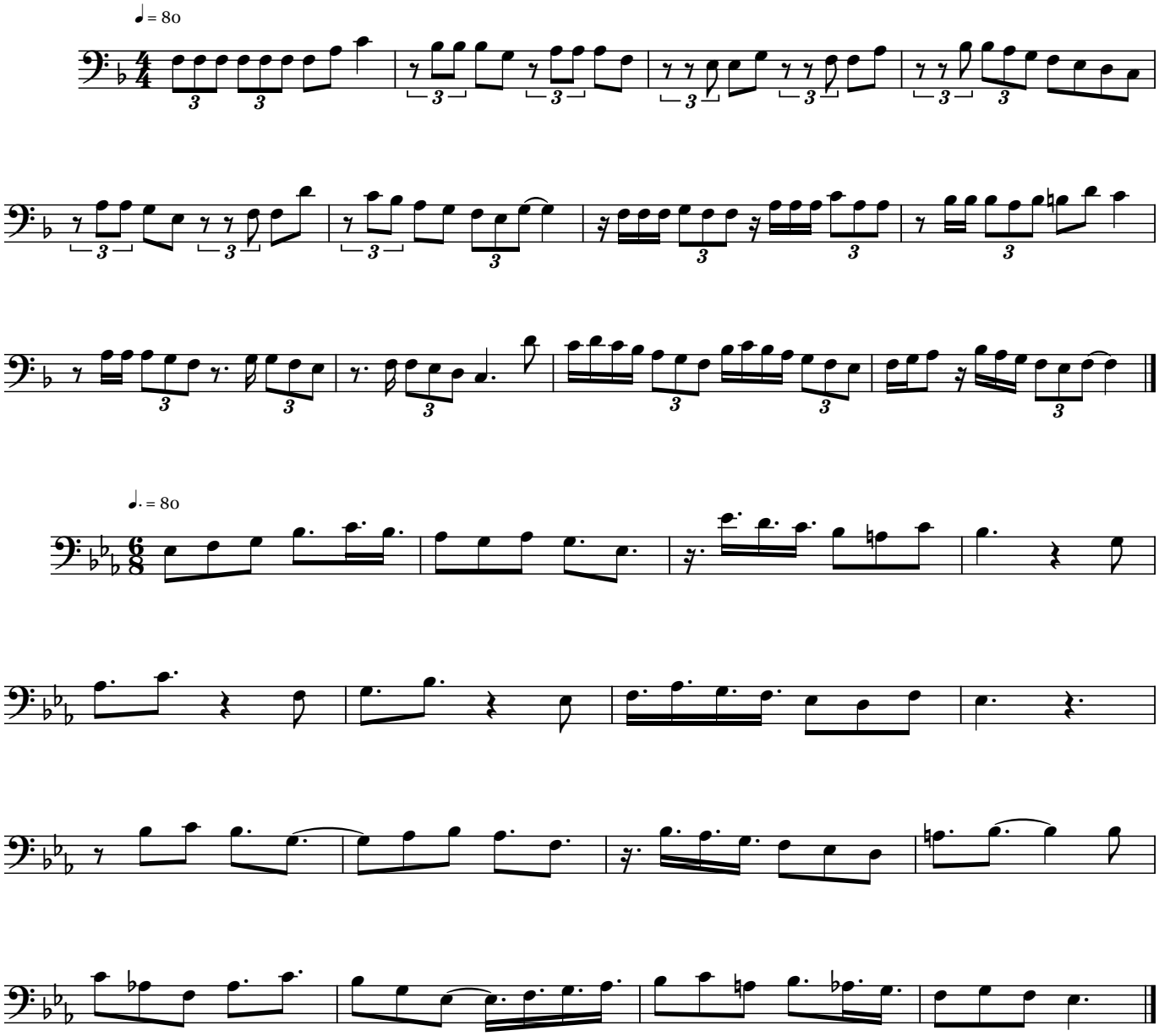


Wider Leaps with Neighbor Tones



Technique/Rhythm Builder: Down-shifting Subdivisions

Many people struggle to go from faster subdivisions to slower.



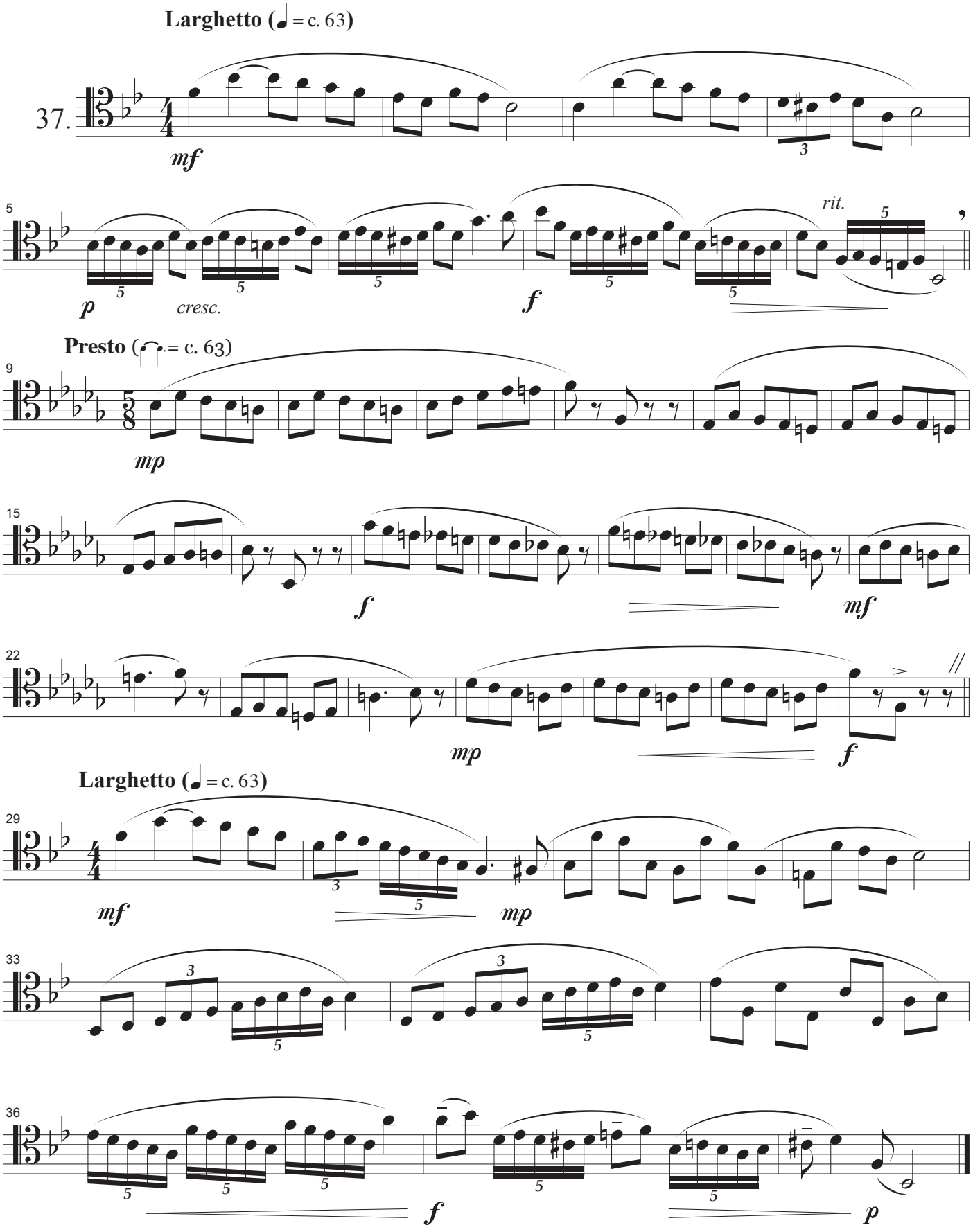
Free book sample: The Melodious Trombone #37 Larghetto - Presto

Recently I finished editing The Melodious Horn, which is simply an adaptation of the trombone book. When I say “adaptation” I mean it. Quite a few melodies were tweaked to work well on the horn. It’s also my last book to be written using the Finale software. From now on, it’s Dorico for me, I think. It was a pain to learn and I still have a ways to go but for the most part, it’s a much better program.

To celebrate the new book and the end of an era, I figured I would share three versions of this etude: tenor trombone, bass trombone, *and* horn in F. Hey, why not.

Notice that, if you use the tempo markings exactly, the quintuplets in the *Larghetto* section should equal the 8th notes in the *Presto* section.

Enjoy!


Larghetto (♩ = c. 63)
37.
mf
5
p
cresc.
f
rit.
Presto (𝅗𝅥. = c. 63)
9
mp
15
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22
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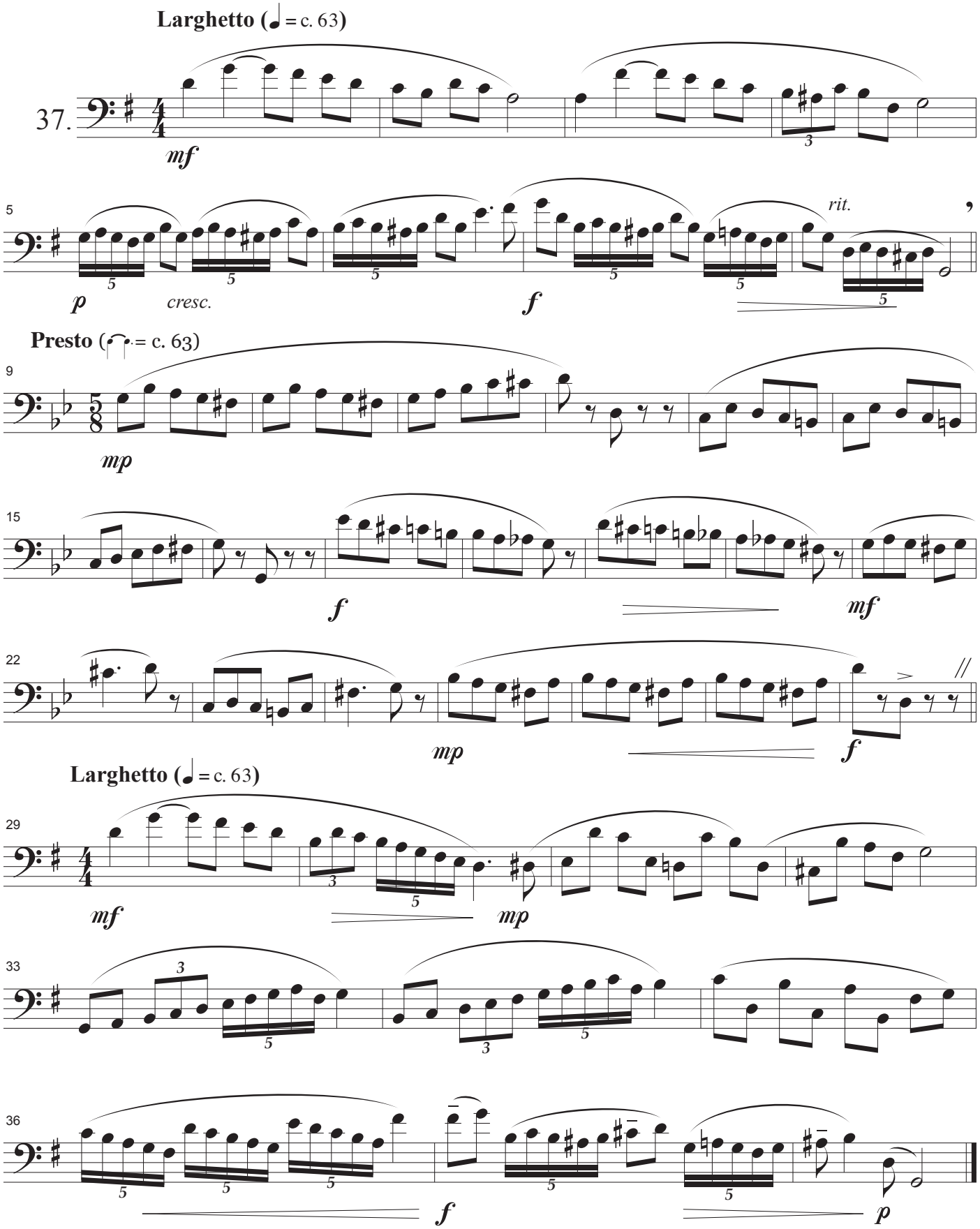
Larghetto (♩ = c. 63)
29
mf
mp
33
36
f
p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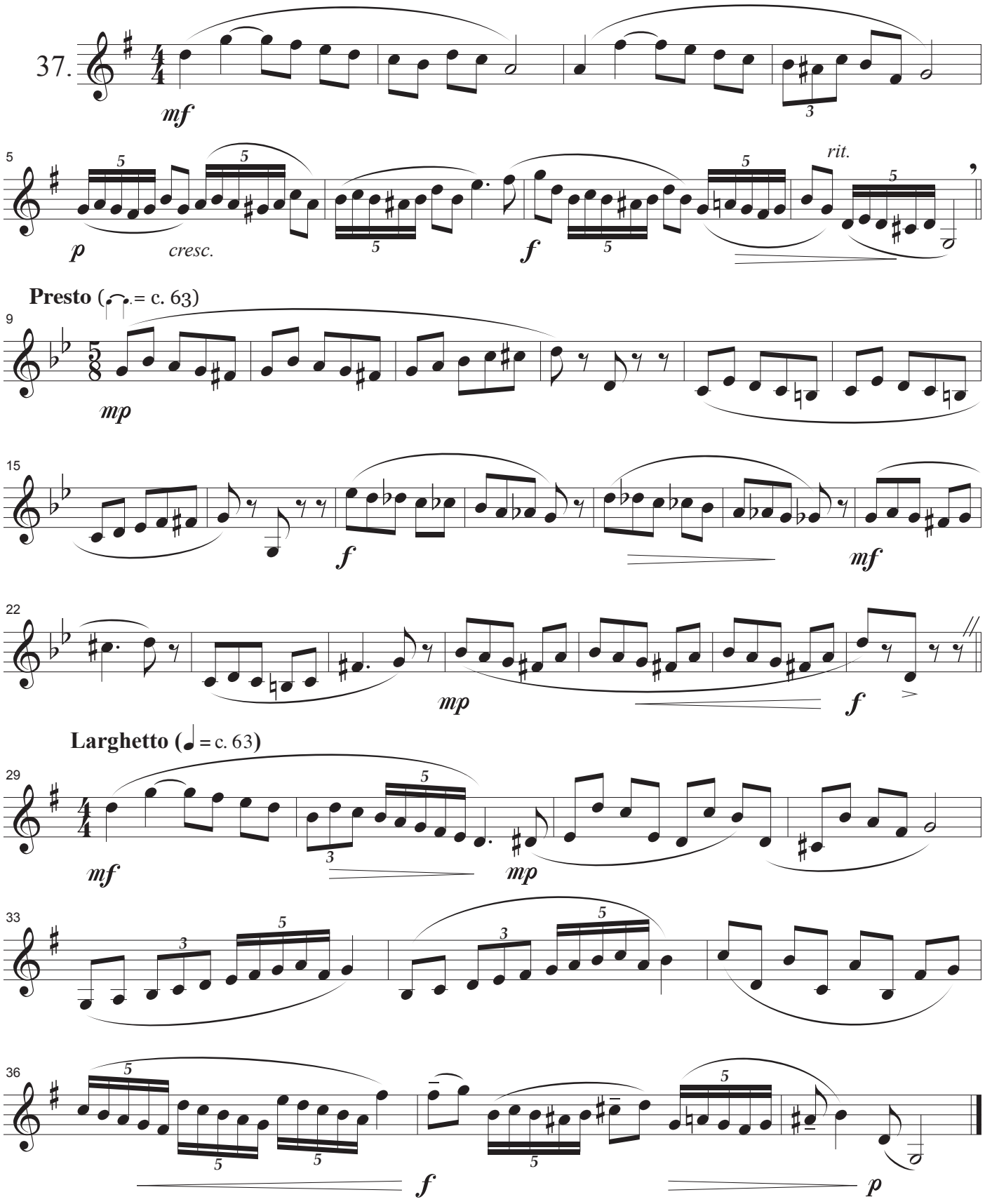
Larghetto (♩ = c. 63)

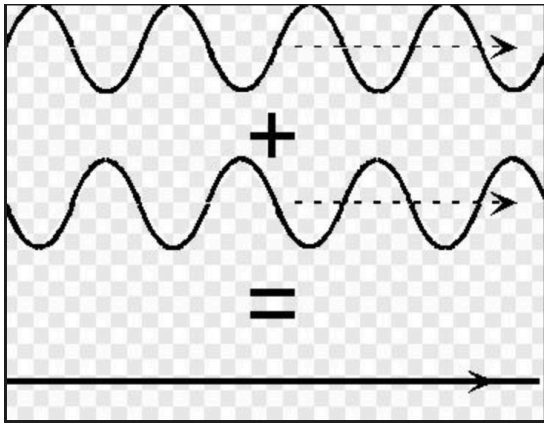


*Playing Tip: In Tune *is* Louder*

Years ago, I was renting a house in College Park, Maryland. My wife and I would go for walks through the neighborhood and we encountered a dog who was eagerly barking at us. Nothing unusual there.

Here's the weird thing: we could barely hear him bark. It turns out I think he was wearing a collar which used active noise suppression. In other words, a microphone picked up the sound of the bark and played it back slightly out of phase.

A sound wave is a sequence of compressions and rarefactions of the air molecules. If you produce, identical sound wave *exactly* out of phase, the two should cancel each other out. Like this:

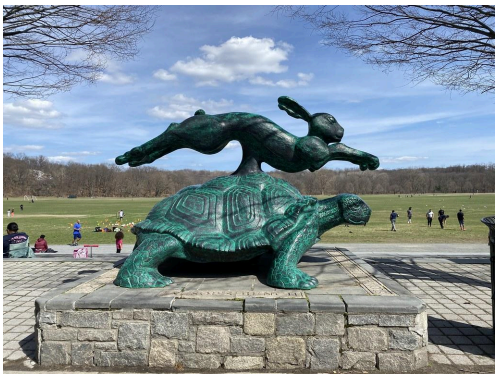


This, I think, is how noise-canceling headphones work. So if you have two players out of tune, you hear *beats*, the pulsing sensation as the waves go into and out of phase. When they are out of phase, they partially cancel each other out. So, two people out of tune may sound more annoying but they should also sound less loud since they are partially canceling each other out. Even on different notes, this effect should work.

Here's the good news: the opposite can happen. If the second wave is in sync with the first, they amplify each other. So, if that chord is in tune, the laws of acoustics mean that the sound waves will reinforce each other producing a larger amplitude - louder.

When the big moment arrives, it's easy to get excited to try to be the "decibel hero." However, if your loud-playing efforts push things out of tune, the effect for the audience will be less sound (and more discomfort). In tune is louder (and better!)

On Teaching and Playing: Slow Practice?



An oft-repeated maxim is, “Slow practice yields fast progress. Fast practice yields slow progress.” Music teachers were repeating this wisdom before I was born and maybe before my grandfather was born.

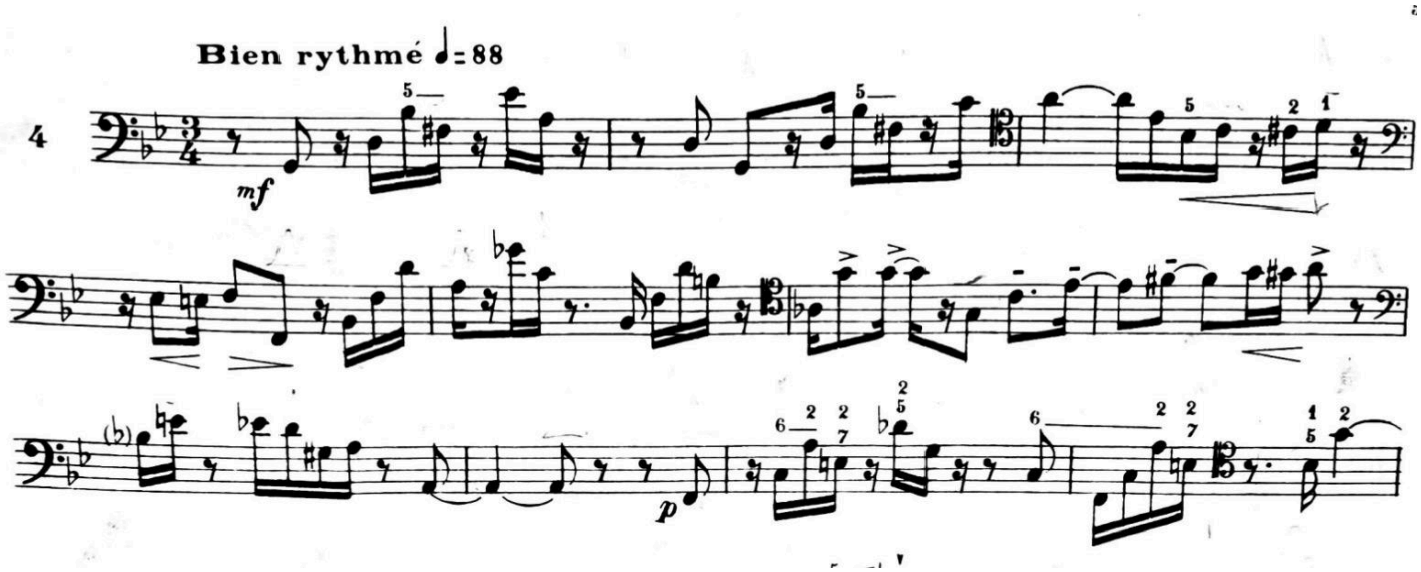
However, if you look you can find dissenting voices. One of the arguments of dissent is that the fundamentals are different at slow tempos. So, in essence, your slow practice is employing a different technique that will be useful at full tempo. Here’s an interesting Instagram video from the oboist, Alex Klein in which he discusses this. To adapt his brain to performance speed, he plays small chunks at full speed.

Interestingly, Jason Sulliman released a YouTube video about this approach. He observes that slow practice allows, “all this extra neurological connection that happens between events.(because those events are more separated in time)” He posits that the fast passage actually requires the formation of new neurological pathways.

In the world of violin pedagogy, this seems to be a common concept. Here’s a video which advocates pausing for “think spots” between measures. In this particular video, I would prefer that she play into the following downbeat, overlapping one chunk with another. In the video she says, “At some point in practicing when you’re trying to get a passage up to speed, slow practice only goes so far.”

This idea of chunks is also nicely demonstrated by Alex Klein in which he sings to demonstrate linking small bits together. Jason Sulliman demonstrates how he practices adding one note at a time to a fast lick (here’s a direct link for that).

All three of these excellent examples seem to deal primarily with training motor skills for rapid execution. So, does slow practice have any value? I would argue that it does in terms of ***accurate perception***. What do I mean? Let's say you have a complex lick in terms of awkward intervals or complex rhythms. Take, for example, this Bitsch étude (#4 from his 15 Rhythmic Studies).



In a case like this, it isn't simply a matter of executing a sequence quickly. It's also a matter of understanding the rhythms and being able to hear the intervals. I still contend that slow practice shines in a situation like this!

Now, if I were going to put this on stage (I wouldn't, by the way!), ultimately I would want to use that "fast chunk" approach but only after the *sound* of the music was clear in my mind.

So:

In developing your sound concept, practice slowly.
In developing rapid execution, use fast chunks.

Both have their place in our practice sessions.

The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy

The Foundation from

Good Vibrations - Masterclasses for Brass Players

Randy Gardner

From the beginning of this wonderful book, Randy presents an interesting concept:

Listen proactively and reactively simultaneously.

Proactive listening is your guidance system. Direct your performance proactively with guidance from a clear sound image in your mind that you intend to bring to life. Reactive listening is the process of objectively and accurately observing what is actually coming out of your bell, and then making adjustments to align that music with your ideal performance eg., adjusting intonation. Listen deeply on both levels for phrasing nuances, articulation styles, note lengths, note shapes, ensemble details, fine pitch discrimination, etc. Be a virtuoso listener!

Gardner, Randy. Good Vibrations, self-published, 2016. p. 3

As performers, we must always be looking ahead to the next thing and envisioning the result we want. However, we can't just ignore what we've just heard. It's a tricky balancing act.

In an ensemble, you have a big phrase in two parts. You're approaching the second part. In your mind you hear how you want it to sound. However, as you were playing the first part, you may have noticed some details that were askew. For example:

- the principal trumpet was playing notes a bit shorter than you
- the conductor seemed to be conducting ahead a bit to move you along
- you're in octaves with the horns

All these details must be heard, assimilated and reacted to in real time. Frustrating? Sometimes, but also this is what makes live performance so interesting.

Years ago, there I heard one of the first iterations of a "national brass ensemble" made up of star symphony players from around the country. In addition to their performance, we had an opportunity to attend master classes and even group warm-up sessions. I still remember these elite performers talking about how, as they played, they were hearing and resolving little issues right in the moment. Each of them arrived with a strong sound concept but those concepts were not identical. It was a tribute to their professionalism that they were able to adjust so quickly that, from the audience's perspective, it seemed as if they had been playing together for years. It took both *proactive* and *reactive* listening.

No, we don't want to be overly reactive, constantly looking backwards without enough awareness as to what's approaching but we also don't want to stubbornly drive towards our goal without awareness of our circumstances.

A Random Thought: Shakira

Earlier in June I got the call for a gig that was a bit outside my normal comfort zone. Shakira was going to play two shows at Phoenix arena and would I like to play trombone? Stipulations: you have to memorize two charts, wear all white, and learn some simple choreography (my wife laughed out loud at this last one!).

Well, I've heard of Shakira but that was about it. So, I did a bit of homework. She's been called the queen of Latin music. She has multiple grammys and a net worth of about $300 million. This tour, entitled Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran ("Women No Longer Cry"), is a roughly 2 hour show on which I would be playing for about 8 minutes in the middle.

I said yes so I had about a week to get ready. Luckily, I still had a white dinner jacket that I've used maybe twice in the past 20 years (it still fits!). We found some white pants at a local Goodwill store and I sprung for some new white shoes. I also bought some in-ear monitors from Amazon.

The contractor sent me PDF's, audio recordings, and video of some horn players at a sound check showing the choreography. I spent a week learning the charts. This in itself was an interesting challenge. The way the music was printed didn't always line up with what I was hearing on the recording. I opted to go with the recording. I spent quite a bit of time in my home office, phone in pocket, wearing in-ears and, yes, incorporating moves into my practice.

Of course, I was going to use my small horn, a refurbished Conn 6H so I had to get used to the response again. The part wasn't too difficult but did have some high licks (up to D5). I had to learn to not miss high notes while moving and playing loudly (more on this in a moment). It helped enormously to break the songs into four-bar groups and figure out how I fit into the form. This was especially important because it was not always written on the page that way. I'm sure other people would pick it up completely by ear but, being an almost completely legit player, I needed structure. The rhythms gave me a bit of pause mostly because I haven't done that kind of thing lately. But once a mentally grouped them into the structure, things fell into place.

The first show was on a Sunday night. By Thursday I could play through everything from memory and had a sense of where and how to move. My biggest concern, honestly, would be all the distractions. A large screaming crowd, dancers moving around, flashing lights, pyrotechnics. I wanted my memorization to be strong enough that (1) I wouldn't be thrown off by the extra stuff and (2) I could actually enjoy being in the moment as opposed to just freaking out about having a memory slip.

On Sunday afternoon we had a sound check which went fine. I prepared listening mostly to her vocals which were not in my ears at the sound (she wasn't there at the moment) so that was a bit weird. There was a very nice catered meal and tons of time to kill. The contractor had been very specific that we were not to take backstage pictures for posting on social media. Tons of time to kill. No way to miss when the show started since the building started shaking!

We had wireless transmitters connected to our in-ears so we could hear the show along with a producer (with a lovely Irish accent) calmly issuing instructions using lines like, "…30 seconds to end of video, leave the quick-change area now…" Also each song had a count-in and a metronome click. No surprise for such a large production. In fact, this operation was so huge that a few concerts in other venues had to be canceled or postponed because of "structural problems" with the stage set-up. Out in the parking garage I counted seven tour buses and five semi trucks although there may have been more. Also loads of vans and limos.

Eventually someone comes to get us to take us backstage. That in itself was amazing. I counted 22 remote camera operators staring intently at video screens while aiming with cross-hairs. Hundreds of support staff moving equipment. Our 'backstage' was behind curtains off to the side of the stage. From our vantage point I could see the sold-out arena with roughly 15,000 screaming fans wearing synchronized lights on their wrists. I could sort of see the stage and could definitely see the pillars of fire that shot up from the rear of the stage.

Then it was our time to go on. We had to move quickly up a narrow staircase and take our places (squeezing past people going the other way with equipment). However, here's the thing: we didn't have mics on our bells. It became apparent from the sound check that the audience would not be hearing our actual sound at all. Given the decibel levels which must have soared above 100 dB, I could have played as loud as possible and *maybe* some people right in front of the stage might have heard me. So, basically, I was eye candy and, judging from the dancers on the stage, not the best eye-candy either.

Still, I had a blast. While we weren't supposed to take pictures, someone sent me some pictures from the show. There I am in my white jacket, leaning back on the high notes and having a deafeningly good time. Was Shakira miming her vocals? No idea but that seems to be the norm these days for big shows. People pay a lot of money ($18,000 for the highest-priced seat!) and you don't want to have a problem with feedback or a dead mic. I get it. I'm certain she was actually singing but I can't be sure what the audience was actually hearing.

Afterwards, I hopped in my little Kia Niro and drove home, arriving before the concert was even over. Would I do it again? Yep!