

TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards

Volume 4, No. 12. ~ December 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](#))

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Enjoy!

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Websites:

[Trombone Zone](#)

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[ASU Bones](#)

A Pretty Good Melody: Waltzing Away In The Manger

Jazz Waltz (♩ = 156)

mp *mf*

9

17 *f*

25 *mp*

33 *mf*

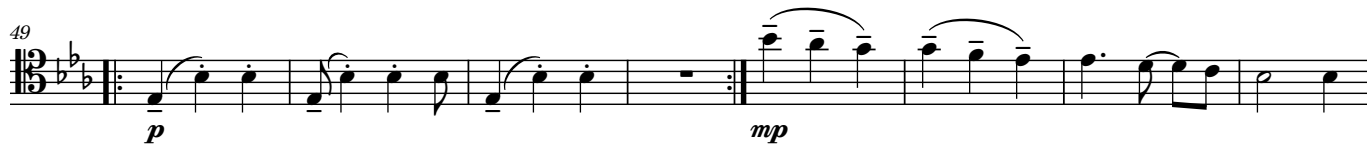
41 *f*

49 *p* *mp*

57 *pp*

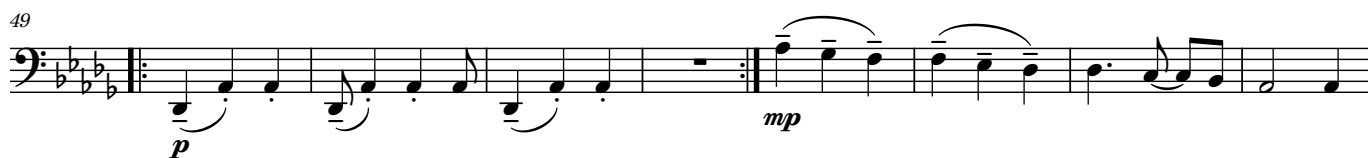
A Pretty Good Melody

Jazz Waltz (♩ = 156)



A Pretty Good Melody

Jazz Waltz (♩ = 156)



A Holiday Lip Slur Melody

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

Here's the original unadorned tune.

Now the adorned tune in the form of a lip slur melody. A lip slur melody is one you play using natural slurs without glisses.

♩ = 132

Technique/Rhythm Builder: Crooked Bells

Believe it or not, I wrote this over 30 years ago!

Presto chango ♩ = 144

mp

fp *mp*

f *ff* *mp*

mf *simile*

f *ff*

mp *cresc.* *f*

fmp *p*

Free book sample:
Patterns and Snippets, Part 3
A snippet from:
Bach, Cello Suite No. 3, BWV 1009, Bourrée No.1

When I wrote Patterns and Snippets, the goal was to write a scale/arpeggio book that (1) wasn't drudgery, (2) had some musicality, and (3) stayed (mostly) harmonically conservative while presenting a larger variety of scale and arpeggio patterns.

In other words, think of a scale as a sort of template. Do lots of variations on it and, in theory, you should be able to quickly learn a new variation. Had you stuck to the same pattern over and over, you might be less able to handle something new. At least that's the idea.

The third part of this book presents short musical selections in multiple keys. Sometimes they come from public domain works, sometimes short things I composed. In addition to sharing with you this Bach quote for both tenor and bass trombone, I will also share the table of contents for this part of the book.

Enjoy!

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#4. *Bach, Cello Suite No. 3, BWV 1009, Bourrée No. 2*

Original key: c minor moving to E-flat major

In the Bach cello suites, two bourrées are presented as a set. This snippet starts in the minor key and transitions to the relative major. Once again, you can add some articulation marks to this.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 72$

The musical score is written in bass clef with a common time signature (C). It begins in C minor (three flats) and transitions to E-flat major (three flats). The piece consists of eight measures, each ending with a half note. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

#4. *Bach, Cello Suite No. 3, BWV 1009, Bourrée No. 2*

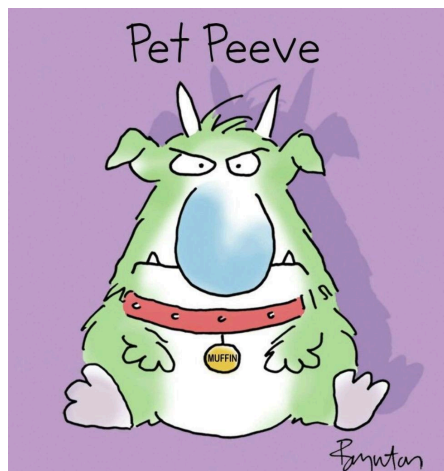
Original key: c minor moving to E-flat major

In the Bach cello suites, two bourrées are presented as a set. This snippet starts in the minor key and transitions to the relative major. Once again, you can add some articulation marks to this.

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 72$

The musical score is written in bass clef with a common time signature (C). It begins in C minor (three flats) and transitions to E-flat major (three flats). The piece consists of eight measures of music, featuring a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing beamed sixteenth notes. The final measure ends with a double bar line.

Playing Tip: Pet Peeve: The Beginning and Length are not the same



Students constantly mix these two up. For example, they are playing short notes and I ask for more length. This they do *BUT* they also change the way the note begins (usually more of a dah tongue or even the dreaded ‘wah’).



Conversely, if I ask for a more distinct attack, they *ALSO* make the notes shorter.



I will even demonstrate using a full-value note with a distinct attack and ask them how it sounds different. They will reply, “You played the notes shorter.”

Uh, no. I don’t think I did.

To work on this, simply play scales in quarter notes.



Imagine, that you have two control knobs: one controls the length of the note, and one that controls how distinctly you attack it.

Note Length



Amount of 'pop' in the attack



Admittedly, this isn't the perfect analogy. We usually aren't called upon to play short notes with a 'dah' attack. However, there is still a grain of truth here.

We should be able to separately control length and attack and not automatically link them in our minds.

On Teaching and Playing: Shifting the Focus Over Time

I'm a big fan of fundamentals. Since I'm in my 30th year of full-time university teaching, my mindset focuses on the evolving content/structure of lessons over the course of a semester. Typically, this would be a semester leading up to a jury performance.

So, early in the semester, I want to focus more on fundamentals: lip slurs, pattern-building, developing the ear and so on. For example, all lessons begin with a Sing-Buzz-Play assignment which, if the student is struggling, can eat up some lesson time. I maintain that it is time well-spent. I'm a strong believer in improving the connection between the ear and the instrument. The exercises I use are [available for free on my website](#). I can achieve *so many* important pedagogical goals with these simple exercises. In most lessons, I have the student buzz only in the initial key. In all subsequent keys, they just go back and forth between singing and playing. A very important detail: *they must move their slide as they sing*. This is vitally important to build that ear/instrument connection! As students get more advanced, I ask them to find the new key without any prompting from the piano - a good workout for the ear.

As the semester goes on, I must devote more time to repertoire preparation and less for fundamentals. For most students, I only do sing-buzz-play for the first half of the semester. Likewise, my emphasis on scale work is greater at the beginning and less at the end.

Most of my students are quite focused on their jury pieces but I need to pace them in their preparation. Too much too early and they tend to get sick of the piece. Too little too late - well, we know that means. A useful trick I use: start early work on the tricky, technical passages so they have time to become automatic. Then, once we focus more on the piece as a whole, those passages are ready to go.

Of course there can be those things which interrupt this normal early fundamentals focus. For example, a talented younger student who wants to enter a recording for a competition. Then our prep work is based on the application deadline: usually November or December. Also, I may have a student play in a studio recital in October or February. It's valuable for them to work up a piece but I sometimes worry that fundamentals are getting scrapped in the scramble to prepare something that is slightly beyond their reach. *It's all about seeking that perfect balance.*

The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy *Molly Gebrian - The Illusion of Mastery*

I first quoted Gebrian's excellent book back in October. Here is my 2nd quote and quite likely not my last. You owe it to yourself to buy this [excellent book](#).

As teachers, we've all heard that refrain, "But it went so well in the practice room yesterday." Gebrian points out simply that an immediate successful repetition of a passage in the moment doesn't mean that you have actually *learned* it. She calls this the illusion of mastery. The real test is to come back to it later, possibly the next day, and see if you can play it then.

Here is an uncomfortable truth: the measure of how well you practiced isn't how it sounds at the end of your practice session. It's how good it sounds the next day when you come back to it. I know that is extremely counter-intuitive. When we sound fantastic during practice only to play terribly in a lesson, we have fallen victim to the illusion of mastery. When we decide to do a run-through and then stop on the first or second line a few times before making it through, convincing ourselves that those first few poor tries were just because we're not warmed up yet or not in the groove yet, we are falling victim to the illusion of mastery. A distinction that is not clear to many musicians- and certainly was not true to me- is that just because you can play something doesn't necessarily mean you can also perform it.

Gebrian, Molly. *Learn Faster, Perform Better: The Musician's Guide to the Neuroscience of Practicing*. Oxford University Press, p.83

I often tell my students that "performing is remembering." You look at a lick and, even if you aren't playing from memory, you are essentially pulling up a memorized series of actions. Even when sight-reading, you may be able to spot a musical element such as an E-minor arpeggio and pull up a sort of 'memory module' for that sequence of notes.

Gebrian writes, "**You want to hit the sweet spot of almost forgetting but not quite.**" (p. 72). In other words, after time passes, can you play it again accurately? It is especially interesting to consider the value of sleep in all this. Practice a lick late in the day and *then get a good night's sleep*. In the morning, you may be surprised at how well you can play it. If you can't, you don't know it yet (or you got a bad night of sleep - I'm looking at you, TikTok).

A Random Thought: Last-Minute!



The West Wing was one of my favorite TV shows. Even if you don't agree with the politics, you have to admit that the writing and character development on that show was superb.

In Season 4, Episode 6, "Game On," the president running for re-election is about to take the stage for an important debate. Mere seconds before he takes the stage, his wife pulls out a [pair of scissors and cuts his tie](#)! I'm guessing she was worried his overpreparation would make him lose his improvisational edge so she figured throwing him a massive curve ball at the last moment would sharpen his reflexes for the debate. It's a great scene as they are scurrying towards the debate stage, frantically borrowing and putting on a replacement tie just as he is about to walk before the cameras. I love the one advisor's frantic comments, "No one's done camera tests on this!"

Sometimes that last-minute surprise can evoke in us a kind of survival reflex, forcing the mind to calm down and focus.

In football, a well-known tactic is to call a time-out just before a field goal to "ice the kicker." Make them wait a bit longer. Likewise, I've seen quarterbacks whose best throws seem to come when they are scrambling and don't have time to think. Same with basketball: sometimes greater success comes from "thoughtless" catch-and-shoot moments.

It's counter-intuitive until we view it through the lens of the Inner Game of Tennis. Maybe that surprise dislodges Self 1 and allows Self 2 to take over without interference.

I had a similar experience when I was teaching at the University of Northern Iowa. I was to be a soloist with the student orchestra, playing a single movement of the George Walker Concerto. I knew that the program had an overture, the concerto, and a symphony. Silly me, I assumed that the concerto would be *second* on the program! Nope! It was first.

I live only 6 blocks from campus and my office was roughly 30 feet from the stage entrance so I timed my arrival based on my assumptions about the program order. I walked in only to discover that I was going on stage in about 4 minutes! Instead of freaking out, this kind of emergency calming response kicked in and the performance went well.

Another time, while I was playing in the Augusta Symphony, they asked for volunteers to give informal pre-concert talks. I volunteered and - you guessed it - forgot that it was my turn to give the talk. I calmly walked up only to find the house manager frantically saying, "Where have you been? Your presentation is now!"

My wife was walking with me and said with relish, "Oh, I can't wait to see *this*." In the 30 seconds or so before I began speaking, I ran through what I knew of the pieces on the program and what interesting tidbits I could riff about. They loved it. Afterwards I got the most wonderful compliment from my wife, "How did you pull that off !?"

As a teaching assistant, I worked for a theory teacher at Peabody. We would meet in the morning shortly before a class started. It amazed me to see her walk in, flip through a score of Beethoven string quartets, spot something interesting and proceed to smoothly deliver a presentation on the piece. It didn't hurt that her knowledge base was really strong!

Yes, careful preparation is best but you might surprise yourself...

...if you surprise yourself.