

TBZ Monthly

A new monthly content service from Brad Edwards
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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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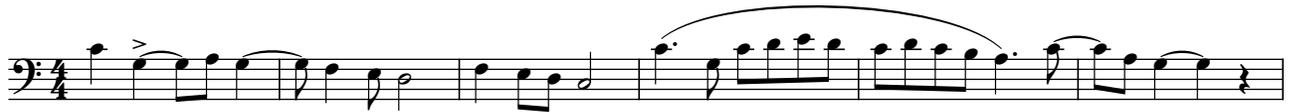
[Trombone Zone](#)
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A Pretty Good Melody: Permutations

As the new year starts, we can go in so many possible directions. Here are some different possible modes and meters.



A Pretty Good Melody



OK, so this one is a little weird. Good counting practice, though!



A Useful Lip Slur

Another lip slur melody for you (what can I say, I like writing these).

The musical score is written for a tuba in bass clef. It begins with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 120$ and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first section consists of five staves of music, featuring a melodic line with various lip slurs. A section marker ⊕ is placed above the second staff, with the text "To Coda" written above it. The second section consists of five staves of music, starting with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 80$ and a key signature of two sharps (D major). This section includes a measure with a fermata and a measure with a trill. A section marker ⊕ is placed above the eighth staff, with the text "Coda" written above it. The final section consists of two staves of music, starting with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 120$ and a key signature of one flat. A section marker ⊕ is placed above the first staff of this section, with the text "Coda" written above it. The score concludes with a double bar line.

A Useful Lip Slur

OK, this one is bigger (easier to read) but it runs across two pages and doesn't use the coda marking.

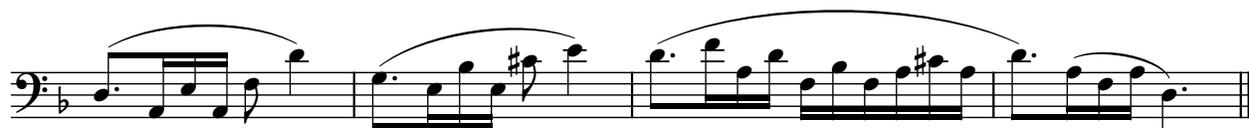
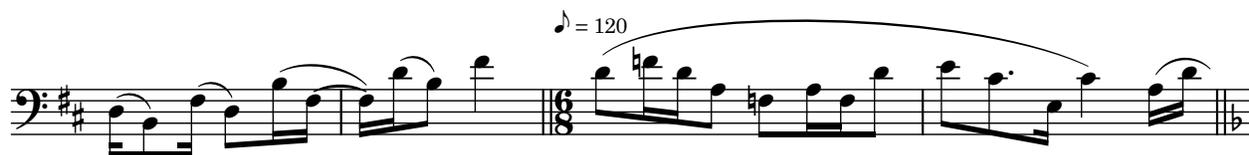
The musical score is written in bass clef and 6/8 time. It begins with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 120$. The piece consists of seven staves of music. The first six staves are in the key of B-flat major (one flat). The seventh staff changes to the key of D major (two sharps) and 2/4 time. The score features various slurs, including a large slur spanning the first two staves, and smaller slurs over individual phrases. A fermata is placed over the final note of the sixth staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a key signature change to D major.

$\text{♩} = 120$

$\text{♩} = 80$

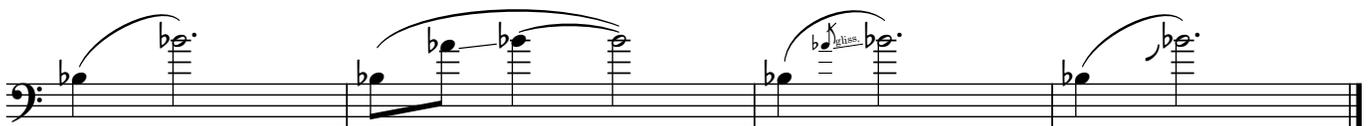
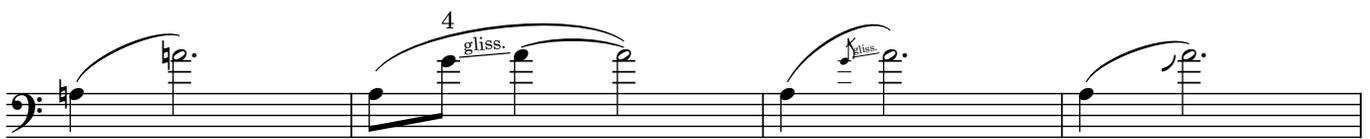
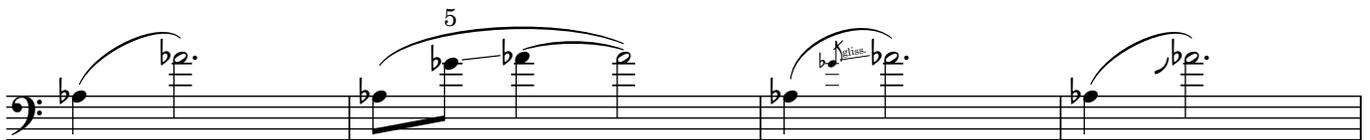
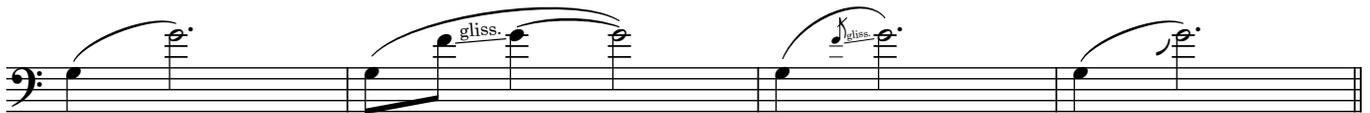
#5

Another lip slur melody



Technique/Rhythm Builder: Clean up those scoops!

A curious thing happens when we try to scoop to a high note. We are thinking of the target note but, when we reach for the longer position, we end up one partial too high. You need to consciously aim at a lower note at the end of your leap.



*Free book sample:
“Mysterious” and “Imperious” from
60 Vignettes for Trombone*

I conceived of these little character pieces in matched sets. Here are two, both in minor keys but with different styles. Here's a [link to the book](#).

Enjoy!

a.

7

14

20

rit.

b.

7

14

20

rit.

c.

7

14

20

rit.

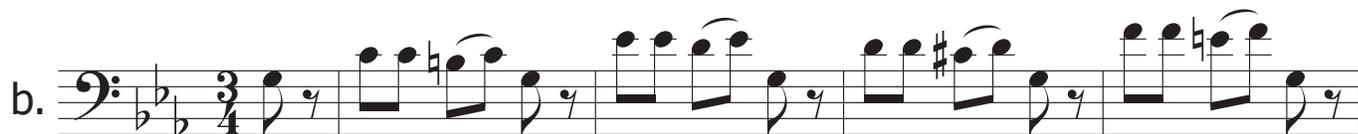
36 *Imperious* ♩ = c. 132-160

a.

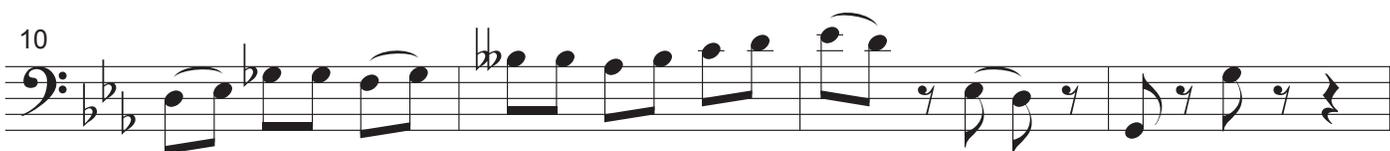
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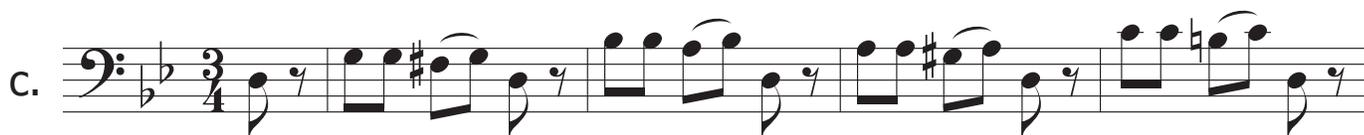
14

b. 

5 

10 

14 

c. 

5 

10 

14 

Playing Tip: When to Breathe?

Breathing is good for you (duh). Let me start by dispelling a myth that I hear all the time: people say that breathing is unconscious. My reply: yes and no. Certainly we breathe when we are asleep and we breathe without thinking about it. However, you can also decide to breathe at a certain moment. Don't believe me? Snap your fingers and inhale right with the snap.



As we play a musical phrase (not wanting to die) we'll have to take a breath at some point. Often we breathe too early, leaving a fairly large gap after a sustained note. I often notice this whenever I record myself - "Why are those breath gaps so large?" Here's an example, the first four bars of a simple tune, "Riverbanks" from my book [Simply Singing for Winds](#).



Depending on tempo and dynamic, you would either play all four bars in one breath or you would breathe after bar 2. For the sake of argument, let's say you need to breathe after bar 2. As you are playing that E-flat, you are most likely *already* thinking about the breath you're about to take. Often people will release too early for their breath.

Something like this:



Look at all that silence that could have been filled with tone. You paid good money for a nice-sounding instrument and then with that gap you are effectively 'leaving money on the table.' Better would be this:



Better still would be this:



Keep that tone going as long as you comfortably can. Here's a useful mental trick that might help. If you saw a grace note printed like this...



...you would instinctively place that little note right before the downbeat. So, imagine your breath is like that grace note. You might even think "grace note breath" to get the idea of a late placement.



If you are marking your breath in the music, it is also a good idea to place that breath mark *towards the end* of the note, reminding you to breathe a bit later.



On Teaching and Playing: My Playing Goals vs. Student Playing Goals

Some of my students are embarking on the audition trail. They are making tapes and traveling to live auditions. I've been there and done that. However, that's not where I am right now in my own career.

This may seem obvious but sometimes our students believe that we are *also* practicing just like they are (or that we should be).

My Playing Goals

- Keep up my fundamentals.
- Prep for any high-profile performances I have coming up.
- Be able to demonstrate somewhat effectively in lessons.

That last one is a little tricky. I have a tuba colleague at another school who frequently posts on social media that his students are out-playing him. Nice sentiment and possibly true although I know him to be a monster player. I think of the stories I've heard about Emory Remington who mostly sang in lessons and wasn't really known as a top-level player himself. Still, he knew the sound he wanted and knew how to get it from his students.

I turn 63 in January. No big secret since my birth year is listed on some of my compositions. I'm still playing well but not at the level I played when I was younger and vigorously pursuing auditions myself. Could I devote more time practicing to keep myself constantly in top playing condition? Sure, but at what cost? There's only so much time in the day and there are other creative projects to which I want to devote time and energy. Choices must be made - different choices than I made in my 20's.

When I was earning my master's, I practiced so heavily that my lips were inflamed most days. Looking back, I would definitely have benefited from more mental practice! But that's not where I am right now.

What do my students need from me? My ear. My understanding about strategies to replace bad habits with good ones. My ability to provide insight and perspective. No, I might not pick up my horn and sound like a god but I *have* that sound in my ear and can convey this in other ways.

My Students' Playing Goals

Well, that depends on the student. Not every student is gunning to go out and win that orchestra audition for a salaried position. I have one grad student who is also a fine guitar player and is actively working in the area on both instruments. I have another grad student who has built a successful private teaching studio and wants to continue along that path. Some students plan/hope to work as freelancers in some region. In fact, a number of my former students remain in the area and work as freelancers. And, yes, other students are gearing up to try to win that audition. With that last group in mind, some possible goals might be:

- Fundamentals
- Listening
- Fundamentals
- Self-recording
- Fundamentals



The Good Stuff - Trombone Pedagogy

Ian Bousfield, Unlocking the Trombone Code:

Auditions and Concerts

Ian Bousfield has held positions as Principal Trombone with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra and the Hallé Orchestra. In this 2015 book, he lays out thoughts and provides playing exercises. He has some interesting thoughts about audition preparation. Some of the text I have made bold. That is my emphasis, not his.

Standing up in public, or behind a screen for an audition, is a very emotional process to go through. I think it is best if we **can take the emotion out of such situations as much as possible**. Try to stay focused, and try to stay practical. How I approach something like this is that I will play whatever I have to play three times. That is to say, I will play the audition repertoire (solo piece and excerpts), or the concert (solo piece) through three times a day: **no stopping, no special warm-ups**. You decide on a time when you are going to do this, and then you play the list through; you do not stop, and **you do not get angry with yourself**, you just do it. **After each run through you note down a tick or a cross for how successful (or not!) you were**. In the case of audition material you can give a tick or cross for each particular excerpt. This means that after a week, you have twenty one sets of ticks or crosses. **Did you get the excerpt right? Yes or no, tick or cross**. The important thing is to ask yourself "Did I feel comfortable?" After a week of twenty-one ticks or crosses, you can look. How many times did you get Bolero right? Nineteen, twenty? How many times was it comfortable? Ten, twelve? Who knows? This can run on for months. This is reality. No more time for excuses. This practice has two functions: one is that if, before an audition, you are staring at a sheet of ticks, you know that whoever is going to beat you on that day is going to have to have a very good day. And that if you have a bad day, you will have simply got unlucky. The odds are in your favour. The other part of this is that if you have some crosses consistently appearing let us say in 'William Tell', or any other tricky passage-then you know, very practically, where you need to work. You know where you can target your practice for the rest of the time that you are practising. You also know what you can go to your teacher with and say, "Hey look, I'm having a problem with this. Let's fix it. What is wrong?" Do not be surprised, though, if you get the

answer that in order to fix whatever the concern is, you have also to fix another four or five things as well. But this is the way that I prepare for auditions.

Ian Bousfield - Unlocking the Trombone Code, p.92. Coventry, England. Warwick Music Limited, 2015.

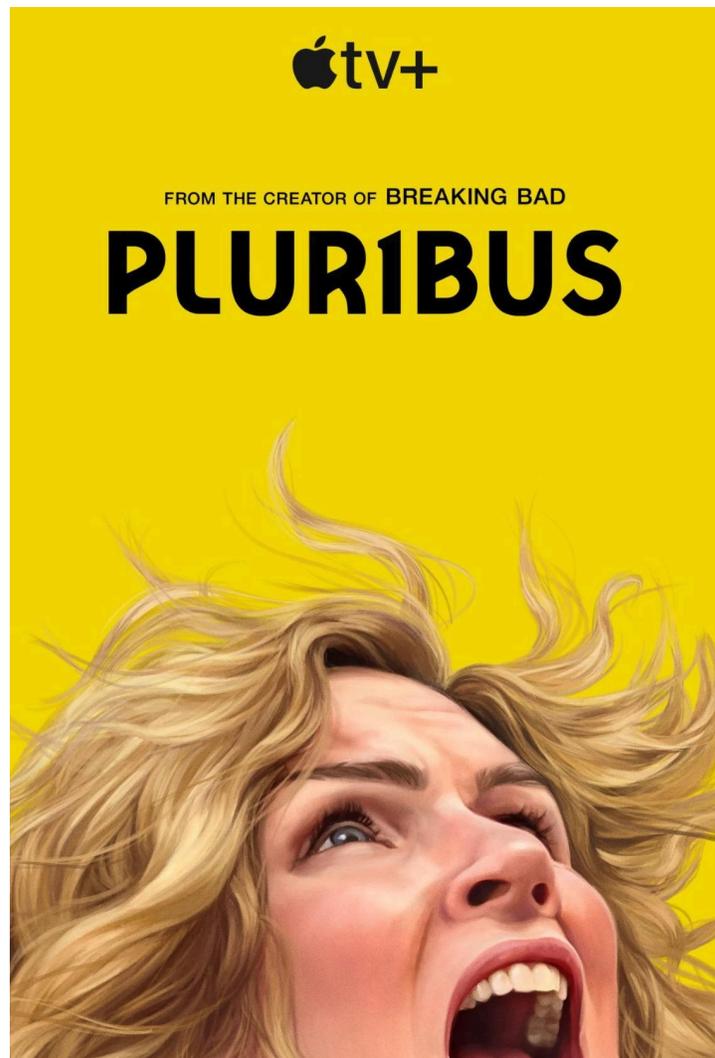
I like Bousfield's notion of forcing yourself to play through without stopping. I also like his advice to take emotion out of the process as much as possible. Easier said than done! We attach so much of our self-esteem on audition success or failure but ultimately those emotions hinder our ability to play our best. I like his system recording successes or failures with a tick or a cross. If you follow this system, you get a more realistic impression of your playing and your odds of audition success. Be honest with yourself.



A Random Thought: Pluribus

In case you haven't heard, Pluribus is the #1 show on Apple TV right now. I'm mildly obsessed with it. Maybe you don't want me to reveal any plot points so, before I go on, I'll insert a page break.

SPOILERS ON THE NEXT PAGE



OK, you've been warned or maybe you don't care. In the first episode of "Pluribus," the code sent from space is a viral RNA sequence that researchers initially thought was Morse code. This sequence ultimately encodes for a lysogenic virus that transforms humanity into a hive mind.

Well, most of humanity. 13 people were not genetically susceptible to the sequence and thus are not automatically subsumed into this hive mind. One such person is our protagonist: Carol Sturka, a rather flawed and surly author who is not taking things very well.

Given that every one of "the joined" knows all human knowledge, it means that any person can fly a helicopter or even a military transport plane. Any human can perform surgery. Any human has the knowledge of the greatest chess masters. When Carol is speaking to one hive member, she is effectively talking to all of them and they remember details from her past (such as where she stored a spare set of house keys a while back). The hive is quite interested in the unjoined 13 people. They very much want to please them and cannot directly lie to them. They do, however, want to find a way to work on their stem cells to create a specialized RNA sequence that will cause a joining.

If you haven't seen the final episode, stop here.

FURTHER SPOILERS ON THE NEXT PAGE



The season's final episode starts in a Peruvian village where an unjoined girl (Kusimayu) has expressed a desire to join the hive. A plane arrives with a custom-designed aerosol that, when inhaled, will cause her to join the hive.

The *entire* village is essentially a fraud to make the girl feel comfortable. People chat with each other (although this is necessary since they are all of one hive mind). They form a loving circle, singing and chanting as the girl prepares to join the hive. As soon as she starts to convert, all singing stops. All talking stops. None of it was actually needed - it was just for show.

The girl, now a hive member, opens the gate to let out the chickens and goats, including a (formerly) beloved baby goat who cries and attempts to follow her as she and everyone in the village simply walks away. After all, such a village is an inefficient use of resources once everyone is joined. More efficient to cluster everyone together.

OK, enough with the plot summary. I think so often about this. There's no more need for musical performances. No more art. No more novels or plays. The songs sung by those Peruvian villagers? They likely will never be sung again. It's not quite cultural genocide since all the memories are rolled into the collective hive mind.

For me the genius question of this show is: what does it mean to be human? I believe an essential part of the human experience is the struggle for creativity - the 'aha' moments.

Carol, an author of fairly mediocre romance novels, writes a new chapter and the hive appears thrilled to read it. Well, of course they are. They already know every book in existence so it stands to reason they would crave newness. In fact, once everyone is in the hive, all human speech and writing will become vestigial.

The best science fiction often poses philosophical questions. Bravo to Vince Gilligan and his team for giving me a lot to think about!

