Peter Ellefson's
"If I only had the time…" warm-up*
Alessi Seminar August 1999
Revised July 2004

Stretch and Breathe

Purpose:
To encourage/allow the body to be flexible for maximal efficiency through minimal effort and to focus on a high-quality breath.

Stretching:

- Relax neck muscles and gently rotate head slowly in a circular motion i.e. chin on chest to right ear on right shoulder to head all the way back to left ear on left shoulder etc. The main thing to remember is to be gentle---allow only the weight of the head to do the pulling, don't force it to stretch. You will likely hear some crackling in your neck.
- Lift and rotate shoulders
- General freeing-up of the upper torso

Breathing:

- Arm raise inhale, arm lower exhale for 4, 5, 6
- Lung capacity in thirds
- Metered walk exercise
- Paper on wall exercise
- Clenched fist inhale

Mouthpiece Buzzing
Option A

Purpose:
To re-establish the connection between brain and chops and to help eliminate "first note funk". Remember to buzz as if your lips are vocal cords. Sing a song with your chops! Do either this first example of memorized tunes **OR** the following set of exercises by Arnold Jacobs

Memorized tunes A to Z

- America, Battle Hymn of the Republic, *Carmen,* Deck the Halls, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, For He's a Jolly Good Fellow etc.

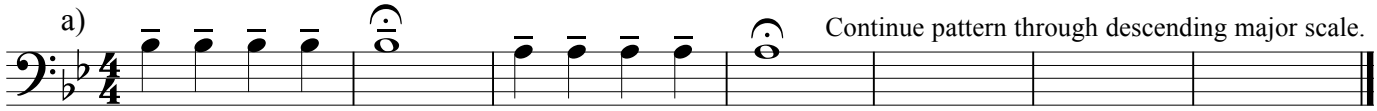
*---Please read my procedural explanations in Appendix I

Mouthpiece Buzzing Option B
(buzz either the previous "tunes" OR this page)

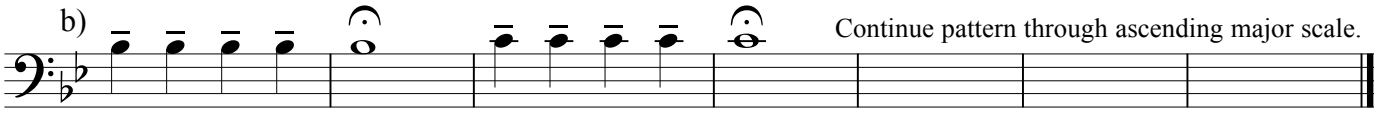
Buzz on mouthpiece alone.
Check intonation frequently w/piano or pitch pipe.

Jacobs

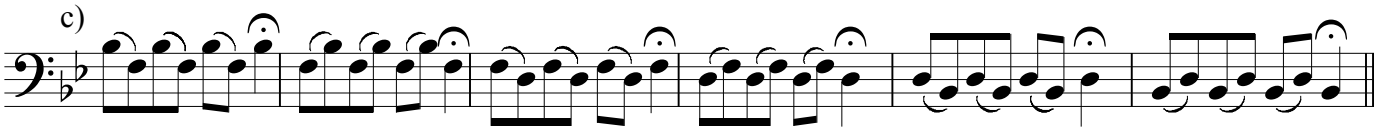
a) Continue pattern through descending major scale.



b) Continue pattern through ascending major scale.



c)



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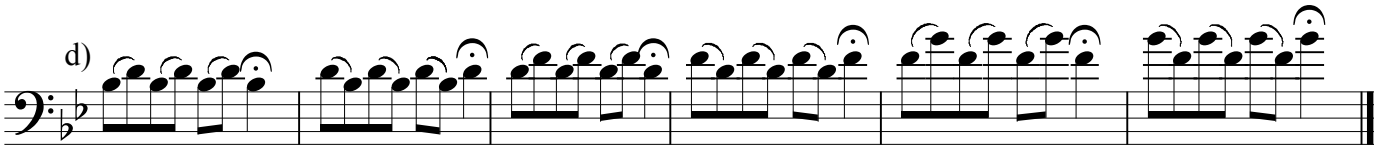
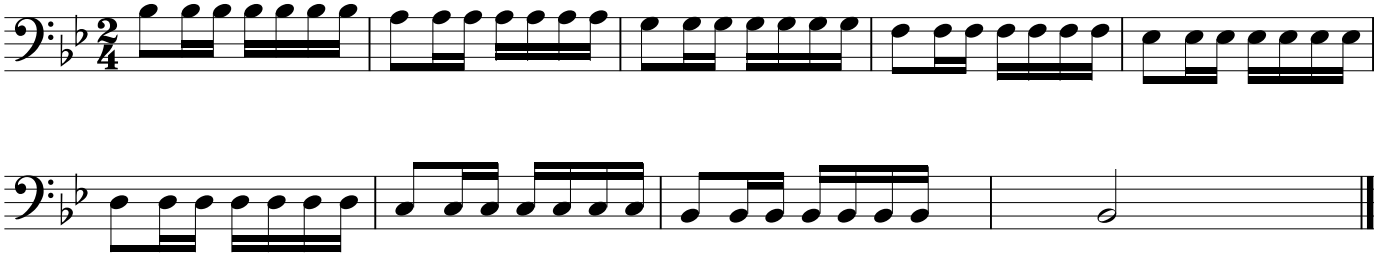
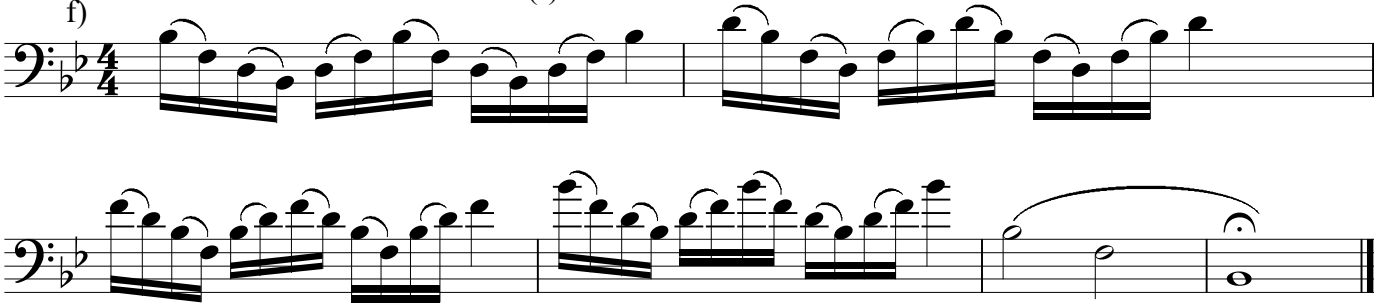


e) Stop for breath as needed



Devise various articulations for (f)

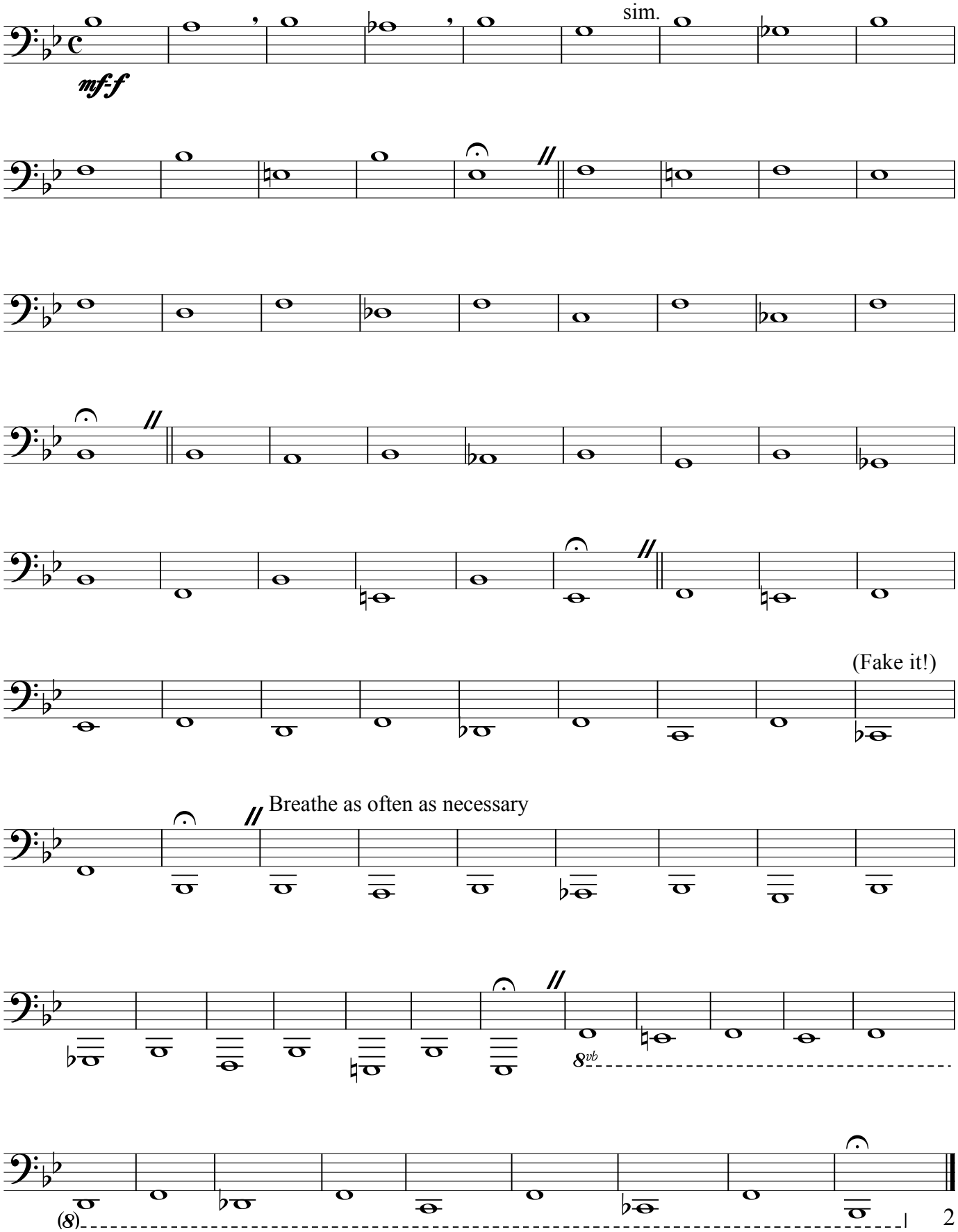
f)



Sound

Full, relaxed breath.
Resonant, unforced sound.
Breathe every 2 measures.

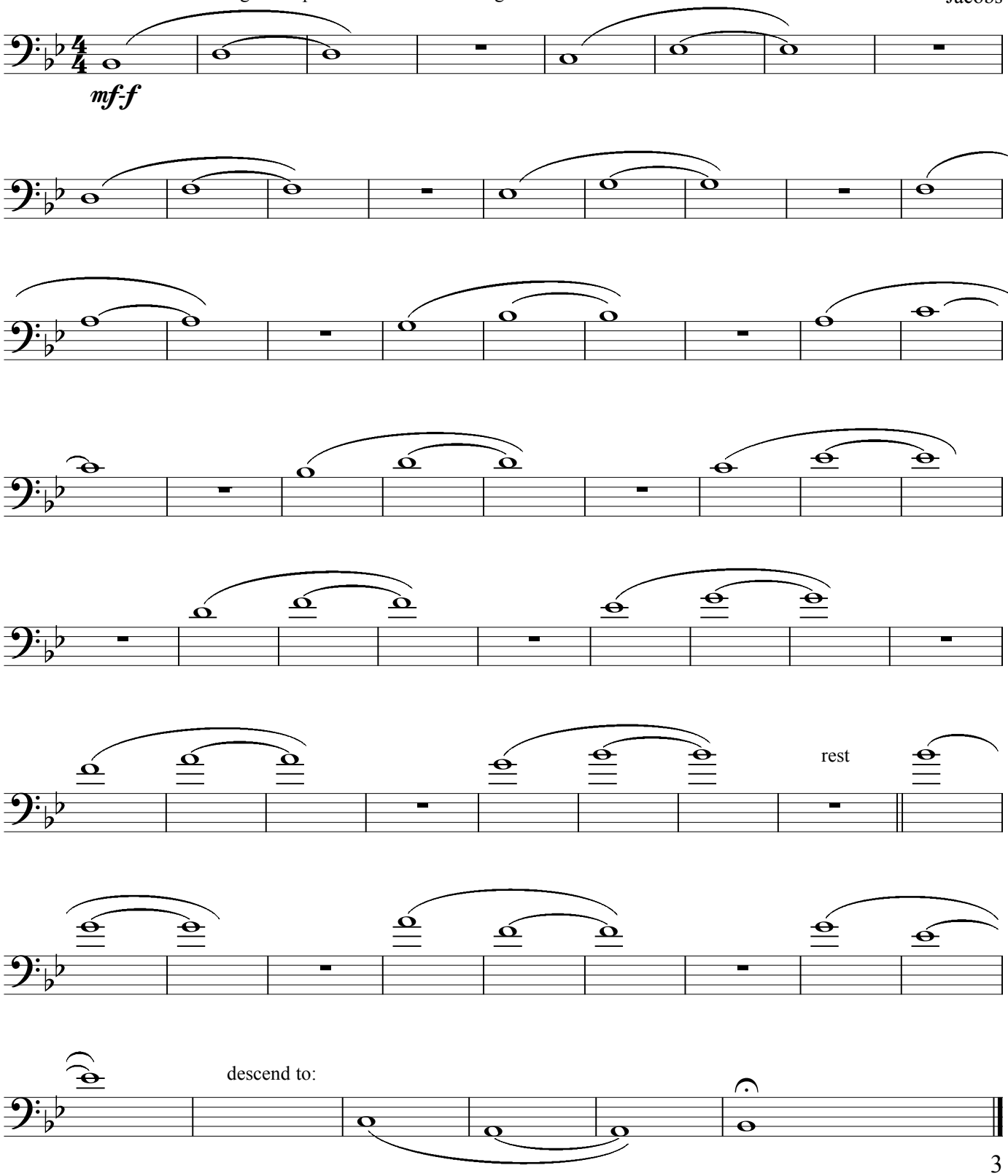
Based upon Remington Warm-Ups



Sound- Option B
(play either Remington OR this page)

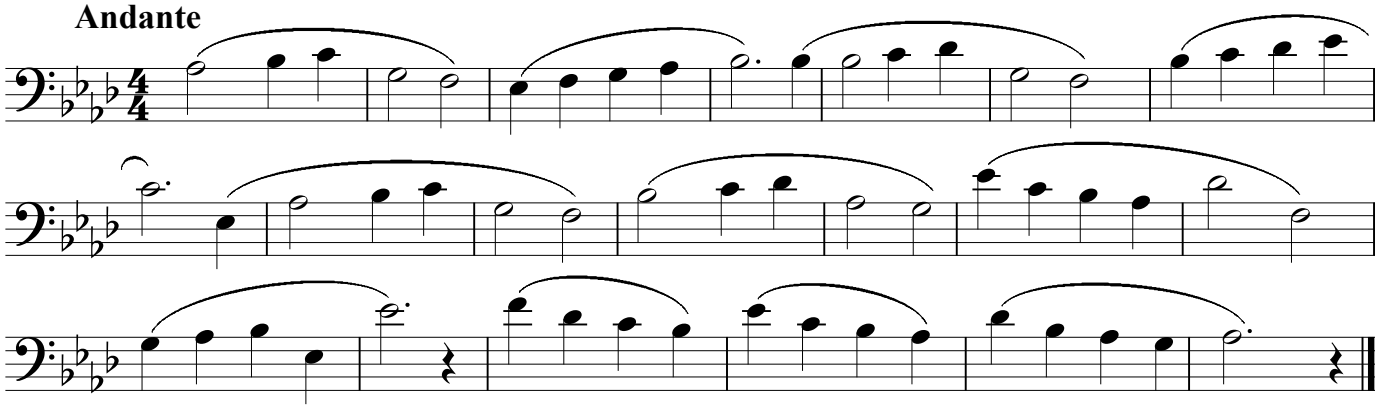
Focus on "World's Greatest Sound" during rests.
Full, relaxed breaths. Resonant, unforced sound.
As desired on mouthpiece alone.
Also do 8vb while utilizing the "open" feel of the breathing exercises.

Jacobs



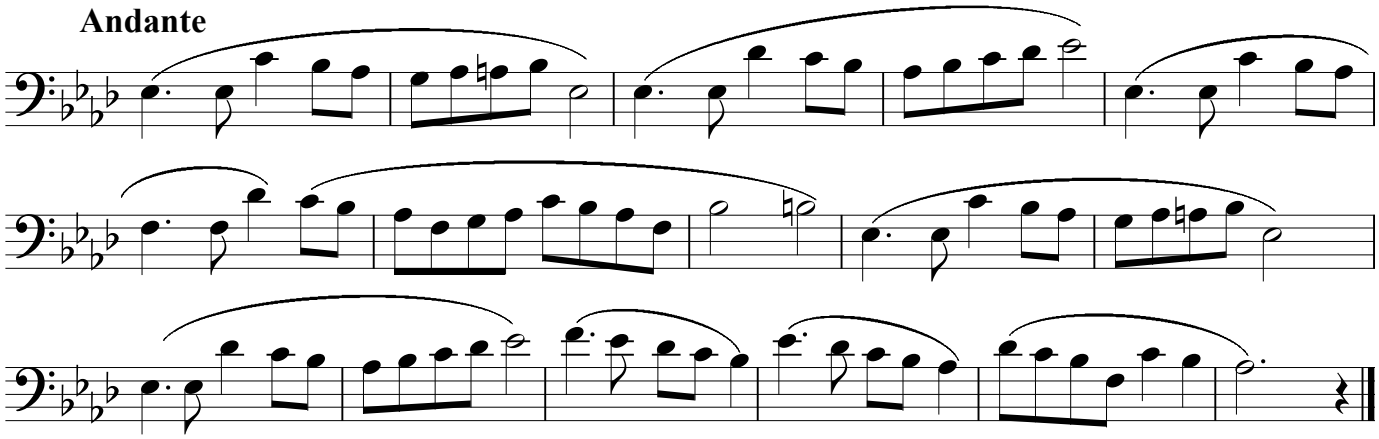
No. 1

Andante



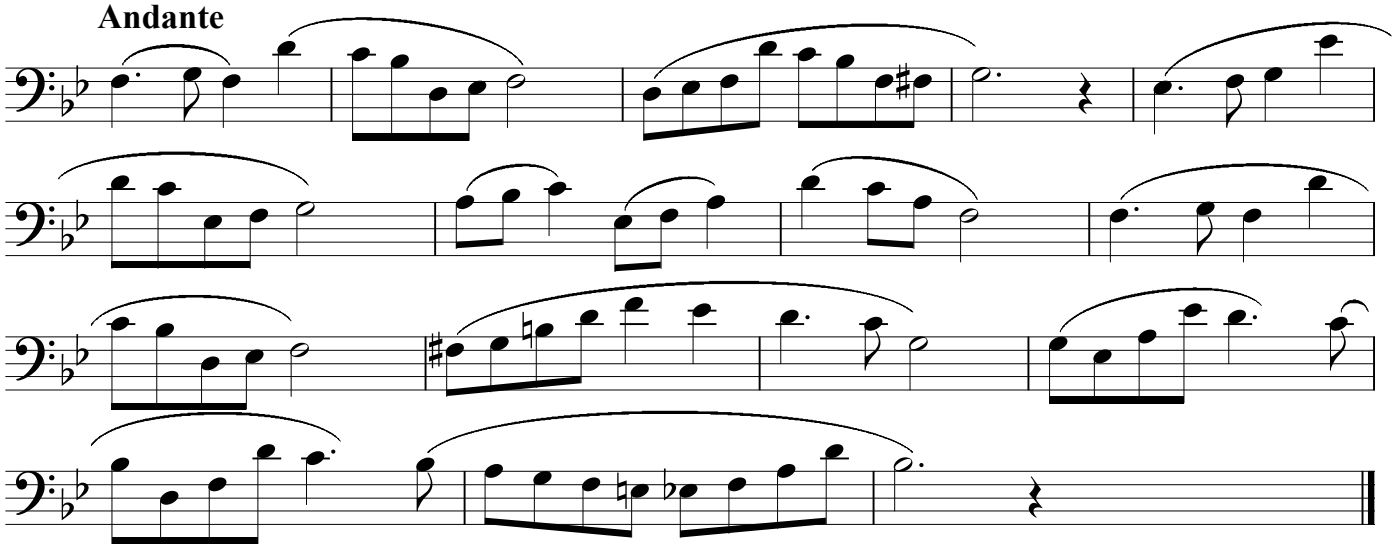
No. 12

Andante



No. 30

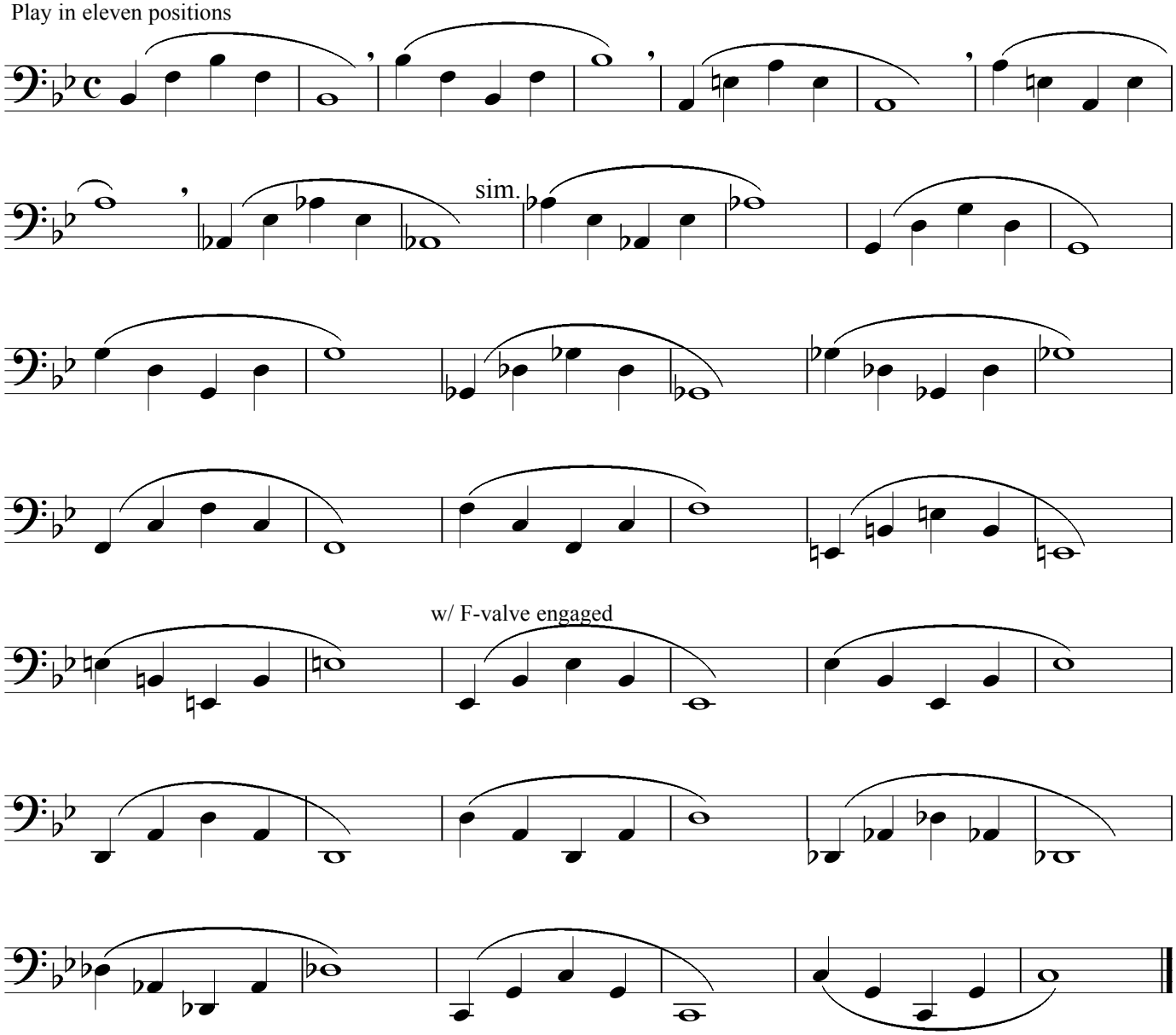
Andante



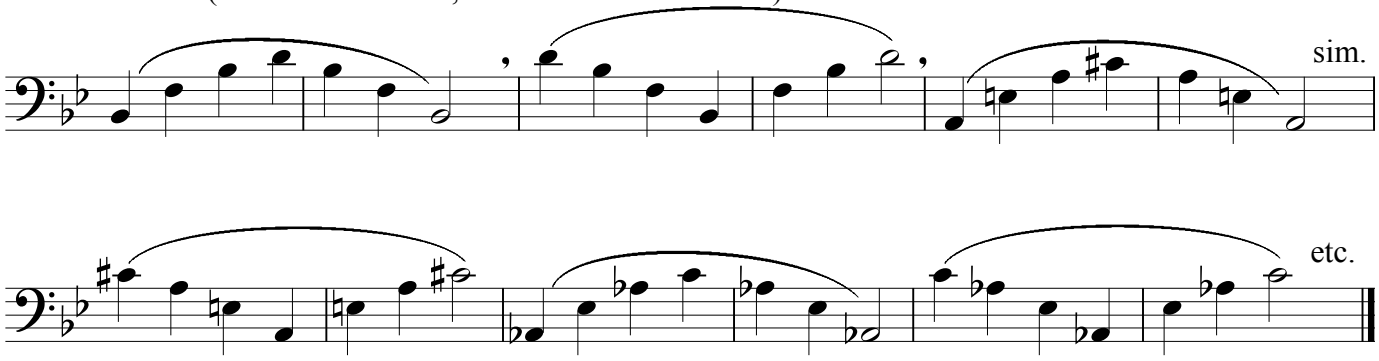
Slow Slurs

Full, relaxed breath, beautiful sound.
Play in eleven positions

Based upon Remington Warm-Ups



Four note slurs (continue with five, six note slurs as desired)



Jacobs

Slow

mf

For the next two studies, play each phrase on one breath.

Schlossberg

Slowly

p *ff* sim.

long

Schlossberg

Slowly

mf-f *p* sim.

Flexibility

Play each repeat 4 times
Do several lines each day

continue to:

Marsteller

sim.

Play patterns through eleven positions

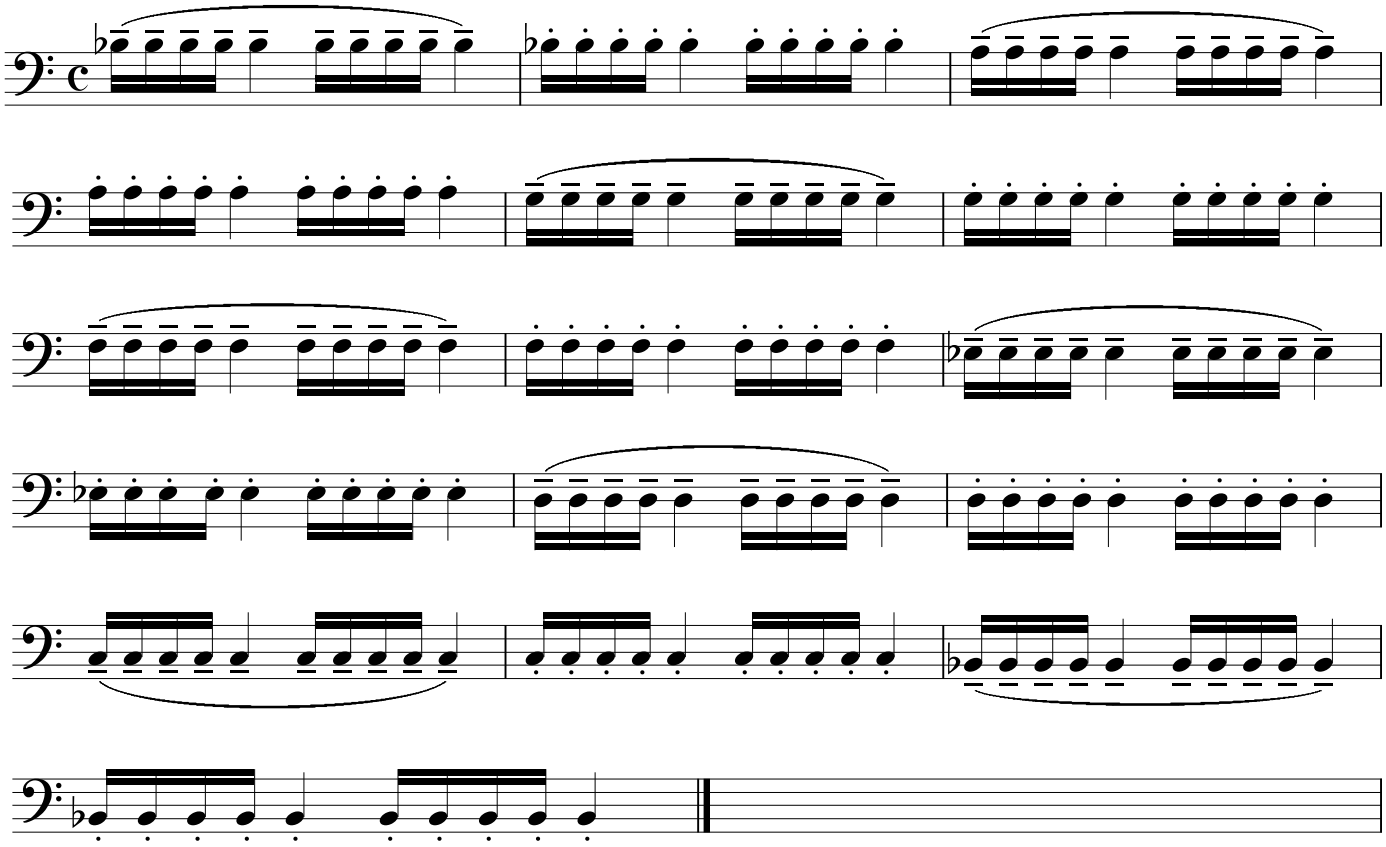
Blokker

a) b) c) d) e) f) g) h) i) j)

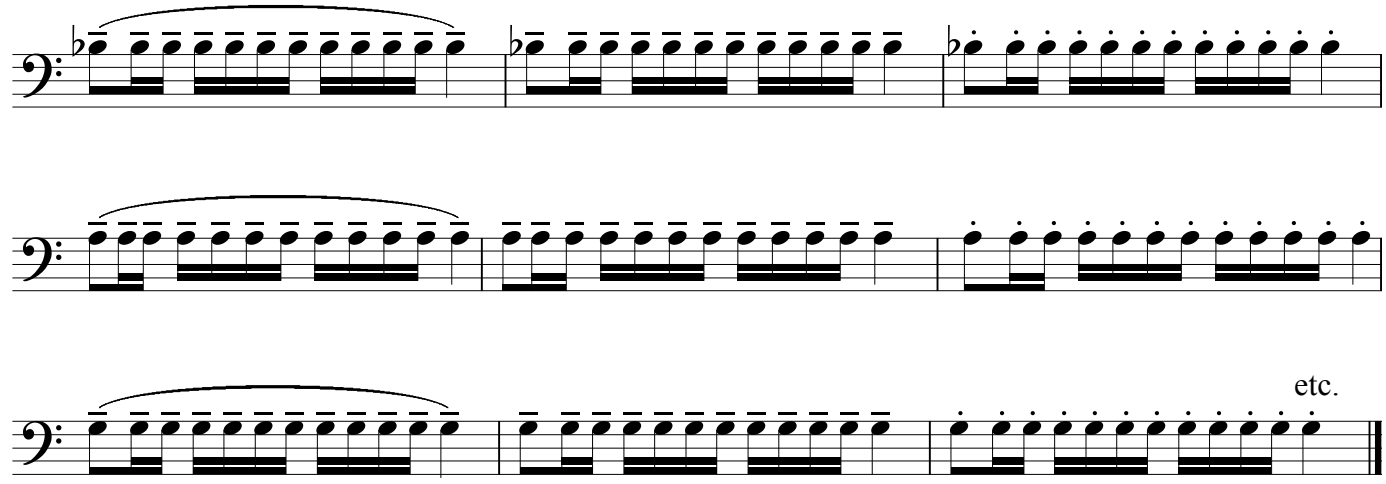
Articulation

Ultra-smooth legato
Crisp, clear staccato
Choose a different key each day
Vary the dynamics

based on Remington



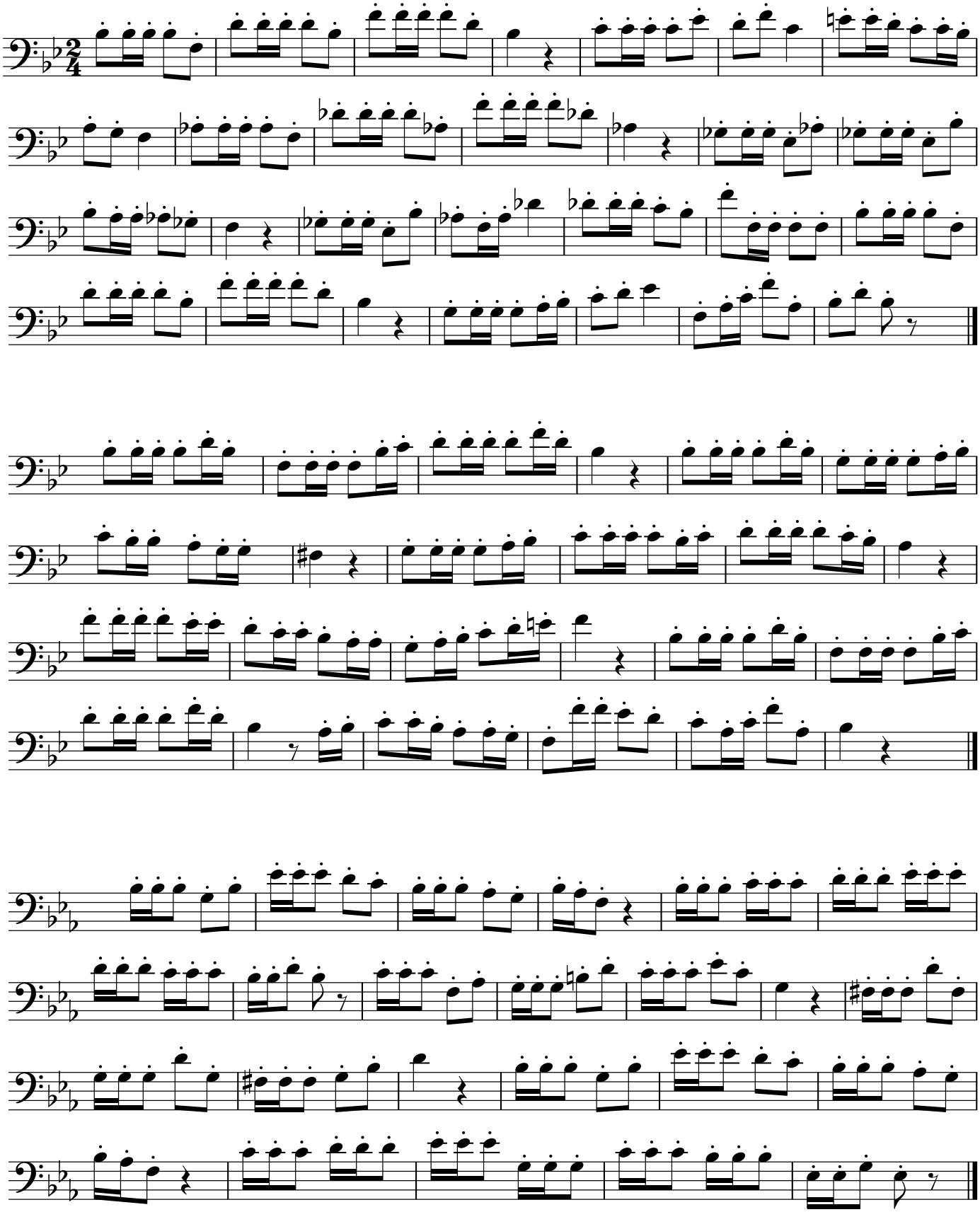
Make a distinct difference between tenuto and legato
Choose a different key each day



etc.

Use crisp, clear attacks
Transpose to other keys/clefs

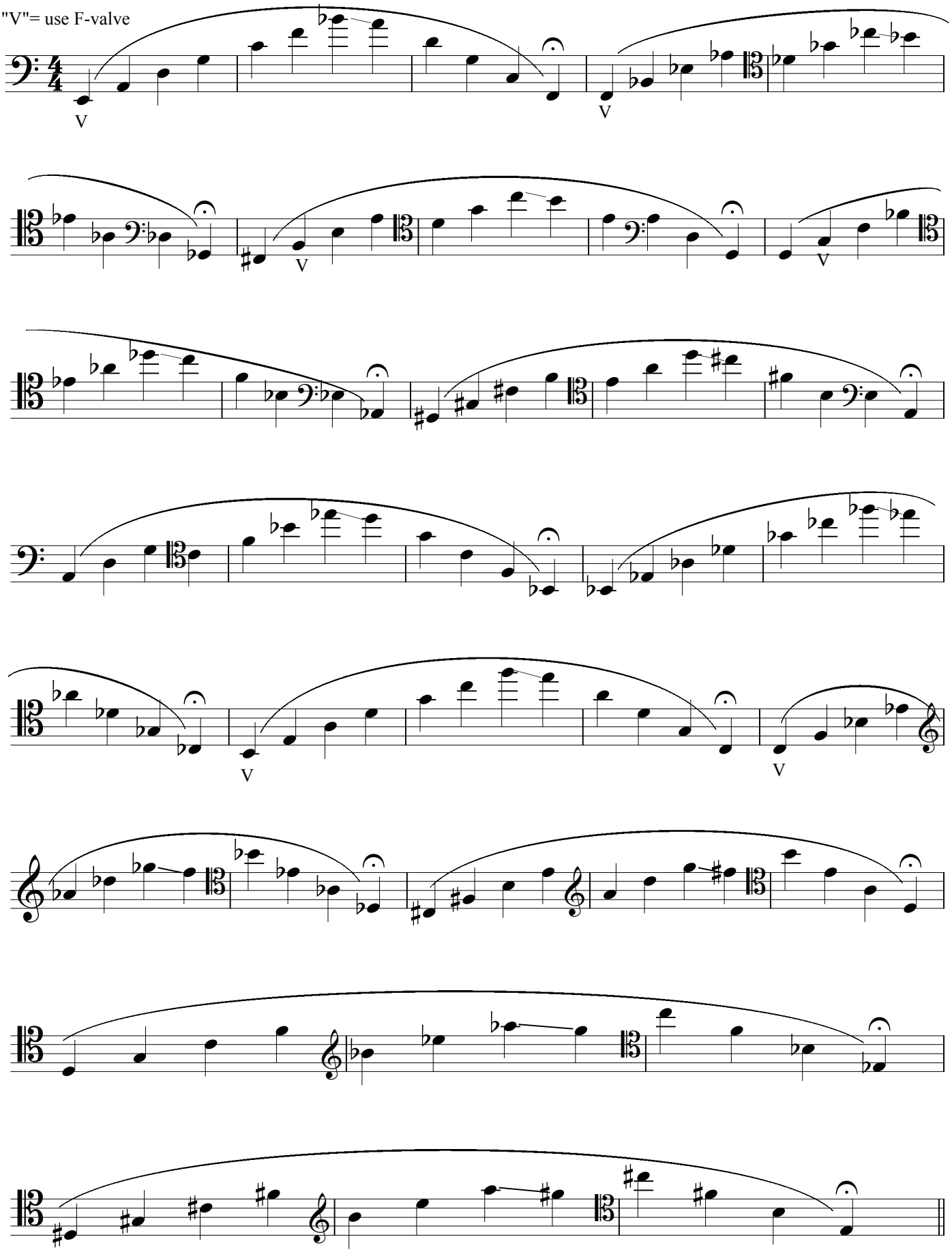
Arban



Extended Exercises

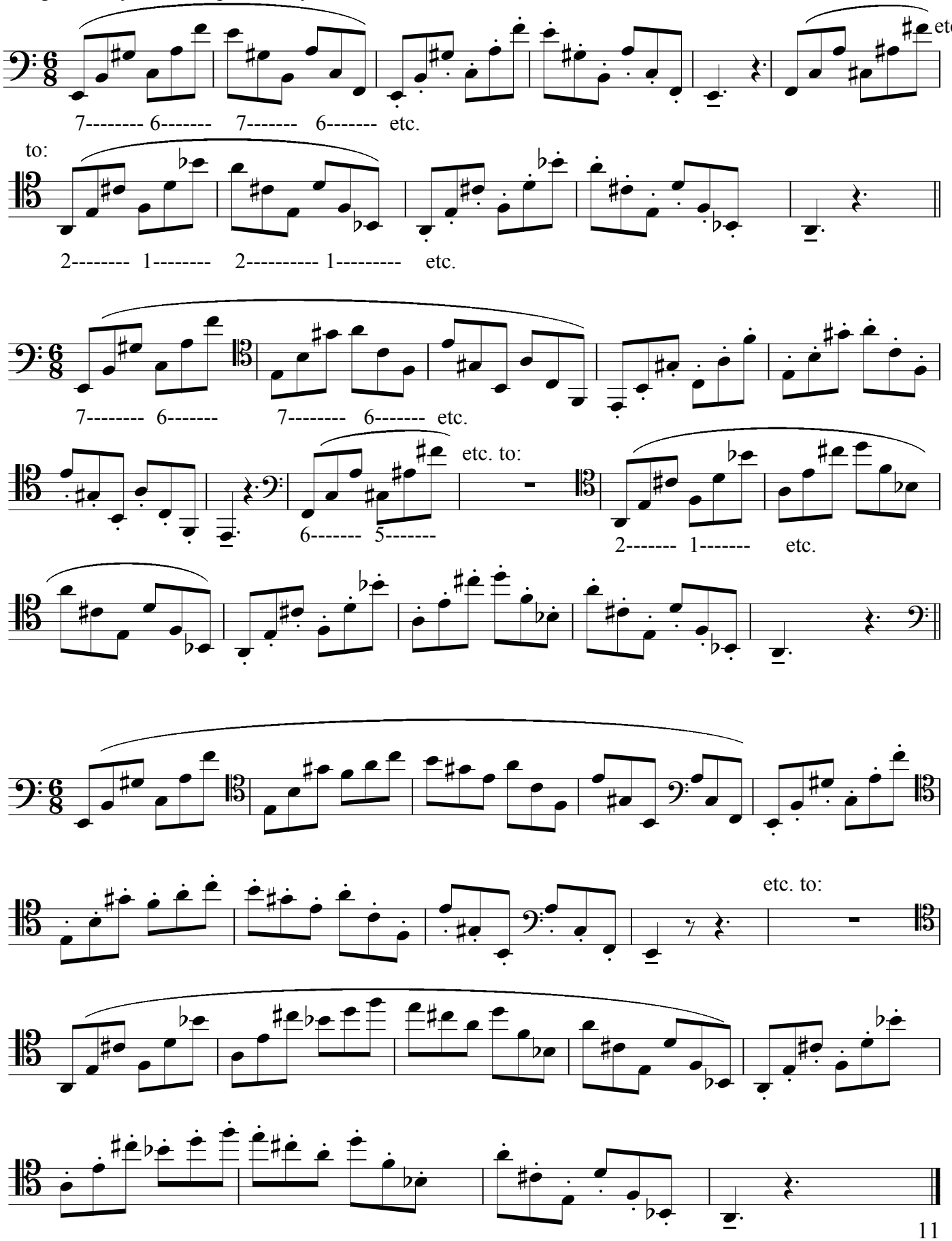
Vernon

"V"= use F-valve



Advanced flexibility studies.
Begin slowly to develop accuracy.

Marsteller



Cool-Down

Baker

mp

Fake it.

Appendix I

Guiding thought:

It is not ***what*** you play but ***how*** you play it that is important.

This is not intended to be the final word but merely a place to start in the development of a quality warm-up. I have not sought to compose new studies or to invent any "new" path to improvement. A plethora of high-quality material already exists in the studies of Arban, Marsteller, Schlossberg, Bordogni, etc. Through diligent study of these and other books one can achieve the highest level of performance---to reiterate, it is not ***what*** is played but ***how*** it is played that counts. Please read my recommendations of studies and etudes listed in the selected bibliography.

This warm-up is designed to add each element of quality playing in a step-by-step fashion. Throughout the practice session there must be further intensive study of each of these elements. The warm-up is meant to prepare the player for serious, in-depth practicing. Please note where the exercises originate from and purchase the books listed in the bibliography. It is through the purchase of these materials that we can ensure that future experts will take the time to write useful materials for our instrument. Don't be a thief.

Procedure:
I begin with some simple stretching and breathing exercises to get the apparatus for sound production working as easily and efficiently as possible. The main goal is to be loose and efficient.

Buzzing the mouthpiece connects the brain to the chops. Either buzz a few memorized tunes (keep 'em simple and bouncy) or the Jacobs buzzing routine that uses the piano to keep you on pitch.

In this Warm-Up I have included extra exercises to keep the session from getting too routine or boring. It is not meant for you to play every note of every page. Just do what makes your practice sessions go well!

The next element added in is the most important: **Sound**. When playing these long tones, think of the "World's Greatest Trombone Sound" in your head and reproduce it through your instrument. Play **either** the Remington **or** the Jacobs. To do both may prove too taxing on the chops so early in the warm-up period. After completing a long tone exercise, take what you have just developed and apply it to the art form of music through the use of simple, melodious etudes. I have included several Cimera phrasing studies to start with. The key point is to keep the melodies short and simple and to let the sound ***sing***.

The next elements I work on are flexibility and articulation. As with the sound exercise, work on improving the basic fundamental skill and then put it to practical use. In the case of the slow slurs, make certain that the sound is great through 100% of the note. Concentrate on the sound of the note you are playing, not the motion required to get to the next note. After the slow slurs, challenge yourself with more extended slurs and flexibility exercises. When working on articulation, strive to develop a wide array of attacks, from the smoothest legato to the shortest staccato. Use the Arban fanfare-type exercises to apply the crisp, clear attacks that you achieved in the repeated note exercises. I have included a couple of extended exercises from Charlie Vernon's "A Singing Approach" and Marsteller's "Basic Routines" book to add some challenge into the warm-up process.

Once the warm-up routine is complete, (a thorough run through takes about 30 minutes) you are ready to commence with your practice session. I advocate 3 or 4 sessions per day of 45-60 minutes. Practicing much longer than an hour at a stretch can lead to bad habits or injury.

After you have had a particularly taxing practice session use the Cool Down to relax your chops prior to putting your instrument away. Always end your practice session by playing some of your best notes. The body has an amazing memory and it will be easier to pick up where you left off if you always end with good sounds. Never put the horn away until you have loosened up your chops.

Appendix II

Recommended Studies/Texts:

Arban-Famous Method
Baker-Tenor Trombone Method
Bitsch-15 Rhythmical Studies
Blazhevich-Clef Studies for Trombone
Blokker-Oefeningen voor Trombone
Bordogni/Rochut-Melodious Etudes
Bordogni/Schwartz-Vocalises w/CD
Bozza-13 Etudes and Caprices
Charlier-32 Etudes de perfectionnement
Cimera-55 Phrasing Studies
Colin Advanced Lip Flexibilities
Colley-Tune-Up System
Farkas-The Art of Brass Playing
Farkas-The Art of Musicianship
Kleinhammer-The Art of Trombone Playing
Kopprasch-60 Selected Studies
Leonard-Advanced Band Method Basses (Tuba) [contains Jacobs studies]
Marsteller-Basic Routines
Maxted-20 Studies
Remington-Warm Ups
Sauer-Orchestral Etudes
Schlossberg-Daily Drills and Technical Studies
Sheridan/Pilafian-The Breathing Gym
Snedecor-Lyrical Etudes
Stevens-Scale and Arpeggio Routines
Tyrell-40 Progressive Studies
Vernon-A Singing Approach
Wick-Trombone Technique
Winding-Yoga for Musicians and Other Special People

Appendix III

Background:

In 1999, I was a participant in the Alessi Seminar in Nyack, New York presented by Joseph Alessi, Principal Trombonist of the New York Philharmonic. Mr. Alessi requested that I lead the warm-up session on one of the days of the seminar. Since I did not have a set warm-up and rarely took the time to do a full warm-up routine, I set about designing a warm-up that would address the specific fundamentals I feel are imperative to high-quality trombone performance…I would ideally do….***if I only had the time…***

I decided that if I was going to be promoting this warm-up as one I would do, I should actually *do it* for a while prior to the seminar. I found the result to be quite startling. After only 2 weeks of commitment to this warm-up, I noticed significant improvements in my playing, specifically in the reliability of my soft playing and overall control. My students have found similar benefits.