Unit 4: Flexibility

There are probably a million different flexibility routines.
This is different. Here's why-
Flexibility isn't just being able to blow air through lips and having them be relaxed enough to just 'change partials' quickly. It's not about 'up the metronome 2 clicks each day and you can eventually play lightning fast' and its also not about ' build your muscles to be able to change pitches really fast'.

Flexibility is about training your nerves to remain calm.
Simple as that.

Not Sold? ..hear me out...

When you blow a lot of air into a slur, you force the nerves to not react because they are anticipating tons of air, and therefor you in effect override the reaction chance. Many people that practice with high airflow all the time can exhibit wicked flexibility at great speeds, but at softer dynamics they cannot sustain this, or end up tightening muscles to compensate and lose resonance.

If you build the muscles to control the slur like a 'flex', it will get quick over time, but it's exhausting for endurance and your lips will never be able to fully relax, therefor inhibiting your tone and resonance.

The secret actually lies in slow control as you learn to balance between flow and muscle control- I call it 'guiding' its a lot like sailing- you have to hoist the sale and set it with the wind, but you can't have it too tight, and the wind can't blow too hard. There is a 'Golden Ratio' for clean and resonant flexibility, and this routine will help you find yours!

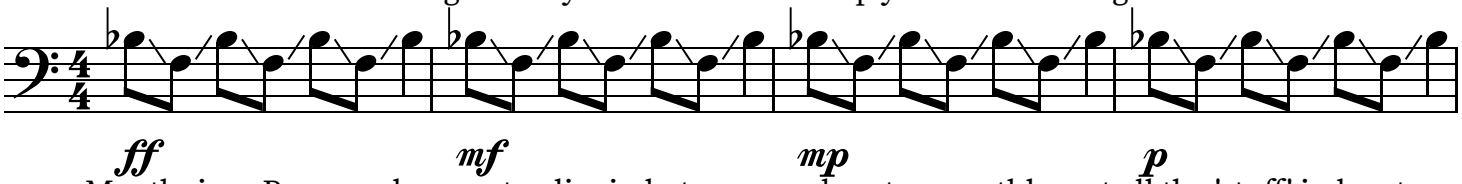
Just keep in mind- Flexibility is built on 3 parts- Form, Flow, and Fulcrum.

Form- Your calmness of embouchure setup- Your face knowing what is coming and not reacting extraneously.
Flow- The air leading, but not pushing. Keeping a ratio controlled, and having motion always. No stagnant air.
Fulcrum- The leverage that happens between the airflow, aperture, tongue angle, and mind. This is the balance.

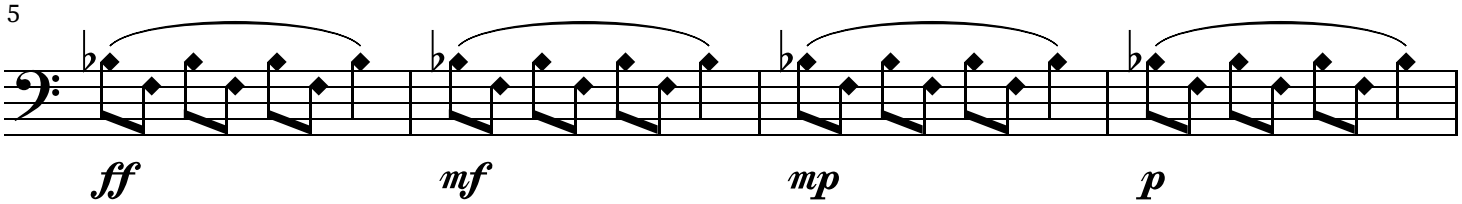
Day 1-4: Play A-F for 20 min (make sure you're taking your time with these) and then G-L) total 35 min
Day 5-8: Play A-F for 15 min, then complete packet.
Day 9-10 FLEX

Alex Knutrud

A Opening the Crossing: Play these as slow as you can. Follow the dynamics closely. Listen for the BEST resonating sound you can- this will help you lock in that 'golden ratio'

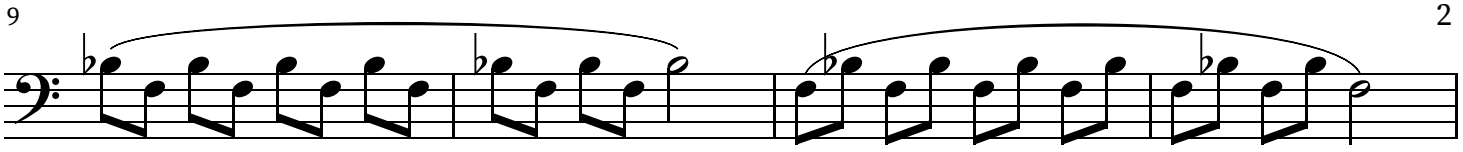


Mouthpiece Buzz- make sure to gliss in between each note smoothly- get all the 'stuff' in bewteen each slur



Copyright 2021 Alex Knutrud. All rights reserved. Please share and copy.

9



*do these at the dynamic where your resonance was strongest- most likely, around **mf** or **mp***

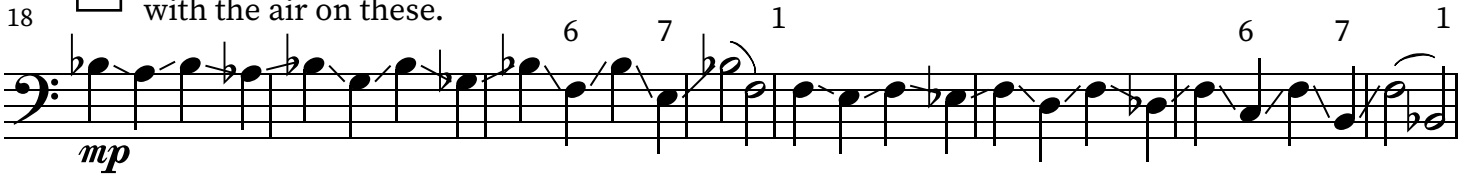
13

Corners firm for this, lips loose and supple. Air steady

Play this line 5 times. Each time, get gradually faster. On the fifth time, you should be twice the speed as the first. If you can, use a flutter tongue on these. If you cannot, instead consider buzzing them on the mouthpiece with a mirror watching your form. You want to be as still as you can, get all the 'soupy' glisses in between each pitch. Lead with the air on these.

B

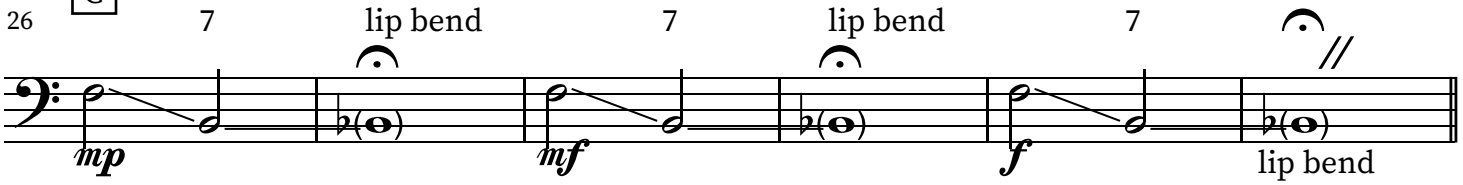
18



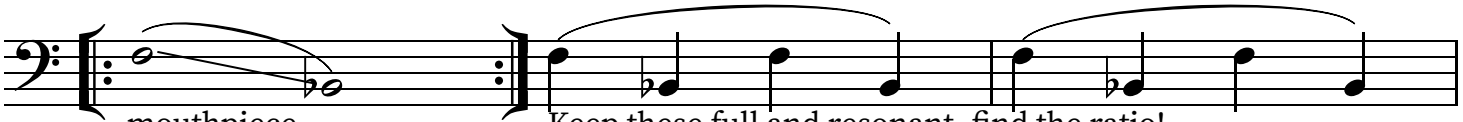
tempo here should be steady. Maybe Q=76. Don't back away from flow as you lip bend- blow into it. Use a mirror if you must, but your form shouldn't change at all.

C

26

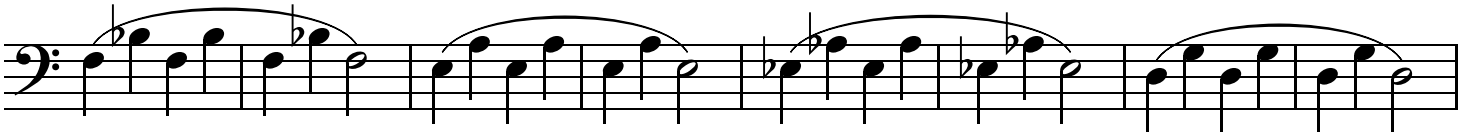


32

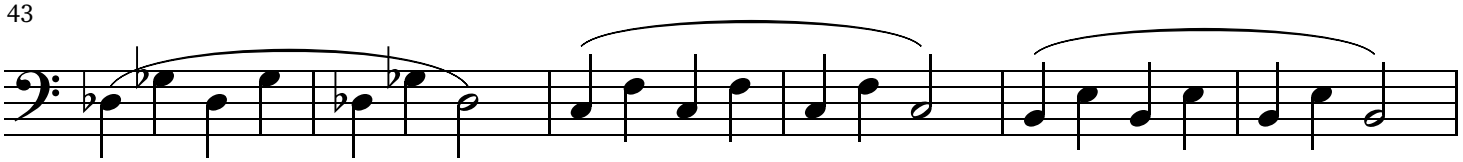


D try Q=66 here.

35

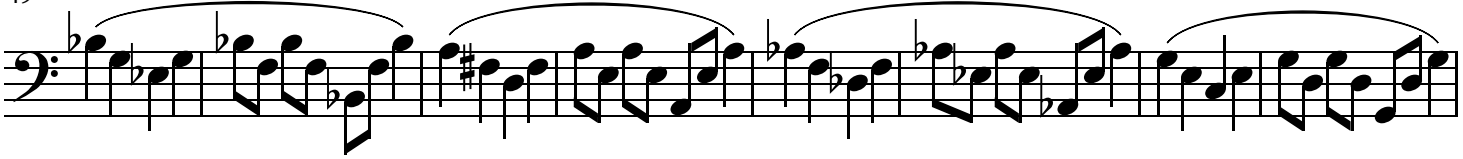


43

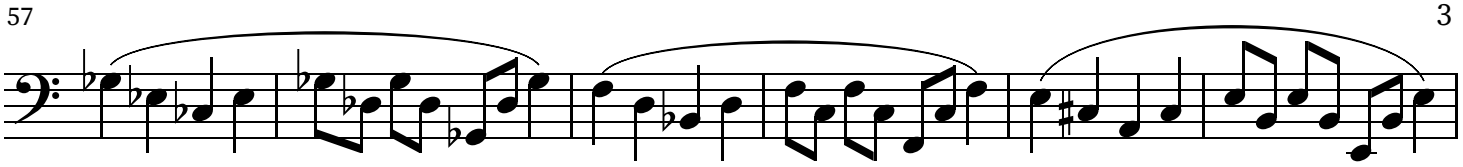


E No tongue. Try these twice- Q=72, and then Q=96

49

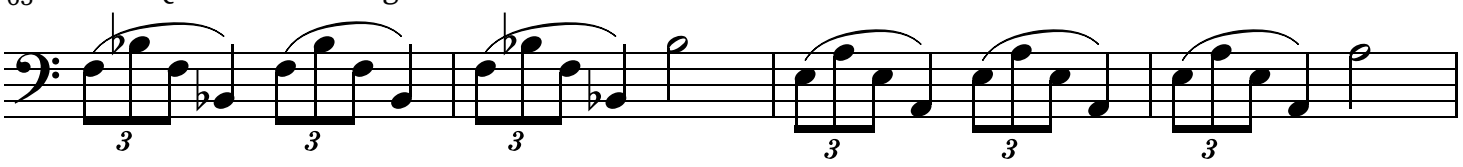


57

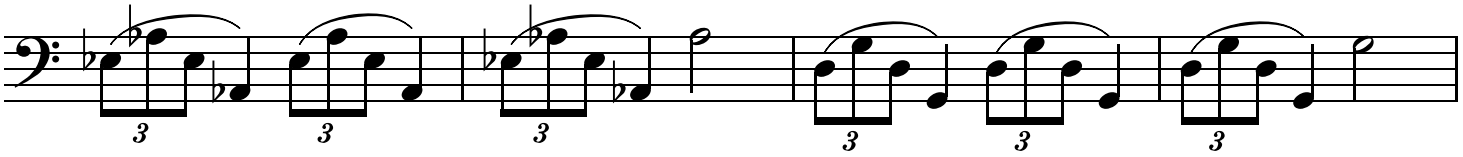


F This should be led more with air than corners. Up your flow ratio a little, and then try this at Q=72 and then again a bit faster. Think of these as a 'flick' of the air. No corner moves.

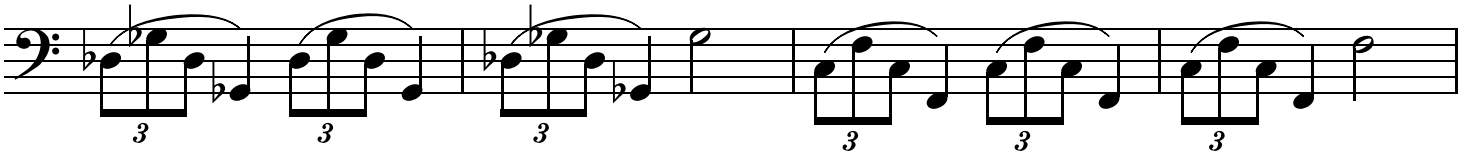
63



67



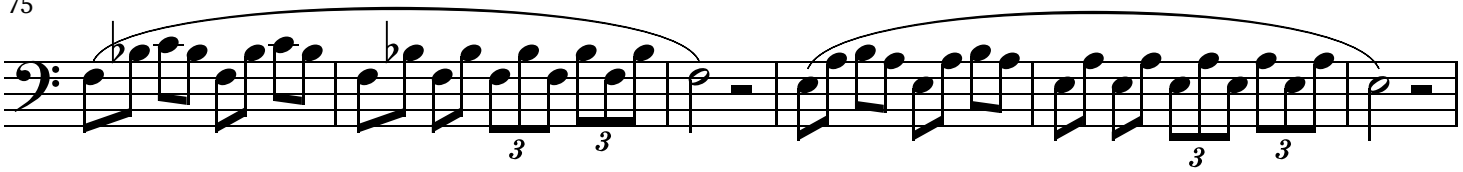
71



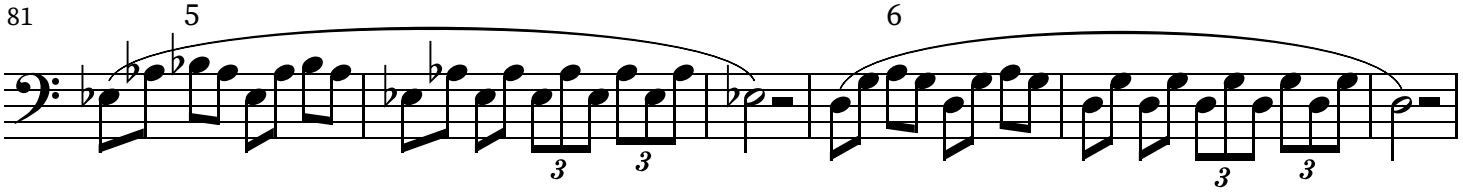
Oral cavity is a big factor in tone with flexibility. Don't let it change over the first measure, and then in the second, your sound should be resonant if you keep it the same. This is one of my favorite exercises of all time. Try Q=80-100 ish.

G

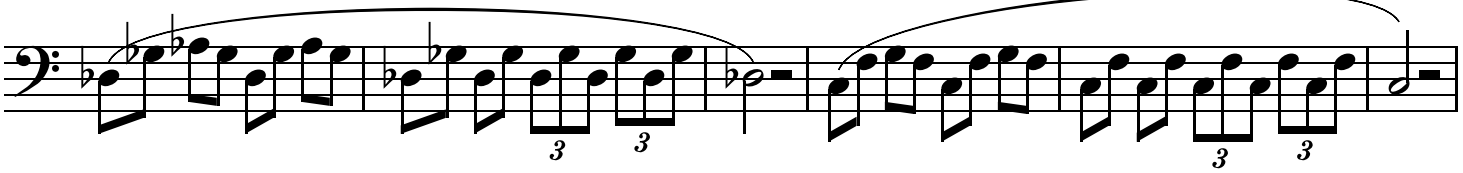
75



81 5 6



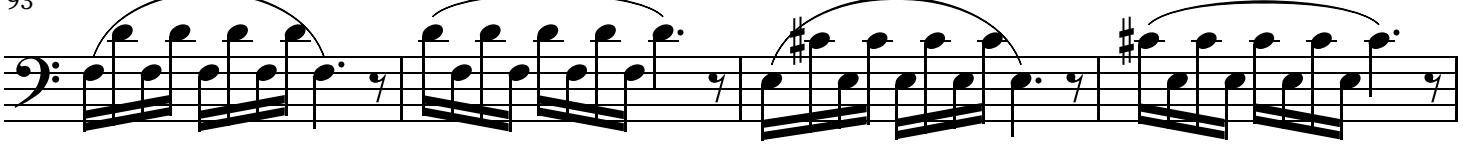
87 7 T1



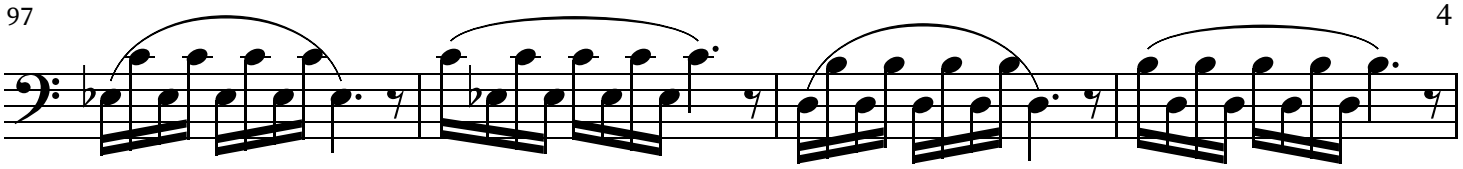
Trill Slurs Lvl. 1: Keep your face still, and use the air direction and shape to change these. Think of your embouchure as a rubber band, and keep the sustain. Try slow and fast.

H

93

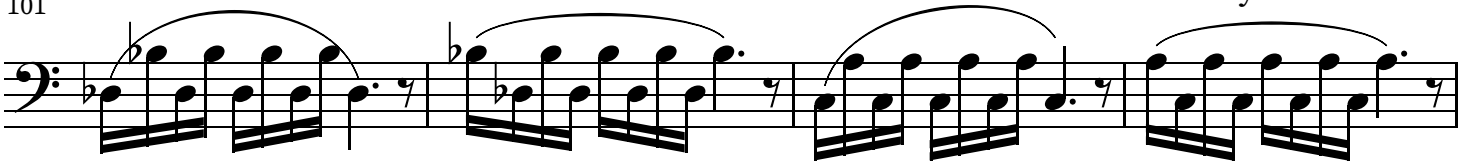


97



101

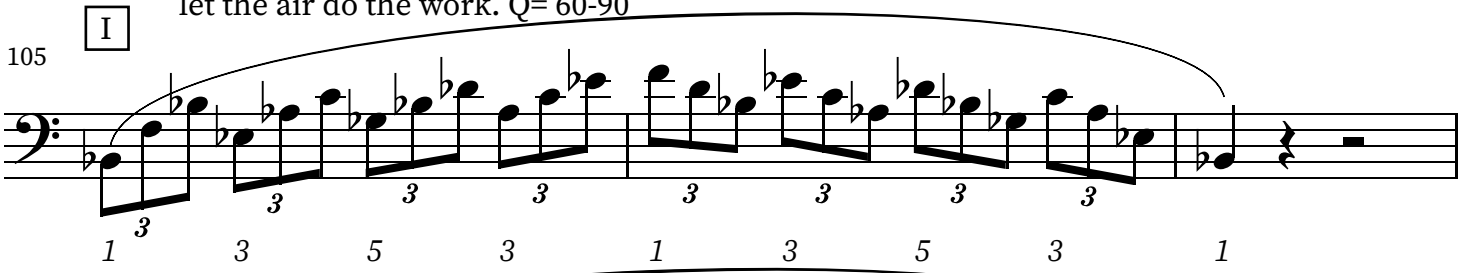
Continue lower if you like.



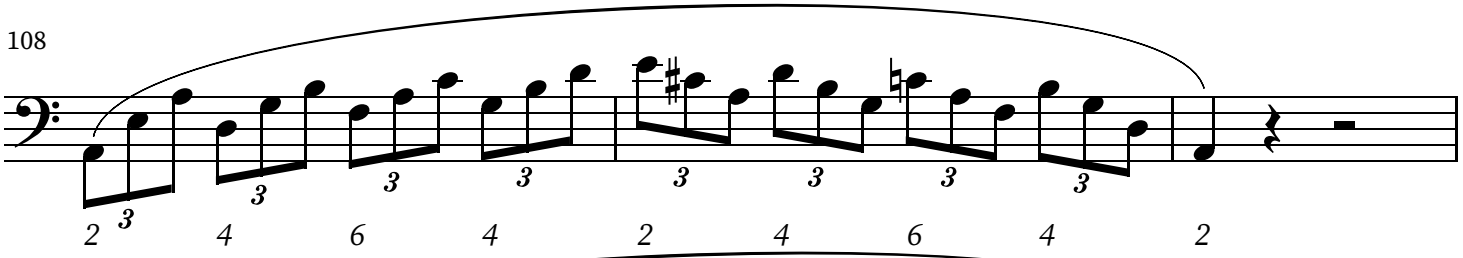
Staircase Slurs I: Alternate these in the positions marked- Keep as loose as you can, and let the air do the work. Q= 60-90

I

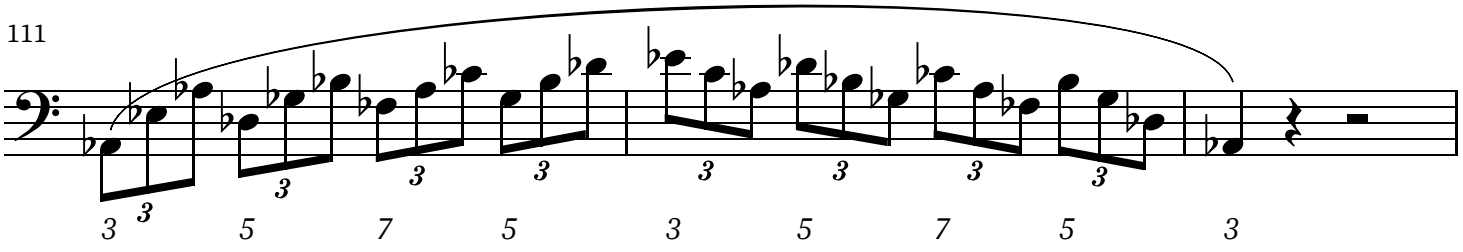
105



108



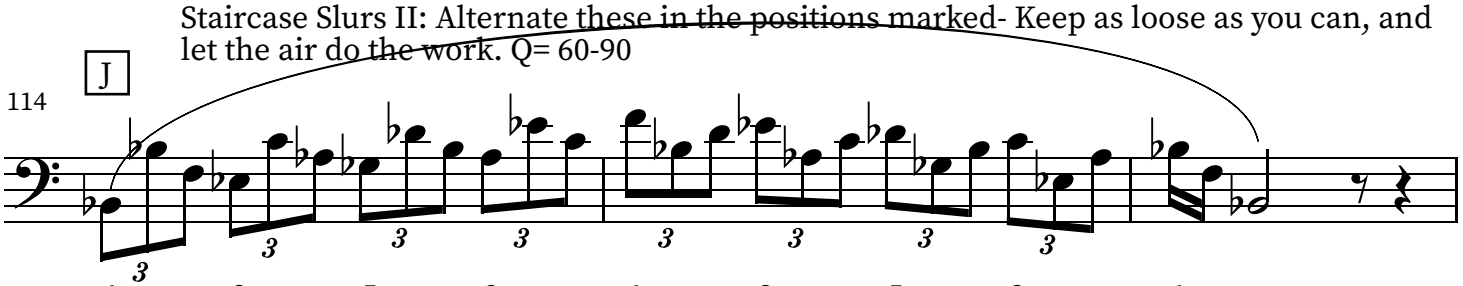
111



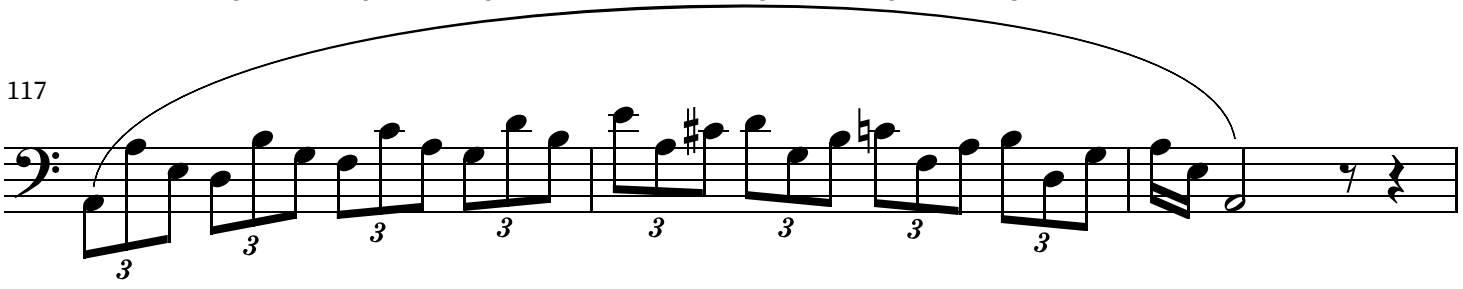
Staircase Slurs II: Alternate these in the positions marked- Keep as loose as you can, and let the air do the work. Q= 60-90

J

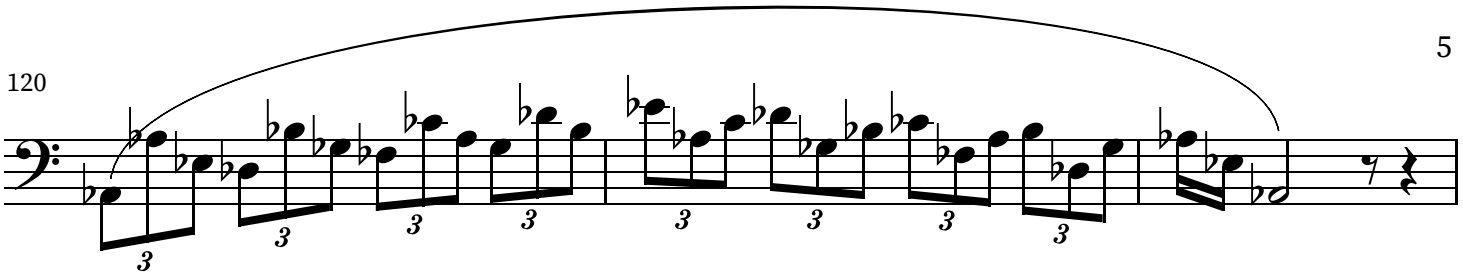
114



117



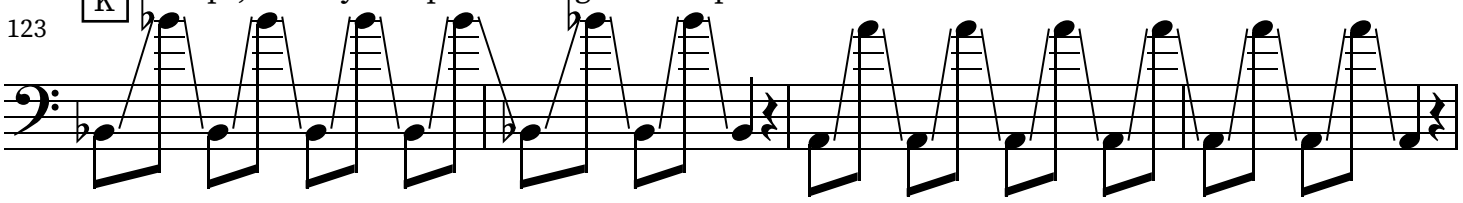
120



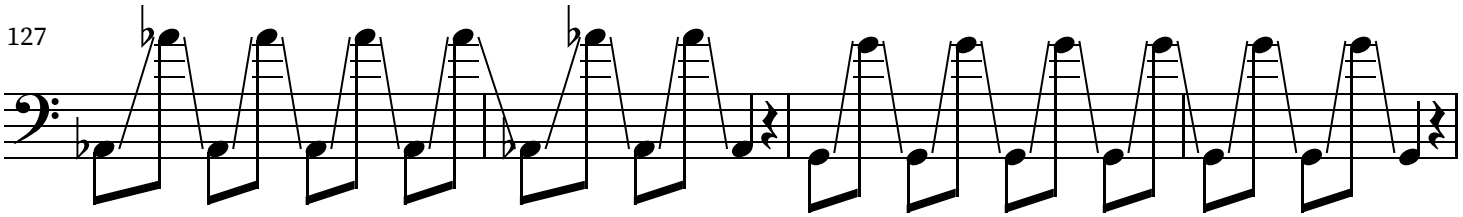
Ataru Slurs: These don't count unless your corners are firm and embouchure is still. All of the slow work you've done in prior lip slur routines slowly will build to this. Treat these as rips, and try and pass through all the partials in between

K

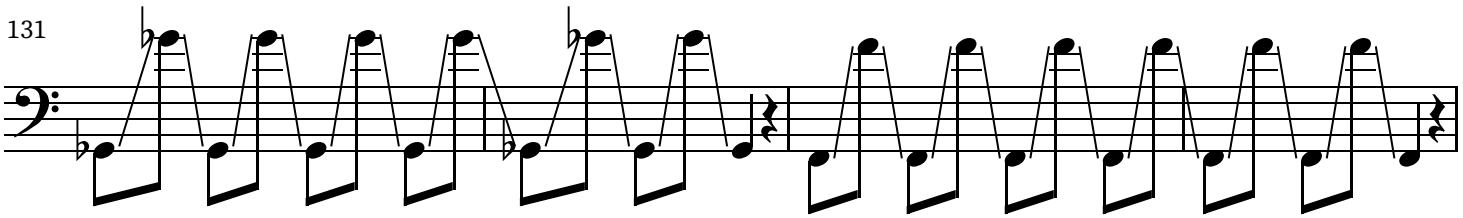
123



127



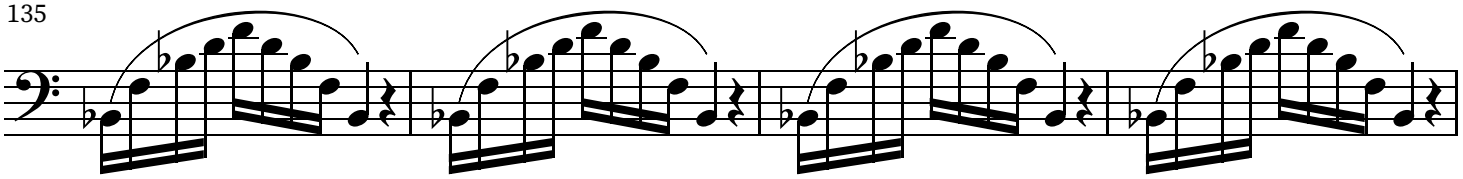
131



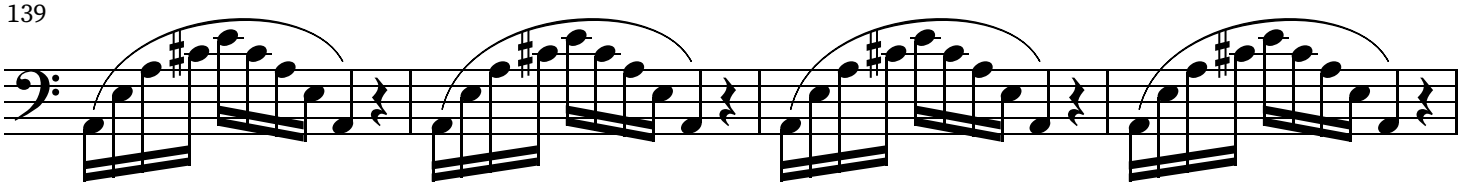
Lightning Slurs- Keep these as quick as possible, but don't let yourself get tight- keep the air moving and constant.

L

135

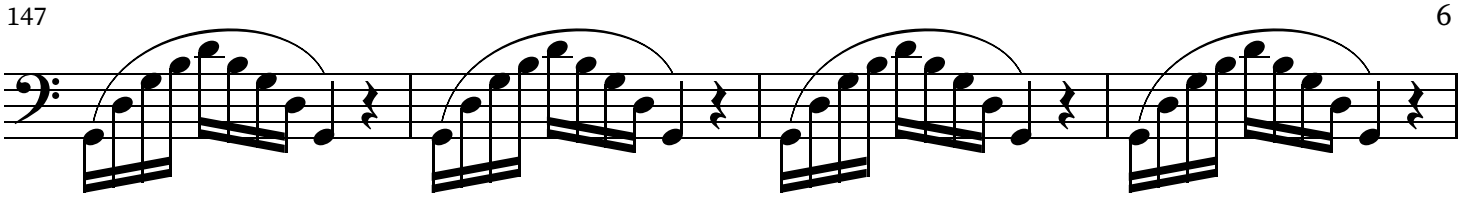


139

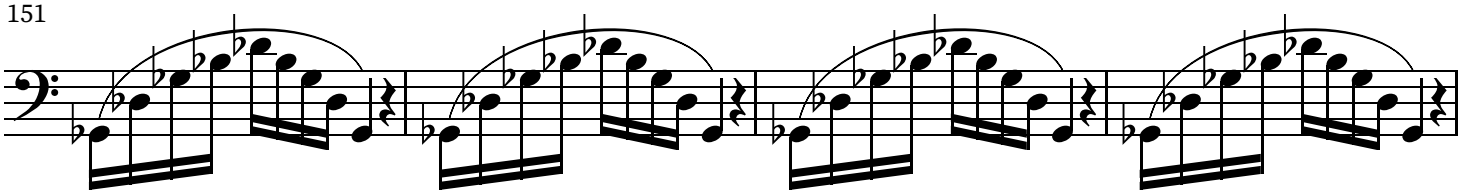


143

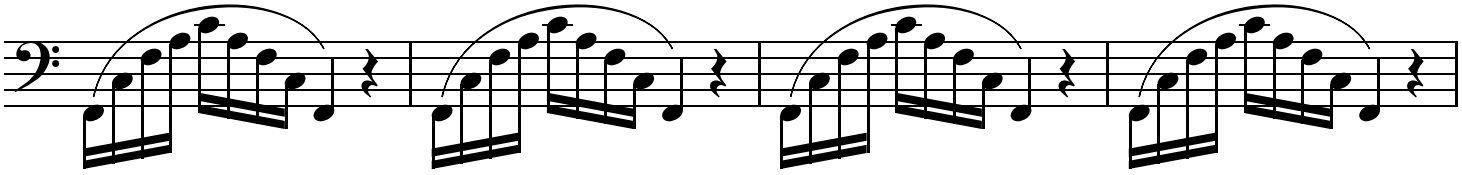
147



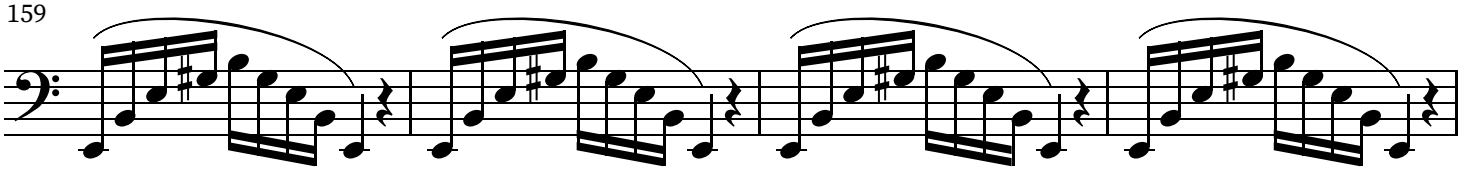
151



155

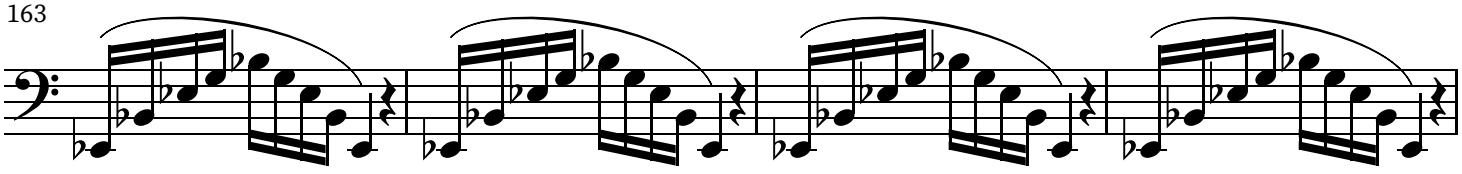


159



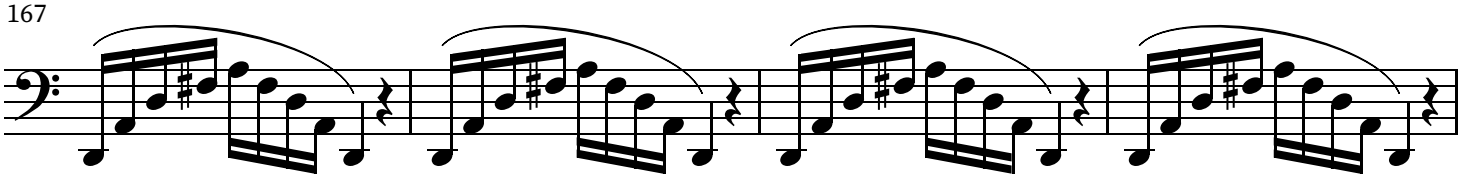
** If you are going into the valve, TRY TY STAY IN VALVE POSITIONS- Play each slur in the same position with the valve down. I know this is hard and a weird way to play these, but if you can make them even, it will make all the difference over time in your valve playing and resonance.

163



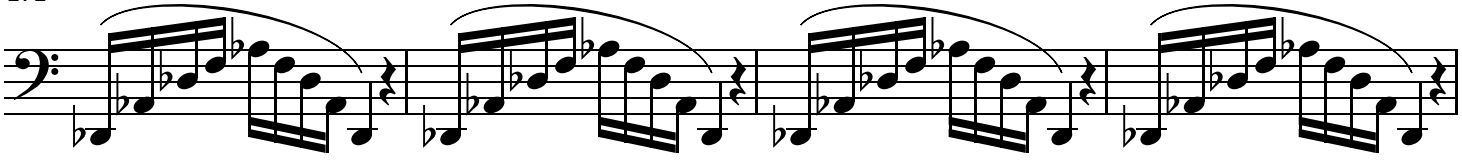
T3-

167



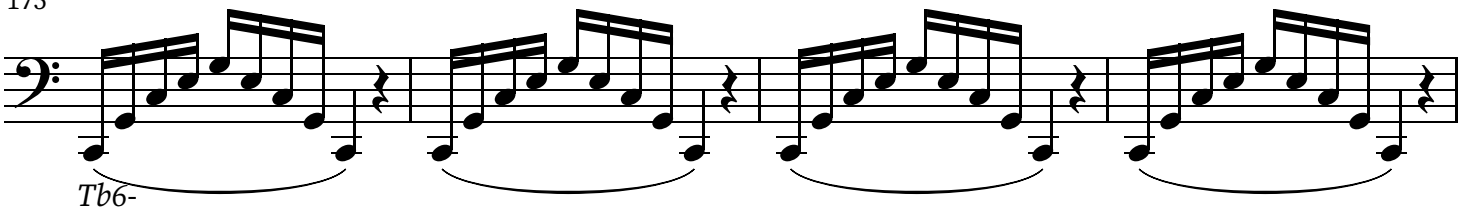
T4-

171



Tb5-

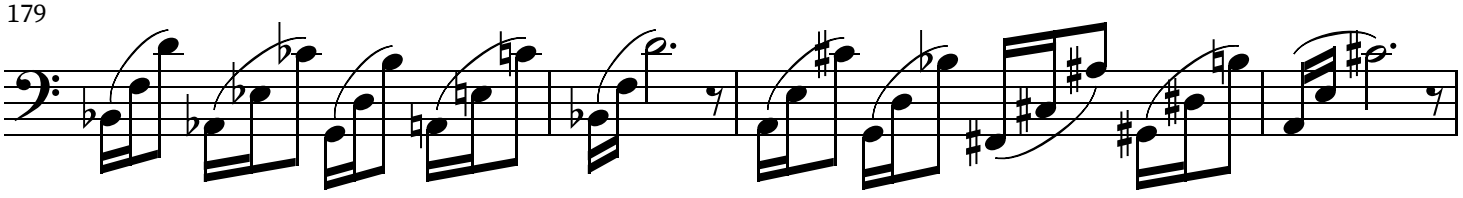
175



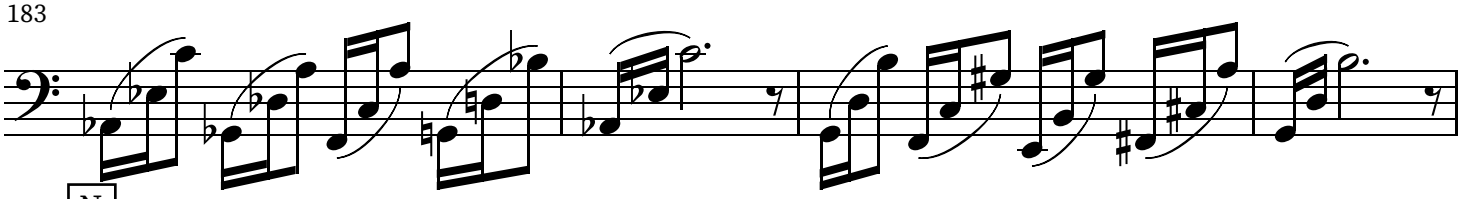
Tb6-

M same as above, but let your tongue get involved here- keep it light of course!

179

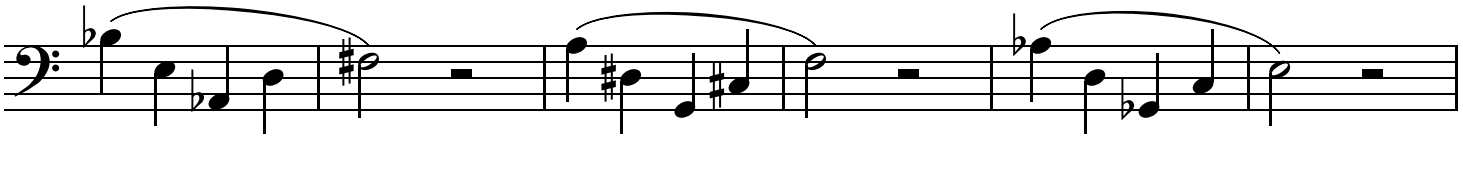


183

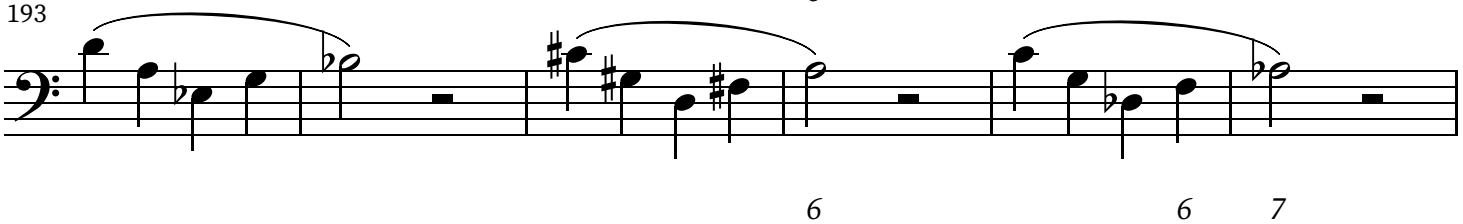


N Sling Slurs: Q=60. Strive for color and resonance. This is a fulcrum exercise. Feel the mechanics work.

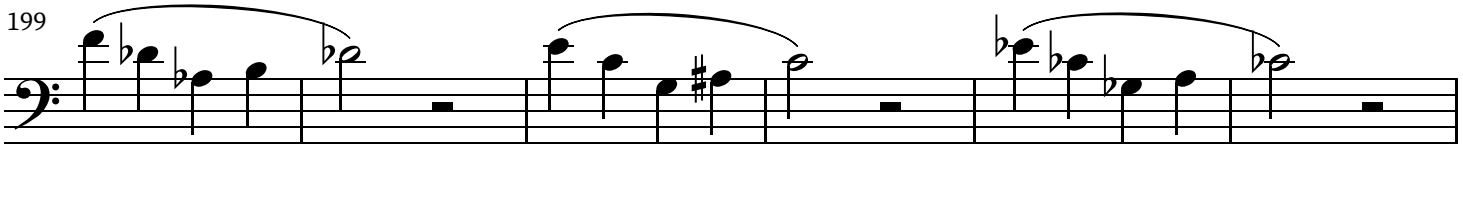
187



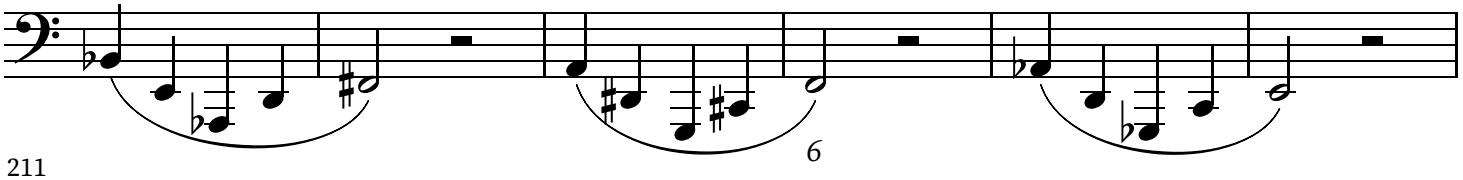
193



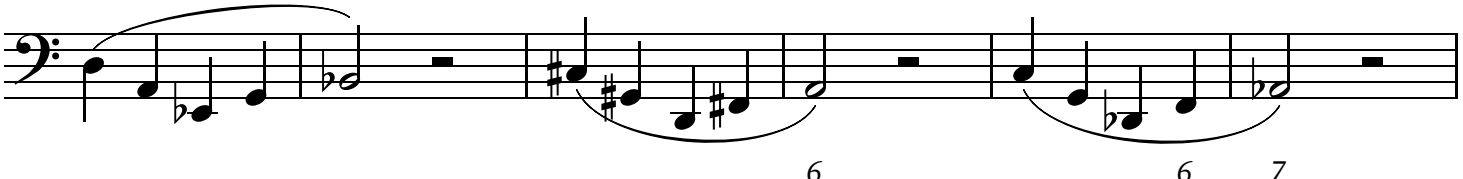
199



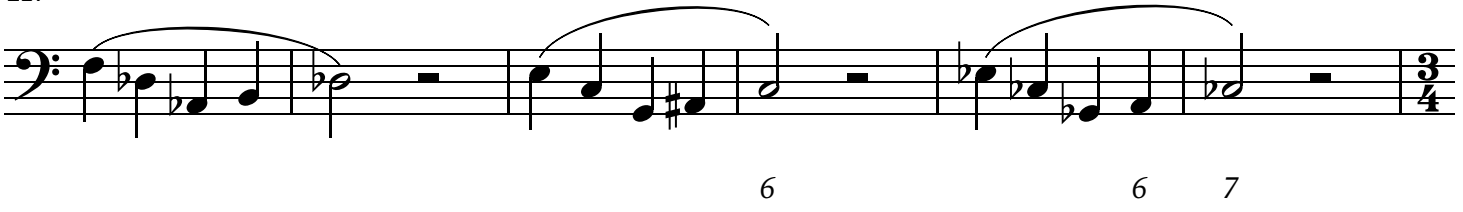
205 These may be low for tenors, but if you can play these notes, you'll get a lot out of them!



211

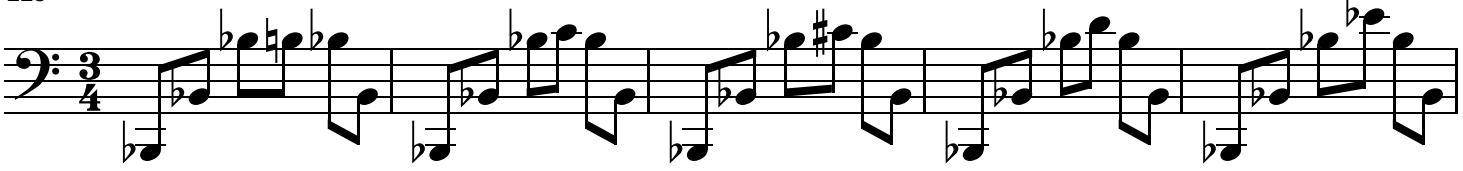


217

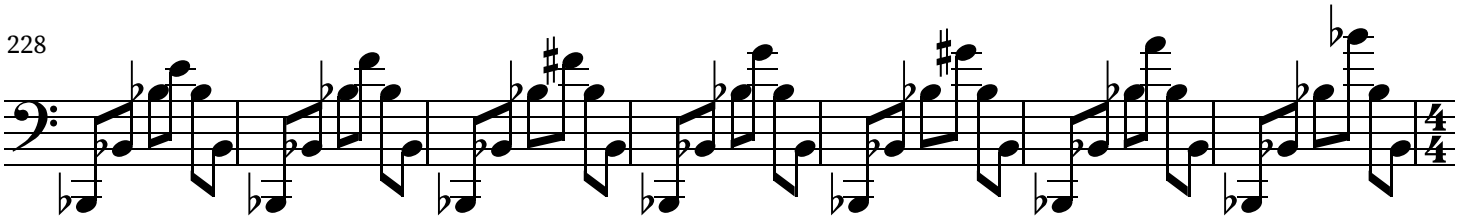


O Von Holtz Octaves: These are frustrating at first, but pay off BIG TIME about 4 months into playing them every day. To make them harder, use a mirror to make sure you're not moving your corners, and a metronome to make sure you're not losing any time in the octave changes.
Play these no tongue at first, and then tongue later. If you can't span the range, its ok- remove the pedal Bb's.

223

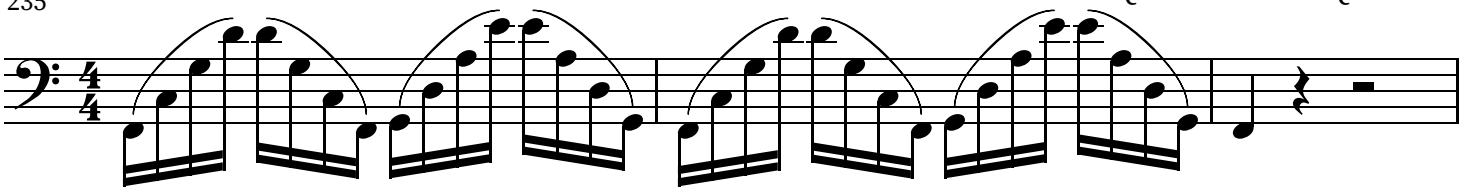


228

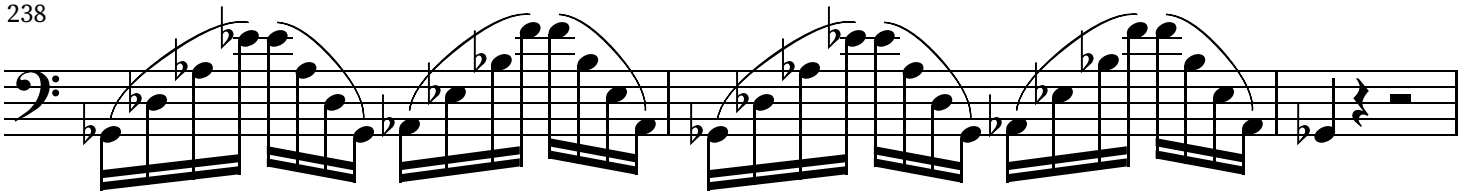


P Violin Slurs: Let the air do the work. Flexibility to get these open 5th's right is about control of form and a controlled relaxation of muscles and tension. Q=72 and then Q=90

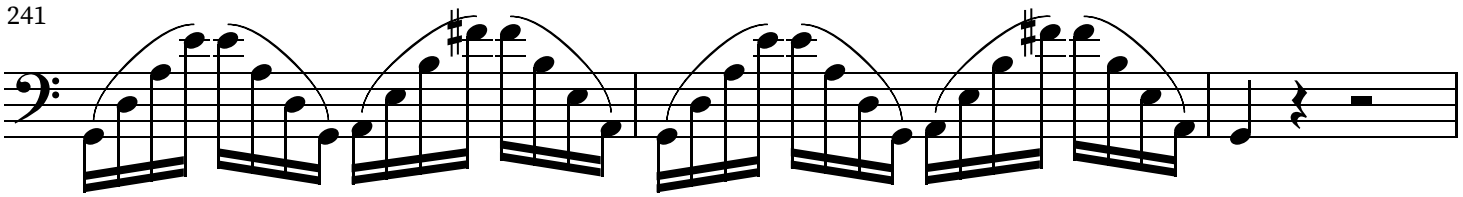
235



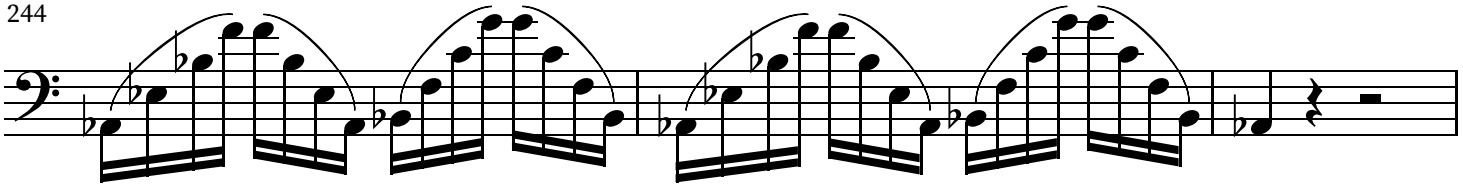
238



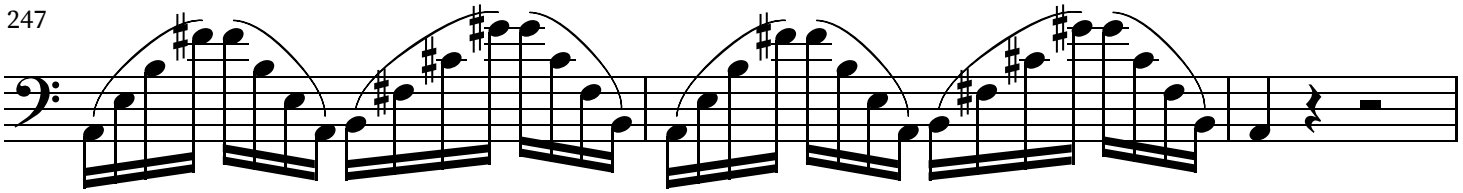
241



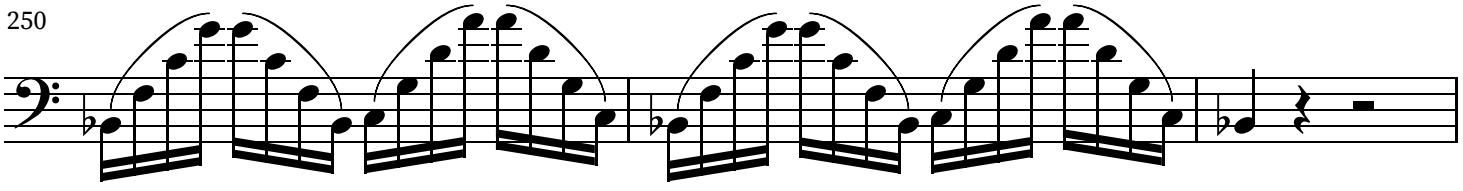
244

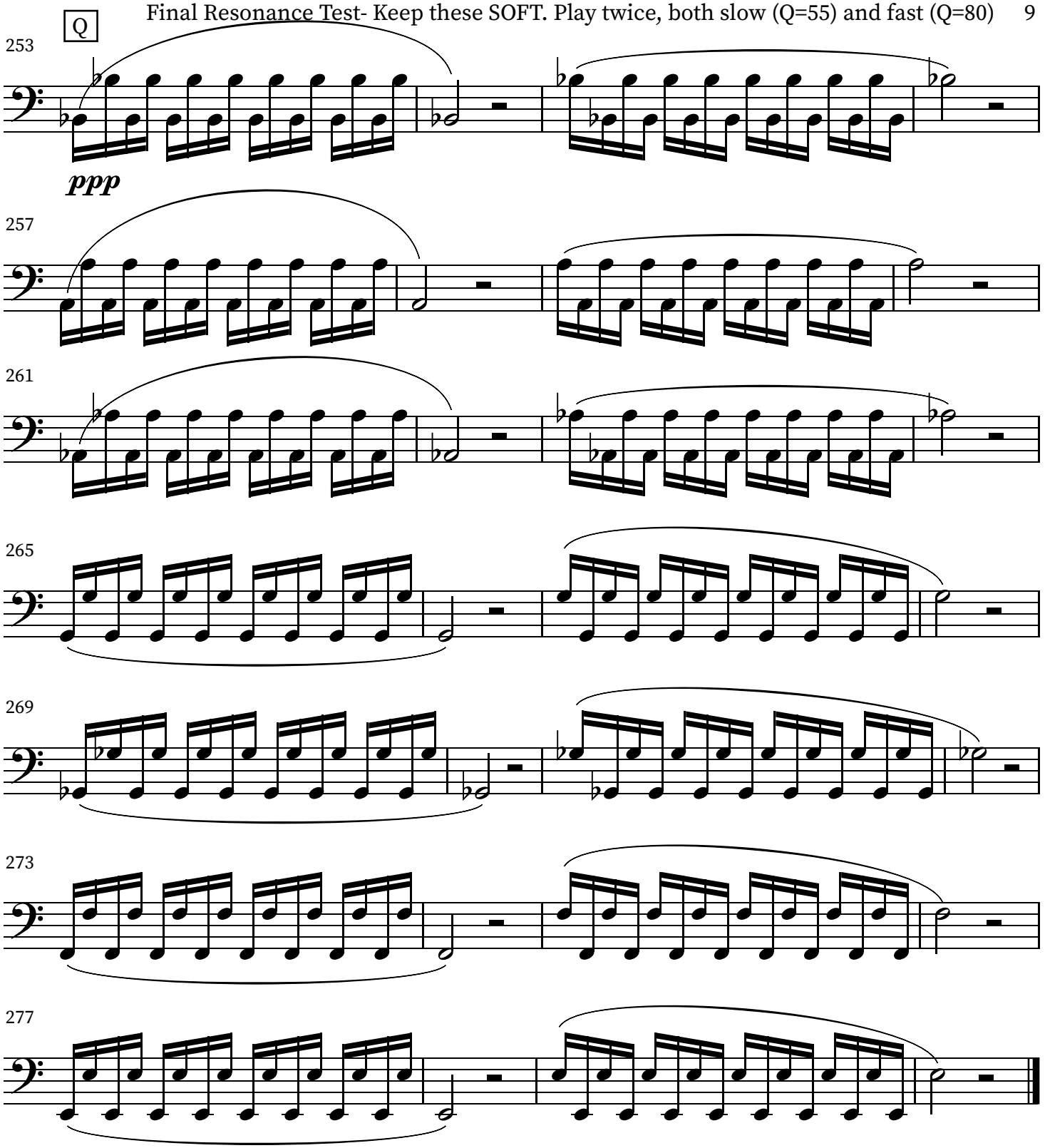


247



250




Q
253
ppp
257
261
265
269
273
277