ATU Bands' Virtual Directors Academy

Tuba Tips: How to Help Your Students Overcome Common Challenges

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1. **Mechanics of Breathing**
    a. Breathing basics
        i. Inhalation = fill from bottom to top (fill water balloon)
        ii. Exhalation = ab muscles to control release of air (squeeze water balloon)
    b. Breathing exercise: progressively shorter inhales with / without arm rise and fall, quarter = 66
        1. In 4, out 8 with arms
        2. In 2, out 8 with arms
        3. In 1, out 8 with arms
        4. In 8th, out 8 without arms
        5. In 16th, out 8 without arms

2. **Mouthpiece Buzzing for Efficiency and a Clear Sound**
    a. Why mouthpiece buzzing?
        i. Airflow
        ii. Embouchure efficiency
        iii. Embouchure strength
        iv. Development of ears
    b. Notes
        i. Minimize movement of the embouchure
        ii. Control pitch changes with tongue movement (whistling)
        iii. Engage ab muscles for good support
    c. GRJ Mouthpiece Buzzing Series
        i. Start in the middle of the range (tuning B-flat)
        ii. Drone pitch = first note of exercise
        iii. Down by HS as low as possible, to tuning B-flat, up as high as possible
        iv. Do each exercise in one breath, adjusting tempo to suit skill level

3. **Flow Studies for Developing Airflow and Smooth Movement Around the Horn**
    a. David Vining: Flow Studies for Tuba - Old Edition (Mountain Peak Music)
        i. https://www.mountainpeakmusic.com/flow-studies-for-tuba-old-edition/
        ii. Most exercises are appropriate for high school tuba players, some are appropriate for middle school tuba players
        iii. Benefits include airflow, breath control, smoothness
    b. Demo excerpts from Vining Flow Studies: #1, 25, 29
        i. Use metronome with beat subdivisions for steady tempo
        ii. Use drone to work on intonation
    c. If Vining book is too difficult for your students right now:
        i. Make up your own exercises that achieve similar goals
        ii. GRJ Starter Flow Studies: take up/down by HS as appropriate

4. **Clarity of Articulation**
    a. The Basics
        i. Good air use is at the root of clear articulation (especially air speed/appropriate embouchure firmness)
        ii. Water faucet analogy = constant air stream
            1. Finger flicks the water = tongue flicks roof of mouth
            2. Wind patterning is great for listening to students' articulation
            3. Exercise: wind pattern two whole notes tied together
        iii. Choose an articulation consonant
            1. "D" consonant is great = not too heavy, not too light
            2. Combine "d" with oh/oo/ee vowel shapes for different ranges = doh/doo/dee (garden hose analogy)
            3. Exercise: form an embouchure and wind pattern 4 quarter notes each on doh/doo/dee
    b. Double and triple tonguing
        i. Use D-G or T-K consonants
            1. Still combine with oh/oo/ee for different ranges
            2. The air is still the driving factor (water faucet)
            3. E.g. doh goh/doo goo/dee gee
        ii. Double tonguing
            1. Back syllable often needs extra effort to sound equal to front
            2. Exercise: form embouchure, WP doo-goo doo-goo doo
        iii. Triple tonguing
            1. D-D-G (GRJ preference) or D-G-D
            2. Exercise: form embouchure, WP doo-doo-goo doo-doo-goo doo

c. GRJ Articulation Exercises
    i. Play patterns with scales (one pattern per note of scale)
    ii. Play a low, middle, and high range scale each day
    iii. Okay to play just the ascending or descending half of the scale

5. Challenges with Register Extremes

a. Physics of playing
    i. Loud vs soft = amount of air (more/less)
    ii. High vs low notes = speed of air (fast/slow)
b. Upper Register: using too much air
    i. Garden hose analogy
    ii. Be careful saying "more air" in reference to high range
        1. What you really mean is faster air
        2. More air can blow lips apart if embouchure is not strong enough
    iii. Balance of three elements:
        1. Ab muscle support
        2. Embouchure corner firmness
        3. Tongue position
c. Low Register: air is too fast
    i. Garden hose analogy
    ii. The challenge: big breath in but release air slowly
        1. "Fogging the mirror"
        2. Keep all aspects of wind tube open: think "oh", keep throat open
    iii. For low range, you need:
        1. Ab muscle support
        2. Some embouchure firmness
        3. Low tongue position / think "oh"
d. GRJ Range Exercises
    i. High Range: go up by HS as high as possible
    ii. Low Range: go down by HS as low as possible

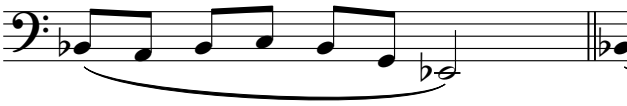
Fundamental Exercises for Common Tuba Challenges

Gretchen Renshaw James

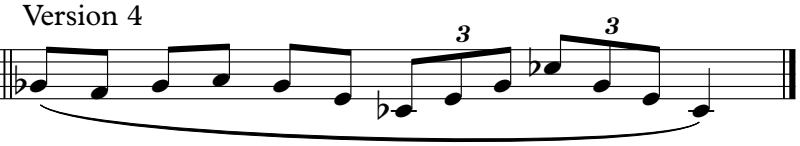
Mouthpiece Buzzing
♩=50-80
Version 1

Version 2

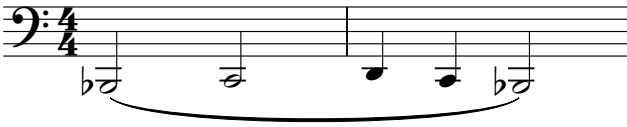
5 Version 3



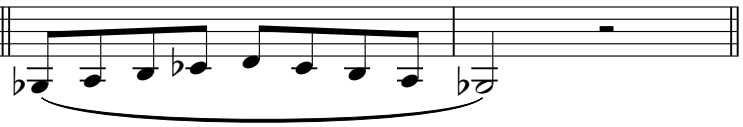
Version 4



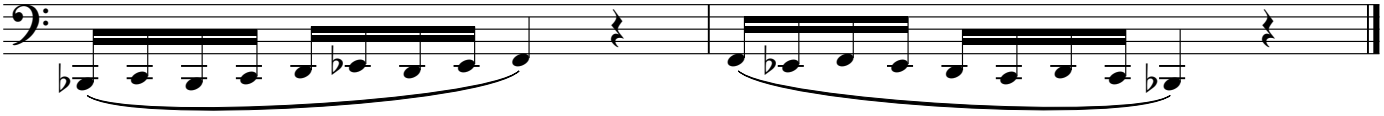
Starter Flow Studies
7 1. Slow Flow ♩=72-80



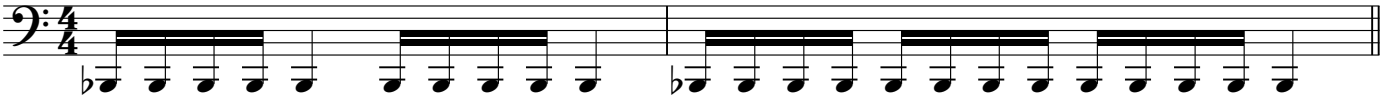
2. Medium Flow ♩=66-72



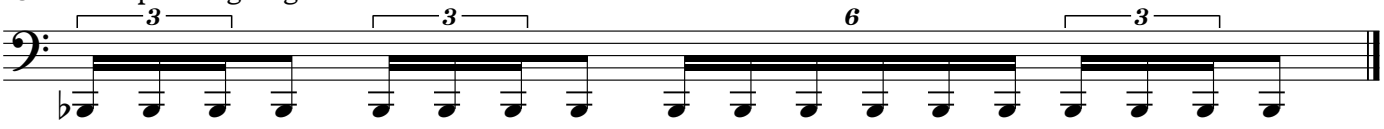
11 3. Fast Flow ♩=66-72



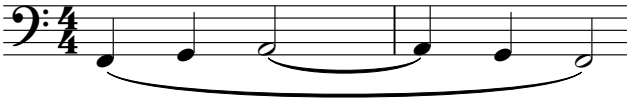
Articulation Exercises
13 1. Single or double tonguing



15 2. Triple tonguing



16 High Range ♩=60



Low Range ♩=54-60

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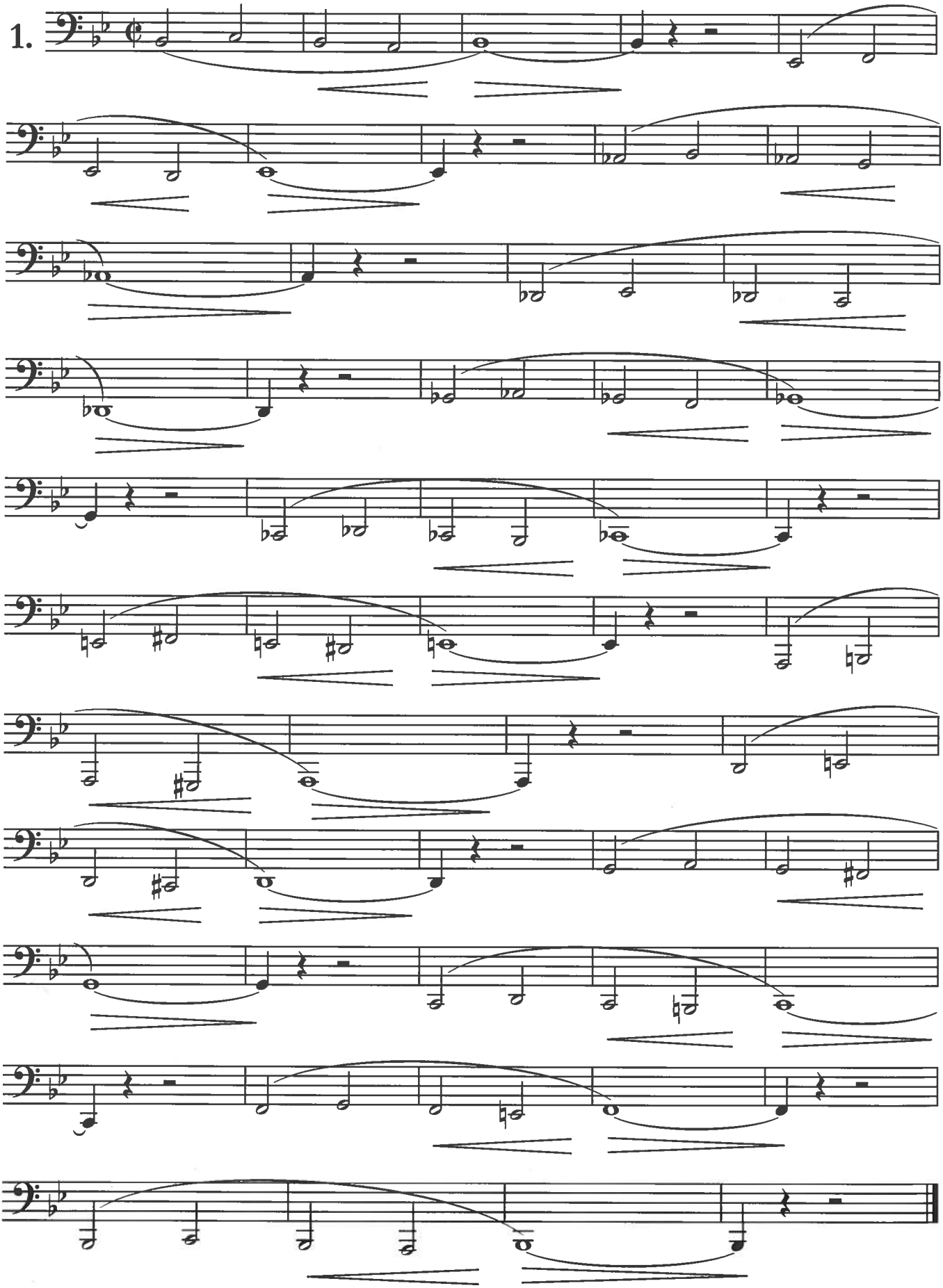
Part I: Slow Flow Studies

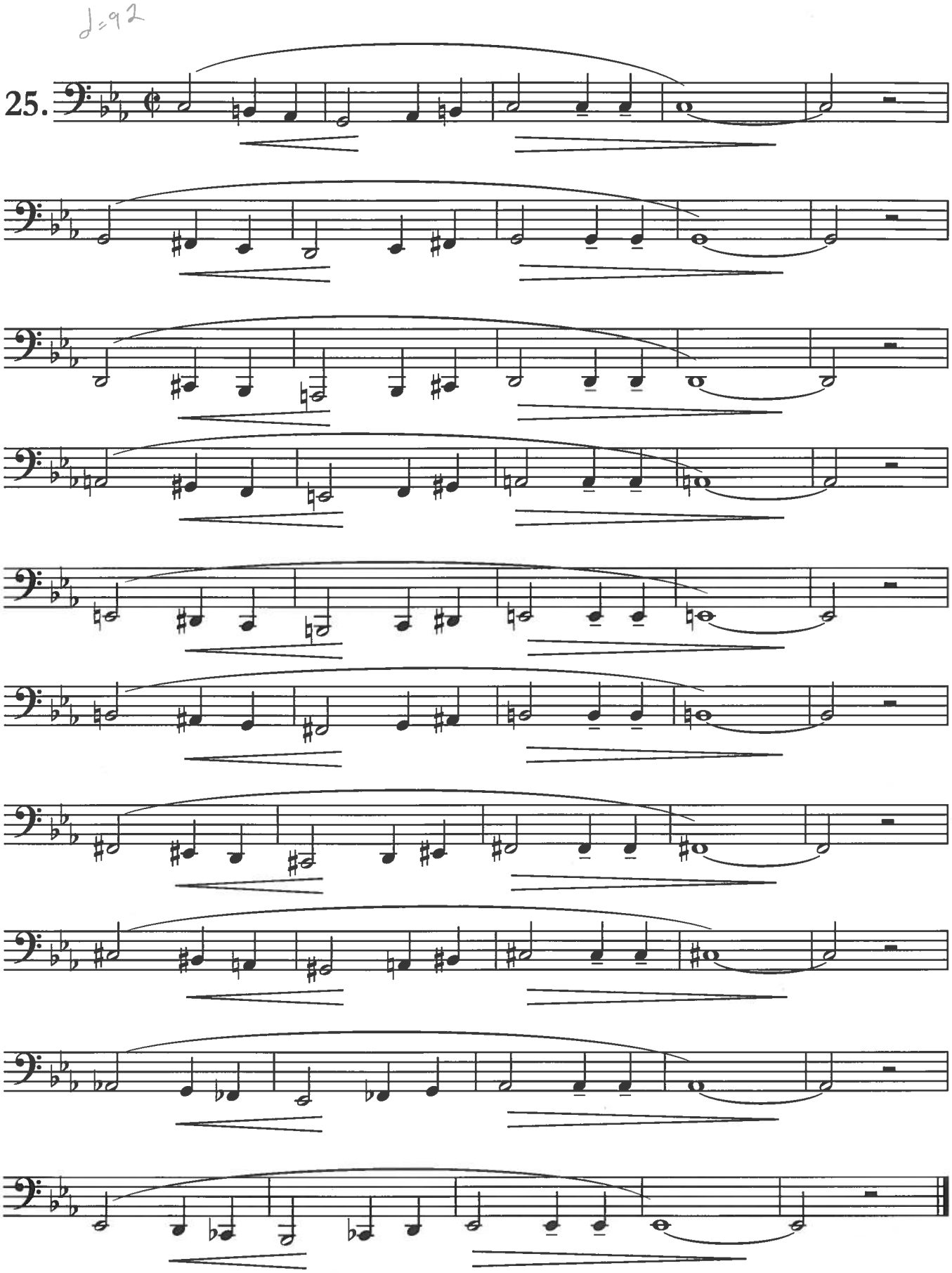
1. Half Notes

♩=66

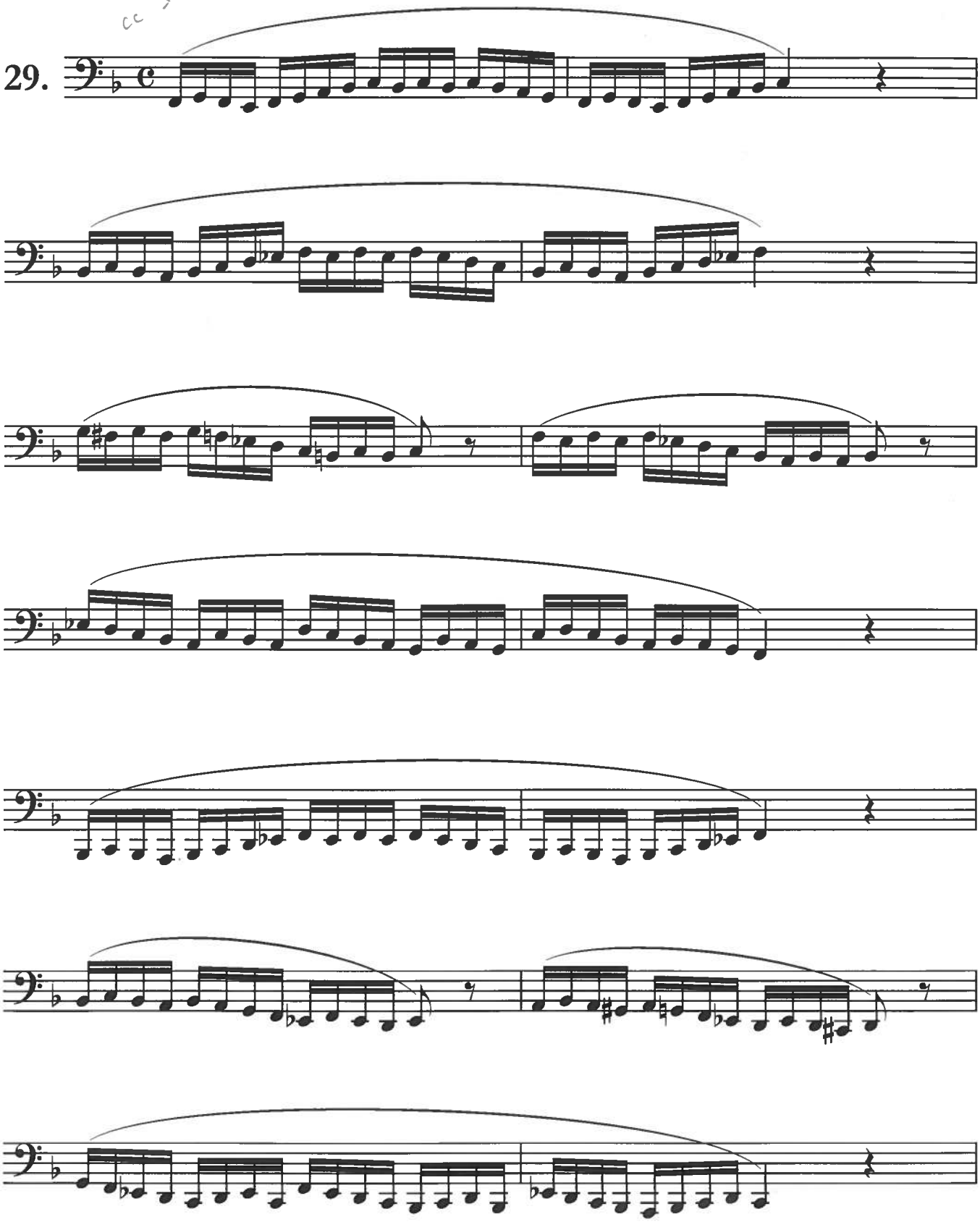
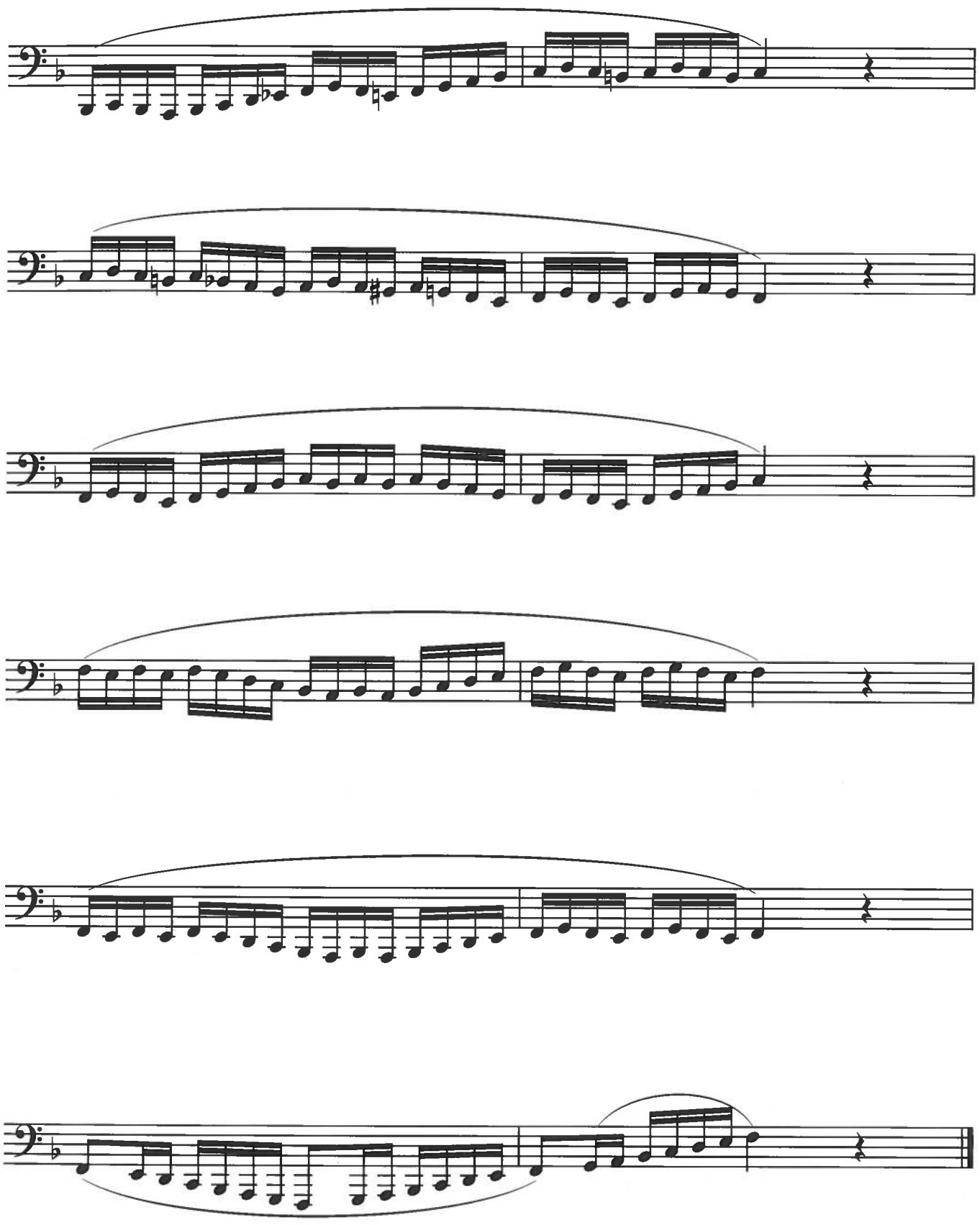
1.



25. Harmonic Minor



Part III: Fast Flow Studies

29. F Major

F ♩ = 100
cc ♩ = 108