tonebase

THE ULTIMATE 15-MINUTE

HORN WARM-UP ROUTINE

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BRASS

Introduction

This fifteen-minute warm-up aims to briefly guide a hornist through all the building blocks of musicianship and technical playing. If one expects to play extensively in the extreme high or low registers, one may adapt these warm-ups into those registers. Additionally, many exercises can be modified to begin on different notes or fundamental pitches of the harmonic series; doing so is central to understanding the horn as an instrument.

Though these exercises often target specific areas of one's playing, it is crucial that one incorporates all aspects of playing at all times–results are most easily obtained if one uses a tuner/drone and metronome, even while warming up. Always use good air and good posture to provide the best structure and support for one's sound.

Note: As one progresses in the world of horn playing, one might encounter a piece that asks the player to transpose at sight from a nearby key such as E-flat, D, or C. Understanding that the exercises given in this document can be similarly transposed to different keys, one should develop their ability to transpose through these daily exercises.

Warm Up Outline

Breathing & Long Tones . . . . . *2.5 minutes*

Chromatic Scales . . . . . *2 minutes*

REST . . . . . *1 minute*

Long-Tone Tuning . . . . . *1.5 minutes*

Articulation . . . . . *3 minutes*

REST . . . . . *30 seconds*

Lip Trills . . . . . *2 minutes*

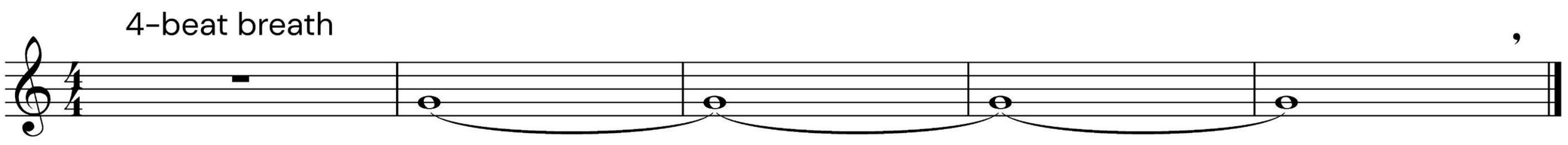
Glissandos & Range . . . . . *2.5 minutes*

Breathing & Long Tones

2.5 minutes

Air is the cornerstone to good horn playing and, as such, should be the first thing one addresses. When breathing, allow the ribcage to fully expand so that the lungs may reach their full capacity, if needed. The horn should be held in such a way that good posture feels easy and natural. Choose a starting note and explore one's range. Return to a neutral position between each iteration; doing so will develop one's ability to begin a phrase confidently on any note!

Uncredited

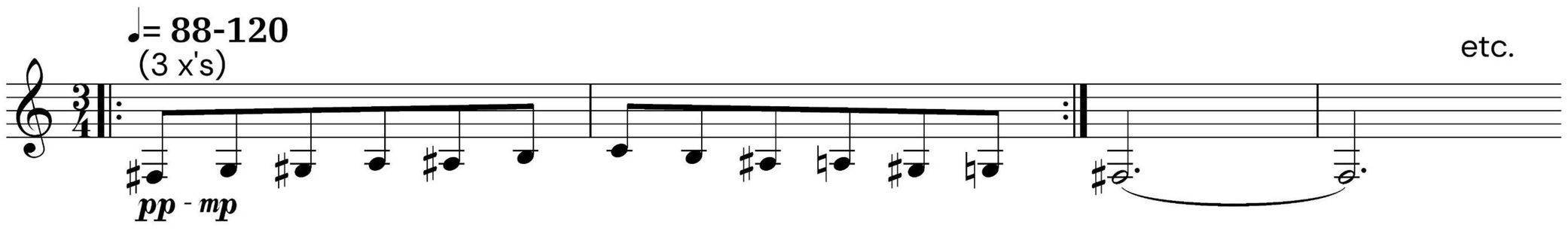


Chromatic Scales

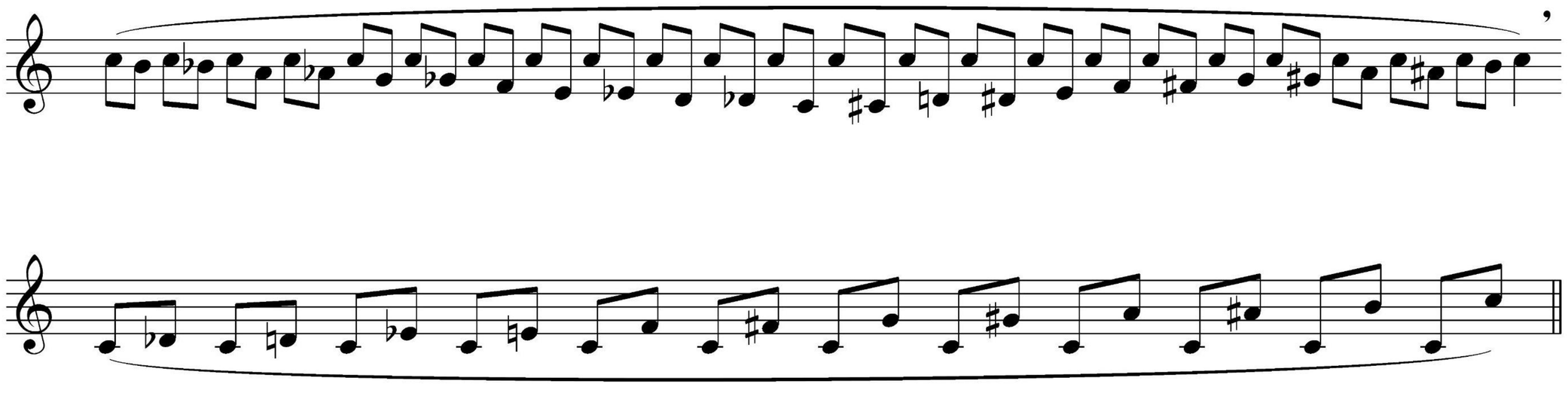
2 minutes

Chromatic scales are one of the best ways to expand our range as well our knowledge of the horn as an instrument. The ability to play a chromatic scale fluidly is achieved through iterative knowledge of each note and its respective fingering(s). Each of the provided exercises can be modified to begin and end on different notes; it is advisable to do so frequently to improve one's technique across the entire range. One may even write their own variations of these exercises to continue developing the ability to read music.

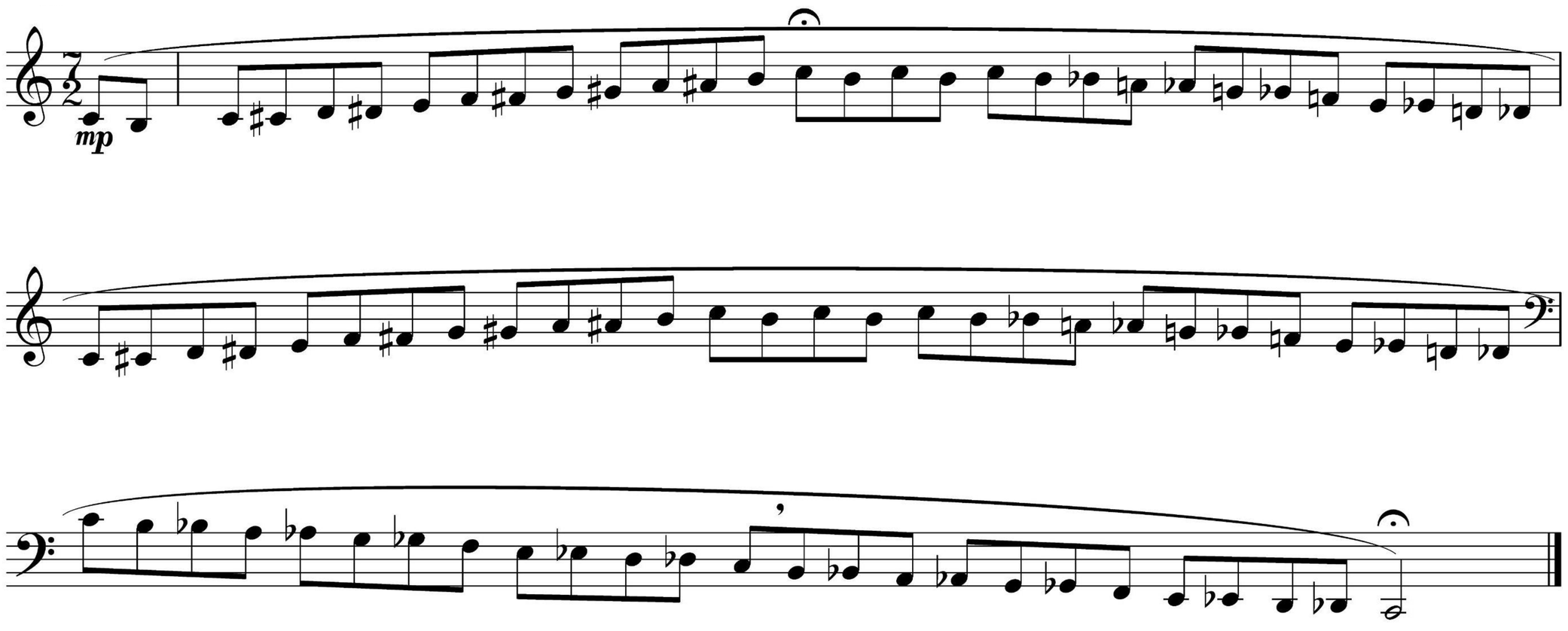
Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan (Brass Gym) - Chromatics



Denise Tryon (Ultimate Warm-up) - Broken Chromatics



Frøydis Ree Wekre (Thoughts on Playing the Horn well) - Legato 2



Long-Tone Tuning

1.5 minutes

It is recommended to check one's intonation multiple times throughout a practice session, not just the very beginning. Doing so helps a performer to understand their pitch tendencies over the course of a practice session or rehearsal. Hopefully, one's tuner and metronome are always on one's stand, though!

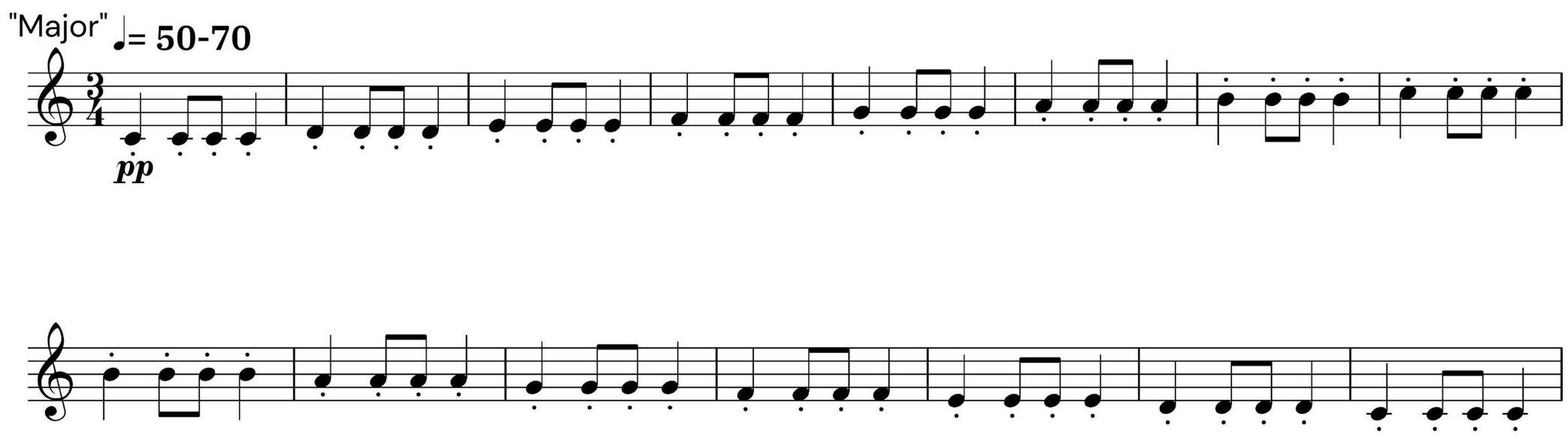
Choose three familiar notes across your whole range and play what feels centered. Aim to correct one's pitch in this order: hand position, slides, mouth shape/air speed.

Articulation

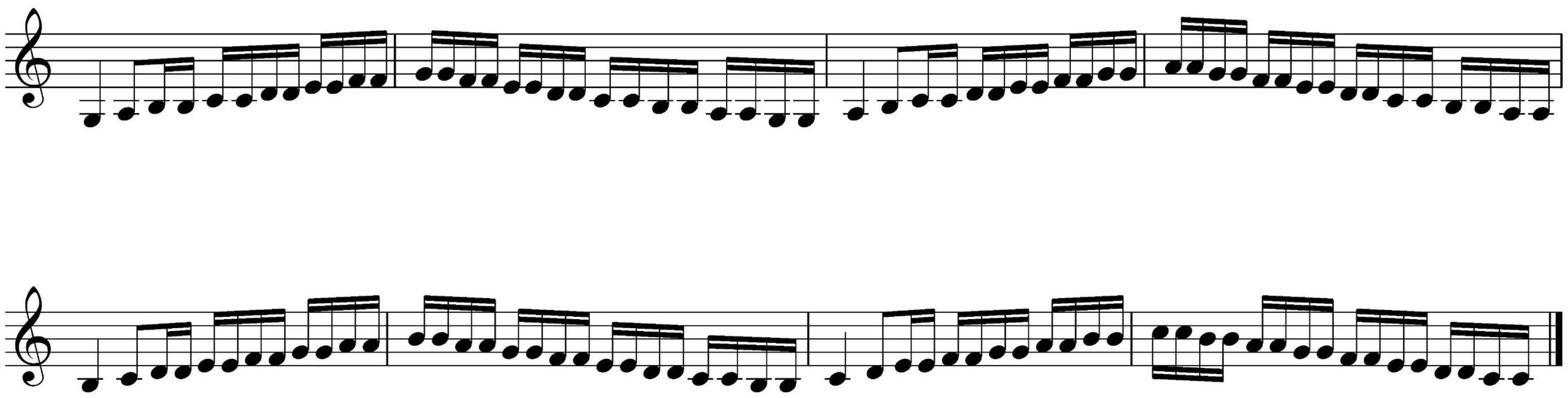
3 minutes

Developing different styles of articulation is an important step in refining one's technique. As the final point of contact before one's air enters the instrument, articulation refines our raw sound into precise sonic gems. The following exercises provide different ways to develop different styles of articulation. Opt for slower tempos initially. Expand these exercises through one's entire range and knowledge of scales.

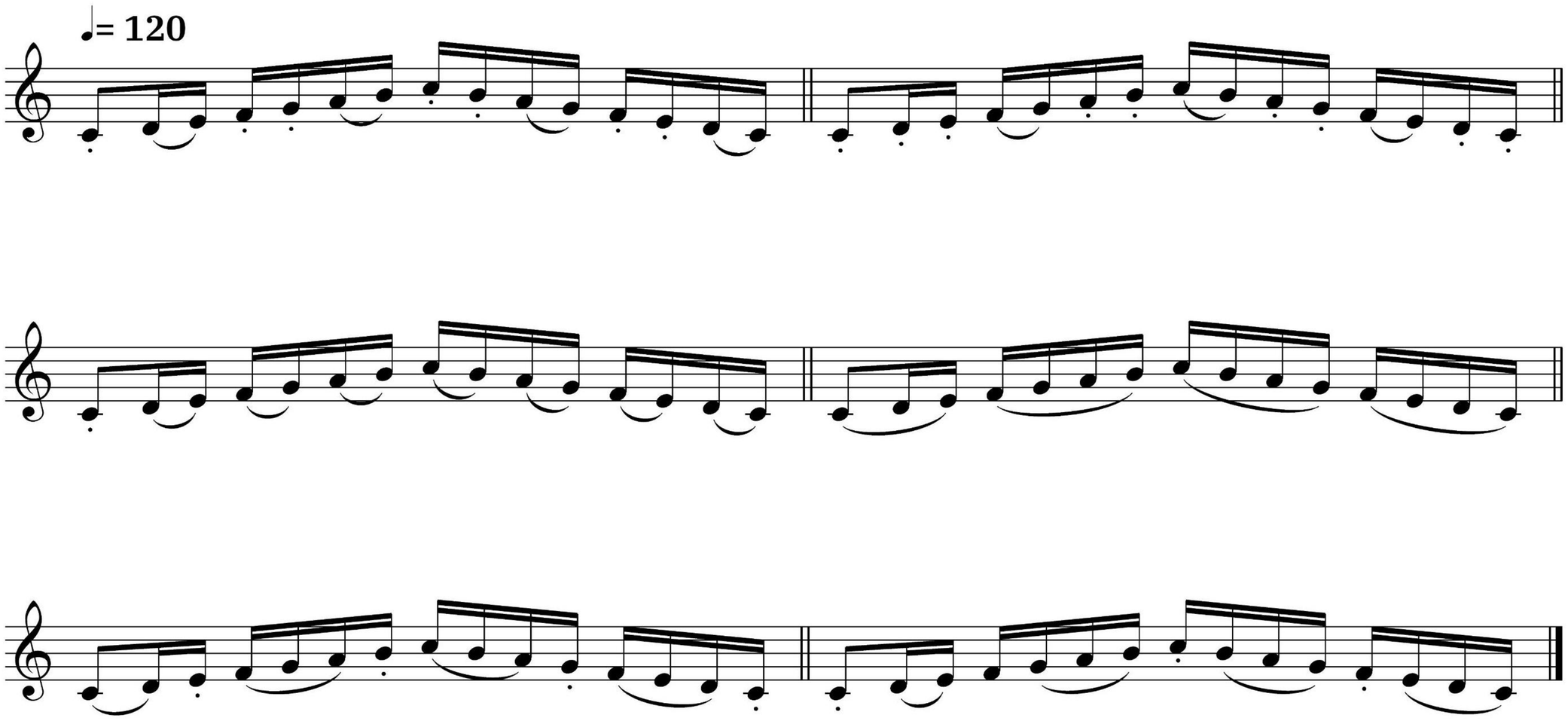
Sam Pilafian and Patrick Sheridan (Brass Gym) - Soft Touch



Oskar Franz (Complete Method for French Horn) - Repeated Note Articulation



Joseph Singer (Embouchure Building for French Horn)

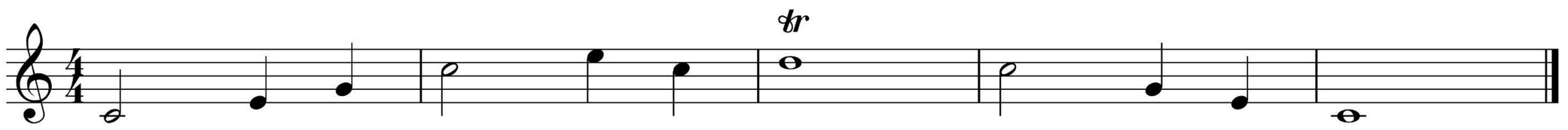


Lip Trills

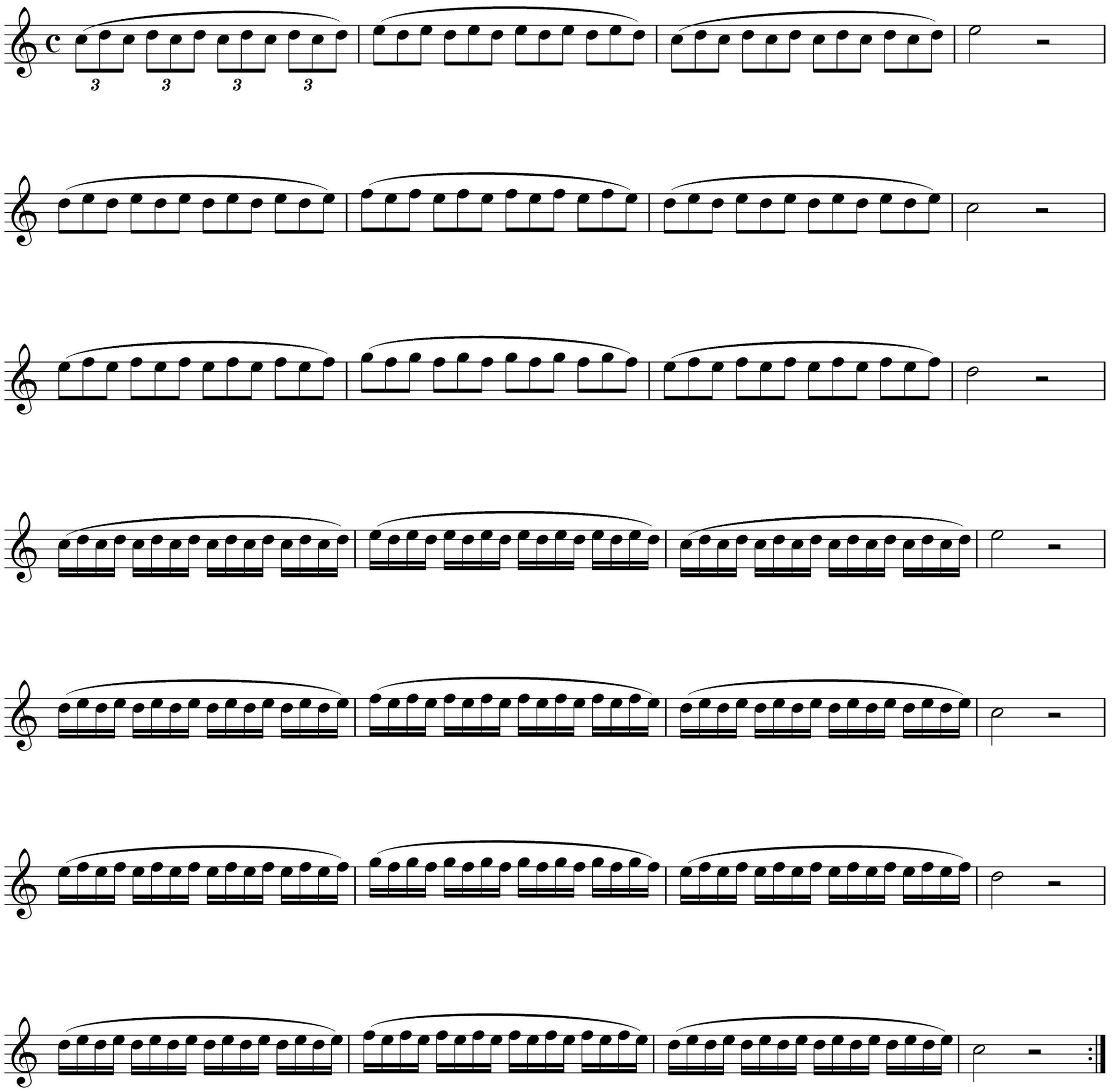
2 minutes

Though lip trilling can seem formidable, this part of our playing technique is best approached very gradually. Lip trills help to develop our understanding of the ‘center’ of each note, both in pitch and the physical experience of playing. It can be helpful to envision these lip trills as being distinct vowels: a-i-a-i-a, for example. Using a drone helps to align the ideal resonance and tone of a note with its ideal pitch. These exercises should be approached slowly; one should increase the tempo only once significant ability has been achieved at a slow tempo. After all, a lip trill is just two notes repeatedly played in quick succession– nothing more.

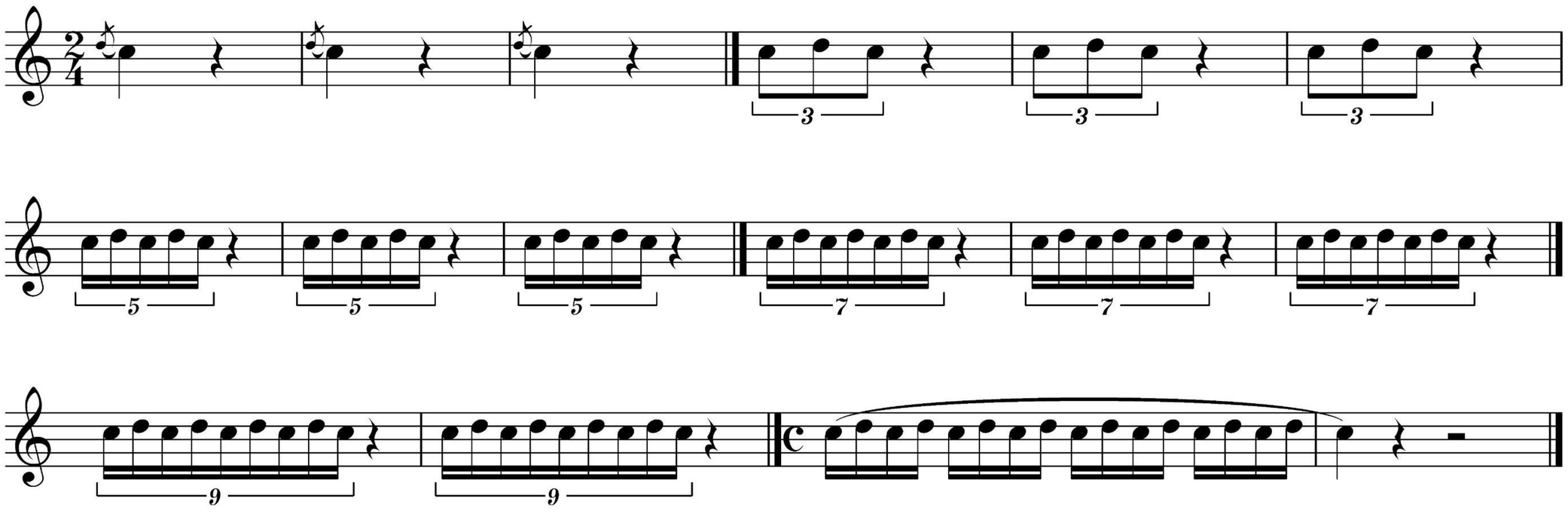
Vince deRosa - Legato Slur and Trill Exercise



Georg Kopprasch (60 Etudes for Low Horn) - No. 5



Frøydis Ree Wekre (Thoughts on Playing the horn well) - Lip Trills

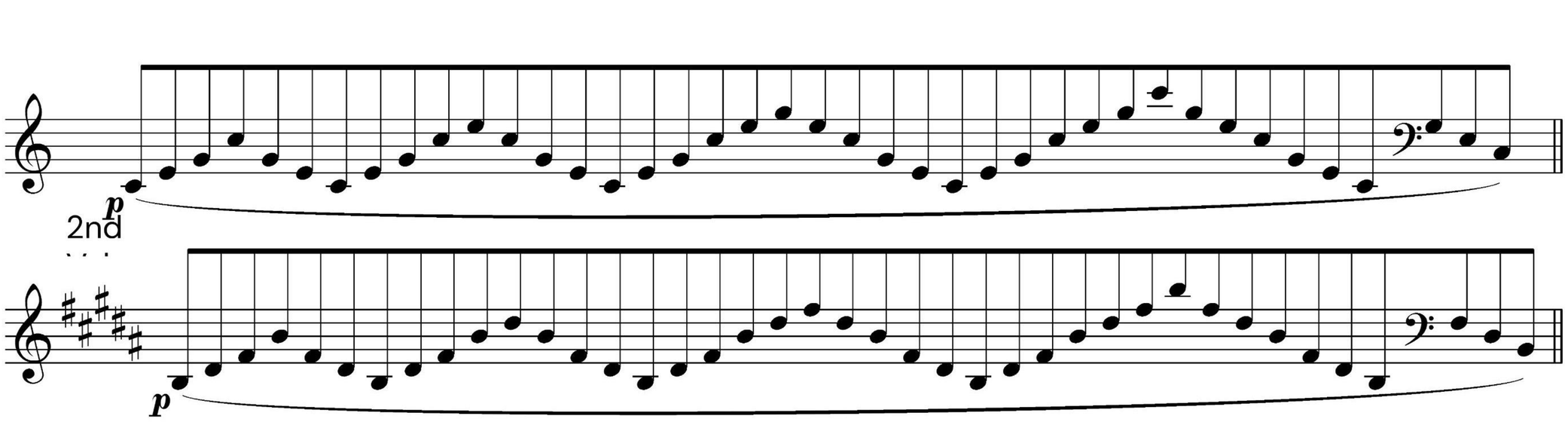


Harmonic Series & Glissandos

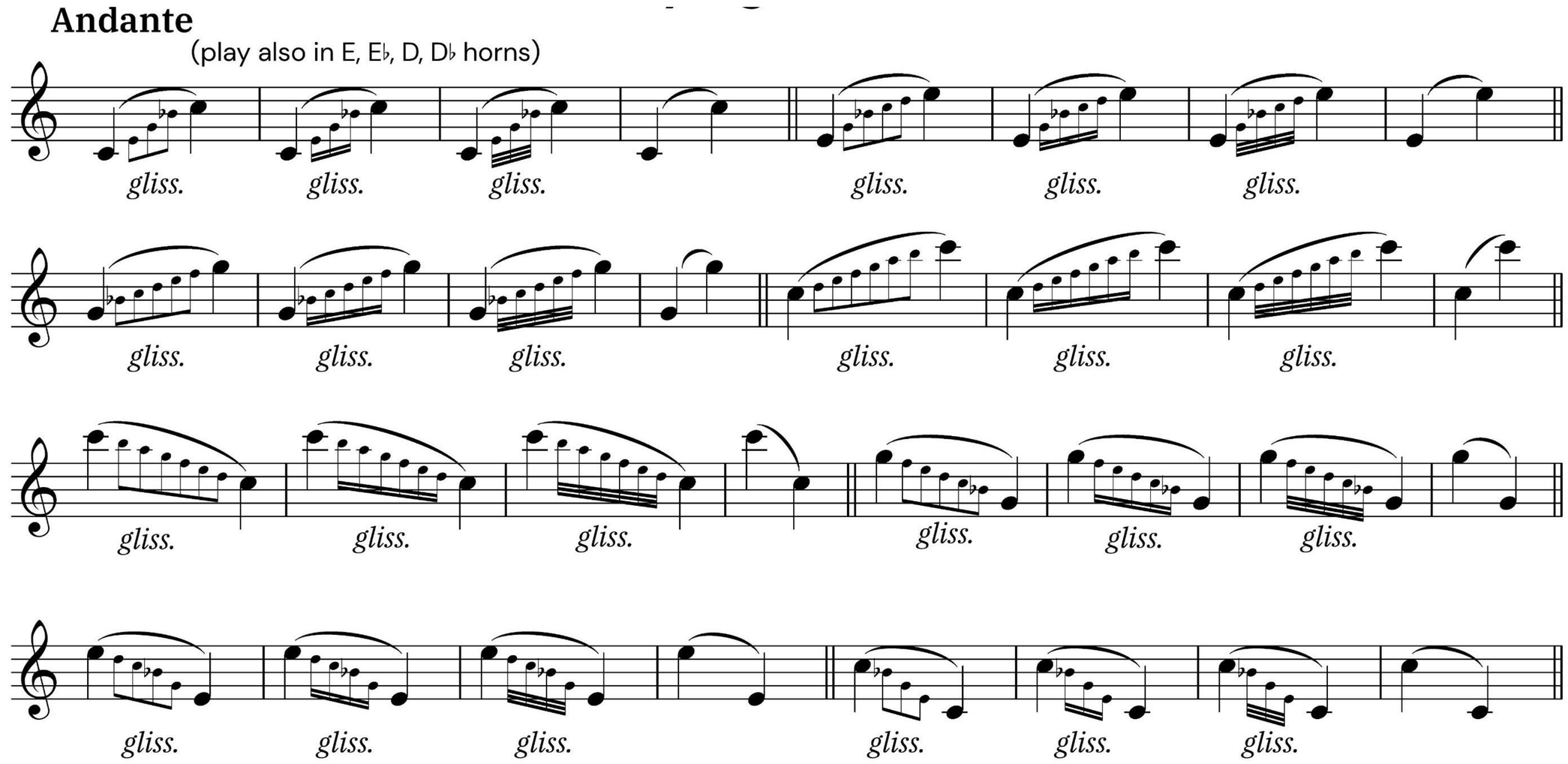
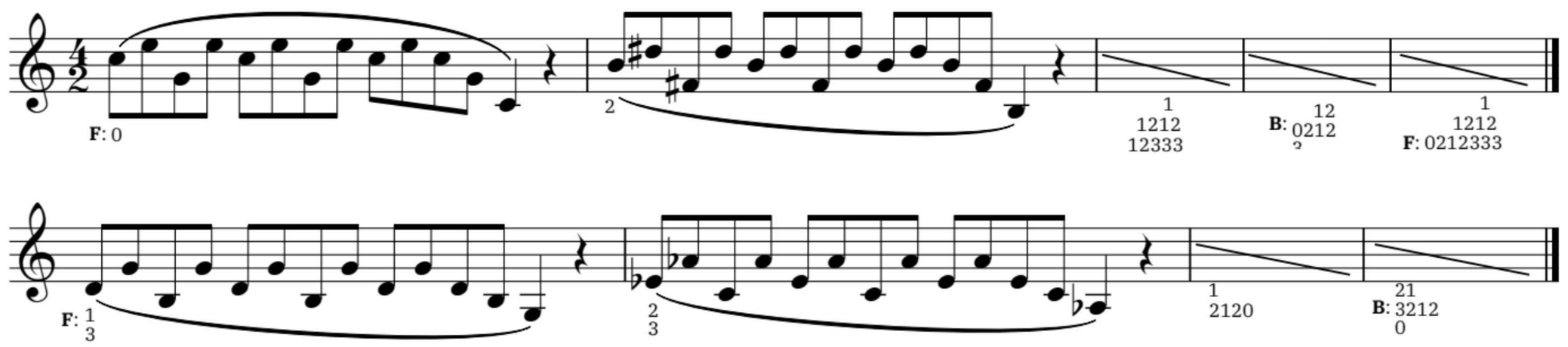
2.5 minutes

Exploration of the harmonic series is essential to understanding the horn at a deep level. When playing any exercise from the following, be sure to transpose the exercise up and down in a similar manner as the first exercise. Use even, smooth air across intervals to glide across the range. These exercises may also be played with articulation.

Philip Farkas (The art of French Horn playing) - Exercise 3



Philip Farkas (The art of French Horn playing) - Glissandos



Frøydis Ree Wekre (Thoughts on Playing the Horn well) - Smør Flexis