

Most high school and college level music students have no idea how loud (or soft) a professional musician can play. Usually the student's *f* and *p* playing is equal to a pro's *mf* and *mp*. How do you develop a great dynamic range? Through proper practice, an understanding of the techniques involved and of course, many performances. You can start developing your own ability to play extreme dynamics by knowing how to control your air, lips, and body. You can also improve by **exaggerating** the dynamics you see on your music. Just remember to keep it **musical** - no **blastissimo** sounds!

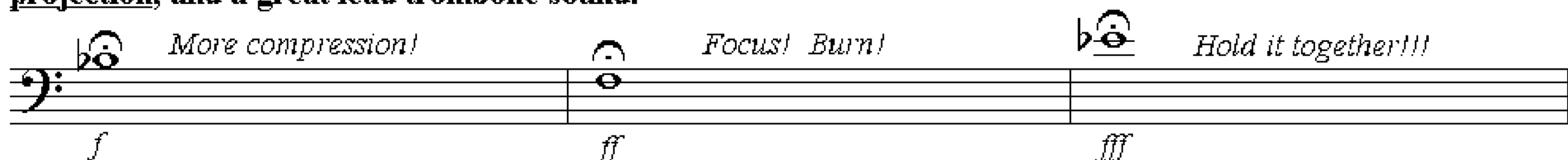
LOUD playing:

To play loudly, we all know you have to **blow harder!** But most students haven't figured out how to control that much air. If you are not relaxed, or your throat is constricted, your body is fighting itself trying to get the air out. Avoid too much mouthpiece pressure and holding your instrument too tightly as well. You must take a **full breath**, feeling your back expand, then using your abdominal muscles, push the air out of your relaxed body. Firm abdominals help to regulate the air, making it come out evenly, and making the notes you play much more consistent. Now that you know how to deliver a good air supply, what typically happens when you try to push tons of air past your lips? They can get blown outwards!

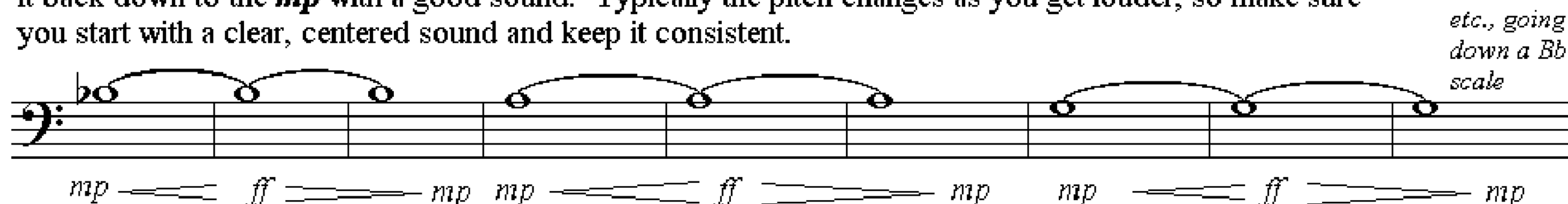
Exercises:

- 1] Play these notes really loud, with lots of air, and gradually **increase** your lip compression. You should hear your sound get more focused, with a "burn" to it. **Don't change the pitch of the note** - keep a clear tone!

Lots of air (loud) + loose lips = a flabby, unfocused sound! **Lots of air + more lip compression = burn, great projection, and a great lead trombone sound!**



- 2] Start softly with a good, centered sound, then make a big crescendo to the *ff*. Don't let your lips get blown out! Bring it back down to the *mp* with a good sound. Typically the pitch changes as you get louder, so make sure you start with a clear, centered sound and keep it consistent.



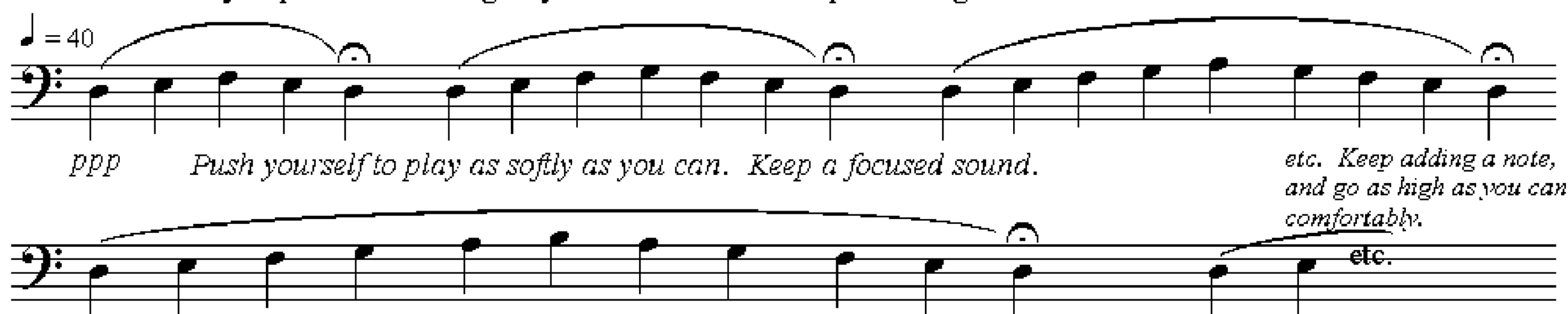
Practice playing loud music! You have to increase your "bubble" - your own particular loud / soft playing comfort level. Try loud orchestral excerpts, or "shout sections" of your big band music. Sustain the dynamics! Make sure you **take a break** when you get tired - build up lip strength gradually over the weeks and months.

Soft playing:

Like loud playing, you have to know the proper techniques involved when playing soft passages. Loud is equated with lots of **fast** air, soft with just enough **slow** air to make the lips vibrate. If your lips are too far apart, you will need to blow faster air past them to get them to sound out a note (the note will be too loud!). Try these ideas:

- 1) Make your embouchure into a more "O" shape (this will help make a **core** or **focused** sound).
- 2) Start notes in **center** (most bad soft attacks are because people place the note too high - if you are playing a D, **think** C# or C)!
- 3) Use firm abdominals to ensure an even airflow.
- 4) **Relax** your body and avoid too much mouthpiece pressure.

- 3] This exercise is excellent for gaining confidence moving from note to note. Play very slowly, use a soft legato tongue, and don't make gaps in your sound or air. Keep the pitch consistent. Keep working on playing it softer and softer. Take risks when you practice - it will give you **confidence** when performing.



Practice soft and loud playing regularly, and keep increasing your personal "bubble"!