Learning a trumpet solo

using "Rhythm Changes"

This is the process I used to learn a trumpet solo in the tune - "BarnBurner" by Les Hooper. This tune is a 'contrafact' (two tunes with the same changes but different melody) wiith the changes to the jazz standard - "I've Got Rhythm'.

I found that while I know the melody to "I've Got Rhythm" quite well, that I simply could not keep up with the tempo while attempting a solo (the tempo is written at 260-280 beat per minute. When we first started the tune we were playing at about 200bpm.

I decided the process I needed to play a solid solo would involve writing ideas that involved longer lines of notes. My thnking was that if I wrote out longer ideas that I could learn them and play them up to tempo.

My first written solo attempt was completed on Oct. 21 this past fall. I wrote it and brought it to class with the Clark College Jazz band the following monday and had a chance to try it in class. I'm afraid it was a bit of a failure for me because I wrote too many notes to play at that tempo. While the ideas were good, they just would not go under my fingers at that tempo.

My second attempt was written Oct. 26 and I focused more on writing less

NOTES WITH MORE SPACE. THIS SOLO WAS MUCH MORE SUCCESSFUL IN THE REHEARSALS THAT FOLLOWED. IN THE MEAN TIME, THE TEMPO OF THE TUNE WAS GETTING FASTER AND WE WERE NOW AT ABOUT 220 BPM. AS I FINISHED WRITING THESE SOLO IDEAS, I WAS ABLE TO PLAY THEM WITH BACKGROUND TRACKS TO "I'VE GOT RHYTHM" ON YOUTUBE. HERE ARE THE LINKS TO THOSE TRACKS. HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=G-JRFPOQQK8&T=60S THIS TRACK IS AT ABOUT 200BPM. HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=9RWYAAX1HZA THIS ONE IS ABOUT 230BPM. ANOTHER TRACK I USED WAS THIS ONE HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=X0BLVYAVNMO WHICH WAS VERY SLOW (86BMP) MAKING IT EASY TO USE WHEN FIRST FINISHING UP SOME NEW IDEAS.

MY THIRD SOLO IDEA PAGE USES MORE REPETITION IN THE OPENING BARS. MEASURE 9 HAS SOME FAST CHROMATICS WHICH WERE SUPPOSED TO SOUND 'FLASHY'. THE BRIDGE (MEASURE 17) USES A LICK FROM "IN THE MOOD" AS A SHORT QUOTE. AT MEASURE 23-25 I TRIED ADDING RANGE TO ADD EXCITEMENT JUMPING BRIEFLY TO A HIGH G. THIS LICK USING OCTAVES ALLOWS ME TO 'SQUEEZE' UP TO A NOTE THAT IS NEAR THE TOP OF MY RANGE! ABOUT THIS TIME WE HAD OUR FIRST CONCERT OF THE QUARTER AND PLAYED "BARNBURNER' IN THE CONCERT. I ACTUALLY PLAYED THE WRITTEN THIRD SOLO AND IT TURNED OUT TO BE A BIT DISAPPOINTING. WHILE THE SOLO WORKED WELL, I SIMPLY COULD NOT KEEP UP WITH THE TEMPO?! ON LISTENING TO THE RECORDING LATER I FOUND THAT THE BAND HAD PUSHED THE TEMPO UP TO 260 BPM WHICH WAS BEYOND MY FINGERS!! MY SOLO SOUNDED VERY CHOPPY AND UNEVEN WITH HOLES WHERE I DID NOT WANT THEM. A FRUSTRATING BUT VALUABLE EXPERIENCE.

MY NEXT SOLO IDEA PAGE IS BASED ON THE USE OF ANOTHER CONTRAFACT SINCE THERE ARE SO MANY THAT USE THE 'RHYTHM' CHANGES. I EXPLORED THE TUNE "OLEO" WITH MILES DAVIS PLAYING. THIS TUNE DID NOT HAVE THE INSTANT RECOGNITION I WANTED SO I LOOKED FURTHER AND FOUND 'ANTHOPOLOGY". THERE ARE LOTS OF TRANSCRIPTIONS OF THIS TUNE AVAILABLE TO LOOK AT AND LISTEN TO INCLUDING A YOUNG STUDENT WHO PLAYED A FLUGEL SOLO ON A TALENT MUSIC SHOW THAT WAS FANTASTIC! HERE IS THE LINK: HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=G-JRFPOQQK8&T=60S MY SOLO PAGE USED ANTHROPOLOGY QUOTES IN THE FIRST BAR AND ALSO AT THE BRIGE MEASURE 18. WHILE

EXPLORING CONTRAFACTS I LEARNED THAT TUNE 'MEET THE FLINTSTONES' USES THE SAME CHANGES AND I TRIED QUOTING THAT IN CLASS ONE DAY WHEN GETTING A CHANCE TO PLAY THE SOLO IN REHEARSAL. AT THIS POINT I WAS SOMETIMES READING MY SOLOS IN CLASS AND SOMETIMES PLAYING OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD. I FOUND THAT WHEN I PLAYED OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD MY IDEAS OFTEN STILL WOULD NOT KEEP UP WITH THE TEMPO AND I LEFT TOO MANY HOLES IN THE SOLO. PRACTICE WAS STILL REQUIRED!

WHILE LOOKING ONLINE FOR TRUMPET TRANSCRIPTIONS WHICH I LIKE TO PLAY ALONG WITH ON YOUTUBE, I FOUND A TRANSCRIPTION OF "I'VE GOT RHYTHM' BY JAZZ TRUMPETER TARELL STAFFORD, A FANTASTIC PLAYER. I WROTE THE FULL FIVE CHORUS TRANSCRIPTION. LATER I USED BITS AND PIECES OF HIS SOLO AND DEVELOPED MY FINAL SOLO IDEAS PAGE. THIS SOLO USES MANY OF THE SECTIONS OUT OF HIS SOLO IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ORDER THAN HE USED. I LIKE THE FLOW OF THIS SOLO AND FIND THAT HIS IDEAS FALL WITHIN MY FINGER ABILITY PRETTY WELL. I AM HOPING TO PLAY THIS SOLO FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE CLARK COLLEGE JAZZ FESTIVAL WITH THE BAND. CHECK IT OUT IF YOU HAVE TIME AND SEE IF I STAY WITH THE WRITTEN SOLO OR TAKE OFF ON MY OWN!

IN RETROSPECT I FOUND THAT LEARNING TO PLAY AN IMPROVE SOLO AT THIS FAST TEMPO REQUIRES SOME SPECIAL WORK. I SPOKE TO SEVERAL GREAT PLAYERS IN TOWN THAT I GET TO PLAY WITH. ONE PLAYER SAID, 'PLAYING FAST IS A SKILL THAT HAS TO BE WORKED ON DILIGENTLY. IT IS LIKE TRYING TO TALK AT TWICE THE SPEED YOU NORMALLY TALK. YOU CANNOT DO IT! THE ONLY WAY TO LEARN TO PLAY FAST IS TO PRACTICE PLAYING FAST. WHEN I PLAY THESE IDEAS I SOMETIMES USE BACKING TRACKS AND MORE OFTEN JUST USE THE METRONOME SET SO IT CLICK ON COUNT TWO AND FOUR (LIKE THE HI-HAT). I HOPE YOU HAVE FUN PLAYING THROUGH THESE SOLO IDEAS. I HAVE FOUND THAT MY VOCABULARY IS EXPANDED BY THIS PROCESS AND ALL OF MY SOLO PLAYING IS STARTING TO GET BETTER! MY ADVICE IS TO WRITE OUT YOUR IDEAS SO YOU CAN PLAY THEM IN LONG PHRASES. MY MIND WORKS MUCH BETTER AT COMING UP WITH IDEAS THAN MY FINGERS! THE OTHER THING I PRACTICE A LOT IS SCALES THAT USE PATTERNS IN EVERY KEY. I WILL INCLUDE SOME OF THESE IN THE PACKET.

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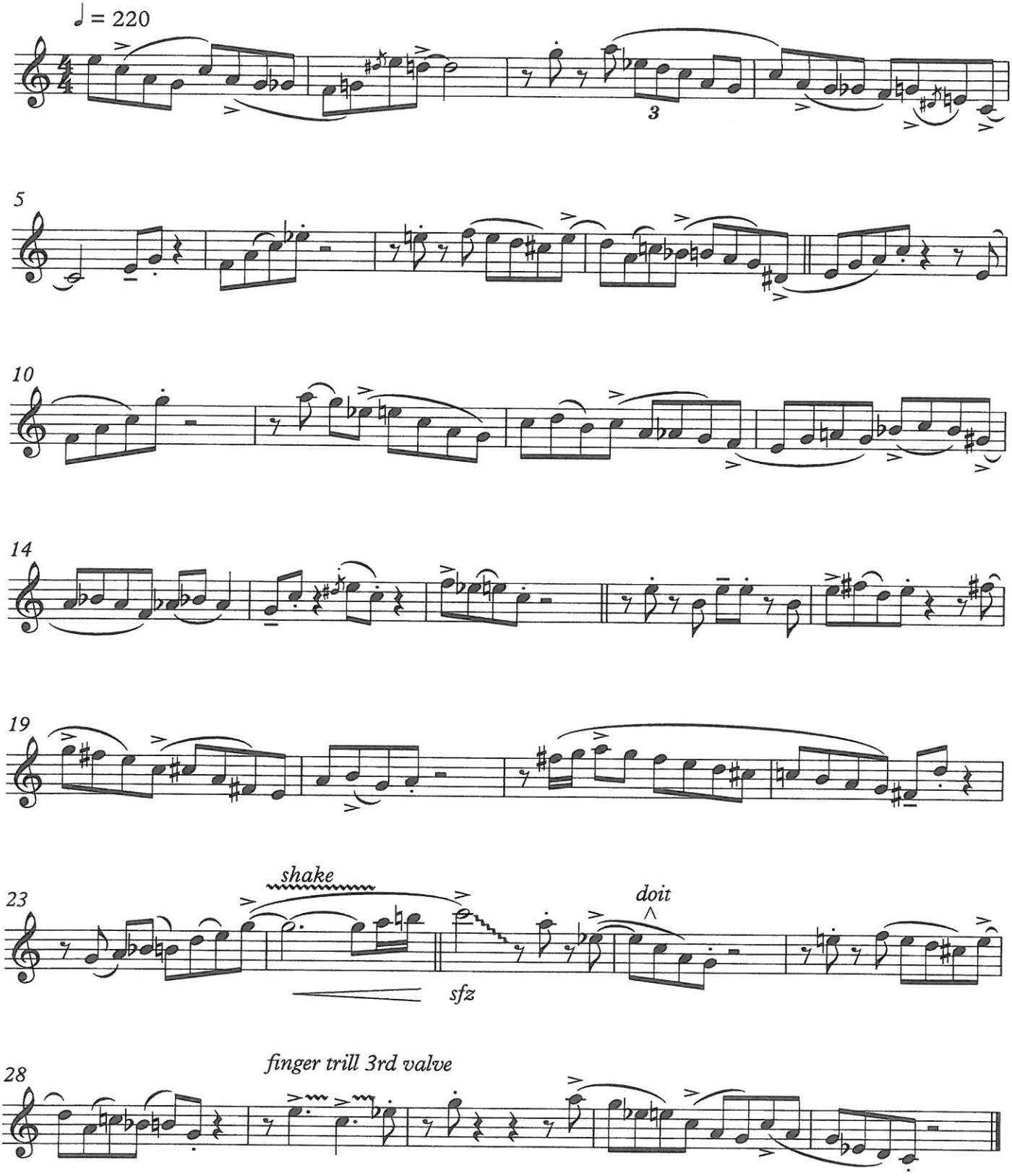
Mr. Steven Robertson is a retired high school band director of 44 years most recently opening up Skyview High School in Vancouver, WA. When I was a high school student I played the drums and was quite accomplished winning the Oregon State Solo contest in 1968 in the snare drum division. I played drum set most of my life in dance bands starting in middle school and lasting throughout most of my career. When I retired I decided I did not want to play drums any longer and decided I wanted to play the trumpet. As a band director I knew the fingerings on all instruments (including trumpet) but this instrument was one of the most difficult for me to play! When I retired I took four years of weekly lessons from Mr. Gerald Webster (the finest trumpet teacher on the West Coast who happens to live in Vancouver). Jerry worked hard with me to develop the ability to start playing trumpet in various groups. I am currently playing weekly in the Solid Brass, Pdx brass band, the Jewish Community Orchestra, the VanPort Big Band and Conjunto Allegre - Salsa band. I also play in the Clark College Concert Band and Jazz Band. One of my current goals is to learn to be a good jazz improvisor and I find this to be a very challenging goal. I find it hard to get the opportunity to play solos in the big band I play in (where there are several much stronger players than me) or in the Salsa band (where I get flustered with the sharp keys that often are used in this music). I find that playing in the Clark College Jazz band has given me a chance to work on my jazz improvisation skills and I appreciate the skills of our director, Dr. Douglas Harris, a fine trumpet player that serves as our director.

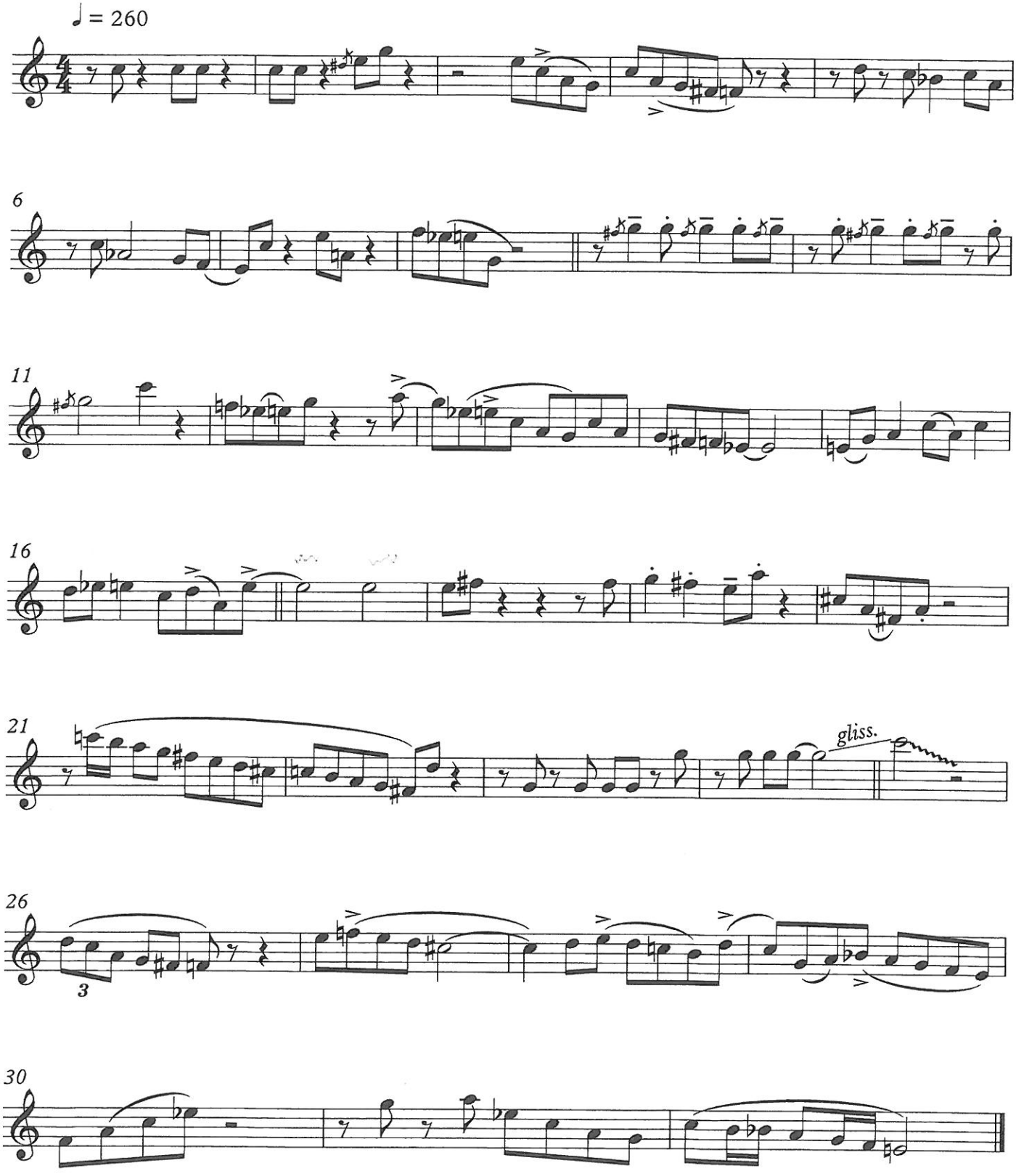
Barnburner - solo ideas #1

10/21/22



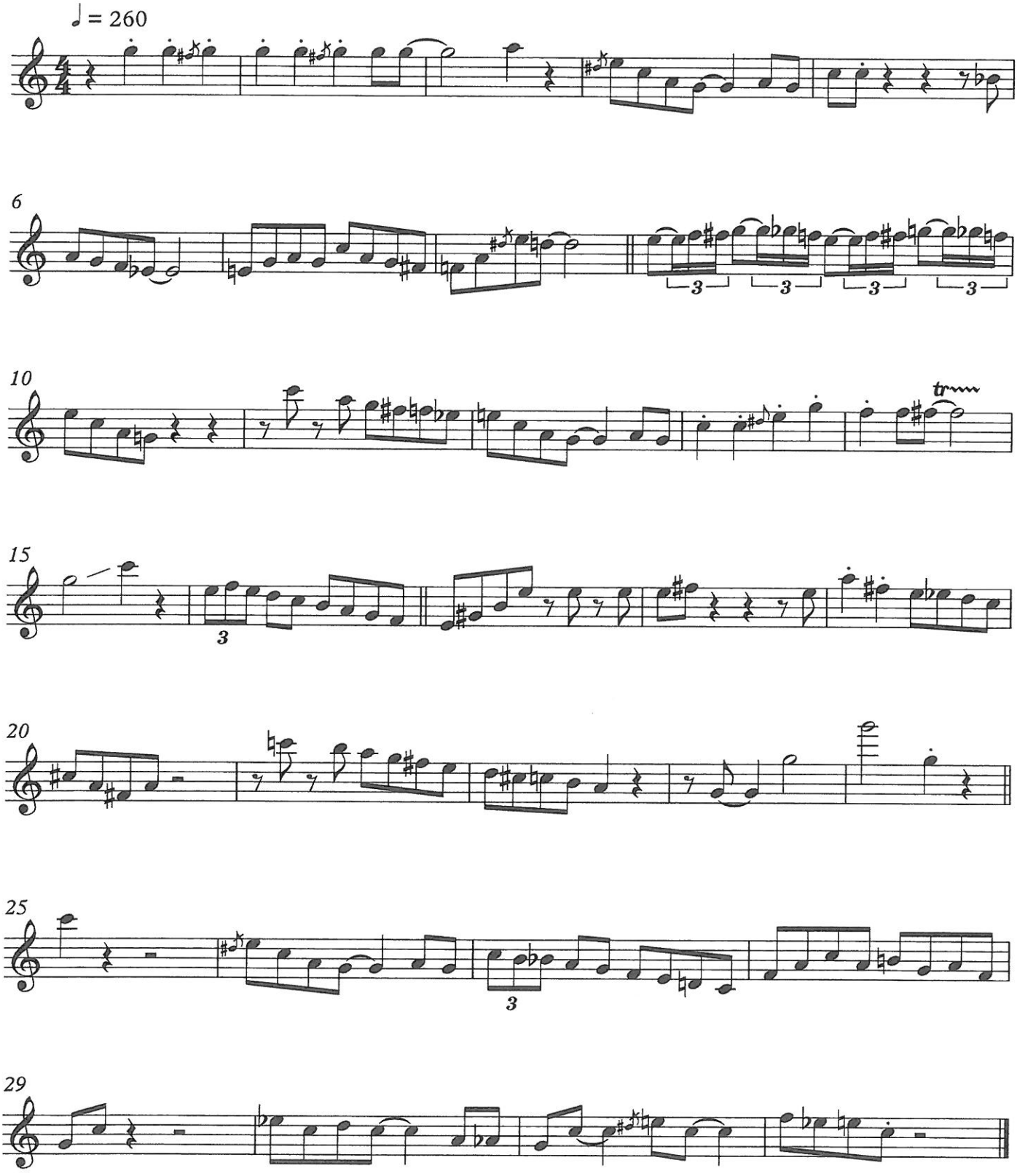
"Barnburner" Solo ideas

10/26/22

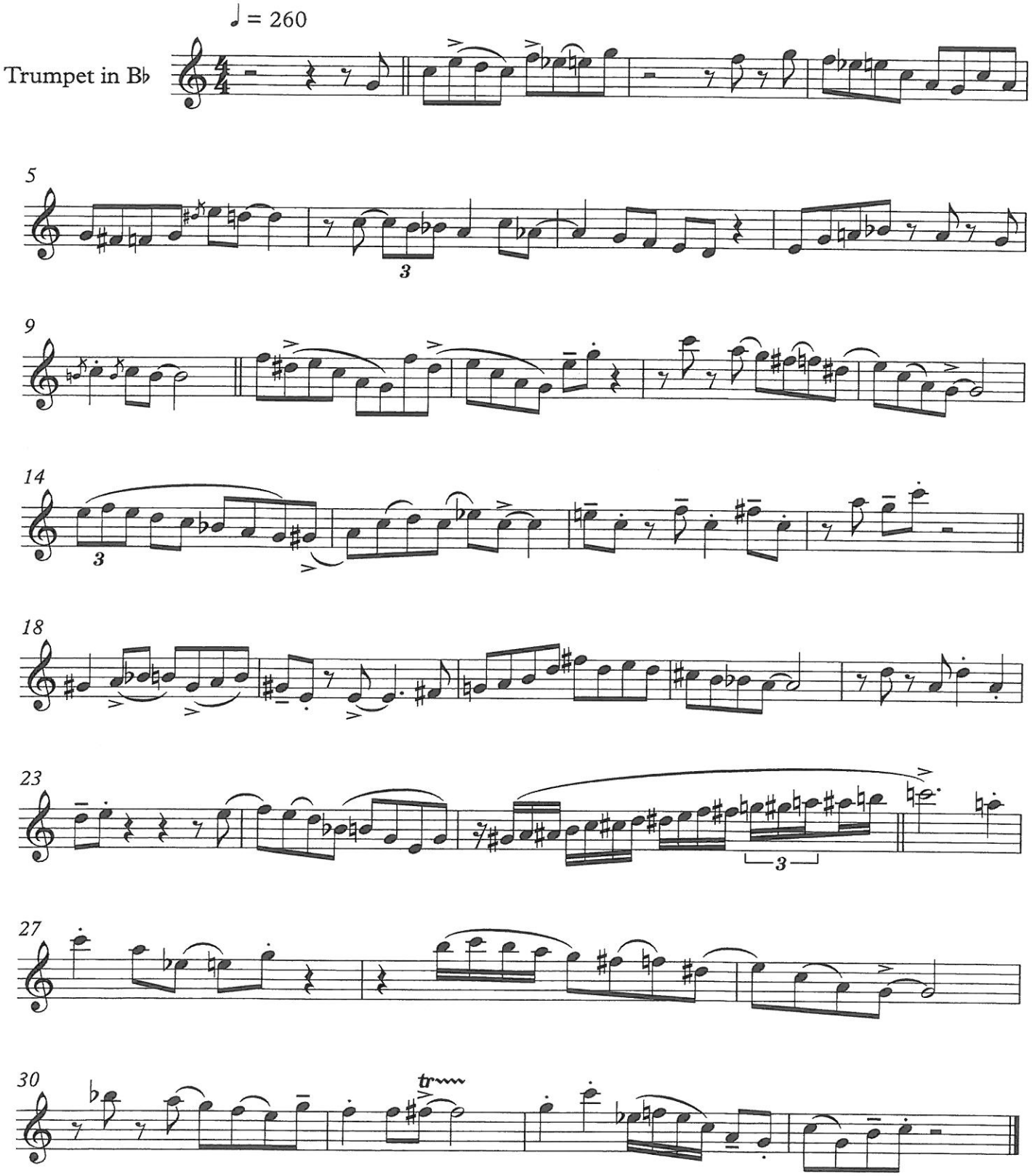


BarnBurner - solo ideas

11/1/22

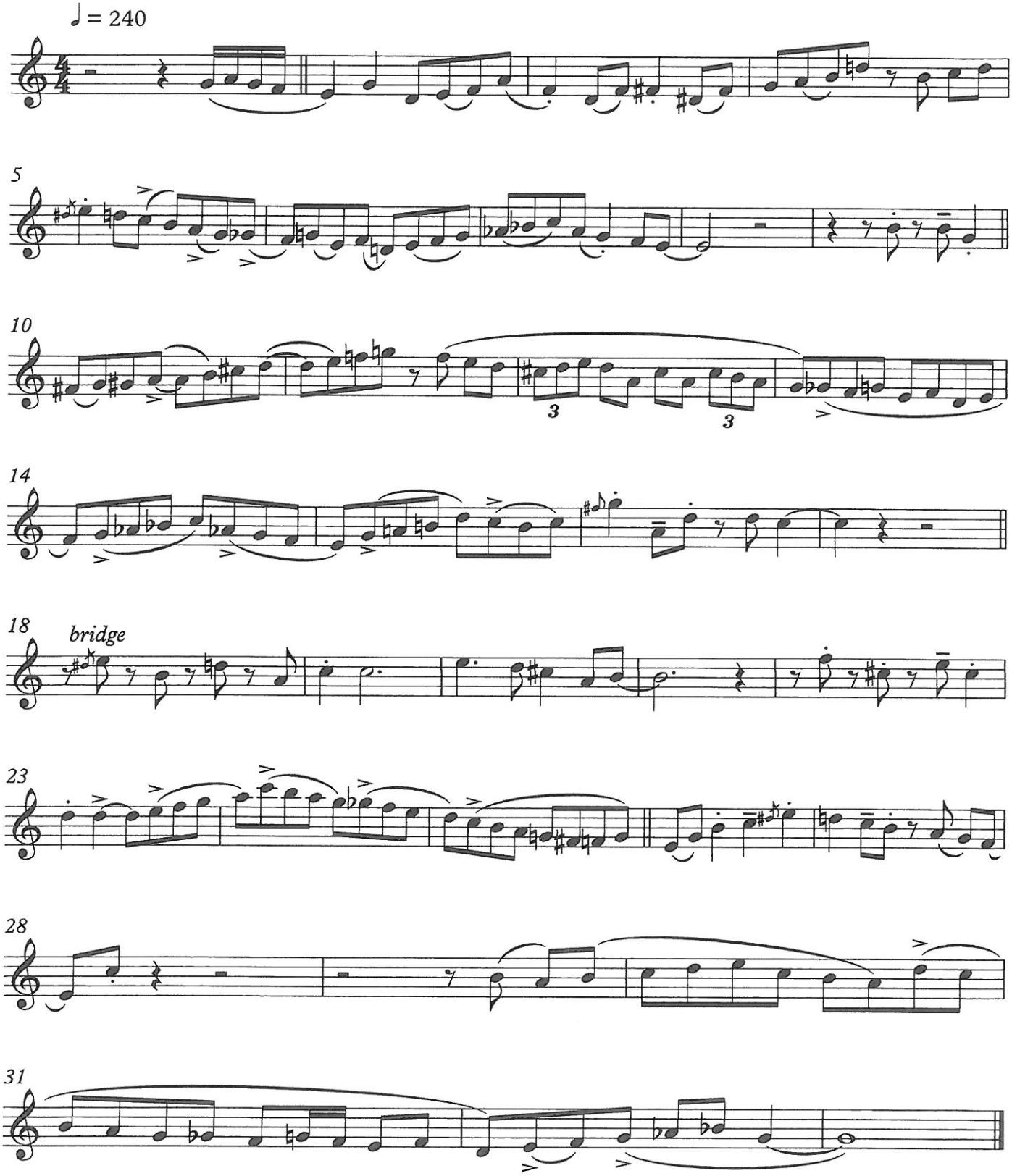


"Barnburner" solo ideas 5

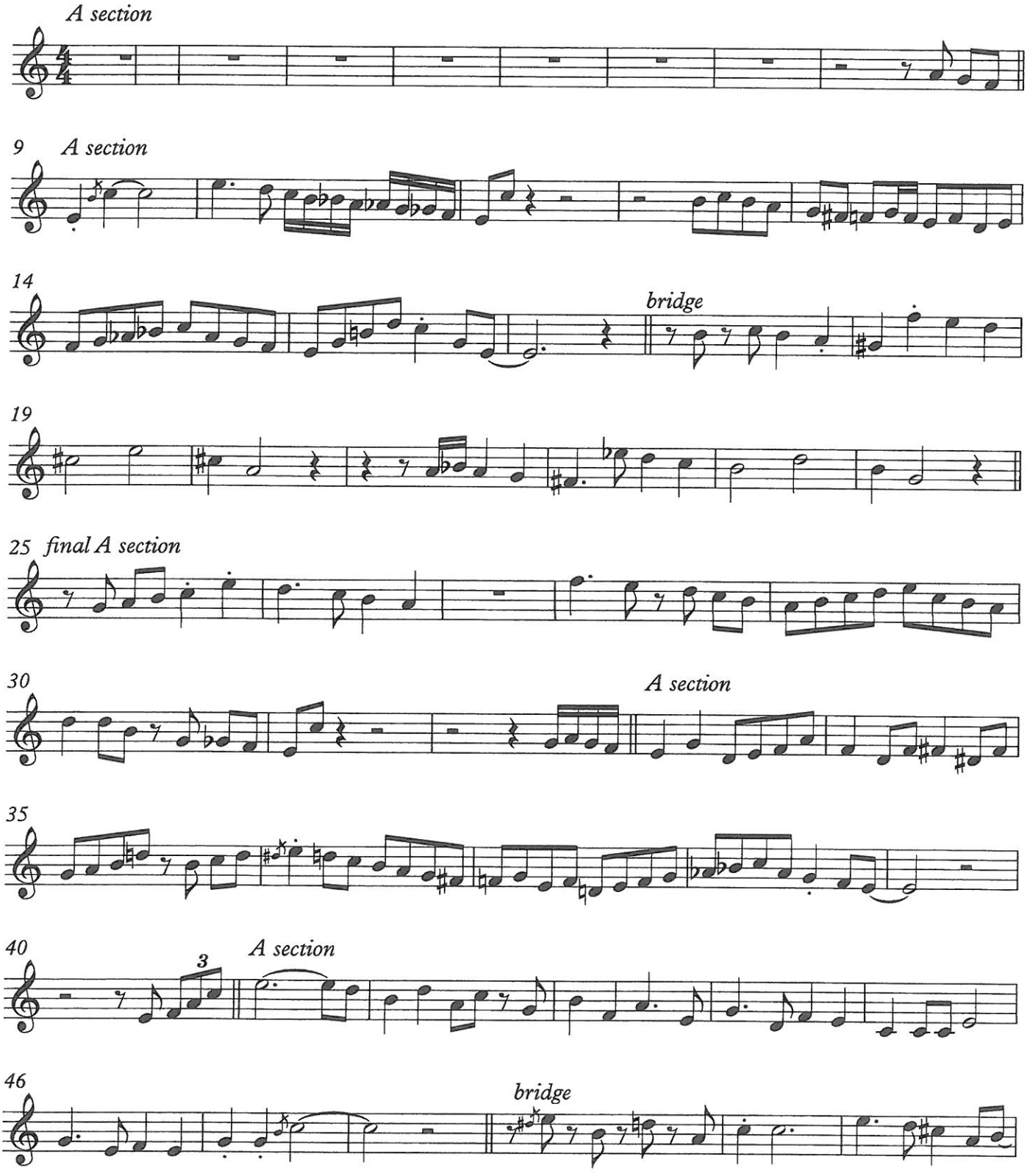


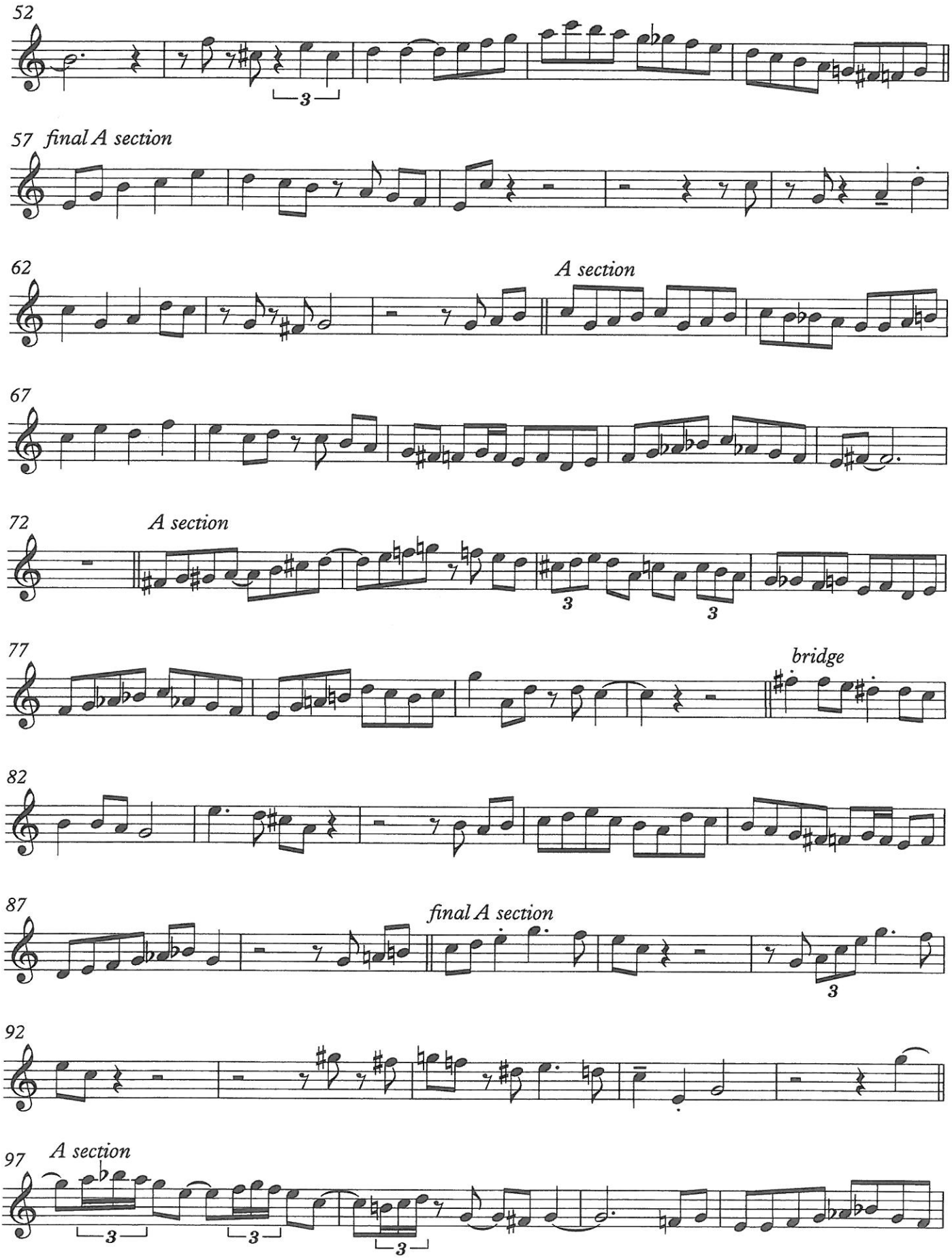
"Barnburner" solo ideas (using Terell Stafford licks)

1/21/23



"Barnburner" solo ideas (transcription Tarell Stafford

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A section
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A section
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bridge
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final A section
92
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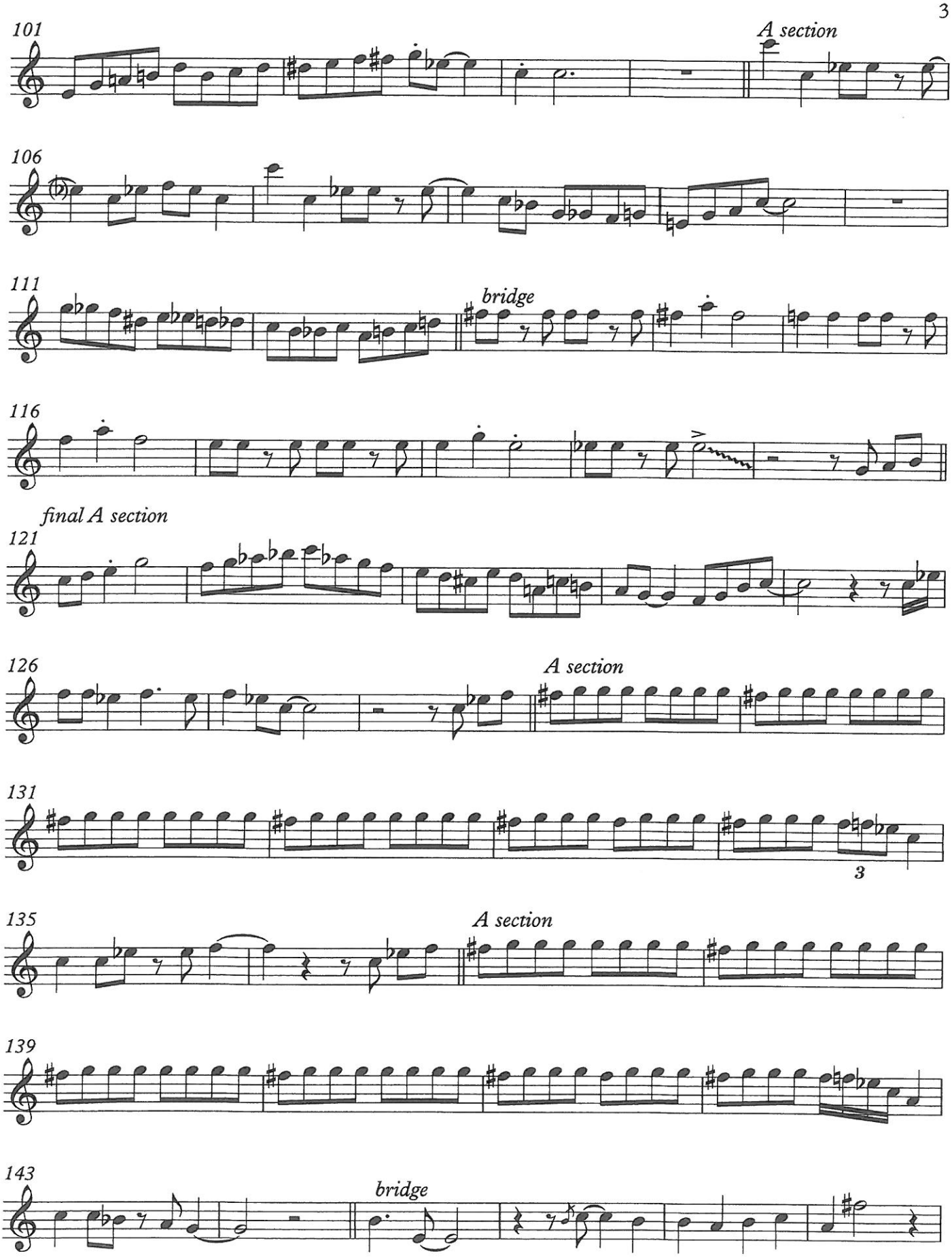
A section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bridge
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final A section
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3
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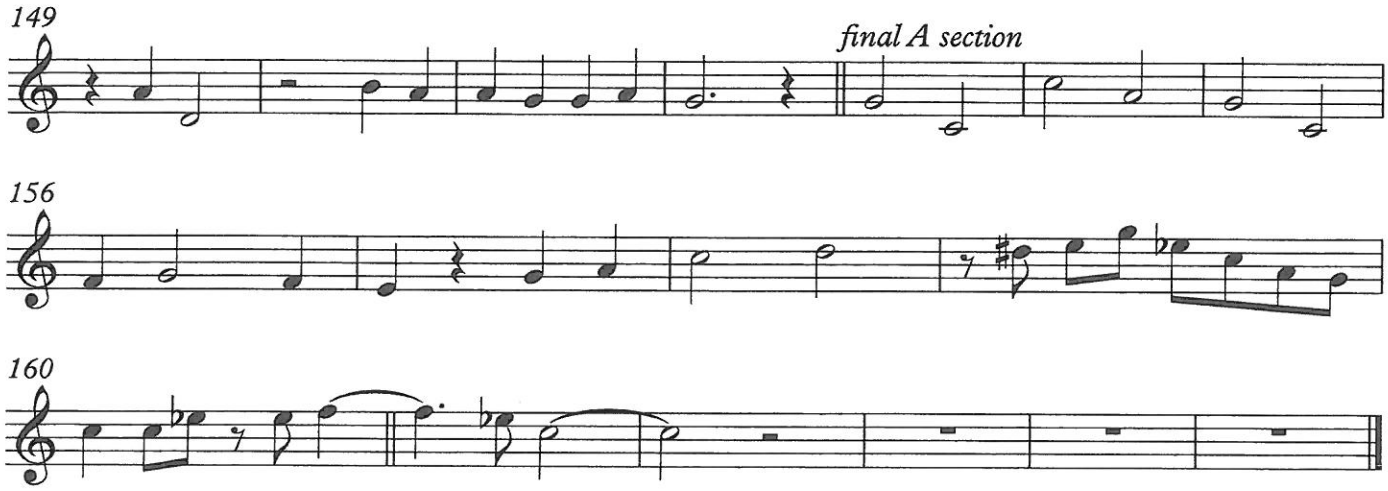
A section
139
143
bridge



To listen to Terell play this solo with rhythm section go to the YouTube link below:

(Terell Stafford) Trumpet solo (Transription) in Bb
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HK9ZDxwzo0U