

Articulating J.S. Bach's Preludes from WTC 1:

A Study of 20th Century Piano Recordings

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper closely examines the performance practice regarding articulation of the preludes from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier Book I. Recordings by five pianists are studied: Vladimir Feltsman, Glenn Gould, Angela Hewitt, Andras Schiff, and Rosalyn Tureck. The recordings reveal certain recurring articulation patterns which are categorized into six articulation techniques: short slurs, long slurs, detached upbeat, accented downbeats, changing articulation, and rolled chords. The author has divided the preludes into four groups: preludes with continuous running figuration, lyrical preludes, lyrical preludes with distinct melody and accompaniment, and preludes with non-lyrical themes. Analysis reveals that for each group of preludes, there are a set of principles that these pianists follow. Overall, for non-lyrical preludes, the running sixteenth notes are played legato, staccato, or a short slur followed by staccato. The slower moving quarter and eighth notes stay mostly detached or staccato. For lyrical preludes, the melody remains largely legato. Articulation techniques are used more extensively in non-lyrical preludes than lyrical ones, and more often in the slower moving eighth notes than running figuration. Articulation techniques are often used as means of embellishment. They enhance the individual character of each piece and generate Baroque attributes. Despite the principles observed in the recordings, many isolated performances are found which do not conform to any of them, suggesting that there is no authoritative rule when articulating Bach's works on piano.

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Chapter I Introduction

The word articulation has a variety of meanings. Its narrow definition with respect to this paper refers to the grouping and sounding duration of the notes, the use of slurs, legato, portamento, and staccato touch. When playing the piano, the word articulation is closely related to the type of touch, phrasing and dynamic nuances.

Bach left some articulation markings in his works for strings, winds and voice, but indicated very little for his keyboard works. Numerous studies have pursued Bach's articulation practice at the organ and harpsichord, assuming that these instruments should be played similarly to the others for which he wrote. The overwhelming conclusion is that there is no "authentic" way to articulate Bach's keyboard music. The problem is magnified when playing Bach's manualiter works on the modern piano, since articulation must be adapted to a new idiom. As a result, a great variety of systems of articulation are seen on the concert stage, and all prestigious Bach interpreters play his keyboard works differently. In this project, the writer will examine the current piano practice of interpreting Bach's preludes from *The Well-Tempered Clavier I*. By studying and comparing several Bach interpreters' performances, the paper will explore how modern pianists use articulation as means of expression.

Five Pianists are chosen for this project: Vladimir Feltsman, Glenn Gould, Angela Hewitt, Andras Schiff, and Rosalyn Tureck. They are world-renowned Bach interpreters of the 20th and 21st century. These recordings were made in 1970s to 2000s. Except for Schiff's recording, which is a live recital performance, all others are audio compact discs released by recording companies.

Baroque articulation is special for a few reasons. First, according to the eighteenth-century keyboard treatises, Baroque composers generally preferred a non-legato style of articulation for unslurred single notes¹. Also, slurs are not used to mark entire phrases, they fall on specific types of recurring figures, usually extending for no more than four notes². A typical piece of music often features detached notes alternating with short and long slurs to create variety, and they serve as an important expressive tool. In order to fully comprehend the importance of the articulation, it is necessary to first examine Baroque vocal technique, from which the instrumental articulation originates³.

While modern singing technique features deep, cantabile legato, Baroque cantabile style placed great emphasis on the delivery of words⁴. For example, the passage shown in figure I.1 illustrates that the natural syllabic stress of the text would place a slight accent on the downbeat notes, thereby dividing the melody into four groups of two. Hence in performance practice, four slurs would be used to reinforce the poetic meter of the text⁵.

Figure 1.1 Meine Seele (Taken from John Butt, *Bach Interpretation: Articulation Marks in Primary Sources of J. S. Bach*, 12)



¹ David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach*, 2nd ed. (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 21.

² Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach*, 22.

³ Erwin Bodky, *The Interpretation of Bach's Keyboard Works*, (London: Oxford University, 1960), 201.

⁴ John Butt, *Bach Interpretation: Articulation Marks in Priary Sources of J. S. Bach*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1960), 11.

⁵ John Butt, *Bach Interpretation: Articulation Marks in Priary Sources of J. S. Bach*, 12.

If the melody above is transcribed for a woodwind or stringed instrument, it would be played as shown in Figure I.2.

Figure 1.2 Meine Seele Transcribed for Instrumental Music (By author)



When performing Bach's works on the modern piano, pianists often take much greater liberty designing the articulation. Many of the designs may or may not conform to the treatise of the Baroque period. A review of the five pianists' recordings reveals that despite their different interpretations, certain consistencies in articulations can be found. Subsequently, a few recognizable articulation techniques can be summarized. There are six of them and they are listed below. For convenience purposes, the six articulation techniques will be written as AT1-6. (All figures shown henceforth are created by author).

1. Short slurs (AT1)



The short slurs are two to three notes in length, used mostly in eighth and sixteenth notes.

2. Long slurs (AT2)



These long slurs provide a combination of slurred and detached notes. The length of the slurs can vary, and the placement of staccato can be anywhere from the middle to the end of a phrase. This technique can also be a combination of just slurs of varying length without detached notes.

3. Detached upbeat (AT3) created by breaking off a legato line before strong beats



(The breaks are represented by the apostrophe mark placed before the high A and G.)

4. Accenting strong beats (AT4)



5. Changing the articulation in the middle of a piece (AT5). The change usually lasts for a few notes to two measures, then returns to the previous articulation. In the case of Gould's performance of the A-flat Major prelude, the articulation changes from staccato to legato completely and never returns. The details of this technique will be further discussed later in the paper.

6. Rolling chords (AT6)



The articulation techniques applied by the pianists are recorded in the table below.

Table I.1 Articulation of the Preludes from WTC I

Abbreviations:

LH and RH refer to Left Hand and Right Hand; AT refers to articulation technique, AT1+ staccato refers to the special articulation pattern which includes two or three slurred notes followed by one or two staccato/detached notes. Light legato refers to a light touch of keys, resulting in connected, but non cantabile melodic line.

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
WTC I no. 1 C major	Legato AT2, [AT5] (unconventional)	Legato. AT4.	Legato.	Pedal, legato AT2, AT5	Legato.
No. 2 in C Minor	Moderately slow, all detached AT4 [AT5, AT1] Second part legato, AT6	Legato, AT4, AT5, [AT3 last part]	AT4, light legato, AT5	Pedal, legato. Uneven articulation, AT4	Legato, AT4, AT5, Rubato

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 3 in C# major	Fast. RH and LH staccato RH 8th AT1, AT5 (unconventional)	RH quasi-staccato LH AT1 [AT1 second part LH]	LH and RH legato. [AT3]. LH later changes to staccato	Moderato, light legato, LH all detached	Moderately slow, rubato RH legato [AT3] LH AT1, slower moving notes later changes to staccato
No. 4 in C# Minor	Moderato. Light legato Dotted quarter shorter, [AT3]	Rubato, slow deep legato	Light legato. [AT3] *	Slow. AT6, rubato, lyrical legato [AT5]	Moderato legato Slight rolling, rubato
No. 5 in D major	Fast, RH, LH staccato [AT4, LH AT5] * coda legato, AT6	Heavy, legato [AT4, AT5 second part]	RH legato. LH detached. [LH AT1 AT5]	Light legato, [subtle AT5].	Moderately slow Light legato, LH staccato [LH AT5]
No. 6 in D Minor	All staccato, LH AT1+staccato, AT2 [AT5, LH AT1]	All staccato. LH AT2	RH Legato. LH detached. LH AT2	Moderato, detached, [LH AT1]	Slow. Legato RH. LH detached, AT2
No. 7 in Eb Major	Slow, first part legato AT1, third part all staccato, change tempo, AT5, quarter note legato, rest detached.	Rubato, AT4, third part detached, AT 7 (*m.1)	Legato. Third part legato, AT5. [8th AT1]	Slow. Lyrical Legato, third part [AT5, AT3]	Moderato, legato, third part legato. [AT1]
No. 8 in Eb Minor	No pedal, all detached, AT6 AT3, [AT1]	Slow, use AT6, lyrical, legato	Legato consistent use of AT6	Slow, use AT6 (basically consistent), lyrical, legato	Deep legato, pedal, [AT6, AT3 (mm.20-21)]
No. 9 in E major	Melody legato, [AT1, AT5, AT3]	Legato, AT3	Legato, [AT3]	Legato, inconsistent AT3 [AT5]	Light legato, use AT3, AT2, AT5

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 10 in E Minor *	LH staccato, (*m.12) RH legato. Last part moderately slow, staccato [AT1, AT4]	AT6, [AT5], last part detached, AT4	Legato, last part Moderato, AT4, light legato	RH legato AT6, LH AT1 +staccato, last part fast, legato, AT4	[AT6] legato. Last part detached, [AT4] (*m.6, 10, 12)
No. 11 in F Major	Fast, staccato LH staccato [AT1+staccato],	AT4 through AT1, quasi-staccato LH AT1+staccato	RH legato. LH detached. [LH AT1+Staccato]	Moderato, detached LH [AT1]	16th note detached. LH staccato. [Slower notes AT1, AT5, LH AT2]
No. 12 in F Minor	Very Slow, legato. [AT5, AT6]	Pedal. Legato	Moderately fast. Legato	Legato, [AT3, AT2]	Light legato. [AT3] *(16)
No. 13 in F# Major	Melody AT1+detached, AT3, AT5	Legato in both hands, light legato [AT3]	Legato, AT3	Legato, AT2, inconsistent AT3,	RH AT1+detached AT3, [AT5] LH legato
No. 14 in F# Minor	16th detached, eight notes, AT6 [AT1, subtle AT5]	Moderately Slow, RH AT1+staccato AT6	RH legato, 8th staccato. [AT6 once]	Allegro, quasi staccato. AT3 AT1 on both hands,	All staccato. AT5, AT6
No. 15 in G Major *	Fast, quasi staccato RH LH every second 8th notes prolonged, AT5	Legato, AT4 LH AT1 [AT5 in LH second part]	RH detached, LH detached [AT1, AT5]	Fast, Staccato on both hands.	Moderato. All staccato, 8th notes AT2 [AT1]
No. 16 in G Minor	Light legato, LH 8th notes AT5 (m.14)	Moderately fast. Legato [AT1].	Legato [AT3 LH AT5]	Legato, 32 nd notes inconsistent detached AT5	No pedal. legato [AT3 (mm.9,13), rubato (m.15) LH detached]

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 17 in Ab Major	Theme detached+AT1, 16th detached, gradually change to all legato, [AT1 AT6]	Theme detached +AT1 16 th detached, 8 th legato with AT1 [AT1, AT6]	Theme detached, 16th legato [AT5]	Theme staccato, 16 th detached [AT6, AT1](m.24 25)	Theme detached 16th detached [AT2, AT6, AT5, AT1]
No. 18 in G# Minor	Legato. [AT5] (m. 9,10, 17) LH becomes light legato at mm.18-24 *m.7	Legato both hands. [AT1, AT3] (m.11, 22)	Legato, AT3 in LH	Legato	Deep legato [AT3] (m.11, 27) slight rubato
No. 19 in A Major	Theme detached, 16th detached, accompaniment notes legato, 8th AT1+Staccato	Theme legato, 16 th staccato+AT1. LH legato. 8 th AT1+Staccato	Legato [AT1] 8th AT1+Staccato	16 th detached, Accompaniment legato. 8 th AT1+detached	RH Light legato. LH detached, 8th detached [AT1, AT5]
No. 20 in A Minor	All detached, AT1, [AT6, AT1, AT5]	Theme Staccato+AT1. 16 th legato [AT5]	8th staccato 16th legato	Theme detached, running notes light legato,	Fast. Theme Staccato+AT1. 16th light legato AT5
No. 21 in Bb Major	Very Fast. Quasi staccato. AT5 AT6.	Fast. Quasi staccato in both hands. AT6 second part [AT5]	RH detached. 8th staccato. AT5, AT6 in second part	Fast. Quasi staccato. AT6	Moderato. RH detached. LH AT1+staccato, AT2.
No. 22 in Bb Minor	Slow, legato	Slow, legato.	Moderately slow, legato	Moderato, shallow legato	Moderato [AT6 m.9]

No. 23 in B Major	RH detached, AT5	Running notes detached with AT1	Legato [LH AT5]	RH legato, AT5	Legato [LH detached]
No. 24 in B Minor	LH staccato, [LH AT5, AT1]	Legato	Moderately fast. LH detached	Slow LH AT1 detached,	LH AT1+detached mixed with legato (m. 12, 18)

The preludes are divided into four groups based on texture, tempo, melodic components. The grouping of the preludes is shown in the table below. The next few chapters will discuss the treatment of each of the groups.

Table I.2 Grouping of the Preludes from Bach's WTC I

	Characteristics	Preludes
Group I Preludes	Preludes with Continuous Figuration	C Major, C Minor, C# Major, D Major, D Minor, E Minor (second half), F Major, F# Minor, G Major, and Bb Major
Group II Preludes	Lyrical Preludes	C# Minor, Eb Major, E Major, F Minor, F# Major, G# Minor, B Major and B Minor
Group III Preludes	Lyrical Preludes with Distinct Melodic Line and Accompaniment	Eb Minor, E Minor, G Minor, and Bb Minor
Group IV Preludes	Preludes with Non-Lyrical Themes in Eighth and Sixteenth Notes	Ab Major, A Major, and A Minor

CHAPTER II Preludes with Continuous Figuration

II.1 Introduction of the Preludes

Ten preludes contain continuous running sixteenth or thirty-second notes, mostly accompanied by eighth or quarter notes: C Major, C Minor, C# Major, D Major, D Minor, E Minor (second half), F Major, F# Minor, G Major, and Bb Major. They are one- or two-part in texture, sometimes consisting of an alternation between the two. Tempo implications vary between Moderato and Allegro.

Compared to the other groups, these preludes feature greater contrast in interpretation among the five pianists. For example, while Feltsman's performance of the F# Minor prelude is filled with rigorous drive (see soundtrack 1), Gould takes a much more elegant approach for the same piece; using a slower tempo and lighter touch, he turns the piece into a dance (see soundtrack 2). Although the two performers use the same style of articulation, the characters they create are different.

Soundtrack 1



File 01 Feltsman F# Minor.mp3

Soundtrack 2



File 02 Gould F# Minor.mp3

Table II.1 Articulation in Preludes with Continuous Figuration

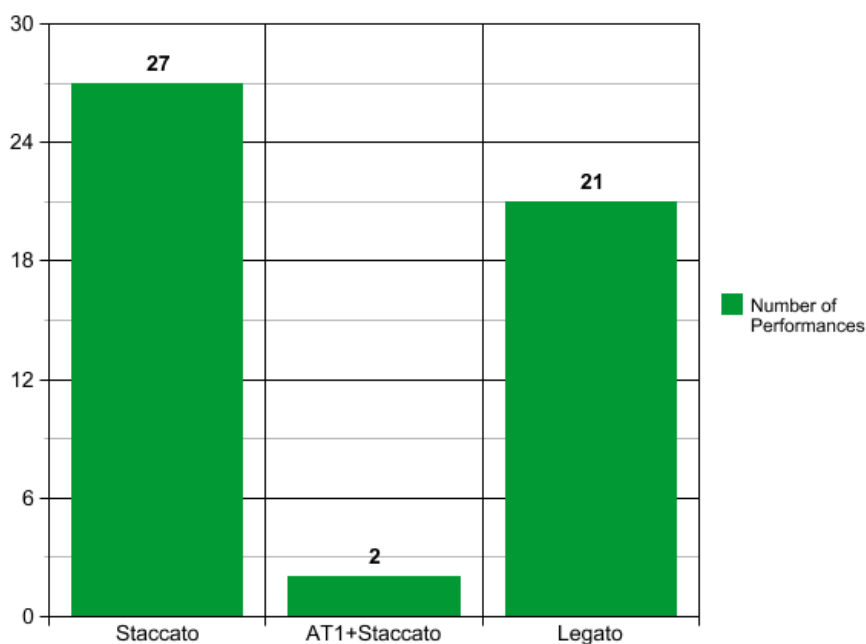
Abbr. AT1 short slur, AT2 long slur, AT3 detached upbeat, AT4 accented downbeat, AT5 changing articulation, AT6 rolling chords, [] refers to the articulation techniques that appear inconsistently or occasionally (later in this chapter, they will be identified as decorative articulation).

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 1 C major	Legato AT2, [AT5] (unconventional)	Legato. AT4.	Legato.	Pedal, legato AT3, AT5	Legato.
No. 2 in C Minor	Moderately slow, all detached AT4 [AT5, AT1] Second part legato, AT6	Legato, AT4, AT5, [AT3 last part]	AT4, light legato, AT5	Pedal, legato. Uneven articulation, AT4	Legato, AT4, AT5, Rubato
No. 3 in C# major	Fast. RH and LH staccato RH 8 th AT1, AT5 (unconventional)	RH quasi- staccato LH AT1 [AT1 second part LH]	LH and RH legato. [AT3]. LH later changes to staccato	Moderato, light legato.	Moderately slow, rubato RH legato [AT3] LH AT1, slower moving notes later changes to staccato
No. 5 in D major	Fast, RH, LH staccato [AT4, LH AT5] * coda legato, AT6	Heavy, legato, [AT4, AT5 second part]	RH legato. LH detached. [LH AT1 AT5]	Light legato, [subtle AT5].	Moderately slow Light legato, LH staccato [LH AT5]
No. 6 in D Minor	All staccato, LH AT1+staccato, AT2 [AT5, LH AT1]	All staccato. LH AT2	RH Legato. LH detached. LH AT2	Moderato, detached, [LH AT1]	Slow. Legato RH. LH detached, AT2
No. 10 in E Minor (coda) *	Moderately slow, staccato AT4, AT1	Detached AT4	Moderato, AT4, light legato	Fast, Legato, AT4	Moderato Detached, AT4
No. 11 in F Major	Fast, staccato LH staccato [AT1+staccato],	AT4 through AT1, quasi- staccato LH AT1+staccato	RH legato. LH detached. [LH AT1+Staccato]	Moderato, detached LH [AT1]	16 th note detached. LH staccato. [Slower notes AT1, AT5, LH AT2]

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 14 in F# Minor	16 th detached, eight notes, AT6 [AT1, subtle AT5]	Moderately Slow, RH AT1+staccato AT6	RH legato, 8 th staccato. [AT6 once]	Allegro, quasi-staccato. AT3 AT1 on both hands,	All staccato. AT5, AT6
No. 15 in G Major *	Fast, quasi staccato RH LH every second 8 th notes prolonged, AT5	Legato, AT4 LH AT1 [AT5 in LH second part]	RH detached, LH detached [AT1, AT5]	Fast, Staccato on both hands.	Moderato. All staccato, 8 th notes AT2 [AT1]
No. 21 in Bb Major	Very Fast. Quasi staccato. AT5 AT6.	Fast. Quasi staccato in both hands. AT6 second part [AT5]	RH detached. 8 th staccato. AT5, AT6 in second part	Fast. Quasi staccato. AT6	Moderato. RH detached. LH AT1+staccato, AT2.

Graph 2.1.1*

Articulation for the 16th Notes in Group I Preludes



Note: “legato” indicated in the graph includes both legato and light legato; “staccato” includes detached, quasi-staccato and staccato. Out of the fifty-five performances observed, about half play the sixteenth notes legato, while the other half play them staccato or AT1+staccato.

II.2 Treatment of Running Notes

Roughly two types of articulation are practiced in the performance of the running sixteenth and thirty-second notes: a more flowing legato style of articulation, and an energetic staccato or detached style of articulation. An examination of the table above shows that while all pianists employ both styles of articulation, they may prefer one over the other. Gould, for instance, prefers detached or staccato style of articulation, whereas Hewitt practices legato much more frequently. Furthermore, both styles of articulation are observed with each prelude, suggesting that there is no correct or incorrect type of articulation for each piece.

One important factor that affects pianists’ choice is the atmosphere embedded in the music. The soothing atmosphere of the C Major Prelude, for instance, leads most pianists to play the sixteenth notes legato. Conversely, when an energetic atmosphere is called for, such as in the F# Minor prelude, staccato becomes the popular choice. However, it is worth noting that the same type of atmosphere can be created through employing different articulation. Tureck’s performance of the C Minor (see soundtrack 3) and G Major Preludes (see soundtrack 4) exert as much energy as any other performers on the same piece, yet such energy is expressed through a heavy touch in legato articulation. Therefore, with correct touch and tone color, either type of articulation can work for the preludes with continuous figuration.

Soundtrack 3



File 03 Tureck C Minor.mp3

Soundtrack 4



File 04 Tureck G Major.mp3

Uniform articulation is often practiced in the running passages. This means that the sixteenth notes are either played legato, staccato or AT1+staccato, rather than a mix of the three.

An important articulation technique employed in the running sixteenth and thirty-second notes is stressing downbeat notes (AT4). Due to their unrelenting nature, keeping the rhythmic pulse is quintessential in the performance of the running passages. In most cases, this is done by placing an accent on the accompanying eighth notes. Yet in the case of the C Major, C Minor and E Minor preludes where there is no accompaniment, accented downbeat (AT4) is used. This technique can be done in several ways. The simplest is to place an accent or tenuto on the downbeat notes, as seen in the performances of the E Minor (see soundtrack 5) and C Minor preludes (see soundtrack 6) by Hewitt, Schiff, and Feltsman. Another way of achieving similar effect is by placing a slur (AT1) on the first two notes of the strong beats. This technique is demonstrated in the performances by Feltsman of the F Major prelude (see figure 2.2.1) (see soundtrack 7). The slurs avoid the roughness of an accent, while preserving elegance. Finally, accenting downbeat (AT4) can be done by placing a break before the downbeat notes to create a detached upbeat (AT3). This is seen in the Tureck interpretation of the C Minor prelude (see figure 2.2.2) (see soundtrack 3 top of the page).

Soundtrack 5



File 05 Hewitt E Minor.mp3

Soundtrack 6



File 06 Schiff C Minor.mp3

Soundtrack 7



File 07 Feltsman F Major.mp3

Figure 2.2.1 Tureck and Feltsman's Articulation for the F Major Prelude



Figure 2.2.2 Tureck's Articulation for the C Minor Prelude



Altering the sounding duration of the notes (AT5) is another common articulation technique practiced in the running passages. This technique not only makes the performance less predictable, but also helps to reinforce the dramatic effect of the piece. In her recording of the C Minor prelude, pianist Tureck begins the piece in legato articulation (see soundtrack 3). Starting from measure 15, with a sudden release of tension, the pianist lightens the touch and plays the sixteenth notes detached. This sudden change of articulation greatly reinforces the changing of atmosphere and expands the tone color. As the tension builds up, the sounding duration of each sixteenth note is correspondingly prolonged. The staccato gradually shifts back to legato as the performance reaches a climatic point at measure 25.

Schiff's use of changing articulation (AT5) is a little different. In his performance of the same piece, the sixteenth notes are played in a more reserved, less ferocious manner (see soundtrack 6). With an overall smaller dynamic range and lighter touch, sudden shortening of the running notes only appears for one to two measures and their occurrences are dispersed throughout the performance. Altering articulation (AT5) therefore can serve as means of embellishment. This articulation technique can also help reinforce sudden changes of atmosphere. At measure 21, for instance, as Schiff releases the tension to begin a four-measure long buildup, the shift to staccato articulation greatly reinforces the decrescendo. In both pianists' performances, AT5 is present at every dramatic moment of the performance. A similar effect is also seen in Schiff's performance of the D Major and F# Minor preludes.

Soundtrack 6



File 06 Schiff C Minor.mp3

In the less common case of Tureck and Schiff's performances of the F# Minor Prelude, short slurs (AT1) are used in the staccato running notes (see figure 2.2.3; marked AT1+ Staccato in the table) (see soundtrack 8). This type of articulation is frequently used when performing Bach's work. It consists of a slur placed over the first two notes of a four-note group. The combination of slurs and detached notes forms a strong-weak-weak-weak pulse which, when played in a moderate tempo and with elegant touch, creates a dance-like rhythm.

Soundtrack 8



File 08 Tureck F# Minor.mp3

Figure 2.2.3 Tureck and Schiff's Articulation for the F# Minor Prelude



II.3 Treatment of Eighth and Quarter Notes

Most of the preludes with running figuration contain series of eighth and quarter notes forming counterpoint against the running notes. Consensus reveals that the eighth notes are played non-legato. The degree of non-legato varies greatly, anywhere from merely detached to staccato.

Many articulation techniques are applied to the slower moving notes, the most common being the short slurs (AT1). Examples of this technique are seen in the performances of the C# Major Prelude, in which short slurs are systematically used to connect the quarter and eighth notes. In Schiff's recording (see soundtrack 9), the slurs begin on the eighth notes and end on the following quarters (see figure 2.3.1), creating a slur from upbeat to downbeat. In Tureck's recording, the slurs begin on the quarter notes, following the hierarchy of the beat that is typical of Baroque articulation (see figure 2.3.2) (see soundtrack 10).

Soundtrack 9



File 09 Schiff C# Major.mp3

Soundtrack 10



File 10 Tureck C# Major.mp3

Figure 2.3.1 Schiff's Articulation



Figure 2.3.2 Tureck's Articulation



Hewitt's performance of this prelude is unique. She adopts a lyrical interpretation that connects all quarter and eighth notes.

AT1+ Staccato is often practiced in the eighth notes. Examples are seen in Gould, Feltsman and Tureck's performances of the F Major Prelude (see soundtrack 7) and Gould's recording of the D Minor Prelude. In the case of Schiff's performance of the Bb Major prelude, slurs are placed over the first three notes of a four-note group (see figure 2.3.3) (see soundtrack 11). The slur pattern creates a subtle accent on the strong beats (AT4). Given the slower tempo and gentler touch of Schiff's recording, they also add a lyrical element to the performance.

Soundtrack 7



File 07 Feltsman F Major.mp3

Soundtrack 11



File 11 Schiff Bb Major.mp3

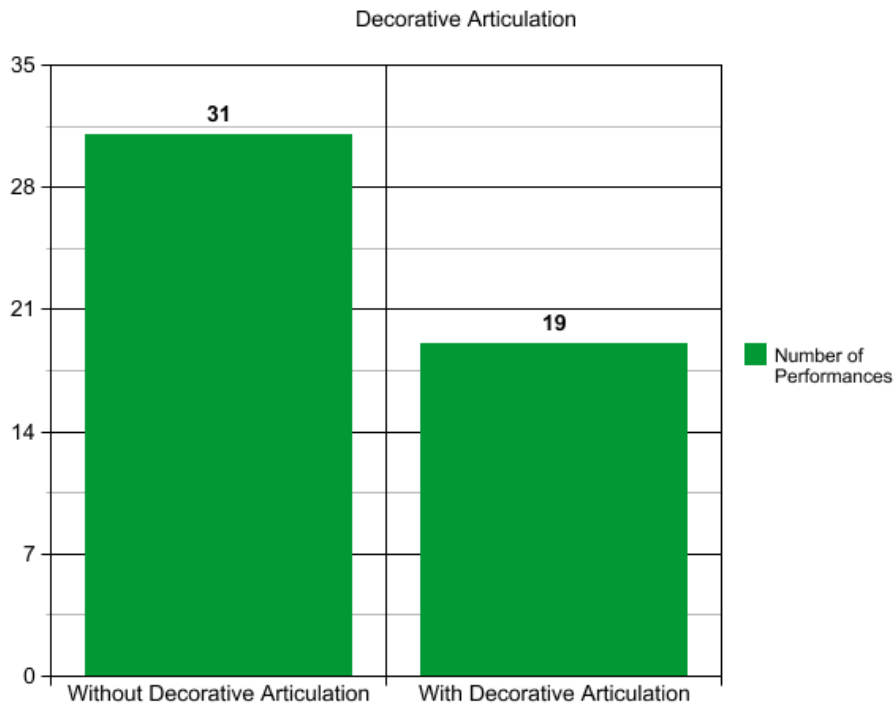
Figure 2.3.3 Schiff's Articulation for the Bb Major Prelude



Changing articulation (AT5) is also often used in eighth notes. In Hewitt's performance of the D Major prelude, the accompanying eighth notes often switch back and forth between staccato and portamento.

II.4 Decorative Articulation

Graph 2.4.1



While uniform articulation creates a nice flowing line, the fixation on the same rhythmic pattern can easily make the performance too predictable and uninteresting. As a solution, articulation techniques are used in various places to make the performance less predictable. These articulations that appear inconsistently will be named decorative articulation. Graph 2.4.1 shows that 19 of the performances studied here contains these, while 31 do not alter the regular articulation patterns.

A strategy that most pianists adopt is to maintain uniformity in running notes while using different articulation techniques for the slower moving notes.

Figure 2.4.1 Hewitt's Articulation for the G Major Prelude (see soundtrack 12)

The image displays five systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. The notation includes various articulation techniques such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The first system shows a steady eighth-note pattern in the treble and a slower-moving bass line. The second system introduces a more complex treble line with slurs and accents. The third system features a dense treble line with many slurs and a bass line with a steady eighth-note pattern. The fourth system has a treble line with slurs and accents, and a bass line with a steady eighth-note pattern. The fifth system continues the complex treble line with slurs and accents, and a bass line with a steady eighth-note pattern.

Soundtrack 12



File 12 Hewitt G Major.mp3

Figure 2.4.1 illustrates Hewitt's performance of the G Major Prelude. The performance begins with the running passages legato and eighth notes detached. Uniform articulation is maintained for five measures until a short slur is introduced at measure 6 in the eighth notes. These inconsistently reappearing slurs are examples of decorative articulations since they do not have any actual function other than creating variety. Their appearance and placement are, in the author's opinion, often a spontaneous choice by the performer.

All six articulation techniques can function as decorative articulation. They may be as infrequent as two measures of a piece, such as heard in Gould's use of changing articulation (AT5) in the C Major Prelude (see soundtrack 13 at 1:36, mm.25, 28); or they may appear on an irregular basis throughout the performance, as in Gould's use of short slurs (AT1) in the F# Minor Prelude (see soundtrack 2). Gould's performance of the D Minor Prelude features a rare case where the pianist unexpectedly introduces pedal in the middle of an otherwise senza pedal performance to create variety (see soundtrack 14, around 00:55).

Soundtrack 13



File 13 Gould C Major.mp3

Soundtrack 2



File 02 Gould F# Minor.mp3

Soundtrack 14



File 14, Gould D Minor.mp3

Long slurs (AT2) are special for the sense of lyricism they bring to the performance. This technique consists of a combination of slurred and detached notes. The placement of the detached notes and the length of the slurs can vary.

Figure 2.4.2 Hewitt Plays the D Minor Prelude (see soundtrack 15)



Soundtrack 15



File 15 Hewitt D Minor.mp3

Figure 2.4.3 Tureck Plays the D Minor Prelude



Figures 2.4.2 and 2.4.3 illustrate Hewitt's and Tureck's articulation for a passage in the D Minor prelude. Though both pianists use long slurs (AT2), the articulation they chose are different. While Hewitt's slurs begin on strong beats, Tureck starts the slurs on weak beats. Also, the former pianist employs a combination of slurred and detached notes, while the latter uses only slurred notes.

The most interesting application of long slurs (AT2) is Gould's and Feltsman's performances of the C Major Prelude (see soundtracks 13 and 16). Most pianists play this prelude legato, but Feltsman plays the piece in separated slurs, while Gould innovatively combines slurs with staccato notes to deflect the lyricism.

Soundtrack 13



File 13 Gould C Major.mp3

Soundtrack 16



File 16 Feltsman C Major.mp3

Figure 2.4.4 Gould's Articulation for the C Major Prelude



Figure 2.4.5 Feltsman's Articulation for the C Major Prelude



There are many cases where the pianists choose to accept a certain degree of predictability by playing the entire prelude with uniform articulation. This is demonstrated in Hewitt's performances of the F Major and F# Major preludes, Feltsman's performance of the D Minor Prelude, and many others. In assessing the performers' choices, an important issue concerning programming needs to be addressed. The recordings studied in this project are all recorded as complete sets, which may have been a factor when designing articulations. When unpredictability is added to every single prelude, this in itself becomes somewhat predictable. Therefore, keeping some of the preludes in uniform articulation adds variety to the entire set. Were these preludes to be performed alone in a recital, the pianists might take different approaches.

II.5 Summary

Four main aspects characterize pianists' articulation of Bach's WTC I preludes featuring continuously running passages. First, the running figuration can be played legato or detached depending on the performer's desired effect, but a generally uniform articulation is required to maintain the momentum. Second, the slower moving notes need to be mainly detached. They may or may not stay in uniform motion. Third, the running passages can be varied with articulation techniques such as accented downbeat (AT4) and changing articulation (AT5), as long as they do not disturb the flow of the line. Pianists can be much more creative when playing the eighth notes. In many of the examples studied here, short slurs are used extensively, and long slurs are used to add lyricism and create unpredictability to the performance. Lastly, this element of unpredictability is widely employed, both on a small scale within the performance of an

individual prelude, and on a large plane where a variety of interpretations are observed for the same type of preludes.

CHAPTER III – Three Other Prelude Types

III.1 Lyrical Preludes

Lyrical preludes are played by these pianists at tempos falling between our current perceptions of Andante and Moderato. The expression of the preludes relies heavily on the touch of keys and tone color. Eight preludes are included in this group: C# Minor, Eb Major, E Major, F Minor, F# Major, G# Minor, B Major and B Minor.

Table III.1 Articulation in Lyrical Preludes

Abbr. AT1 short slur, AT2 long slur, AT3 detached upbeat, AT4 accented downbeat, AT5 changing articulation, AT6 rolling chords, Light legato refers to a light touch of keys, resulting in connected, but non so cantabile melodic line

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 4 in C# Minor	Moderato. Light legato Dotted quarter shorter, [AT3]	Rubato, slow, deep legato	Light Legato. [AT3] *	Slow. AT6, rubato, deep legato [AT5]	Moderato legato Slight rolling, rubato
No. 7 in Eb Major	Slow, first part legato AT1, third part all staccato, change tempo, AT5, quarter note legato, rest detached.	Rubato, AT4, third part detached, AT 7 (*m.1)	Legato. Third part legato, AT5. [8 th AT1]	Slow. Deep legato, third part [AT5, AT3]	Moderato, legato, third part legato. [AT1]
No. 9 in E major	Melody legato, [AT1, AT5, AT3]	Light legato, AT3	Legato, [AT3]	Legato, inconsistent AT3 [AT5]	Light legato, use AT3, AT2, AT5

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 12 in F Minor	Very Slow, light legato. [AT5, AT6]	Pedal. Legato	Moderately fast. Legato	Legato, [AT3, AT2]	Light legato. [AT3] *(16)
No. 13 in F# Major	Melody AT1+detached, AT3, AT5 LH detached	Legato in both hands, light legato [AT3]	Light legato, AT3	Legato, AT2, inconsistent AT3,	RH AT1+detached AT3, [AT5] LH legato
No. 18 in G# Minor	Light legato. [AT5] (m. 9,10, 17) LH becomes light legato at mm.18-24 *m.7	Legato both hands. [AT1, AT3] (m.11, 22)	Legato, AT3 in LH	Legato,	Deep legato [AT3] (m.11, 27) slight rubato
No. 23 in B Major	RH detached, AT5	Running notes detached with AT1	Legato [LH AT5]	RH legato, AT5	Legato [LH detached]
No. 24 in B Minor	LH staccato, [LH AT5, AT1]	Legato	Moderately fast. LH detached	Slow LH AT1 detached,	LH AT1+detached mixed with legato (m. 12, 18) AT5

In most of these performances, the pianists play the main theme legato, which is the touch best suited to project lyricism. It is interesting to note the various degrees of lyricism displayed. In recordings of the C# Minor prelude, for example, both Tureck and Feltsman (see soundtrack 17) choose a deep, sonorous tone and a slow tempo to create a rather somber effect. The melody is expressive with a wide range of tone colors. Gould and Hewitt (see soundtrack 18), on the other hand, play the piece in a much more reserved manner. With lighter touch and

moderate tempo, the melody flows quicker; instead of a somber effect, they create a rather sweet melancholy. While also expressive, the characters of their performances are very different from those of Tureck and Feltsman.

Soundtrack 17



File 17 Feltsman C# Minor.mp3

Soundtrack 18



File 18 Hewitt C# Minor.mp3

In most performances of lyrical Bach preludes, pianists favor shallow, bright tone over deep, singing tone. This may be due to the fact that most of these preludes are composed in major keys, which calls for an uplifting, merry atmosphere. Yet more importantly, the five pianists intentionally avoid giving the preludes an overly Romantic air. In Hewitt's performance of the E Major Prelude (see soundtrack 19), she not only applies shallower touch of the keys, but also carefully avoids using long phrases. As most phrases are between half to one measure long, they do not generate the drive to move forward that is typical of 19th century aesthetic. Such legato is not only practiced in the major key preludes. In Hewitt's interpretation of the G# Minor prelude (see soundtrack 20), the three-measure long, continuous running melody from mm.3 to 5 is divided into six segments using shorter slurs.

Soundtrack 19



File 19 Hewitt E Major.mp3

Soundtrack 20



File 20 Hewitt G# Minor.mp3

In much rarer cases, pianists completely disregard lyricism by playing the melody detached. For example, Gould and Schiff play the melody of the F# Major prelude AT1+ staccato. They eliminate lyricism and play the prelude in the air of a dance. Schiff's performance is rather energetic and lively (see soundtrack 21). With a moderately fast tempo, he plays the

piece with a pastoral feeling. Gould, on the other hand, takes a much slower tempo (see soundtrack 22). He brings a stately feeling to the music and plays the piece in the style of a court dance. In both pianists' performances, detached upbeat (AT3) and changing articulation (AT5) are extensively used to make the interpretations less predictable.

Soundtrack 21



File 21 Schiff F# Major.mp3

Soundtrack 22



File 22 Gould F# Major.mp3

Not many articulation techniques are applied to the melody, and few are practiced systematically. Of the ones that do appear, AT1-3 (short slurs, long slurs, detached upbeat) are the most common. This is heard in Hewitt's performance of the E major prelude (see figure 3.1.1) (see soundtrack 19).

Soundtrack 19



File 19 Hewitt E Major.mp3

Figure 3.1.1 Hewitt's Articulation for the E Major Prelude



The performance opens with two measures of legato playing. Starting from the third beat of measure 3, the unexpected staccatos on E and C# break the legato line, ending the smooth flow established in the beginning. Over the next few measures, such staccato notes inconsistently appear, creating a mischievous feeling. The first systematic use of articulation technique is before the cadences. The eighth notes leading up to the dominant at m.8 and the tonic at m.22 become detached. This cadential point marks the modulation of tonal center as well as the sectional division of the prelude, so the use of changing articulation (AT5) appropriately highlights the measure and anticipates the final arrival of the new tonic. Such practice of articulation is also seen in the recordings by Schiff, Gould and Tureck.

Another systematic use of articulation technique is at measure 10 (see figure 3.1.2), when a break (AT3) is placed before each of the syncopated notes. This technique not only strengthens

the accents created by the syncopation, but also brings liveliness to the overall piece. Similar use of detached upbeat (AT3) is also found in Gould's and Schiff's interpretations of the F# and E Major Prelude.

Figure 3.1.2 Hewitt's Articulation for the E Major Prelude



III.2 Lyrical Preludes with Distinct Melodic Line and Accompaniment

Four preludes are lyrical in nature, with a distinct melodic line and accompaniment: Eb Minor, E Minor, G Minor, and Bb Minor. Compared to the Lyrical preludes discussed in the previous section, this group moves in a slower pace, and seems more lyrical, partially due to minor tonalities.

Table III.2 Articulation in Lyrical Preludes with Distinct Melodic Line and Accompaniment

Abbr. AT1 short slur, AT2 long slur, AT3 detached upbeat, AT4 accented downbeat, AT5 changing articulation, AT6 rolling chords

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 8 in Eb Minor	No pedal, all detached, AT6 AT3, [AT1]	Slow, use AT6, lyrical, legato	Legato consistent use of AT6	Slow, use AT6 (basically consistent), lyrical, legato	Deep legato, pedal, [AT6, AT3 (mm.20-21)]

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 10 in E Minor (first part) *	LH AT1+ staccato, hold bass note, (m.12 doesn't play the rest) RH legato	AT6, [AT5],	Legato	RH legato AT6, LH AT1+ staccato	[AT6] legato
No. 16 in G Minor	Light legato, LH 8 th notes AT5 (m.14)	Moderately fast. Legato [AT1].	Legato [AT3 LH AT5]	Legato, 32 nd notes inconsistent detached AT5	No pedal. legato [AT3 (mm.9,13), rubato (m.15) LH detached]
No. 22 in Bb Minor	Slow, legato	Slow, legato.	Moderately slow	Moderato, shallow legato	Moderato [AT6 m.9]

Table III.2 shows that there is a much higher degree of uniformity in articulation amongst pianists when playing these preludes. Most of the melodic lines are played legato, and few articulation techniques are used. Compared to the Group II lyrical preludes, a deeper touch in legato is usually practiced in these preludes.

The only exception is Gould's performance of the Eb Minor prelude, where he detaches both melody and accompaniment (see soundtrack 23). It is unusual for pianists to play this prelude in such a way, yet in the author's opinion, his performance expresses as much sorrow as other performers. Gould plays most of the notes at about half of their written value, and leaves spaces in between. Without any pedal, the performance is filled with ominous silence and emptiness. He extensively uses rolling chords (AT6) to make sure that the performance is never filled with the resonating sound of a full chord. With specially designed articulation, Gould gives another dimension to the doleful expression of this music.

Soundtrack 23



File 23 Gould Eb Minor.mp3

As in the lyrical preludes from the previous category, short slurs (AT1) and detached upbeats (AT3) create variety in the articulation. One commonly practiced articulation technique unique to this group is AT6, rolled chords which originated in harpsichord performance. Since it is not possible to place emphasis on top notes in the harpsichord through control of dynamic volume, harpsichordists roll the chords to make each voice more audible, which at the same time avoids the strong dynamic accent caused by multiple notes playing simultaneously. This technique has been passed on to the piano performance of Bach's music, and is frequently practiced.

Like the preludes with consistent running figuration, the G Minor Prelude features series of eighth notes to accompany the melody. All five pianists chose to play these notes legato (see soundtrack 24), which suggests the traditions heard in the preludes with running figuration are ignored to stress the lyrical atmosphere of the G minor Prelude. On the other hand, the recordings by Feltsman and Gould of the E Minor Prelude seem to contradict this observation (see soundtrack 25). In their performances, the two pianists choose to play left hand AT1+ Staccato (see figure 3.2.1). Such articulation no doubt diminishes the lyricism embedded in the melody. Perhaps like the few non-lyrical performances of the lyrical preludes, such articulation is intended to create unpredictability into the overall performance of the set.

Soundtrack 24



File 24 Schiff G Minor.mp3

Soundtrack 25



File 25 Feltsman E Minor.mp3

Figure 3.2.1 Feltsman’s and Gould’s Articulation of the E Minor Prelude



III.3 Preludes with Non-Lyrical Themes in Eighth and Sixteenth Notes

These three non-lyrical preludes are lively and move at a moderate tempo: Ab Major, A Major, and A Minor. There is much greater variety of articulation practiced in this group than others, ranging from playing everything legato to everything staccato.

Table III.3 Articulations of Preludes with Non-Lyrical Themes in Eight and Sixteenth Notes

Abbr. AT1 short slur, AT2 long slur, AT3 detached upbeat, AT4 accented downbeat, AT5 changing articulation, AT6 rolling chords

	Glenn Gould	Rosalyn Tureck	Angela Hewitt	Vladimir Feltsman	Andras Schiff
No. 17 in Ab Major	Theme detached+AT1, 16 th detached, gradually change to all legato, [AT1 AT6]	Theme detached +AT1 16 th detached, 8 th legato with AT1 [AT1, AT6]	Theme detached, 16 th legato [AT5]	Theme staccato, 16 th detached [AT6, AT1](m.24 25)	Theme detached 16 th detached [AT2, AT6, AT5, AT1]

No. 19 in A Major	Theme detached, 16 th detached, accompaniment notes legato, 8 th AT1+Staccato	theme legato, 16 th staccato+ AT1. LH legato. 8 th AT1+Staccato	Legato [AT1] 8 th AT1+Staccato	16 th detached, Accompanim ent legato. 8 th AT1+detache d	RH Light legato. LH detached, 8 th detached [AT1, AT5]
No. 20 in A Minor	All detached, AT1, [AT6, AT1, AT5]	Theme Staccato+ AT1. 16 th legato [AT5]	8 th staccato 16 th legato	Theme detached, running notes light legato,	Fast. Theme Staccato+AT 1. 16 th light legato AT5

An examination of the table above reveals that pianists tend to detach the themes of the Ab Major and A Minor prelude, but there is no consensus on the treatment of themes in the A Major Prelude.

Figure 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 illustrate Tureck and Gould's articulation for the Ab Major Prelude. Both pianists play the piece detached with extensive short slurs (AT1), yet their placement of slurs is most unusual. According to observations made in the preludes with running figuration, short slurs usually start on the downbeat, yet Tureck consistently starts the slur on the weak beats (see soundtrack 26). Furthermore, she uses slurs so extensively that the great majority of eighth notes are under slurs. In Gould's performance, the slurring system changes every two measures (see soundtrack 27), and placement of slurs at mm.6 and 8 are somewhat bizarre. As the performance progresses, Gould gradually changes articulation from mostly staccato to all legato. Of all the recordings observed in this project, this is the only performance where the articulation completely changes.

Soundtrack 26

Soundtrack 27



File 26 Tureck Ab Major.mp3



File 27 Gould Ab Major.mp3

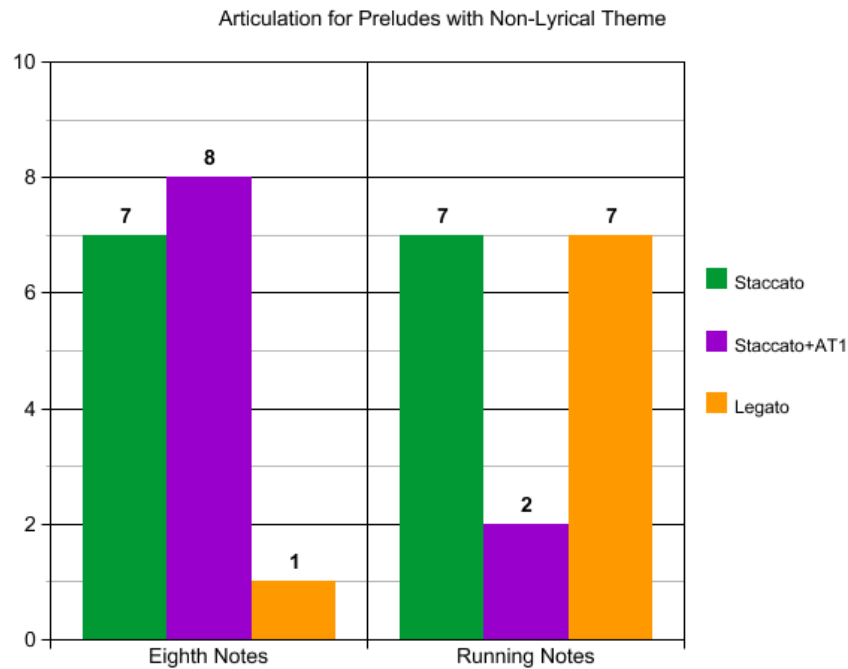
Figure 3.3.1 Tureck's Articulation for the Ab Major Prelude

Figure 3.3.2 Gould's Articulation for the Ab Major Prelude

Varying interpretations are heard in recordings of Bach's A Major prelude. Although the left-hand accompaniment is invariably played legato, the treatment of the theme and running sixteenth notes vary greatly. Hewitt and Schiff play the piece legato throughout, Gould and

Feltsman play everything detached, and Tureck adopts a mixture of legato and staccato. The different articulations generate different characters. Hewitt and Schiff's performances are filled with a sweet, lyrical air, while Gould and Feltsman's interpretations are filled with an energetic drive.

Graph 3.3.1



The graph above reflects that the principles of articulating the eighth and sixteenth notes in these three preludes are the same as for the preludes with consistent running figuration. While the running notes can be played either staccato or legato, most people play the eighth notes staccato or AT1+ Staccato.

Articulation is an integral part of the expression in the performance of the three preludes with non-lyrical themes. It shapes the atmosphere and directly affects the character of the piece. Tureck's and Gould's treatment of the Ab Major Prelude, for example, greatly differ from the

other three performers because of their employment of short slurs (AT1). As many of their slurs start on weak beats, the natural pulse of the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter is disrupted. Their articulations not only soften the excitement created by the detached notes, but also diminish the rhythmic drive of the piece. Comparatively, the other three pianists adopt a simpler interpretation for the theme, with accents falling on the first beat of every measure. The strong-weak-weak pulse is so vividly illustrated that it generates a dance like feeling (see soundtrack 28).

Soundtrack 28



File 28 Schiff Ab Major.mp3

III.4. Summary

A comparison among the three groups of preludes reveals that the more lyrical the piece, the less articulation techniques are applied. For example, the third group, lyrical preludes with clear melodic line and accompaniment can be played without any articulation technique (with the exception of rolling chords AT6). The fourth group, preludes with non-lyrical themes in eighth and sixteenth notes, on the other hand, feature extensive articulation techniques. The second group, lyrical preludes fall in between the other two. While the melodies are mostly played legato, they can be lightly embellished with AT1-3 (short slurs, long slurs, detached upbeat). Also, a comparison between the two types of lyrical preludes reveals that the slower the piece, the deeper touch which is applied.

Combining the observations made in both Chapter II and III, a general articulation principle can be derived from these recordings. First, for all non-lyrical preludes, the running notes are played legato, staccato, or AT1+staccato. The slower moving quarter and eighth notes,

however embellished, stay mostly detached or staccato. For lyrical preludes, the melody remains largely legato. A variety of articulation techniques can be lightly used but do not disturb the flow of the singing line.

CHAPTER IV Observations

IV.1. Freedom of Articulation

The analyses of Chapter II and III generate two important observations. First, pianists take a significant amount of freedom when playing Bach's works on piano, especially for the preludes with running figuration and for the non-lyrical preludes with eighth and sixteenth notes. Even for the lyrical preludes, despite the similarity of articulation found in the performances, there are always exceptions (i.e. the different performances of the F# Major Prelude and the Eb Minor prelude). If all performances were to be studied pedantically, no articulation principles can be drawn at all. Piano performers sometimes completely disregard the articulation principles stated in the Baroque treatises. Hewitt's all legato performance of the C# Major prelude and Gould's gradual shift from all staccato to all legato in the Ab Major prelude are not in accordance with any Baroque treaties, and were likely not practiced by any Baroque performers. This may be due the fact that no consistent articulation markings have been observed in Bach's music.⁶ In fact, as Ralph Kirkpatrick states,

“Most accounts of Bach's own keyboard playing date from a generation later and do not tell us very much about his handling of the instrument... Most of the great keyboard composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were far from having the kind of universal keyboard technique that became common in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They

⁶ Dene Barnett, “Non-uniform Slurring in 18th Century Music: Accident or Design?” *Haydn Yearbook* 10 (1978), 180;

Richard Troeger, *Playing Bach on the Keyboard*, (Minnesota: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2003), 123.

were equipped to play the music of their own style and of their own school and very little else... Fashions in Bach performance have changed radically and often since Bach's time"⁷.

This is not to say that pianists should exercise absolute freedom to play Bach. An analysis of the few unconventional performances illustrate that performers seem to have their own logic to justify their articulation choices. For example, although Hewitt's performance of the C# Major prelude begins completely legato, detached upbeat (AT3) is used at the end of each phrase. Also, starting at measure 32 and 63 when series of eighth notes appear, they are all played staccato. In this way, the legato articulation employed in the beginning is regarded as a decorative articulation. Similarly, the non-legato performances of F# Major can be justified by the fact that the two pianists do not regard this prelude as a lyrical prelude. The categorization and grouping of the preludes are by no means authoritative. They may vary greatly from one pianist to the next. It is therefore quite possible that for Schiff and Gould, this prelude does not belong to the same group as other lyrical preludes.

This study suggests that pianists may responsibly design their own articulation as long as they can justify their choice. Although it was not done by any of the five pianists, one might play the E Major prelude as follows (see figure 4.1.1)

⁷ Ralph Kirkpatrick *Interpreting Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavier": A Performer's Discourse of Method*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984),17-18.

Figure 4.1.1 Possible Articulation for the E Major Prelude



Although such a way of articulating the piece eliminates most lyricism, it is much more in keeping with the approach of playing this work on the harpsichord. With a slightly faster tempo, such an interpretation creates a strong dance-like quality and jolly atmosphere.

IV.2. “Baroque” Style Performance

Six articulation techniques are summarized in this paper, but why do pianists use them? It seems likely they wish to re-create the Baroque style, since similar techniques are not utilized for their performances of Classical or Romantic period music. However, since the modern piano differs substantially from Baroque instruments, some may question the degree to which authenticity can be achieved. Many pianists (including the five of this study) obviously believe it is possible, evidenced by their incorporation of these articulation techniques. These efforts to use non-legato articulation and a variety of articulation techniques will be referred to as playing in

“Baroque” style (since the authenticity of Baroque style is debatable, the word will be used with quotation mark).

Figure 4.2.1 Feltsman’s Articulation for the E Minor Prelude



Figure 4.2.1 illustrates Feltsman’s articulation for the E Minor prelude (see soundtrack 25). There is no doubt that he uses AT1+ staccato articulation and rolling chord (AT6) to create “Baroque” style performance. This performance raises the question, does the pianist use the articulation techniques because he wants to play in “Baroque” style, or because he likes the effect that the ATs generate? If the answer is the former, he could very well have taken away the AT1+ staccato, and just kept the rolling chords (AT6). In this way the performance will remain in “Baroque” style, as was heard in the performances of Tureck and Schiff. However, if the answer is the latter, why does Feltsman use separated slurs (AT2) when playing the C Major prelude (see soundtrack 16)?

Soundtrack 25



File 25 Feltsman E Minor.mp3

Soundtrack 16



File 16 Feltsman C Major.mp3

Figure 4.2.2 Feltsman's Articulation for the C Major Prelude



Most pianists including Tureck, Schiff and Hewitt play this prelude fully legato. Gould, on the other hand, consciously uses long slurs (AT2) in deflection of the flowing singing line (see figure 2.4.4 in Chapter II). By doing so, he does successfully give his performance a “Baroque” air (even though it is highly doubtful that anyone in the Baroque period would have employed similar articulation). Figure 4.2.2 seems to indicate that Feltsman takes Gould’s side when interpreting this piece, yet a hearing of the performance reveals that he plays the melody in the style of a long legato. The breaks between the small slurs are so subtle that they hardly create any disturbance to the flowing line. It seems that the presence of separated slurs (AT2) is only to make the performance more in “Baroque” style. This fact not only contradicts the previous conclusion of the E Minor Prelude, but also raises a question: if he employs so many “Baroque” stylistic traits, why didn’t Feltsman use rolling chords (AT6) as decorative articulation in the Bb Minor prelude (see soundtrack 29)?

Soundtrack 29



File 29 Feltsman Bb Minor.mp3

These contradictory conclusions suggest that like tempo, articulation, and dynamics, playing in “Baroque” style is a choice that pianists consciously (or subconsciously) make when playing Bach’s preludes. Comparing the performances of the five pianists, all of them play some preludes with extensive articulation techniques, and other preludes with less.

Table IV.2 Performances with Extensive/Few Articulation Techniques by the Five Pianists

Pianists	Performances with extensive articulation techniques	Performances with few articulation techniques
Tureck	F# Minor, Ab Major	C Major
Gould	C Major, Ab Major, Eb Minor	Bb Minor
Schiff	F# Major, Ab Major, C# Major	C Major
Feltsman	Eb Minor	Bb Minor, B Major
Hewitt	C# Major	C Major, F# Minor, B Major

IV.3. Highly Personal Performances

This paper has already discussed many performances with uncommon articulations: Gould’s performances of the C Major, Ab Major, Eb Minor; Hewitt’s C# Major; Feltsman’s C Major, E Minor; and Tureck’s Ab Major are all examples. Listed below are some additional examples.

Figure 4.3.1 Gould's performance of G Major (see soundtrack 30)



Soundtrack 30



File 30 Gould G Major.mp3

While maintaining a general staccato articulation for the eighth notes, Gould accents and prolongs the Gs in the lower register.

Figure 4.3.2 illustrates Gould's performance of the C# Major prelude (see soundtrack 31). The performance starts with a staccato left hand. Then for some reason, the pianist decides to place a one-time-only tenuto on the left-hand F# in measure 4. At measure 9 when the hands switch parts and the right-hand takes over the slower moving notes, short slurs (AT1) are added to connect the quarter and eighth notes. For the remainder of the performance, the left hand always plays the slower moving notes staccato, while the right hand plays them with AT1.

Soundtrack 31



File 31 Gould C# Major.mp3

Figure 4.3.2 Gould's Articulation for the C# Major Prelude



Schiff's articulation for this prelude is similar to that of Hewitt (Figure 4.3.3) (see soundtrack 9). His performance starts with slower moving notes alternating between different types of short slurs (AT1) and long legato. Then, like Hewitt's interpretation, he uses detached upbeats (AT3) extensively at the end of phrases, and changes the articulation to fully detached when series of eighth notes come in. Unlike Hewitt however, he takes a much slower tempo, and plays the right hand with deep legato articulation and extensive rubato.

Soundtrack 9



File 09 Schiff C# Major.mp3

Figure 4.3.3 Schiff's and Hewitt's Articulation of the C# Major Prelude



Some pianists go so far as to not follow the few markings Bach left in the score. Reviewing Table 1.1 from Chapter I, star signs (*) indicate the performances which directly violate Bach's own markings. Taking the E Minor prelude for example, according to the Barenreiter Urtext Edition, Bach placed a series of slurs in measure 3, and a sixteenth note rest in measures 10 and 12 (see figure 4.3.4). Of the five recordings observed, Gould is the only pianist who played the two rests, and none of the five pianists played the slurs. In a way, if these performances can be justified, they seem to indicate that there is no limit to what pianists may do. Perhaps this explains why it has been so difficult for theorists to make an authoritative

conclusion about how to articulate Bach's works. Also, in Nicholas Routley's article "Historically Illuminating Performance: Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975; A Comprehensive Review of Sound Recordings and Literature; History, Imagination and the Performance of Music", the author shows that pianists' general interpretation of Bach's music has changed significantly from the 1940s to 1970s.⁸

⁸ Nicholas Routley, "Historically Illuminating Performance: Bach Performance Practice, 1945-1975; A Comprehensive Review of Sound Recordings and Literature; History, Imagination and the Performance of Music". *Musicology Australia*. Vol.30, (January 1, 2008,): 70-74.

Figure 4.3.4 Bach's Prelude in E Minor WTC I, BWV 855⁹

The image displays the musical score for Bach's Prelude in E Minor, BWV 855, from the Well-Tempered Clavier I. The score is presented in five systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The piece is titled "Praeludium 10." and is identified as "Bach, J. WTC I (Bk. I) BWV 855 48". The notation includes various musical elements such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like *rit.* and *tr.*. The bass line features a steady eighth-note accompaniment, while the treble line contains more complex melodic and harmonic patterns.

⁹ Johann S. Bach. *The Well-Tempered Clavier I, BWV 846-869*. (New York: Barenreiter Kassel, 1989), 48.

IV.4 Bach's Instruments

Scholars have contemplated on how Bach would have played his works on the modern piano. Although this question can never be answered, some known factors may give a clue to his possible attitude towards the instrument. According to Bach's student J.F. Agricola, Bach initially criticized Silbermann's early fortepiano; yet upon further improvement, he expressed satisfaction.¹⁰ Also, Bach enjoyed transcribing his works for other instruments, and often playing his works on different instruments when the originally intended instrument was unavailable.¹¹ These facts suggests that Bach may very much have liked hearing his pieces performed on the modern piano. Having the ability to project beyond a small room while creating the subtle individual touch differences of a clavichord, this instrument would certainly have been appealing to him. But it is perhaps doubtful if he would play in the same style as five pianists highlighted herein.

Aesthetic tastes change over time. If Bach were alive today, the present author suspects he would not be as meticulously demanding with subtle articulation differences as sometimes believed. In fact, were he present at a Feltsman's recital, he might be disappointed more about surface issues (e.g. a rigid and ritualistic recital manner, programming, absence of a wig and lack of colorful suit decorations) than the way the pianist played his pieces. If this may be so, it seems fruitless to pedantically search for knowledge about how Bach played his own pieces, when the answer can never be known. Like most composers, Bach would likely wish performers to execute his works in a way which excites their own personalities and preferences. This is,

¹⁰ Eva Badura-Skoda, "Did J.S. Bach Compose 'Pianoforte Concertos'?", *Bach*, Vol.31 No.1, (2000):11.

¹¹ Rachel Wilder, "Liberating Sound: A Study on the Consequence That Performance Practice Research Has Had on Performances of J. S. Bach's Keyboard Works," (DMA diss., University of Kansas, 2017), 22.

perhaps, the reason these five pianists sometimes design bold, unconventional articulations for their renditions.

Every now and then great Bach interpreters come up with new ways of interpreting his music. Often these innovations lead to trends that are subsequently followed by other pianists. If he is to be considered a trend-setter, one may expect Andras Schiff's occasional extensive rubato, for example, to be repeated by a given group of young 21st century pianist. And since the modern piano did not exist in the Baroque period, the answer to the regularly recurring question about whether pianists should follow Baroque keyboard traditions – and in what ways, or to what extent - will likely change with each generation.

CHAPTER V Conclusion

As music theorists are unable to offer sufficiently documented rules for articulating J.S. Bach's music on modern piano, recordings of the prestigious pianists have become the most important reference for many piano students and teachers. However, as interpretations vary greatly from one pianist to another, the recordings can bring more confusions than answers. The writer has witnessed many cases when students desperately try to detach the running figuration of a prelude just because they heard recordings in which other pianists have done so. These students are not aware that staccato articulation is more often a choice, not a necessity. As some are misguided in their attempts to imitate the sound and effect of the harpsichord, they may follow counterproductive rules (i.e. to use no pedal, crescendo or diminuendo). The modern piano does not respond well to attempts to flatten and dismember its unique qualities.

This paper examines the performance practice regarding articulation of the preludes from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I. The recordings of five pianists are examined. Six articulation techniques were discovered: short slurs, long slurs, detached upbeat, accented downbeats, changing articulation, and rolled chords. The preludes are divided into four groups and the principles of articulation are summarized for each group. For the preludes with continuous running figuration, the sixteenth notes are played legato, detached or AT+ staccato with uniform articulation, while the slower moving notes are mainly detached. For the lyrical preludes, shallow legato is usually practiced. Though infrequent, AT1-3 are used to create unpredictability. The third group, lyrical preludes with clear melodic line and accompaniment, are also played with legato, but a deeper touch is preferred. These preludes feature the least amount of articulation techniques, sometimes none at all. The last group, preludes with non-

lyrical themes in eighth and sixteenth notes follows the same principle as the first group, but with extensive articulation techniques. Decorative Articulations are often used as means of embellishment. They enhance the character of the piece and generate a certain “Baroque” air to performances. Because there are many performances that do not conform to any of these identified articulations, the summarized principles in this paper are not authoritative. The performances observed in this project reveal that there is no rule for playing Bach’s music on the piano. It is up to individual pianists to find a middle ground where they can comfortably express their ideas and emotions while not overstepping accepted Baroque performance guidelines.

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