

Interpretation of Wind Band Articulation Markings in the 21st Century

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CENTURY**

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this empirical study is to gather, examine, and compile information regarding the explanation and performance of various articulations in music written for winds as performed in the 21st century. This information will be gathered through surveying wind band conductors at the high school level as well collegiate and professional wind band conductors.

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Chapter 1

Interpretation of Wind Band Articulation Markings in the 21st Century

Purpose:

The purpose of this empirical study is to gather, examine, and compile information regarding the explanation and performance of various articulations in music written for winds as performed in the 21st century. This information will be gathered through surveying wind band conductors at the high school level as well collegiate and professional wind band conductors.

Rationale:

Proper articulation is an integral component of interpreting wind band music. While every conductor has an idea of the correct interpretation of articulation markings, there is much differentiation. Ideology of approach to articulation varies, whether it be volume, note length, attack, or note shape. Further complicating this issue is that wind articulations are often derived from string articulations, and do not necessarily translate among the two families of instruments. This study will identify interpretation trends of wind band conductors to help better inform the language and methods employed to guide articulation interpretation.

Motive

The motive for this thesis stems directly from my experiences as a music educator. Over the past fourteen years I have spent countless hours rehearsing various instrumental ensembles. The one aspect of teaching instrumental music that I find myself continually questioning is the

variety of articulation markings as relates to woodwind and brass instruments, as well as relating the proper methods for executing articulations to students.

I became more interested in this topic when introduced (through my graduate coursework) to Francis W. McBeth's book *Effective Performance of Band Music*. The second chapter of the book deals with proper interpretation of articulation markings. In this chapter, McBeth interviewed ten band composers and ten band conductors of the era, and published the responses (McBeth 20). After reading through the various responses, I believed it would be an interesting study to recreate in 2015 (the original text was published in 1972) and see how modern band directors would interpret common wind articulations. I hope to be able to find some consensus among the respondents.

Chapter 2

An Overview of Articulation for Wind Instruments

Defining Articulation

According to the *Essential Dictionary of Music Notation*, articulations are symbols used “to indicate *how* a note or chord is played, alone or in relation to other notes and chords (Gerou, Lusk 26)”. The text then goes on to categorize articulations as either being “durational articulations” (27) such as the staccato (.) marking or the tenuto (-) marking, or “articulations of force” (33) such as the tenuto, accent (>), or marcato (^).

However, this definition contradicts itself immediately by defining tenuto as circumstantial, allowing it to be either durational or of force. For example, in the *Essential Dictionary of Music Notation*, the staccato marking “indicates that the note or chord is to be played **short** (Gerou, Lusk 29)” and accent “is to be played with **more attack, more marked** (34)”. However, tenuto “indicates that a note or chord is to be **held for its full value** (durational articulation), or the intention may be to apply a **slight stress** (articulation of force)” (31). Given this definition of the tenuto marking, it is left up to the performer to interpret the composer’s intent. In this way, there is already room for discrepancy when discussing articulations, even with just one source.

By contrast, Mark McGrain’s chapter on articulation in his text *Theory and Technique for Music Notation* breaks with the *Essential Dictionary of Music Notation*’s categorization entirely. McGrain states that the tenuto mark “indicates that the note it attends is to receive a soft or dull attack and is to be held for its full value” (McGrain 156). In this definition, the tenuto marking is simultaneously an articulation of force (“soft, dull”) and duration (“full value”). It is perplexing

that there are broad philosophical differences among reputable sources when approaching articulation. It is no wonder, then, that definitions of articulations as relates to wind instruments are often nebulous at best.

Inherent Problems with Current Notational Practices

Perhaps the problem with interpreting articulations for wind instruments is a result of the origin of the articulation markings. As McBeth states in *Effective Performance of Band Music*:

“I think that the reason articulation markings in the winds are ambiguous lies in the fact that the winds borrowed the markings from the strings and tried to force-fit them. For example, any “off the string” articulation marking is transferred to the winds as a “separation of notes.” The problem is that when an “off the string” articulation is used the string is still vibrating and producing tone; but, when notes are separated in the winds, there is no sound. A wind player cannot produce an “off the air” articulation. We have to decide: Do articulation markings alter note values or not? If they do, do they alter them all the time or only part of the time? If they do not alter note values, what do they do?” (McBeth 18-19).

Paul Greenstone’s doctoral research into brass instrument articulation found that a consensus for performance practice could only be found “in the Baroque Period, the Classical Period, and jazz. Authorities demonstrated no consensus for articulations of any other musical period” (Greenstone x). Through surveying brass performers, composers, and conductors, Greenstone drafted and proposed a system of seventeen defined articulations for brass players, based on the preferences of the three surveyed groups (Greenstone 106-108). Given that there are seemingly no native wind articulations, and proposed systems of extended articulations have not

been adopted, it is not surprising that these conflicts exist. This is especially frustrating, as articulation is an important aspect of interpreting band music.

Importance of Articulation

Proper interpretation of articulation is necessary for authentic reproduction of a musical performance in accordance with the composer's original intentions. In *Guide to Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor*, Frank Battisti and Robert Garafolo dedicate an entire section of their score analysis guide to "Stylistic Articulations & Expressive Terms". They note that one should "examine the composer's expressive use of stylistic articulations (symbols and words) – legato, staccato, marcato, tenuto, polyarticulations" as well as "consider the performance practices of that historical style period represented by the composition [as relates to] articulations" (Battisti, Garafolo 32).

Frederick Fennell demonstrates this in his own score study by adding his own handwritten tenutos to the opening bars of Richard Wagner's *Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral* (Figure A.1). He states "everybody is *always* in a hurry to get to the coming note, whereas occupation with the note in hand should be the concern of all" (Fennell 30). Fennell's handwritten tenuto marking reinforce the musical need to add some weight to the appoggiatura notes rather than quickly moving to the next downbeat. This is the opposite of what is expected in a fanfare dotted-eighth/sixteenth note pattern, where the sixteenth note would be played lighter compared to the downbeat. The articulations can change the same notated rhythm from a fanfare to a dirge.

In *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Volume 5*, Eugene Corporon cites the need for proper interpretation of articulation from the conductor's perspective:

“**Articulation** contributes to distinctiveness as much as sound and tone quality. It is as essential to a wind group as bowing is to an orchestra. It is important to keep in mind that articulation is to sound what diction is to speech. Pronunciation and enunciation are as significant to music as they are to speaking. If your message is to be understood, your diction must be clear. Clear articulation helps to create identifiable note grouping and phrase structure. One should be able to design and mix various sounds and articulations that are specially chosen for various pieces, composers, style periods, moods, characterizations, etc. I cannot overemphasize the importance of matched articulation. It is something that I spend a great deal of time considering and implementing” (Blocher, et. al 53).

Professional wind players are expected to not only interpret but also execute proper articulation. Bassoonist Barrick Stees notes in his blog post “A New Litmus Test?” that in two separate professional bassoon auditions, an excerpt of the ostinato from *Bolero* was used (Figure A.2). The bassoons were required to articulate the pitch G4 repeatedly on the same rhythm used by the snare drum. Stees notes that “all of our finalists played at a very high level. However, **NO ONE** articulated the G's cleanly!”. From the most academic interpretation of articulation through professional performance practice, there is no singular definition of any of these markings. Often times, definitions are conflicting, or at best nebulous. I will be interested to see how articulations are defined by those I survey.

Chapter 3

Method of Study and Findings

Overview

To gather data, I created an electronic survey asking high school and collegiate band directors for their interpretations of articulation markings. The survey was distributed online via Facebook, posted both to my personal page and to the private Band Directors Group. The survey was open for one week at the end of October 2015, and I aimed to receive between 25 and 50 responses. Instead, I received 91 responses, of which 83 were usable. I closed the survey to further responses and began analyzing the responses.

Survey

My first step was creating a survey. The survey drew heavily from the work of Francis McBeth, as found in *Effective Performance of Band Literature*. In fact, I replicated McBeth's five original questions. The original letter McBeth sent asked the recipient to "describe how the following should be performed by wind players" (McBeth 20). All of the original questions showed four quarter notes with various articulations. Each was accompanied by a question further clarifying the graphic example, e.g. "In other words, what does the (>) mean?". The five articulations from the McBeth text are as follows:

1. Four quarter notes with accent (>) markings
2. Four quarter notes with tenuto (-) markings
3. Four quarter notes with staccato (•) markings
4. Four quarter notes with a combination of accent and tenuto markings (≥)

5. Four quarter notes with marcato markings (^)

In addition to these questions, I ultimately decided to add a list of parameters to each question in the form of checkboxes. In seeking open-ended answers, I anticipated a wide variety of responses. In order to better quantify the responses, I chose five definite parameters for any given articulation. These parameters were based around the original answers McBeth had gathered in his survey, and asked respondents to whether each articulation affected the following:

- Start of the note (attack)
- Note duration / space between notes
- End of notes / release
- Volume / dynamic level of note
- Weight of note
- None of the above
- Other (with a write-in option)

I included an additional optional sixth question for respondents: “Do you have any other thoughts regarding wind instrument articulation notation not covered in the previous 5 questions?”. After studying McBeth’s survey results, I felt it was necessary to include a space for further clarification should participants not feel their points were not properly conveyed in the initial free response question.

Additionally, each respondent was asked to provide demographic information, such as:

- Name
- Email address
- Level of school currently taught (if retired, most recent)

- School at which they currently teach (if retired, most recent)
- Number of years taught

While not included in this thesis, the demographic information was gathered in order to verify that the candidates were qualified to complete this survey.

Prior to gathering survey responses, I took my own survey. By doing so I established my own beliefs and created a baseline with which to judge other responses. I did this prior to distributing the survey so that I would not be influenced by any response I might read as responses were submitted (while recognizing my own biases in responding as a high school band director of fourteen years).

In order to collect responses, I published the survey link to the Band Directors Group on Facebook on October 20, 2015. Within ten minutes of posting the survey, I had received my first response; within the first day there were 40 responses. My original goal was to collect between 25 and 50 responses; within one week I had received a total of 91 submitted responses. A total of 8 responses had to be discarded because the participants were either unqualified or unverified according to the parameters of this study. The study ultimately yielded 83 usable responses.

Method of Analysis

Google Forms, the service used to create the survey and house the responses, stores data by entering the all of the data from one answer into a single spreadsheet cell. This format proved unwieldy and too broad. I needed to develop a method to dissect and analyze data.

I first created a duplicate of the response spreadsheet in which to work, so as to preserve the original responses in case of a catastrophe. The spreadsheet started out as single page with every response listed in cells. I duplicated that sheet a total of eleven times, one for each part of

each question. The individual sheets were re-named according the question number (e.g. 1A, 1B, 2A, etc.). On each sheet, I then hid all columns of information not relevant to that question.

I then started analyzing the checkbox responses, as they had defined answers. Since there were a total of seven possible responses for each checkbox section, I inserted seven blank columns on those sheets. These new columns were labeled with shorthand versions of the potential answers (e.g. start, duration, end). Using the search command in Google Sheets, I was able to search for the exact phrases used in the checkboxes (i.e. “start of the note”) and those cells would be highlighted. An “X” was placed in the appropriate column when the search term was found. The final step for these sheets was to look through each response for any text that was entered as an “other” option and highlight it in red text for later reference. In all of the checkbox responses (415 total) there were only two write-in responses.

Analysis of the free-response questions proved more challenging, given the range of responses (from single word responses to short paragraphs and all points in between). I opted to start analysis of these responses by adding columns similar to those found in the checkbox sheets (e.g. start, duration, end, etc.). I then spent time going through the responses looking for key phrases or words that would match these new columns. When a matching word or phrase was found, I copied it into that column. More often than not, I added columns to a sheet as trends became obvious. One example is the “syllable” column I added to each sheet, as there was consistent use of syllables respondents used to describe an articulation. Another example would be the addition of a column to count the frequency of word usage when describing note durations.

Once the responses for each question had been extrapolated into useable data, I began comparing the free-response questions with the checkboxes, as well as the trends within the free-

response questions. When starting to analyze the data in the survey, I first examined the checkboxes regarding the parameters of performance that would be affected by the articulation markings. By examining the trends in responses from part B, I was able to better anticipate the trends in the free response questions. An overview of each those questions follows.

Question 1 Responses (accented quarter notes)

The first question of the survey asks the respondent how they would instruct wind players to play four accented quarter notes. Figure D.1 demonstrates that the vast majority of the respondents felt that the accents affected the start of the note (77) as well as the weight of the note (63). More than half of respondents indicated that the note duration (49) and volume (47) would be affected, while less than half of respondents indicated that the accent affected the end of a note (34).

Some of these trends are reflected in the free responses. Of the 83 respondents, 67 respondents described a specific method of starting the note, and 41 respondents describe a specific note length associated with an accent. However, only 29 respondents discuss the dynamics associated with the accent, 14 respondents describe the relative weight of an accent, and 1 respondent explicitly describes how an accent would affect the release of a note.

With such consistent checkbox answers, I anticipated similar results in the free response answers. However, when looking at the responses regarding the duration of accented notes, the answers are very divisive. Of the 41 respondents who discussed accented note lengths, 22 respondents indicated that they would tell wind players to play these notes with some degree of separation. However, 16 of those 41 respondents indicated that they would tell wind players to play these notes full length, with absolutely no separation. The remaining 3 respondents

indicated that the length of the note would vary depending on factors such as tempo and musical style.

Other musical aspects presented very little variation as far as interpretation. For example, 67 respondents stated an exact method for starting the pitch; 100% of those respondents indicated the accent is an emphasized attack. The language varied, of course; respondents used phrases such as “emphasized attack”, “firm start”, “heavy attack”, and “strong tongue” to describe the playing style. However, the meaning remains the same. This also corresponds with the 62 respondents who indicated that the accent would affect the weight of a note.

In terms of starting the note, respondents often included a “syllable” that they would use to explain the proper articulation of a note. For the accent note, 10 respondents specified a syllable they use to relay the information. The split was even between “D” syllables (e.g.. dah, duh(t), day) and “T” syllables (e.g. “t tongue,” ta, tah); 1 respondent indicated that they would use either “day or teh” depending on the context. Another respondent specified that it was “ta, not da” when playing an accent.

There were 29 respondents who indicated some sort of dynamic interpretation related to the accent. These responses were fairly consistent, but had some discord. Of those 29 respondents, 26 indicated that the accent implies some sort of diminuendo or decay from the start of the note to the end. The other 3 respondents indicated that the note would be played louder than its unaccented counterparts. A single respondent further specified that, in the printed example, each note would have a decay, but that there would be a crescendo played over the musical example. Another respondent indicated that they do not teach the accent as being louder, since accents happen in all varieties of dynamics.

Only 2 respondents explicitly described the way a release would be performed on an accented note; 1 respondent indicated “heavy release”, another used the syllable “duh(t)”. Given that 34 respondents indicated that the accent in some way affected the end/release of a note, these numbers seem incongruous. One possible explanation for this is that the same responses that are interpreted as being part of duration (49 respondents) or dynamics (29 respondents) also affect the release of a note. It is also possible that the respondents, as a whole, deemed the start of the note the most important aspect of the accent, and chose to write at length about starting the notes, and disregarded specific endings to notes.

There were a number of free responses that gave some valuable insight into the interpretation of the accent marking. A total of 9 respondents indicated that the accents were accomplished with use of air or breath support in conjunction with a strong articulation with the tongue. The use of bells or chimes as an example of proper accented sound was mentioned by 3 respondents. Additionally, there was a single respondent who indicated “other” as one of the parameters the accent would affect (specifically citing “Emphasis of this note compared to those without”).

Question 2 Responses (tenuto quarter notes)

I expected to find the most consistent interpretations for the tenuto quarter notes and the staccato quarter notes. Indeed the responses to the affected parameters for tenuto demonstrate a substantial amount of consensus between respondents (Figure D.2).

Almost every respondent indicated that the duration of the note would be affected by the tenuto marking. In examining the free responses, 68 respondents wrote explicitly about the length of the tenuto quarter notes. Of those 68 respondents, 62 indicated that these notes needed

to be played “full value” or “100%” of their notated value. Conversely, 5 respondents indicated that there should be some space between the notes, though they specifically note that there should be “as little [space] as possible” or “very little separation”. Only 1 respondent indicated that it could be either. This respondent’s rationale for their answer was “if [played] on a repeated pitch, minimal space may be employed but [it is] not recommended”.

A total of 13 respondents indicated a specific technique for starting the tenuto notes. The most common words used in describing the front of the note were “light”, “gentle”, “soft”, and “smooth”. As with the accented notes, some respondents opted to include syllables for clarification. Of the 13 respondents that submitted syllables, 8 respondents used a “D” syllable (doo or dah), 1 respondent indicated a “T” syllable (“too”), and the remaining 4 respondents indicated a combination of syllables (“too/doo” or “la/da”).

Only 2 respondents discussed specific endings to the tenuto notes. The first of those respondents indicated that they instruct their players to “release the note after the next beat”. The other suggests that this style of note has a “long vowel ending”. However, the responses involving the duration of tenuto notes would indicate that note endings are practically non-existent, and are minimal interruptions to the played notes.

Consensus on the volume and weight implications of the tenuto marking is non-existent. Given that only 12 respondents marked it as an affected variable, it is not surprising that only 4 respondents indicated that the tenuto marking affected the volume of the note. Of those that discussed the volume implications, 1 respondent indicated that the notes would be performed “possibly loud, depending on dynamic”. A single respondent indicated that they would instruct performers to play these notes with a slight crescendo and decrescendo. The other 2 respondents

state that there is, in fact, no change to the volume of the note, and that they should be played “consistently”.

Similarly, only 6 respondents indicated the weight implications of the tenuto marking. While 2 respondents state that the notes should have added weight, 3 respondents indicated that the tenuto may indicate an increase in weight on the note, depending on context. Only 1 respondent indicated that the tenuto notes would be played “not heavy”.

As with the accented notes, it is interesting to examine the comments that do not fit neatly into a single category. Only 1 respondent indicated that the tenuto marking could affect the tempo in the same manner as the written indication *tenuto* (often abbreviated *ten.*). There is also a trend where words and phrases are used consistently. For example, the phrase “full value” appears 29 times in the responses. The word “connected” appears 19 times, “smooth” appears 12 times, and the phrase “smooth and connected” appears 7 times.

Question 3 Responses (staccato quarter notes)

As with the tenuto marking, the respondents indicated consensus that the staccato marking affects the duration (82 respondents) and end of the note (68 respondents) in the given example (Figure D.3). In addition, approximately half of the respondents indicated that the staccato marking influences the start of the note (47 respondents). Less than half of the respondents indicated that the weight of the note would be affected (40 respondents). Only 10 respondents indicated that the staccato would affect the volume of the notes.

In total, 77 respondents described in detail how they would teach the note duration. While not agreeing on the terminology, all of those respondents indicated that each quarter note would be performed with some separation from the notes on either side. The description of how to

separate the notes falls into one of the following categories: the general term “separated” (27 respondents), played half length (18 respondents), played with space (13 respondents), short (11 respondents), detached (5 respondents), or lift (2 respondents, one who combined “lift” with “separate”). While some respondents combined two or more of these terms to describe the proper playing instruction, one respondent indicated very clearly that it “separate, NOT short”.

It is interesting to note that of the 83 respondents, there were 6 respondents that did not indicate any associated duration with the staccato marking. In fact, 5 of those respondents simply responded the open-ended prompt with a single word: “staccato”, effectively defining the word by using the word itself. It is unfortunate that there is not more definition given by these respondents, as we can only speculate their specific interpretation based on the parameters checked in the second portion of the question. Perhaps the lack of specificity in responses stems from the fact that respondents come from diverse and unique situations. Given the sheer variety of experience, background, and ideology of the respondents, one can speculate that individuals have all created a definition of the term “staccato”. However, it is doubtful that these definitions are all identical.

It is a bit surprising to see that even though 68 respondents indicated the staccato having an effect on the end or release of a note, only 11 clarified this in the free response section. Part of this can almost certainly be attributed to the overwhelming response to separating the notes from one another, which affects the end of each note by definition. What is interesting, however, is examining the specific responses related to ending the note. Of those 11 respondents, 5 of the respondents indicated that these notes would be stopped with the tongue (as if pronouncing the word “dit”). Another 4 respondents indicated that there would be an air release (e.g. “dah”). Only

2 respondents stated that the proper release (tongue stop versus air) would depend on the tempo and style of the piece.

In all, 12 respondents described in detail how they would start the note. While there is no consensus among those 12 in terms of exact terminology, they all indicate that they would not have student play these notes heavier (like an accented note). The most common used phrases are “dry attack” and “light attack”. A total of 9 respondents indicated a specific syllable to describe the attack of the note. The style of syllable is split almost down the middle; 4 respondents used a “T” syllable, and 5 indicated a “D” syllable.

Fewer respondents commented explicitly regarding the weight and dynamics of the staccato note. In terms of the perceived weight of the staccato quarter note, 16 respondents indicated that the staccato note would be “light”. Meanwhile, 2 respondents indicated that there would explicitly be “no emphasis” on a staccato note. Only 1 respondent discussed dynamics as related to the staccato marking. This respondent indicated that each note would be played with “even” volume (as opposed to other markings, where respondents indicated a crescendo over the four quarter notes).

It is interesting to see what each respondent chose to include in his or her explanation of the staccato note, particularly that which does not fit neatly into a single category. Most of the more detailed answers are simply clarifying the length (e.g. “does NOT mean short”, “literally half the value”). However, one respondent discussed vocabulary specifically, stating “some younger students will only respond to the word ‘short’”. Another respondent clarified “short staccato will have no resonance if played as short as possible”. The term “bouncy” was used by 2 respondents to describe the sound of a staccato note.

Respondent #83 offered interesting anecdotal evidence when they stated, “In wind band, I strictly use the term detached. For jazz, I will say short”. I find this interesting because in these questions no specific type of musical genre is indicated. The question asks only how the respondent would describe the given articulations to wind players. I find this particular response fascinating because while I have heard many directors discuss anecdotally the difference between wind band and jazz band articulations, this is the first time that the difference is noted in this survey. Further discussions of jazz articulations do appear later in the survey.

Question 4 Responses (accented tenuto quarter notes)

The fourth example asks respondents to interpret a combined articulation of an accent and a tenuto, the only polyarticulation in the survey. A total of 79 respondents indicated that this articulation affects the start of the note, 78 indicated that it would affect the duration, and 62 indicated that it would affect the end of the note. In terms of other factors, 67 respondents indicated that the marking would affect the weight of the note, while 46 indicated that the volume of the note would be affected. This is the first example where each variable had over 50% of the respondents indicate that it would be affected.

Given that respondents had already been asked about each of these articulations individually, it was interesting to see where the responses would correlate from between questions one, two, and four (Figure D.4a). The strongest correlations for start of the note, weight of the note, and volume of the note appear between the accented note and accented tenuto note. The strongest correlation for the duration of the note is between the tenuto note and the accented tenuto note. What is most surprising when comparing data is that this polyarticulation

affects the end of the note (62 respondents) more than either the lone accent (34 respondents) or the lone tenuto (46 respondents).

In examining the free response answers, a total of 57 respondents wrote in detail about how the articulation would affect the start of the note. Of those 57, every respondent indicated that this articulation implied some sort of weight or strength to the note. The adjectives used to describe the start of the note included “accent” (16 respondents), “strong” (12 respondents), “emphasis/emphasized” (11 respondents), “weighted”, and “heavy” (5 respondents each). These are the same frequently used words as in the first example. Other less frequently used adjectives for this example included “firm”, “hard”, “stressed”, “definite”, and “deliberate”.

Meanwhile, a total of 72 respondents explicitly described the duration of the accented tenuto note. Of those 72 respondents, 61 respondents indicated that the notes should be played at full value, 9 respondents indicated a minimal separation between notes, and 2 respondents indicated that the length would vary between full value and slight separation, dependent on style and tempo of music. The most commonly used terms to describe the duration of the marking were “full value” (23 respondents), “connected” (14 respondents), “no space” (7 respondents), and “full length” (7 respondents).

I found it fascinating that, while 62 respondents indicated the end of the note being affected in the checkbox section of this question, only 2 respondents cited specific endings to the notes, mostly regarding style of release (air release, as opposed to a tongue stop). However, as with question number two, I believe the ending is addressed implicitly by virtue of the connected nature of playing tenuto notes.

Only 19 respondents cited specific examples of weight in the free response section of question number four (as opposed to 67 in the checkbox section). The accented tenuto was

described by 18 of those respondents as giving the note more weight than a plain quarter note. Examples given by respondents to describe this note range from “heavier” and “emphasized” to the more extreme “punched” and “emphasized at the max value”. Only 1 respondent indicated that the articulation implied less weight, stating specifically “I consider this the same as just [an] accent maybe a little less weight”.

A total of 14 respondents indicated how the volume would be affected by the articulation. Of those respondents, 13 indicated that there would be some sort of decay or diminuendo on each note. Only 1 respondent indicated a dynamic other than a diminuendo, stating simply “Loud tenutos!”.

Very few respondents had anything to discuss outside of the five main variables. There was 1 respondent who indicated that the notes would be played like bell tones (this same respondent stated the same about the regular accented notes). Another respondent indicated that this marking could indicate some sort of rubato, though did not specify when this would be the case. And finally, 1 respondent simply stated “Don’t like this one!” before describing the syllables they would use to have their students play the accent (“deh”, a portmanteau of “teh” for an accent and “dee” for a tenuto).

Question 5 Responses (marcato quarter notes)

Like the accented tenuto marking, a majority of respondents indicated that the marcato marking would potentially affect every performance variable (Figure D.5). In fact, the positive responses range from 51 for “volume” to 76 for “start of note”. Given that the majority of respondents indicated that the marcato potentially affected every single performance variable, I expected to see a lot of written descriptions for the marcato.

A total of 67 respondents describe the duration of the marcato note. Of those, 65 indicate that there is some separation between notes. In fact, 15 respondents use the term “detached” to describe the note, 12 use the term “short”, and 11 use the term “staccato”. Another 11 respondents indicated that there should be “space” between the notes (though the answers range from “a little space” to “lots of space”). Exact percentages were stated by 9 respondents; 6 respondents indicated that marcato note would be played at 50% of full value, 2 respondents indicated 66% of full value, and 1 respondent indicated that the marcato notes would played as short as 25% of the note value.

Given my own understanding of the marcato articulation as a type of accent, it’s not surprising to see that 30 respondents used the term “accent” when discussing the start of the note. In addition, the start of the note was described as strong (7 respondents), and “heavy” (5 respondents). Some sort of use of diaphragmatic emphasis or air emphasis was noted by 4 respondents. The marcato also had the most violent descriptions of any of the articulations, with various respondents indicating the player should “play with a hit” or “punch the note”.

The releases of marcato notes are more defined than the other markings, with 16 respondents indicating a specific type of release. A total of 9 respondents indicated that the note should be played with a “t” tongue stopping the note. Another 5 respondents indicated that the note should in fact, not be stopped (though there were indicators that the end of the note should be emphasized). Only 2 respondents indicated that the note could possibly be stopped, depending on the musical context, such as a jazz music articulation.

It is interesting to note that while 71 respondents indicated in the checkboxes that the marcato affects the weight of the note, only 17 respondents describe the weight of the body of the note in detail. The most common responses were that the notes would be “heavy” (8

respondents) or performed “with emphasis” (6 respondents). However, this can be attributed in part to the given the number of responses describing the strength of the beginning of the note.

A total of 51 respondents indicated in the checkboxes that the marcato articulation affects volume. Only 13 respondents had any input regarding the actual volume of the note. Of those, 7 indicated that the note should be played louder than the non-marcato notes, and 6 indicated that there would be some degree of decay in each note.

Question 6 Responses (other thoughts on articulation)

A total of 30 respondents opted to respond to the optional sixth question. Responses ranged in length from full paragraphs detailing particular thoughts on articulation as a practice, to short, inconsequential answers (e.g. “I love articulation!” and “nope”).

Nearly half of the respondents (14) discussed how interpretation of any of these articulations would be largely dependent on various musical factors, including (but not limited to) style, tempo, composer, compositional era, and given dynamics. Similar sentiments also often appeared as offhanded comments in the first five free response questions.

A small but vocal group of respondents (5 total) expressed a desire to further discuss the détaché marking (the polyarticulation of a tenuto and a staccato) given its prevalent use in modern band music. This was not included in my survey as I was looking to recreate Dr. McBeth’s study as closely as possible, but would definitely be an interesting future research topic.

In addition to clarifying their positions on the five given examples, some directors offered further general commentary on articulation in general. Some interesting one-off comments included:

- “Articulation symbols only clearly describe only one or two of your listed variables - a better system of symbols would allow the composer to specify these variables more explicitly.”
- "I have to really address tonguing with all students, especially beginners. If tonguing is not corrected in the first months of beginning band, it's hard to fix. Many students do glottal tonguing. I am a stickler for tonguing- you MUST tongue.”
- “Teaching articulations is addressed easily with jazz music. Re-arrange [sic] a song for your concert band and you'll have an easier time addressing articulation - it's easier to understand in jazz music."
- “Like dynamics, are articulations relative?”
- “Every note must be articulated, even when slurred. No exceptions for any instrument except extreme tempos with fast passages on woodwind instruments where double tonguing is not an option. Think like a trombone player. They must articulate or every note doesn't have a truly defined start. “
- “I like to use the word pronunciation with my students, rather than articulation. I also think it's important that wind players can visualize what each ‘pronunciation’ would look like on a string instrument. The bow=air, articulating is just as much about air as it is tongue.”
- “Interpretations of these articulations has become more standardized over time by a combination of the availability of quality recordings of their performance, engraving conventions within the publishing industry, and wind band adjudication standards.”

Chapter 4

Conclusions and Reflections

Conclusions

After many months of surveying, data gathering, and data analysis, I can safely say that there are two conclusions I can make from this study:

1. No one agrees on anything.
2. “It depends.”

Neither conclusion is particularly surprising, especially when one considers the open-ended nature of the survey. For example, almost every respondent (82 of the 83) indicated that the staccato articulation marking affects the duration of the note. However, there is little consensus as to how exactly the duration is affected. Some respondents broadly indicate that the note is simply short, others state exactly 50% of the original value. This repeats for all articulations.

The second conclusion offers a direction for how to proceed, and is the true takeaway from the survey. The word “depend” (or some variation of it) was used 22 times in the course of the free responses by a total of 13 different respondents. McBeth himself states that he “chose to use the articulation marking over four quarter notes [causing] the discussion to be general” (McBeth 20). This sentiment was echoed by respondent #37, who stated “Holst accents are not Mackey accents; transcription accents are not the same as original wind band accents”. Interpretation of music in any genre is heavily dependent on the historical era as well as the style of music being performed.

Perhaps the issue at hand is that the current system of musical notation that we have is inadequate for its intended purposes. John Locke states in *The Art of Interpretation of Band Music*:

“What is truly lacking in our system of musical notation is the ability to convey such aspects as emotion, timbre, balance, and nuance. Chief among these is the ability to convey emotional content in symbolic form, especially so for instrumental music, which generally cannot benefit from the presence of a text...

In this regard, a conductor becomes the bridge between the composer and the listener. There are literally an infinite number of possible decisions that need to be made about a given piece of music... Simply put, merely playing the notes and rhythms in the marked tempo is not good enough” (Walker, et al 110).

Reflections

In pursuing this topic for my thesis, my goal was to better understand how modern day band directors interpret articulation markings in wind band music. By gathering responses from respondents from all over the country, I have been exposed to a number of “correct” interpretations for the various articulation markings studied. These responses have forced me to reevaluate the way I approach teaching articulation to my students in class. A few of the ways that I have found that I am implementing some of my newfound knowledge are:

- **Using consistent terminology for articulations.** I would often interchange “tenuto” with “legato”. I was also guilty of using the term “rooftop accent” in place of the more proper “marcato” accent.

- **Using the word “pronunciation” in lieu of “articulation”.** I have found that for my less experienced players, the term “articulation” has been “white noise” for quite some time. When changing the term to “pronunciation” as per one respondent’s suggestion, I have found that the students are better able to perform the articulation asked of them. This also aligns with my use of syllables (du, tu) to describe the proper articulation styles.
- **Having the students consider the importance of air in articulation.** An accent or marcato is even more effective when the proper air support is placed behind the note.
- **Investigating articulations as they relate to bowing.** This is probably the most important aspect of this study, and based on McBeth’s own thesis. I have found that if I need to interpret a particularly confusing articulation (e.g. the polyarticulation of a staccato and a tenuto) I consult with colleagues who play string instruments to describe or demonstrate how they would perform it on their instrument. Hearing their descriptions or musical examples better prepares me to explain that style of articulation to my students.

Final Thoughts

As I continue to educate myself about articulation (as well as other aspects of musical notation) I want to make sure that I continue to see the bigger picture when rehearsing and performing music. As important as articulation markings are for proper interpretation, I keep coming back to the words of Edward Lisk: “conductors become over-attentive to the notation of music and less attentive to what the composer intended to say. The beauty of the composition is overlooked because the mind is consumed with analytical details” (Lisk 8).

Musical Examples

[illegible]

4

Two staves for Bsn.1 and Bsn.2. Measure 4: Bsn.1 has a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) followed by a quarter note (C5), marked *mp*. Bsn.2 has a whole rest. Measure 5: Bsn.1 has a triplet of eighth notes (B4, C5, D5) followed by a quarter note (E5). Bsn.2 has a quarter rest followed by a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4). Measure 6: Bsn.1 has a quarter note (D5), a triplet of eighth notes (E5, F5, G5), and a quarter note (A5). Bsn.2 has a triplet of eighth notes (A4, B4, C5) followed by a quarter note (D5).

Appendix B

Articulation Survey for Band Directors

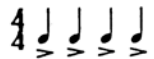
This survey is based on Dr. W. Francis McBeth's survey from the text "Effective Performance of Band Music." Examples given appear exactly as they did in the original publication.

This survey is open to current and retired band directors at the high school (grades 9-12) and collegiate level.

Are you a current or retired band director at the high school or collegiate level?

- ☐ Yes [continues to Example 1]
- ☐ No [if selected, survey is ended.]

Example #1

 In other words, what does the (>) mean?

Question 1a

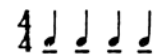
Describe how the above would be played by wind players

Question 1b

What variables of performance does this marking affect? Choose as many as options as you see fit.

- ☐ The start of the note (attack)
- ☐ Note duration / space between notes
- ☐ End of note / release
- ☐ Volume / dynamic level of note
- ☐ Weight of note
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ Other: [fill in the blank]

Example #2

 In other words, what does the (—) mean?

Question 2a

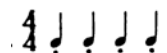
Describe how the above would be played by wind players

Question 2b

What variables of performance does this marking affect? Choose as many as options as you see fit.

- ☐ The start of the note (attack)
 - ☐ Note duration / space between notes
 - ☐ End of note / release
 - ☐ Volume / dynamic level of note
 - ☐ Weight of note
 - ☐ None of the above
 - ☐ Other: [fill in the blank]
-

Example #3

 In other words, what does the (•) mean?

Question 3a


Describe how the above would be played by wind players

Question 3b

What variables of performance does this marking affect? Choose as many as options as you see fit.

- ☐ The start of the note (attack)
 - ☐ Note duration / space between notes
 - ☐ End of note / release
 - ☐ Volume / dynamic level of note
 - ☐ Weight of note
 - ☐ None of the above
 - ☐ Other: [fill in the blank]
-

Example #4

 In other words, what does the (\geq) mean?

Question 4a

Describe how the above would be played by wind players


Question 4b

What variables of performance does this marking affect? Choose as many as options as you see fit.

- ☐ The start of the note (attack)
- ☐ Note duration / space between notes
- ☐ End of note / release
- ☐ Volume / dynamic level of note
- ☐ Weight of note
- ☐ None of the above

☐ Other: [fill in the blank]

Example #5

 In other words, what does the (^) mean?

Question 5a

Describe how the above would be played by wind players

Question 5b

What variables of performance does this marking affect? Choose as many as options as you see fit.

- ☐ The start of the note (attack)
 - ☐ Note duration / space between notes
 - ☐ End of note / release
 - ☐ Volume / dynamic level of note
 - ☐ Weight of note
 - ☐ None of the above
 - ☐ Other: [fill in the blank]
-

Additional Comments

OPTIONAL: Do you have any other thoughts regarding wind instrument articulation notation not covered in the previous 5 questions?

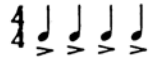
Demographic Information

- Prefix
- First Name
- Last Name
- Email
- Level taught [High school / Collegiate / other]
- School
- Job title
- Number of years teaching experience
- Do I have your permission to publish your name along with your responses as a part of the final paper? [yes / no]

Appendix C

Personal Baseline Responses to Survey

Question 1:


 In other words, what does the (>) mean?

Accent. These quarter notes are played with a “tah” attack. The volume should be roughly one dynamic higher than the written dynamic (i.e. these are played at forte in a mezzo forte passage). Exact interpretation will depend on style of music.

Affects:

- Start of note
- Volume
- Weight

Question 2:

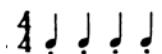
 In other words, what does the (—) mean?

The notes are connected, but with only the smallest disruption of the airstream with the tongue. Initial attack is more of a “du/dah” attack.

Affects:

- Start of note
- Note duration
- End of note

Question 3:

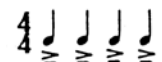
 In other words, what does the (•) mean?

Staccato, literally separated. I would instruct my students to start each note with a definite tongued (du/tu depending on style of music) and shorten each note so that there is space in between in each note. Depending on the tempo, this might be the equivalent of a dotted eighth / sixteenth rest combination, or even eighth note/eighth rest combination.

Affects:

- Start of note
- Note duration

Question 4:

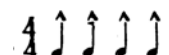
 In other words, what does the (≥) mean?

The interpretation will largely depend on the style of music. That being given, this would be played like accented notes (“tah”) with full value (zero separation). I would also probably advise against the decay that occurs with most regular accented notes.

Affects:

- Start of note
- Note duration
- End of note
- Volume
- Weight

Question 5:

 In other words, what does the (Λ) mean?

A marcato accent. These are a full dynamic level higher than regular (>) accents. I also equate these to a downbow on a string instrument. Always use a “tah” articulation.

Affects:

- Start of note
- Note Duration
- Volume
- Weight

Appendix D

Responses to Check Box Parameters

Figure D.1 – Accented Quarter Notes

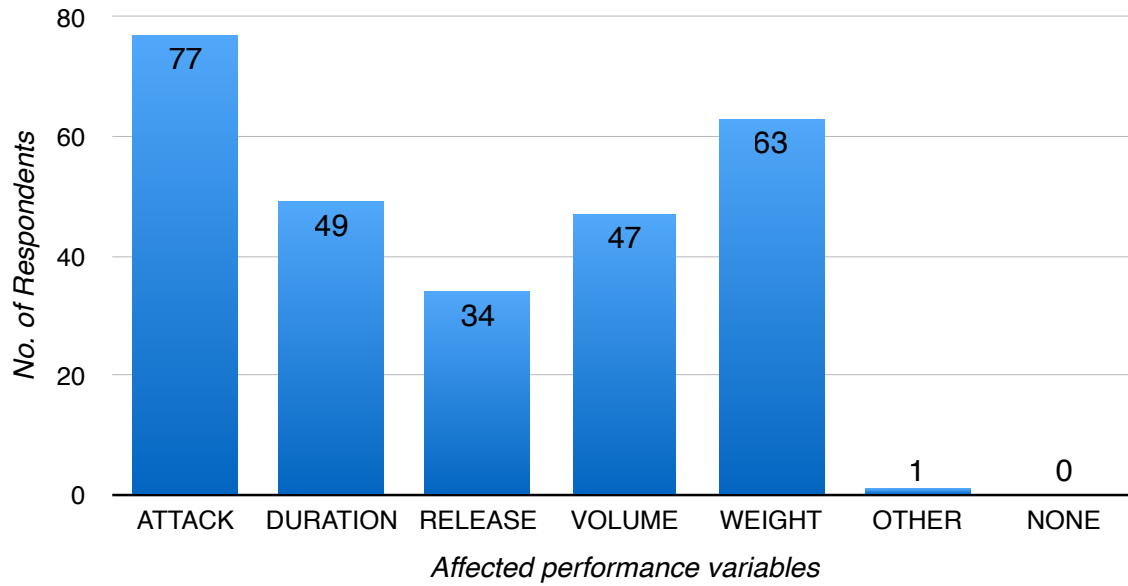


Figure D.2 – Tenuto Quarter Notes

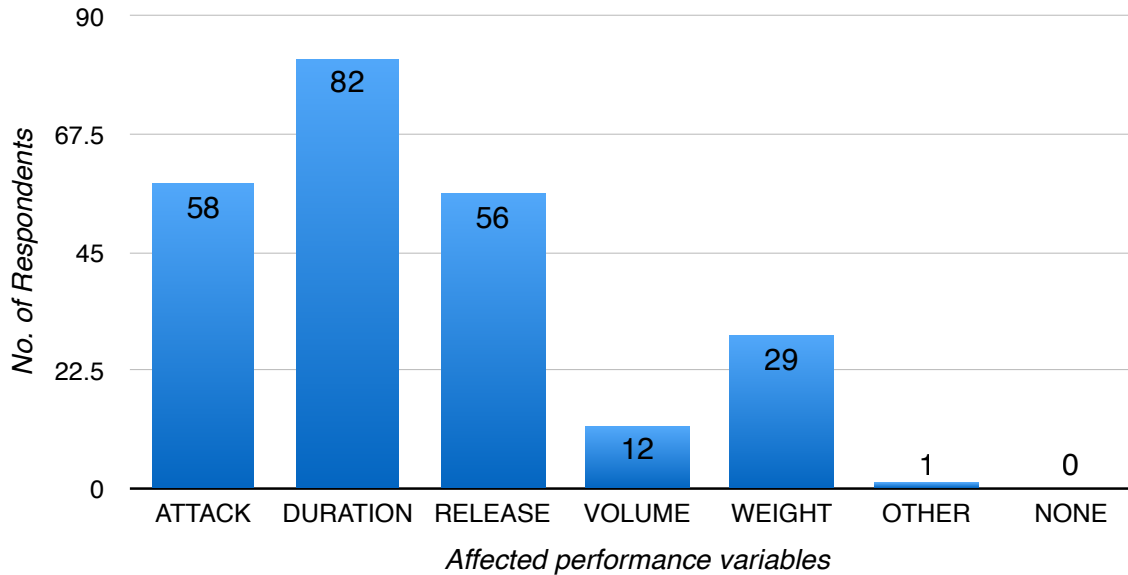


Figure D.3 – Staccato Quarter Notes

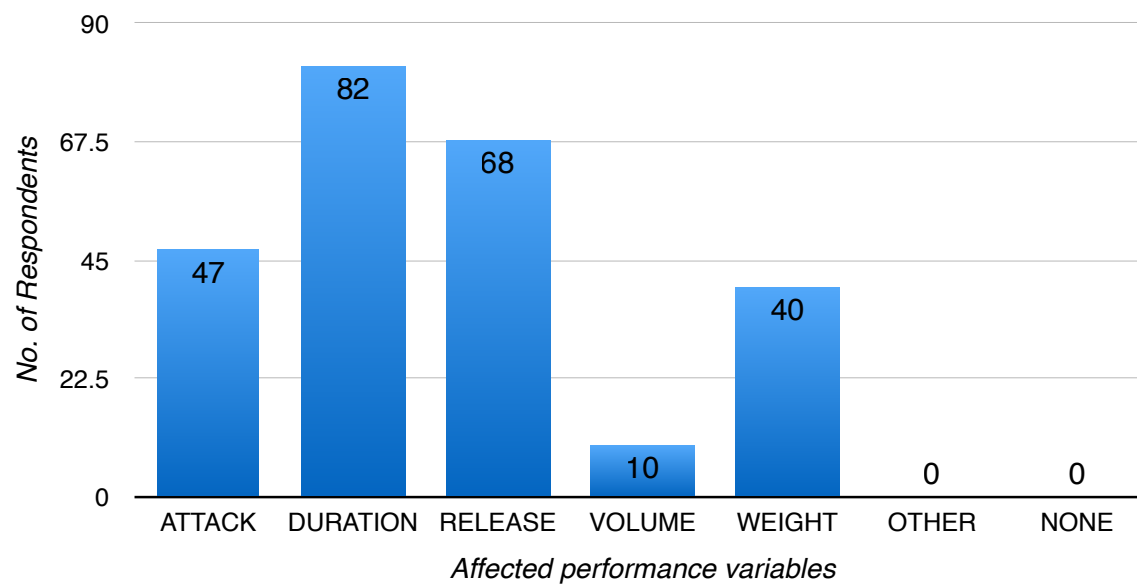


Figure D.4 – Accented Tenuto Quarter Notes

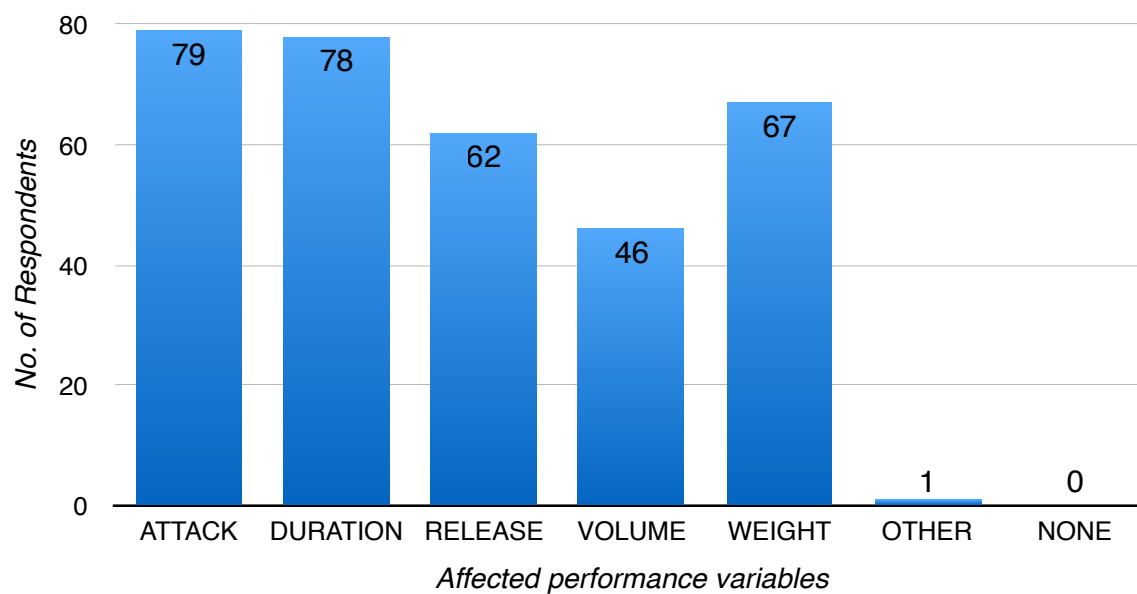


Figure D.4a – Comparison of Accented, Tenuto, and Accented Tenuto Quarter Notes

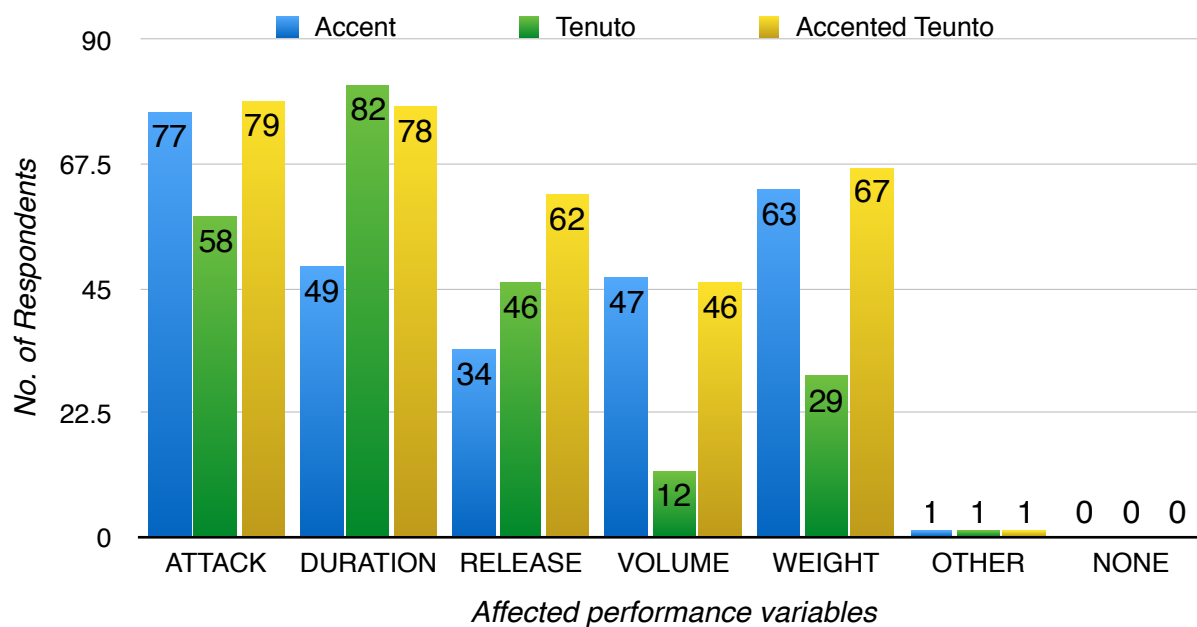
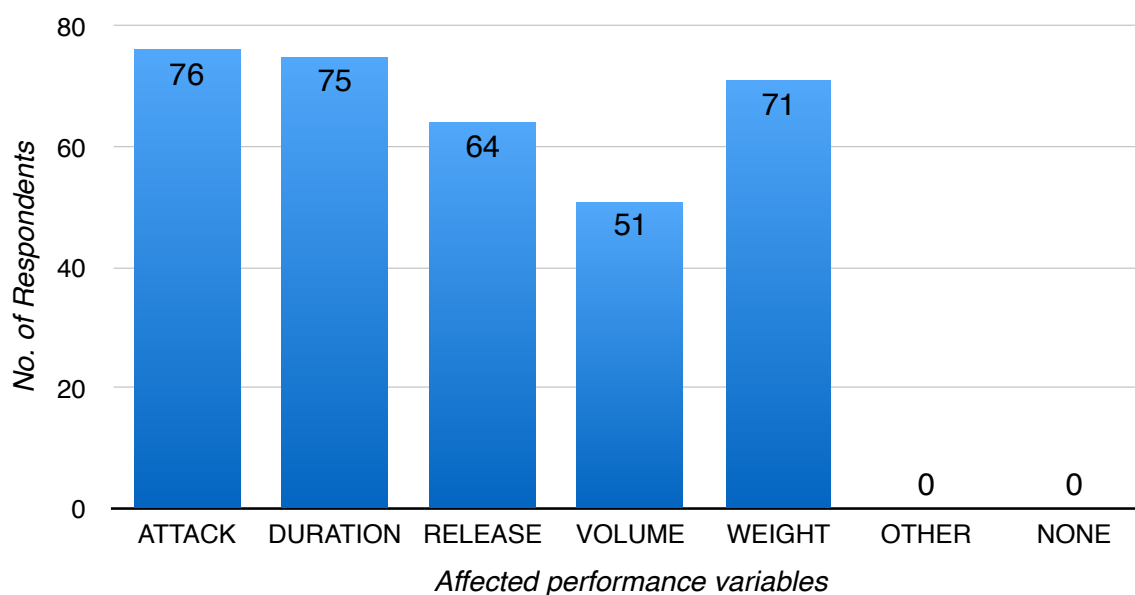


Figure D.5 – Marcato Quarter Notes



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