# **EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY**

# ARTICULATION AND EXPRESSIVE INTERPRETATION IN WANG JIANZHONG'S TRANSCRIPTION 'A HUNDRED BIRDS PAY HOMAGE TO THE PHOENIX'

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**RECEIVED:** 03/06/2024 **ACCEPTED:** 31/08/2024

# **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** According to Western classical music literature, the primary criteria for interpretation in performance practice is strict adherence to the original score and musical notation. When a composer or arranger transcribes a work to a different instrument, it becomes more complex because the interpretation of a work involves fidelity to the composer's intention. This indefinitely increases uncertainty, particularly when the transcription lacks clear indications that allow a more liberal interpretation. **Aim:** Thus, this article examines the use of articulation and how it affects the expressivity in Wang Jianzhong's piano transcription, 'A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix'. The analysis discusses the interpretation of articulation in this transcription. **Methodology:** This study adopts a musicological analysis by a case study and literature review from related research that focuses on a synthesis of musical elements to achieve a conceptual interpretation from a performance and theoretical perspective. **Result and Conclusion:** The analysis demonstrates that the original timbre and musical emotion can be successfully conveyed on the piano through the use of different articulation strategies, despite the composer's lack of extensive notations.

# **KEY WORDS**

Articulation, Interpretation, Expressive, Intention, Jianzhong Wang, Chinese Piano Transcription, Birds' Call.

## INTRODUCTION

Articulation signs are a prevalent style of notation that has been extensively examined in the field of performance practice, encompassing text analysis (Denny, 1988), composers' intention (Somfai, 1996), and interpretation (Bayley, 2000). It generates diverse musical meanings, expressions, and emotions when combined with different musical elements. Notating articulation has evolved particularly in the 20th century, as composers began to move away from conventional indications. These have resulted in many studies aimed at discussing and identifying the meaning and practice of interpretation. For instance, 'A Little Suit For Christmas' composed by George Crumb employs the sign '+' above each note to indicate muting rather than the traditional rest notation (Metzer, 2006). Furthermore, Toru Takemitsu, in his composition 'Rain Tree Sketch', employs three different types of fermata instead of slur to produce legato articulation, besides using literal notation to indicate the player's playing approach (Kim, 2018). Conversely, some composers prefer to have less detailed indications because of a preference for certain compositional forms and styles, while also allowing more liberty for the performers to explore the work. The composition 'China Gate', composed by John Cage, adopted repetitive rhythms, limited pitch material, and notations reflecting a devotion to minimalist aesthetics and techniques (Afaneh & Al-Alhoub, 2022; Ha, 2022; Kim, 2018; Metzer, 2006). The use of graphic notation by John Cage illustrates his belief that the piece's performance time and its sound effects were contingent upon the performer (Pierce, 1972).

Notations intentionally devoid of articulation signs necessitate an examination of the composer's intended message conveyed through the use of articulation marks (Riggs, 1987). Nevertheless, situations with the absence of articulation marks are an indication of performance style. In such cases, the interpretation of these notations is in doubt. There is uncertainty regarding the criteria for ascertaining if an articulation mark signifies its own execution (Brown, 1999; Duong & Ngo, 2022; Rovira, Merzero, & Laucirica, 2022). The absence of standardised performance guidelines for articulation execution necessitates not only an increased knowledge of the work's background but also the specific compositional style and characteristics of a composer. Yet, from the composer's point of view, it is not necessary to have a rigid guide for the performers, as some styles of performance are still conventional (Cook, 2012; Li, Wang, & Fan, 2024; Muthuswamy, 2023).

Looking back on the development of Chinese piano composition in the 20th century, it always focuses on the issue of how to create works that combine the characteristics of Chinese culture with the expressiveness of piano within the context of the blending of Chinese and Western music cultures. It is clear that European classical music influenced the composition of Chinese piano music in its musical form and harmony in the early 20th century. Following that, European music-making techniques were skillfully incorporated into Chinese formal structures and harmonies during the first half of the 20th century based on continuous exploration in folk music composition (Zhou, 2007). The exploration and development of Chinese music is reflected in these two periods. Nevertheless, a major issue is the aesthetic ideologies conflict between traditional Chinese music culture and Western music culture during this process. For this, Wang Jianzhong's piano transcriptions resolve this issue. It demonstrated how piano compositions express the concept of 'tranquility (静), subtlety ( 虚), simplicity (淡), and distance (远)' in Chinese folk music (Kadyan, Bhasin, & Sharma, 2022; Yazicioglu & Kanoglu, 2022; Zhou, 2007). This can be attributed to both his skillful use of European music composition techniques as well as the clever integration of the characteristics and formal structure of Chinese music. In this manner, the Chinese piano music style was formed and developed, becoming a key turning point for the Chinese piano nationalization. By utilizing the piano transcription, Wang Jianzhong has expanded the range and forms of Chinese folk music expression, illustrating the unique characteristics of Chinese folk music and making the piano one of the most important instruments in expressing traditional Chinese music.

'A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix' is one of the representative transcriptions of Wang Jianzhong's transcribed works, which describes a mythological story about how a hundred birds honor a phoenix and pay homage to it. Towards the end of the Cultural Revolution, Wang Jianzhong transcribed the solo suona work of the same name on piano in 1973, which was in accordance with the political ideology of that time. Due to this, this piano transcription presents the characteristics of the original suona version, faithfully reproducing the compositional style, the timbre of birdsong, and the musical expression of the original. Even so, it is still worthwhile to explore in detail how the piano can accurately convey the folk characteristics reflected in this piece.

Therefore, the subject of this study is Wang Jianzhong's 'A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix,' which was transcribed from a traditional Suona piece. It illustrates how the articulation reflects the original style of Suona music and how they convey that essence to the listener. Furthermore, it also conducted on how

different articulations convey the musical imagery of birdcalls when transcriptions are made. An in-depth discussion on how articulation plays an essential role using both traditional and modern technique on piano that evokes vivid musical narratives.

# **Articulation and Expression**

One of the many functions of articulation is to express the 'spirit' of music, which is similar to how speech achieves clarity in the pronunciation of individual words and syllables (Cyr, 2017). Musical discourse can serve as a persuasive power presenting different expressions due to the movement profile resulting from articulation patterns, which vary across different levels of execution (Türk, 1982). In performance practice, musical characters produce expressive variations that convey the emotion of the piece to the audience (Juslin, 2000). The phrase structure determines the duration between notes, analogous to syllable duration in speech, whereas articulation strategies affect the execution of duration, which in turn affects music expression (Fabian & Schubert, 2003). Frotscher (1981) asserts that the purpose of articulation is to impart the character and coherence of the composer's composition in the score in a manner that accurately captures the tone, spirit, and emotion of the work. Therefore, articulation is considered an important expression factor that impacts performance. Articulation is commonly used to convey emotion of grief, solemnity, or tenderness with legato, whereas staccato and non-legato are associated with the feeling of happiness, fear, or anger (Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996).

The expression reflected from an articulation depends on other musical aspects. For example, Bach's approach to creating musical expressions is using dynamics, rhythm, and other musical elements combined with articulation (Kramer, 1998). Similarly, Grave (1973) used the metrical position of stress to measure the correlation between phrase length and the direction of motion in paragraph sentences to examine the link between rhythmic articulation patterns and theme in Mozart's concertos. Based on the above statement, the interpretation of articulation mainly depends on the specific idiom, rhythm, and character (Stowell, 2001). Notably, articulation is associated with intonation and inflection in music, which, through different articulation patterns, shape the musical image and express the musical idea. Furthermore, inflection, intensity, pauses, and volume of the voice all contribute to the expression of language (Dubos, 1978; Grave, 1973).

Articulation strategies directly affect the way that the intention of the work is expressed (Jusczyk & Krumhansl, 1993). Jerkert (2004) illustrated the effect of playing duration between tones with articulation techniques on expression in Bach's organ compositions. Likewise, Stephenson (1991) noted that emphasis and duration are the primary variables in articulatory execution. Executing heavy and powerful articulation for grand and tragic compositions is appropriate, while using lighter articulation for pleasant and delicate pieces. Bilson (1992) also claimed that the execution of the articulation plays a rhetorical function in the interplay between duration and silence, which governs expression in music.

Additionally, the expressive intention and the perception of aesthetics in music influence the musical expression by articulation execution that results in a degree of expression bias and inaccurate articulation execution. According to Türk's (1982) principle, it is important to note that the musical character specifies relatively precise articulation techniques. For instance, strong and heavy execution can be applied to express a serious or solemn character, while softer and lighter execution can represent a pleasant and lively character, respectively. However, Türk (1982) also states that 'subtle distinctions in dynamics must be made, and that... according to whether the feeling or passion is represented in a more vehement or moderate manner (p. 348)'. It can be seen that an important factor in the successful execution of articulation is the performer's subjective awareness as well as adherence to the established rules. Schulenberg's (1990) research examines how misjudgement of articulation impacts the authenticity of expression by performers. However, Schulenberg (1990) still noted that 'in deciding questions of interpretation, individual performers necessarily draw upon their own knowledge and experience, and a claim to authenticity is difficult to substantiate'.

# **Challenge in Transcription Interpretation**

The ambiguity on unindicated articulation even increases when compositions are transcribed to another instrument. Despite the fact that the musical content is preserved in the transcription, the balance between different composition styles and orchestration must be considered to obtain the most accurate interpretation of the musical expression. Performance practice involves conveying and communicating musical ideas and emotions to a listening audience, and the performer follows the pattern provided by the composer to perform this act. Based on this context, an authentic performance must correspond to the performance described in the musical notation, as determined by conventions that faithfully interpret that notation. However, transcription also consists of elements that cannot be replicated. Hansen & Huron's (2018) study examined the relationship between the acoustics of instrumental music and the expression of its emotional effect. Notably, specifying the timbre of instruments can provide a more accurate portrayal of a character or personality (Kennan & Grantham, 2002). Especially in program music, the acoustic characteristics of the instruments can enhance the perception of emotion expressions. The way instrumental music is notated has changed from vague articulation indications to containing detailed information, which also allows a broader range of interpretation on the transcriber's part for these notations.

Therefore, the transcriber's interpretation of the original notations must consider the music's intent. This is because some features are not immediately reproduced during the transcribing process, such as timbre, emotional effects, dynamic marks, and so on. These elements will be altered depending on the instrument and playing style, which implies that the acoustic characteristics outlined in the new transcription medium must be consistent with those expressed in the original score.

Likewise, the interpretive information in the score is affected by the expressive characteristics of the original instrument. Even articulation, one of the most distinctive characteristics of expression, does not convey the most authoritative message among the various instruments when facing transcription work (Palmer, 1996). A harpsichord, for example, requires pedals and legato instruction to play long notes into melodic lines. Therefore, interpreting harpsichord compositions according to the articulation instructions of the harpsichord is not authentic when they are transcribed for the piano. Although these score notations provide instructions that largely correspond to historical performance information, performers continue to rely on their own experience and knowledge to interpret them in a somewhat subjective manner, which in turn leads to inauthentic interpretation. Therefore, Tomlinson (1988) suggests that a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical context pertaining to the work is essential, which is to convey the authentic meaning of the work through performance.

Apart from this, Scruton (1999) states that transcription serves as a work of interpretation of the original content in which the understanding of the source work is externalised. For the interpretation, Stephenson (1991) pointed out it is important to note that the character and purpose of the music influence the manner of execution indicated by the articulation. Depending on the characteristics of the instrumental music, the process of transcription can result in different indications of musical characteristics. Furthermore, the expressive factors in compositional structure illustrate the degree of execution of the

musical character. It can be seen that the articulation execution of the composition is in accordance with its musical character. Hence, based on Golomb's (2004) observations, the degree of emotional unity expressed by musical features influences both the performer's interpretation and the audience's interpretation. Moreover, transcription involves both the ideology and the performance practices of the transcriber and performer. Hanslick (1986) emphasises that from aesthetic judgements it is evident what the judge's ideology is based upon. Transcribers also serve as recipients of the original score to convey new interpretations of the sounds implicit in the notations, capable of presenting these ideas in real-time and in sound. Therefore, the interpretations presented by the transcriber and the performance practice should be coherent. Wenzinger (1968) argued that performing interpretation and critical interpretation are intended to elicit a particular response or to express a specific idea.

Music notations serve as a rhetoric in critical interpretation, while performative interpretation compensates for the audience's lack of necessary knowledge by responding to musical images. Musical notation exerts a binding effect on musical performance practice between critical interpretation and performative interpretation. Consequently, for transcriptions to be considered authentic, the transcriber's interpretation must be compatible with the performer's interpretation (Fabian & Schubert, 2003).

Transcription interpretation involves both the performer, who critically interprets the expression of the composition, and the transcriber, who interprets the meaning of the original composition (Davies, 1988). It should be noted that although the score contains detailed interpretative information, these interpretations are not necessarily authentic and may be influenced by the rules of modern performance practices (Davies, 2001). Schulenberg (1990) proposes the concept of 'intertextuality' in which the interaction between expressive features has a significant impact on authenticity as well. For instance, the intervention of the rhythm in which the ornamental tone is revealed as a sound effect and as a role that fails to live up to the expectations of the composer.

This article examines the articulation indication of the articulation between the two different musical languages and targets the interpretation of its content in a Chinese folk instrumental music transcription for piano. Looking back on the history of Chinese piano, the Red Guards' hostility towards the piano and the destruction of European classical recordings in China during the Cultural Revolution provided Chinese music artists an opportunity to promote

'national music' with Western instruments. In 1968, the ideological change in Chinese leadership marked a turning point for the further development of Western artistic works in which Chinese themes were presented using Western artistic techniques. 'The Red Lantern' as a masterpiece of East meets West, by the pianist Yin Chengzong, brought out the melodic character of the Peking Opera through the richness and power of the sound of the piano (Kraus, 1989). Thus, for the literature and repertory of Chinese piano compositions, the majority of these piano works were composed as transcriptions. Chinese piano transcriptions preserve the musical imagery and symbolism of the original pieces and provide the framework for secondary compositions. As an example, folk tunes, scale modulations, vocal methods of folk instruments, and specific compositional structures are combined with Western piano writing style. For instance, different ornamentations, such as trills, leaning tones, and arpeggios are used to replace the essence and playing techniques from the traditional ethnic instrumental piece. However, the transcription to a new instrument indefinitely invites a great change that affects how the music is expressed, with articulation being one of the most important elements. The limitations and abilities of a single instrument also contribute to the interpretation and indication of the manner in which the articulation is performed.

# **Background of the Work**

The diversity and richness in Chinese folk instrumental music provided a wealth of musical writing material for creating Chinese piano compositions and led to the development of new musical languages and writing styles. These piano transcriptions aim not only to preserve the original melodic contours and musical characteristics to the greatest extent possible but at the same time take into consideration the quality of the tone and overall aesthetics of the original music for the new performance medium. This similarly occurred in Wang's transcription, 'A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix', with one of the major issues being the ambiguous articulation indications. The original composition of 'A Hundred Birds Pay

Homage to the Phoenix' was written for Suona as a solo piece by Ren Tongxiang (1973), a professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In the same year, Wang Jianzhong transcribed a piano version based on Ren Tongxiang's recording. The title of the work indicates that it is about the imitation of different bird songs by exhibiting different Suona playing techniques, such as the scattered plates and tongue techniques.

From the vast range, variation, and timbre of the birdsong, the articulation thus serves as an important element in contributing to the effects of these birdsong in this rondo-structured work. The work is also constructed in the form of the 'zhang hui ti' (章 回体), meaning that, while each section describes a complete and relatively independent episode, they have a strong connection to the preceding segment (Zhang, 1993). For example, the cadence at mm. 187 and mm. 188 are used as a transition to the following section. From mm. 126 to mm. 132, the chromatic scale is modulated from the soprano to the basses used in the cadence figure as a connection to enhance the continuity of the music.

Further, the articulation represents phoenix symbolism. Phoenix is regarded as a divine bird in Chinese musical culture, but its figure does not seem to be fixed. Instead, it is conveyed through symbolism and imagery. This is especially evident through the scene where one hundred birds call together and make pilgrimages to the phoenix, which shows its superiority and nobility. This symbolism is reflected by the articulation pattern within the structure of 'zhang hui ti' in 'A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix'. As a result, the articulation analysis that follows is guided by this feature as well.

There are the three main sections and three episodes in this composition that present various scenes from the original score. Regarding the structure of the composition, the composer has largely followed the original Suona version; however, in the transcription, the music is written in a more pianistic manner. It is therefore possible to analyse in terms of structure how the articulation pattern interprets in the transcription. The structure can be summarised as follows:

Table 1: The Indication of a Short Slur.

Main Section	Bar Number	Description
А	S1 (measure:1-28)	Spring returns to the land
	S2 (measure:29-50)	Fun in the Forest
	S3 (measure:51-87)	Birds singing Chorus of birds
В	S4 (measure: 134-173)	The various \$3
С	S5 (measure: 187–232)	Happy Song and Dance
Episode		Imitated
	measure: 88–133	Cuckoo Old Mountain Chicken
	measure: 174–186	Yellow oriole Mixed sound of various birdsongs
III	measure: 233–234	Chirping of cicadas

One of the issues is the short slurs that raise some ambiguities to be discussed. An expressive slur is connected to the compositional structure that illustrates the intent of the transcription by using varying degrees of attack and release. This is particularly evident in the main sections (A, B, and C), each showcasing different interpretative possibilities.

Dealing with the fast tempo of this work, the short slurs in different rhythmic patterns shorten the distance between musical idioms and intervals, providing subtle differences in attack and dynamics, as demonstrated specifically in the various birdcall images (see Figure. 1). In general, the abundance of short slurs is not surprising given the fast tempo of this birdsong composition. The short slurs provide a hint for us to recall the Suona, the blowing instrument that features the tonguing articulation. These couplets indirectly imply ample staccato playing to indicate the lively, fast, and crisp rhythmic pattern, while also portraying the dialogue between the different species of birds. Therefore, it is evident that short slurs exhibit expressive nuances. The majority of the semiquaver figures in couplets or quintuplets tend to be represented by brief slurs. This makes us wonder if the remaining non-indicative figures required a slur or not. The passage in the main section clearly indicates that the articulation of these sections is intended to present a musical characteristic. Specifically, the introduction from mm. 1 to mm. 28 portrays the scenes of 'Spring returns to the land' with the use of abundant slurred semiquaver figures. This may also reflect the 'Moderato' character of the music (see Figure 1).

In this section (mm. 1-mm. 28), the pervasive use of sixteenth-note patterns with short slurs creates a dense and intricate rhythmic texture, which sharply contrasts with the straightforward and regular nature of the 2/4 times signature. Typically, the consistent arpeggiated sixteenth-note patterns create a continuous and balanced sense of rapid tempo. However, in this section, sixteenth notes connected by short slurs appear in both strong and weak beats, followed by a brief breath before the subsequent note. These short slurs not only propel the development of the melody by providing smooth transitions between notes but also emphasise and clarify the melodic motives on the weak beats (e.g., G#-F#-E, B-F#-E, Figure. 1) by connecting them seamlessly, which highlights their rhythmic significance and melodic contour. This creates a distinctive musical texture that combines fluidity with rhythmic precision.

The demisemiquaver quintuplet pattern embedded within the slurred semiquaver figures intricately

mimics Suona's distinctive portamento technique. This technique, characterised by smooth, continuous pitch transitions, is effectively conveyed through these short-slurred notes. This approach adeptly captures the expressive dissonances and ornamental flourishes inherent to the Suona's performance style. The precise articulation of these rapid, interconnected notes not only reflects the dynamic range and emotional intensity of the Suona but also faithfully reproduces the subtle dissonances and embellishments found in the original composition.





Figure 1: "Spring returns to the land" mm.1-mm.28 (section A).

The other function of the short slur is to indirectly change the accent, which also contributes to generating expressive nuances. The scene of 'Fun in the Forest' from mm. 29 to mm. 50 exhibits the short slur along with the fast Allegro Vivace, portraying the activeness of birds (see Figure. 2). This enhances the clarity and strength of the musical discourse, providing more clarity and sustainment to establish the emotional progression in mm. 46-mm. 50. The short slur across the bar line from mm. 46 to mm. 47 and mm. 48 to mm. 49 creates two sets of syncopations in the same register. Additionally, the left hand moves from the small octave to the great octave with regular intervals and rhythmic sequences, gradually increasing the distance from the right hand (see Figure. 2). This movement creates a sense of depth in the auditory space and enhances the interaction between the two parts. This coordination between the hands may reflect the distance and bustling activity of birds. The crescendo dynamic and the accent on the final note of the eighth-note rhythm in measure 50 further support this interpretation. Within the 3/4time signature of measure 50, the indicated forte and the accent on the second eighth-note rhythm enhance the intensity of this section, which further illustrate the intensity of the birds' calls or wing flaps. In the measure 30, the short slurs are used to highlight two different rhythmic patterns and emphasise the second beat in quavers. At measure 41, the off-beat articulation pattern is omitted, which allows the remaining rhythmic elements to stand out more distinctly, enhancing the dynamic variation and layering of the music. This may portray the image of a bird's jump and instability (see Figure. 2).



Figure 2: "Fun in the Forest" mm.29-mm.50 (section B)

Likewise, short slurs serve to alter the accentual rhythm in the section 'Happy Song and Dance' (mm. 187-mm. 232). Obviously, the sequence of the sixteenth notes as the main rhythm pattern in this section captures the abruptness and speed characteristic of bird songs (see Figures. 3-5). In terms of the structure, a rhythmic framework is provided at the beginning of this section. First, the shift of the time signature from 3/4 to 2/4 (mm. 204-mm. 205) introduces tension and uncertainty in rhythm (see Figure. 4). Within this framework, the rhythmic differences are bridged by the short slur to ensure musical continuity and coherence. Moreover, a question may be asked regarding whether the slur indicates a division of phrases or a musical idiom. In tonal analysis, the dominant chord of the E zhi tonality determines the division of phrases. Specifically, the dominant chord creates clear boundaries for phrase divisions, which establish connections between the second and third intervals by short slurs (mm. 191-mm. 204). This pattern not only forms six repeated motive fragments but also constructs symmetrical phrase structures that exemplify the characteristic rapid pitch changes typical of Suona music. The interpretation of this pattern can be supported by the tempo indication giusto-vivace, which emphasises the precise and lively tempo needed to highlight these features. (see Figure. 3).



Figure 3: "Happy Song and Dance" mm. 186-mm.195 (section C).



Figure 4: "Happy Song and Dance" mm.196-mm.221 (section C).



Figure 5: "Happy Song and Dance" mm. 222-232 (section C).

Interestingly, there is no slur indication in the variations of S3 (mm. 134–mm. 160) for the singing melody in the right hand of the variations section (see Figures. 6 and 7). The melodic motif centres around the note E, with an ascending motif of #C-A-B-E and a descending motif of #C-B-A-E, forming a harmonic motion that

moves upward and then downward. This creates a call-and-response motif theme structured in a 2+2 pattern. This motif is further underscored by the tenuto markings on the outer melodic line of the chord to emphasise measures 134 to 137. The left-hand employs a slurred arpeggio pattern on the seventh chord of #F, providing harmonic support and a smooth connection to the melody.



Figure 6: 'A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix' Variations of S3(mm.134-mm.150).



Figure 7: 'A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix' Variations of S3(mm.151-mm.165).

The second phrase (mm. 138–mm. 146) functions as an extended passage using the syncopated and dotted eighth-note rhythms to enhance legato expression (see Figure. 6). However, this segment's utilisation of an eighth-sixteenth and sixteenth-note rhythmic pattern did not mark a short slur articulation, in contrast with the articulation pattern employed in the preceding sections. This contrast serves to highlight the distinct expressive qualities of the three sections. Here, the left-hand accompaniment employs broken chords of the #FYu, BShang and #CJue within the key of E, which is articulated through short slurs and positioned on strong beats to create a subtle dynamic connection

that supports the development of the right-hand melody and achieves nuanced expressions. The third phrase (mm. 147–mm. 160, Figures. 6 and 7) functions as a concluding passage, synthesising the melodic elements of the first and second phrases and manifesting predominantly in the left-hand part. At measure 156, the appearance of a short slur serves as a pre-closure emphasis, the impending conclusion of the passage.

Another role of the slur may come from the function to emphasise the Chinese essence of this transcribed work. Notably, the short slur was often placed on the accidental pitch that the downbeat appears to emphasise and harmonically highlights the E zhi tonality from the Chinese traditional folk scales. From the notation, the short slur is indicated over the accidental note bian zhi D# in mm. 15, mm. 19, mm. 32, mm. 40, mm. 42, and mm. 44 (see Figure. 1). The F# yu seventh chord sustains in mm. 15 and mm. 19, then resolves to the dominant E in the followed measure. The left-hand bass is articulated in a way that allows the two 4-bar phrases to emphasise the melody, D# -E -F# -E, while highlighting the upper voice in the right-hand, E- F#- E, E- B- E. Similarly, for mm. 32, mm. 40, mm. 42, and mm. 44, the short slur highlights the accidental D# in the interval of the fifth of the dominant E chord, echoing the first inversion of the dominant E chord at the end of the adjacent phrase.

Besides this, the short slur also portrays the timbre of the original composition, which restores the feature indicated in the Suona score (bright, graceful, and vibrant). Here, it can be seen that the short slur clarifies the musical characters, which also perhaps represents Wang Jianzhong's intention in transcribing the Suona score into a piano score.

From the notation, short slurs were also used in the background music to create a singing and soft musical. The gentle orchestral backdrop combines with the bright timbre of birdsong, providing a contrast between sharpness and softness in the composition.

The phrases in these sections conclude with a return to the dominant note E, with the register change corresponding to the dynamic change that produces different timbral variations in similar slurred figures. Likewise, the section of 'Chirping of Cicadas' (mm. 233–mm. 234) employs a repeated slur for the 2nd interval and alternates the vibrato between the two hands, effectively mimicking the Suona technique. This was achieved by portraying the fast, even, and powerful sounds by the vibrating tongue of the Suona; the timbre is emphasised by the use of

pure fourths, G#-C#, F#-B, E#-A# (Figure. 8).

Furthermore, cicadas have a high-pitched, clear call that consists of a double-dotted rhythm and trill. Throughout the composition, each beat represents a cicada's call, with an undulating dynamic and a fast-slow-fast tempo to mimic the cicada's singing (mm. 233–mm. 234). The use of trills emphasises the coherence, intensity, and length of the phrase, which avoids tempo and dynamic rigidity, providing a lighter and undulating sound to the cicadas.



Figure 8: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.233-mm. 234.



Figure 9: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.56 and mm. 69.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the different articulations of the short slur registers an octave that produce two distinct bird calls in an antiphonal style in the same rhythmic pattern.

Despite the absence of a clear dynamic indication in both phrases, the shift down an octave provides some dynamic contrast between the two different timbres. An obvious difference exists between mm. 56 and mm. 69 (see Figure. 9). Here, both short slurs are indicated differently for the same figure in varying octaves. In mm. 56, the slur covers the entire bar; however, it is perplexing why the first note is left out without a slur in mm. 69. Obviously, this articulation pattern reflects the polyphonic character of the chorus. First, the short slur distinguishes the playing technique of the figures between the two registers, which may intend to present a contrasting tone colour between the crisp (lower octave) and mellow (higher octave); it can also be portrayed as a dialogue between flocks of birds from near (lower octave) and far (higher octave). Rhetorically, the high register figure may exhibit an imagination of a more lyrical, hazy, and distant call of the

birdsonas while the repeated figure in the lower register indicates the proximity of the 'call' signal. The composer may perhaps project that the 'nearer' birdsong is clearer, which explains a more detailed articulation with the omission of a slur at the first note for this figure. It can be observed that the different uses of the slur result in these two bars of the same rhythmic pattern projecting opposite musical idioms. The slur over the high-register figure is indicative of a more legato touch that results in lighter and softer discourse, and the separation of the guaver notes from the semi-quaver notes indicates a semi-detached touch that produces a thicker and brighter-sounding texture. The two contrasting fragments may also depict two distinct bird calls, illustrating a comparison of emotions. The semidetached articulation of guaver and semi-guaver notes generates a thick, bright texture, and dynamic range that corresponds to the differing registers of the two musical passages.

# **Expressive Accentuate and Tenuto Signs**

Another interesting articulation indication is the accentuation and tenuto that serves to portray Chinese traditional music characters to maintain the authenticity of the original work.

Traditional Chinese music's expressive character can be more effectively articulated by highlighting specific melodies and employing rhetorical execution techniques. For this reason, these two accentuated signs serve to impart an emphasis placed on the point of a particular–melody to convey the emotion of the original composition. Therefore, the rhetorical articulations can be more effective in targeting the musical expressions in this transcription.

Expressive accentuation serves two important functions in this section: driving the beat forward and contributing to distinguish the timbre between the repeated pitches (Jancewicz, 1997). Accents appear on the notes of the upper register and the top notes of the octave. The accents that are consistently used in the off-beat from bar 51 to 60 and 64 to 75 (Figure. 10) emphasise the rhythmic contour through a quick attack (see Example. 8). This indicates the sharp and bright tone of the Suona, which could also imitate the birdcall, as well as the alissando that is associated with it playing. Moreover, the accentuation is located in the high voice of the main theme in the right hand with the steady articulation of the rhythmic two-quavers pattern in the left hand. The legato in the middle voice of the right hand contributes to defining the mood of the theme while simultaneously giving it a more complex dimension.

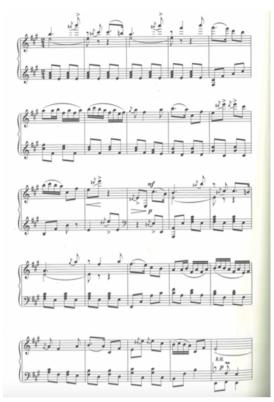


Figure 10: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.51 to mm.75.

The accentuation in this work may also serve to provide a direction. As a transitional subsection, the accent with staccato provides an upward bounce for the upward movement of the broken chord in mm. 161 and mm. 162. The accent sign on the first quaver note of the left hand in mm. 161 stresses the dynamic change that introduces a new motif to mm. 163.



Figure 11: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.161 to mm.163.



Figure 12: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.186.

Similarly, the accentuations highlight the specific group notes within the same register to clarify the melodic flow and provide rhythmic direction. One can clearly see this from the placement of each group of notes in the accent in mm. 186, through the use of accents, the rhythm direction can be controlled, as well as the musical character expressed in different registers.

Tenuto in general is more lyrical than accent to indicate the melody and emphasise the legato. The recalling of the Suona or a blowing instrument such as sheng could still be observed in the tenuto used from mm. 134 to mm. 137. Although in a chordal writing, the 'legato' singing style could be executed even without the slur indication. Furthermore, tenuto in this work contributes to assisting dynamic direction. The measures from mm. 108 to mm. 110 achieve the same purpose by tenuto. The dotted quarter note with tenuto in the main melody serves as the prominent medium in driving the dynamic forward. Additionally, not only does the tenuto give a sliding effect following the appogiaturas at the end of each bar, it also assists in executing the short decrescendo. (see Figure. 13).



Figure 13: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.134 to mm.137.



Figure 14: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.106 to mm.115.



Figure 15: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.31 to mm.32.



Figure 16: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.39 to mm.40.

For some sections, tenuto is employed to emphasise dynamics by giving them a tonal contrast. This occurs at mm. 32 and mm. 40 (see Figure.15-16). To compare them, the tenuto emphasises the minor second interval (D# E) on the strong beat position of the accent on mm. 32, highlighting the dissonant intervals and implying a decrescendo, as the top notes of the octave are marked with accents on mm. 31. At mm. 40, the tenuto is not used on the minor second interval (D# E), this generates two distinct expressions of musical concepts.

# **Articulation in Relation to Ornaments**

The interpretation of articulation often influences an ornamentation. Undoubtedly, the abundance of embellishment will be directly used for works that relate to birdsong, regardless of direct imitation or a simple portrayal of the avian song, because the birdsong is generally considered as fast, sharp, and bright, while effects such as glissando, appoggiatura, and others may serve to imitate the birds calls. Thus, the decision on the execution of articulation for some of the ornamentation in this work merits examination.

Most of the ornaments occur in the episodes divided into three sections, mm. 88 to mm. 133, mm.174-mm. 186 and mm. 233-mm. 234 (Table. 1). The entire range of mm. 92-mm. 106 is in the upper register, which corresponds to the cuckoo's clarity as indicated in the Suona edition (Figure. 17). The appoggiatura with pp is placed on a strong beat of the motif in the two-eight rhythmic pattern, succeeded by a complete rest that occurs between each phrase from mm. 92-mm. 106. In this figure, accompanying the cuckoo's call is the left-hand accompaniment in steady and repetitive groups of two-eighth notes while there is no indication of articulation. The notes are played in a separated manner from each other, which enhances the stability of the rhythm and dynamic. It also improves the general cohesion of the interior structure because the notes are performed separately, resulting in a more consistent tempo and intensity, which form a contradicting phrase.



Figure 17: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm.91 to mm.110.



Figure 18: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm. 106 to mm.115.

The yellow oriole was portrayed by the use of diminished fifth and minor second intervals, with the quick appoggiatura (mm. 174-mm. 186). Here, the tie notes were held over the barline, emphasising the sharp tone produced by the appoggiatura, resulting in an extended legato effect. This contrapuntal writing enhances the musical flow and accentuates the bright and clear timbre of the yellow warbler's call.



Figure 19: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm. 171 to mm.186 (Yellow Oriole's call, mm.174 to mm.185)

From Figures. 19 and 20, several approaches are used in the birdcall fragment to further improve the musical texture and highlight the contrast between various fragments. A two-bar figure in the sixteenth notes moving in minor seconds is repeated throughout the part to provide a contrast to the articulated birdcalls, and the entry of the second and fourth appearance in the second beat of the bar gives a temporary 3/4 time against the consistent 2/4 LH accompaniment. Next, a progressive repetition of the minor second sixteenth note groups is accompanied by a dynamic change in the crescendo creating a steady line of legato that evokes the chirping of a flock of birds through an advancing crescendo (Figure. 20).



Figure 20: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm. 116 to mm.125

Trills and fermatas are given diatonic notes to depict two flocks of birds chirping in different directions in mm. 186. This sets the stage for the next chapter, which is about the different emotional expressions of birds. Apart from this, trills are employed to indicate the technique of Suona. Through the use of the trembolo, the entire atmosphere is brought to a climax. Employing these two articulations, we are able to imagine a hundred birds frolicking and rejoicing. A flock of birds is depicted in the same way in both mm. 238—mm. 243 and mm. 289—mm. 293.



Figure 21: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm. 235 to mm.244



Figure 22: A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix, mm. 285 to mm.294.

# Articulation in Different Pianists' Performance

As a result of the previous discussions and analyses, it is possible to reveal a key issue in performance practice: performers tend to interpret music based on their own understanding and personal experience. In this regard, it can be seen that the articulation in 'A Hundred Birds Pay Homage to the Phoenix' is more than an expression of the performer's own interpretation, as well as to influence and shape how the audience perceives

the work in its entirety. In order to illustrate this point, it is possible to study how different pianists choose articulation and how this affects emotional expression and structural fluency.

Tempo and dynamic are among the most important characteristics that determined the emotional expression. Typically, the passage "Spring returns to the land" (Figure.1) as an example shows this point through the following three pianists' performances. Although Wang Jianzhong indicated different levels of dynamic and moderato in the notation, Shi Shucheng, Yin Chengzong, and Zhang Haochen demonstrate their unique understanding of this passage by using differing patterns of articulation.

According to Shi Shucheng's recording, it exhibited restraint with regards to tempo and dynamics, avoiding excessive fluctuations and flows of emotion. This articulation treatment can be found in the phrases mm.1 to mm.8. Instead of using a clearly dynamic contrasted articulation treatment, such as from f to p, which avoided abrupt transitions between phrases by using a steady dynamic. By doing so, it also guarantees a uniform tone. However, a gradual change in tempo occurs from slow to fast in Yin Chengzong's recording. It is interesting to listen to the subtle dynamic changes contained within each note of each measure within its interpretation. In contrast to Shi Shucheng's performance, this approach is very different. Another example of the articulation approach can also be seen in Zhang Haochen's performance, which displays a fast-tempo style. The performance is more contrasting when it uses a more intense dynamic contrast (ff-f), breaking Shi Shucheng's smooth articulation with sudden accelerations or decelerations.

# **CONCLUSION**

Cross's (1998) explanation of 'Performance objectivity' allows a tighter alignment of the music with the essence of the piece and its structural integrity, because of its strict adherence to the original score and musical markings that are the main criteria for performing objectivity. Accordingly, after 1920, many scholars stressed the concept of 'objectivity', even though in performance the concept of 'objectivity' was contrary to the Romantic style of performance. Messiaen asserts that the accuracy of the musical text's reproduction is not a deterrent to interpreting the content of the music (Wright & McCarrey, 2014). Drawing together these views, as articulation being one of the most important markings, the interpretation of a particular music requires an in-depth examination through the composer's intention, background, and the performer's perspective. Detailed notation may not adequately convey the musical message to the performers, and the musical interpretation remains dependent on the performer's understanding of the specific situation and context of the work.

Regarding this, articulation signs are considered important aspects of the work, enabling its expression of specific emotions through articulation patterns and giving instrumental music the ability to resemble language through its articulation patterns. Golomb (2004) asserts that the slur employed by Bach in his original composition is part of his musical concept; nevertheless the lack of an autograph manuscript leaves these musical concepts unclear. It illustrates the importance of these signs not only in reproducing the original in the transcribed work but also in interpreting the results produced by the transcriber and performer. For this composition, it examines how the articulation patterns interpret the musical

expressiveness of transcriptions and analyses the musical expression of transcriptions from an objective perspective to ensure authenticity.

The analysis demonstrates that the original timbre and musical emotion can be successfully conveyed on the piano even if the composer did not include very comprehensive notations. The main method used to accomplish this is the depth use of different articulation strategies. Short slurs are used in the composition to simulate birdcall, rather than to convey a strong staccato. Furthermore, the employment of tenuto and accents produces dynamic contrasts that, when combined with ornamentation and the deliberate use of different registers, effectively communicate a variety of features associated with birdsong. This demanding technique allows the composition to maintain the original work's essence while illustrating the piano's unique expressive abilities.

Table 2: A Table for Music Term in Article.

Music term	Definition	
Articulation	Refers to how the player plays each note, such as the way the notes are linked or separated, or how strong or weak they are.	
Legato	Smooth and consistent playing without noticeable pauses between notes.	
Tenuto	Duration are as close to original as possible.	
Accentuation	A note is more prominent or stronger than others.	
Ornamentation	Extending musical expression with additional notes or variations.	
Trill	A rapid alternation between two neighbouring notes.	
Arpeggios	Sequence the notes of the chord.	
Leaning note	The note appears before the main note and slides in briefly and quickly.	

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