



RULES OF INTERPRETATION AND ARTICULATION

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Although musical interpretation is a creative, individual process, there are certain conventional practices that are known to artistic performers in all media. The following list is an attempt to verbalize these customs to provide a handy reference for conductors and singers as they study and rehearse. It is hoped that these ideas will lead conductors to approach musical performance in a way which will excite musician and audience alike.

1. No two consecutive notes, syllables, or words can be sung alike.
2. All notes longer than one beat must grow or diminish.
3. Even the basic unit is subject to a slight crescendo / decrescendo.
4. Every note must move to the next. Visualize each note pushing the next off the page.
5. Every new pitch must get a slight new accent.
6. Two notes of the same pitch must be separated for clarity
7. All notes within a slur must be separated by a 1/28th rest.
8. Words ending with a vowel must be separated from a word beginning with a vowel.
9. All new pitches should receive one of the following treatments
marcato / FADE
marcato / FADE / crescendo
marcato / RING
touch/ GROW
messa di voce (<>) – in all early music
stretch (tenuto) especially eighth notes
10. The dot in all dotted figures represents a lift 
11. In  the sixteenths must be separated from the eighth.
12. Each note in a run or *melisma* must receive a breath articulation (new energy)
13. One or two short notes must be sung louder than long notes.
14. Pick ups serve as spring boards to the following note; they must therefore be intensified, spun forward, and gather energy which is released in the note that follows.
15. Unaccented syllables swell into accented syllables.
16. Beginnings of phrases must be emphasized. “Ping” the first notes.
17. First notes of [phrases that begin off the beat or after a rest receive stronger accents than do those beginning on the beat.
18. Syncopated figures call for a separation between each note.
19. In polyphonic music each voice must listen and respond to each other line (like a conversation).
Take over, then yield (like rules of the road)
Lean into held notes when another voice enters (pulsing).
Feel other pitch movement in you own line (e.g. moving eighth notes in another voice).
20. The rule of the octave leap is: put weight on the lower note and detach it from the upper note. The bottom note of any leap should likewise receive more weight.
21. Rules for vibrato are:
The top voice should use less vibrato

- All voices should reduce amount of vibrato at cadences and dissonances
Use less vibrato in polyphonic music
22. Lean into all dissonances and relax resolution.
 23. High notes should be sung lighter, more buoyantly.
 24. One phrase one breath.
 25. The last note of a slur or phrase is usually shortened and deemphasized and must be separated from the note that follows.
 26. Long notes and ends of phrase must fade; however, if the last note of a phrase precedes a rest, it often becomes slightly towards the end.
 27. There are four primary kinds of accents:
Apocic stress length (most important for nuance, musicality).
Tonic height (notes stand out by virtue of being higher than others)
Metric regular recurring stresses (especially in triple meter and compound meters such as 5/4, 7/8, etc.)
Dynamic indicated with signs (superimposed onto the music)
 28. Accented syllables in each word receive agogic (tenuto) accents. These natural accents of length and stress must be heightened for dynamic energy and communication.
 30. Messa di voce (the 'blossoming" of any note longer than the basic unit) should be employed in Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods; exception: notes which end in phrases (<>)
 31. The basic articulation in Baroque and Classical music is non-legato. Liberal use of staccato dots or *mezzo-portato* marks is recommended to achieve the crisp clarity desired in Baroque style. The use of *detache`* articulation extended into the Classical period as well.
 32. The concepts of *Notes ine`gales* and *Quantitas intrinseca* were employed in Baroque music without being indicated in the score. Basically these concepts dictated that series of short notes were not performed with identical length or weight. Rather they are executed with flexible inequality (similar to adding dots or using the long/short quality of a triplet). Mozart later referred to “good” notes and “bad” notes the good notes (those occurring on metrical pulses or ON the beat) received more length and weight and the bad notes those occurring on weak beats or OFF the beat) were shorter.



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