Corrections to Debussy's Sonate pour Flûte, Alto, & Harpe First Movement: Pastorale

by Carl Swanson

Editor's note: Because of the length of this article, the second movement corrections will be published in the next issue, Summer 2014, and the third movement corrections a year from now, in the Winter 2014 issue.

HEN we see a piece of music in print, particularly one of the great masterpieces in the literature, we assume, without ever really thinking about it, that the publisher and engraver printed exactly what the composer wrote and intended. It came as a complete surprise then, when I was given a copy of the manuscript to Debussy's *Sonate pour Flûte, Alto, & Harpe*, to find out that there were a considerable number of discrepancies between the manuscript and the Durand edition, over one hundred, in fact!

Marie-Claire Jamet, the daughter of my teacher Pierre Jamet, and an internationally recognized harpist in her own right, had given me a photocopy of the original manuscript, and she told me at the time that it contained some discrepancies from the printed edition. Her list of differences consisted of several corrections for the whole *Sonate*, and was made up for the most part of notes that were tied or not tied, one wrong note, etc. I talked to Elizabeth Huntley, editor of the *Harp Journal*, about the possibility of an article on these differences, and she loved the idea. I then decided that if I was going to write about this, I should proofread the entire *Sonate* myself, just to see if I would find any other discrepancies and to familiarize myself with the manuscript.

I got out my Durand edition of the *Sonate*, the only one that has been available for almost a hundred years, and compared it to the original manuscript. What follows in this, and two more articles

that will appear in the next two *Harp Journals*, are the discrepancies that I discovered between the manuscript and the Durand edition.

What is the source material for this article?

The photocopy that Marie-Claire gave me, written in Debussy's own hand, has a catalogue number on the title page of MS. 991 (see the cover of this magazine) and circular red stamps on every page of the manuscript (twenty-eight pages total) that read: Conservatoire de Musique-Bibliothèque, Paris (Conservatory of Music, Library, Paris). There is also a circular blue stamp on the title page that reads: A. Durand & Fils, Editeur, Durand & Cie., as well as another catalogue number that is C. 1924. The title page also contains an oval red stamp that reads: Conservatoire de Musique, Bibliothèque (Conservatory of Music, Library). I asked Marie-Claire how and when she got her copy of the manuscript, and she told me that it was given to her by Francis Pierre, who had been her assistant at the Paris Conservatory when she taught there, and who later was the harp teacher at the Lyon Conservatory. She didn't know how or when he got it.

The photocopy she gave me is reduced in size, and is faint and at first difficult to read. But once my eyes adjusted to it, I was able to read almost everything and did not have to guess at all about the corrections listed in these articles. I couldn't check the notes themselves, because in places the note heads and stems completely disappeared, as well as some of the bar lines. I had to go through and draw the bar lines in again, and also write in the Durand page and rehearsal numbers to make it easier to keep track of where I was.

I assumed that Marie-Claire's photocopy was a second or third generation copy, and that mine therefore was a third or fourth, explaining why everything is so faint. So I contacted the National Library of France (la Bibliothèque Nationale de France, BnF) to see if they knew where the manuscript was, and if I could get a better photocopy, preferably the same size as the manuscript and not a reduction. They responded that they had the manuscript and could supply me with what I wanted. They sent me two complete photocopies: one a reduction, and one much larger, close to or the same size as the original manuscript.

But upon examination, those copies were even more faint than the one given to me by Marie-Claire, not by much, but enough. So I contacted the library again, asking if there was any chance they could make me a set of photocopies or photographs directly from the manuscript instead of from a microfilm, as I presumed they had done. They wrote back that they would put in the request, but it might be denied if the manuscript was deemed to be too fragile. To my surprise, they told me a few days later that my request had been granted! After waiting anxiously for several weeks, I received the new set of photocopies, made directly from the manuscript itself. They are much clearer than the previous copies I had received, and show all of the detail that was faint or missing in previous copies. I proofread the entire Sonate again, using these clearer photocopies, and all of the corrections here are based on those copies.

The manuscript is absolutely clean, with no corrections, deletions, or markings of any kind. Debussy's signature appears at the end of the last page, so I have to assume that this is a hand-written copy he made himself. The presence of the stamp of the Durand Company indicates that they had possession of this copy of the manuscript.

What is the nature of the discrepancies between the manuscript and the Durand edition?

The discrepancies deal almost entirely with musical indications. There are a small number of places where the notes are different in the manuscript, and

a few places where a note is tied in the manuscript but not tied in the Durand edition, or visa versa.

The discrepancies that I found number about one hundred over the entire Sonate, (approximately fifty in the first movement alone!), and fall loosely into three groups. The first consists of musical indications (p, pp, cresc., decresc., etc.), that are in the manuscript but not in the Durand edition. The second group consists of musical indications, like those mentioned above, that are in the manuscript, but are in a slightly different place in the Durand edition, usually a measure earlier or later. The third group, the smallest, consists of musical indications that are in the manuscript one way and are the opposite in the Durand edition (a cresc. in the manuscript that is a decresc. in the Durand edition, for example). The most baffling are the few times that the manuscript has a note that is not in the Durand edition, or is in a different place than in the Durand edition. But more about that later.

There is one more group of differences that needs to be mentioned, and that consists of several places in the manuscript where Debussy, most likely through simple oversight, leaves out something that should have been there, and the Durand edition corrects it. I had two very valuable assistants on this project, Martha Moor and Judy Ross, both harpists with eagle eyes and formidable theoretical knowledge, and the three of us discussed at length each of these discrepancies that we ultimately deemed to be oversights on Debussy's part. One example is on page 2, first and second lines, where the harp right hand is written 8va-----. When that motif comes back on page 9, Debussy didn't put the 8va----- over the notes! If you were to play it exactly as Debussy wrote it the second time, both hands would be right on top of each other!

How could such discrepancies happen?

I can only speculate about how there could be such discrepancies between the manuscript and the Durand edition, and I'm not sure if further research is likely to answer any of the questions posed by this dilemma. Was this the manuscript that was used

to print the Durand edition, or is there another manuscript? Is it possible Debussy made additions or changes to the manuscript after the music was set by Durand? Is it possible that someone other than Debussy added things to the manuscript, again, after the music was printed? Most intriguing of all is a small hint that a harpist may have looked at the manuscript before it went to the printer. On the bottom of page 32 in the Durand edition are three eighth notes in the treble clef with the initials *m.g.* underneath, indicating that the left hand is to play those notes. I find it hard to believe that Debussy would have put that in, although it is also in the manuscript and apparently in his hand. There are no pedals marked in, nor fingering.

Several thoughts did occur to me as I worked on this project. The first is that Debussy was one of the first composers in the history of music to be extremely exacting about how he wanted his music played, and in the manuscript version of the piece, he tells the performer how to play virtually every note. Debussy detested the term Impressionist applied to his music, I think because he felt it suggested that there was something imprecise or vague about it. Nothing could be further from the truth. So the printing house may never have engraved a piece with so many musical indications and did not give them the importance that Debussy did. Secondly, the piece was written and published in the middle of World War I, and the engraver who actually printed the music for Durand might have been short-staffed, might have lost key people to the war, or might have been primarily involved with government publishing for the war effort, with little time to deal with anything else.

But there is a third issue to consider, and for that one must look at the timeline of this piece. It was written in 1915 and published in 1916. The first performance, a private one at the home of Jacques Durand, Debussy's publisher, was on December 10, 1916, and was followed by public performances in 1917. Debussy had been diagnosed with cancer almost ten years earlier and by this time was dying. He was very ill and suffering enormously, and would be dead barely a year later, on March 25, 1918. So he

may have been too ill to proof the galleys properly or to deal with the printer before the piece was published.

As for the discrepancies themselves, I feel confident that the manuscript and all the musical indications therein are in Debussy's hand and what he wanted. Even if they were added after the piece had been published (which frankly I doubt!), they are nevertheless Debussy's own.

I have been through the manuscript and Durand edition more times than I can count at this point, and this has given me a better understanding of what Debussy wanted in the performance of this piece. My own teacher, Pierre Jamet (1893-1991) received extensive coaching from Debussy himself on the *Sonate* and the *Danses*. Taking into consideration his eye witness account of those sessions, as well as other comments that Debussy made to him, all of the musical indications in the manuscript make sense to me.

What is the significance of these discrepancies between the manuscript and the printed edition?

In the performance of music from any age or by any composer, it is important to know and understand the performance practices that relate to the music. If we are going to perform the *Sonate*, or any other piece of music for that matter, we should be looking at a score that is as close as possible to what the composer wrote. That is the starting point in understanding a piece of music.

For Debussy, the musical indications are as important as the notes, and to be reading a score with omissions or wrong indications concerning his musical intent is as bad as reading a score with wrong or missing notes. In studying the manuscript, I have come to realize just how precisely Debussy documented his musical thoughts. In the Durand score, for example, a *ritard* is simply written *rit*. A measure or two later there is another indication that says *au mouvt*. But in the manuscript, what Debussy consistently writes is *rit*.————// clearly indicating the area where the *ritard* is to take place and exactly where it is to stop.

I have also come to realize from studying the manuscript and comparing it to the Durand edition,

that Durand "homogenized" much of the texture of the piece. Frequently in the Durand edition the musical indications for two or all three instruments are exactly the same: two or three instruments *crescendo* or *decrescendo* together for example. In the manuscript, however, it is very common to see one instrument making a *crescendo* while another one makes a *decrescendo*. There are places in the first movement where (in the manuscript) the viola plays very quietly with no dynamic change, while the flute makes a *crescendo* and the harp a *decrescendo*, or a smaller *crescendo*. Debussy makes maximum use of what the three different instruments can do together and treats them as individual voices. This is lost in much of the Durand edition.

In comparing the original manuscript and the Durand edition, I decided to document every single discrepancy, no matter how minor it seemed to be. In going through this list, one may feel that some of these changes are not that important. But I feel that the sum total of these discrepancies is much more important than any one of the individual changes. It is only by documenting exactly what Debussy wrote in the manuscript that we can get an accurate picture of his intentions.

How to read the following musical examples.

The remainder of this article consists of the measure or measures where differences between the Durand edition and the manuscript occur. The Durand edition is used for the examples, and the corrections are shown in red.

There are captions next to or below each example, describing the changes that are needed. The caption for each example gives the following information, in this order: The location of the measure or measures in question in the full Durand edition score, described each time as page, line, and measure (Page 3, line 2, measure 3, for example) followed, in parenthesis, by the location relative to rehearsal numbers (6 before 1, for example). Then the instrument or instruments involved in the correction (FLUTE, VIOLA, HARP) followed by a colon, and then a verbal description of the difference between the Durand edition and the manuscript. So the cor-

rection is both verbally described and shown in a musical example in red.

The corrections sometimes involve removing something from the Durand score, but most of the time adding something. When something is to be removed from the Durand score, with nothing replacing it, we have chosen to place a red X over that which is to be removed. When something in the Durand score is to be replaced by something else, we have chosen to remove whatever is to be removed and then to replace it in red with what should be there.

Most of the time, the musical example shows only the instrument or instruments involved in the correction. This is to save space. As you make the corrections in your own copy, you will see how these changes affect all three instruments.

If you are going to make these corrections to your Durand score, you should have a bottle of white-out handy, a small straight edge, and several sharp pencils or a pen. There are a few places where there is something wrong in the full score, but it is correct in the individual flute or viola parts. Those are mentioned as we go along. There are also a few places where the individual flute or viola parts are wrong and the full score is correct. These too will be noted.

The author wishes to express his deep gratitude to Martha Moor and Judy Ross for their invaluable aid in preparing this article, as well as the staff at the National Library of France, who were absolute angels to work with.

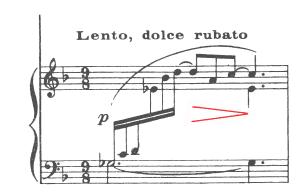
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In the course of his career, Carl Swanson has been a performer, a manufacturer and a restorer of harps. He is a frequent contributor to The American Harp Journal.

Example 1 ▶

Page 1, line 1, measure 1

HARP: There is a decrescendo under beats 4, 5, and 6.



Example 2 ►

Page 1, line 2, measure 4 (measure 7 from the beginning) FLUTE: There is a decresendo under the last $5-16^{\rm th}$ notes.

HARP: Both chords are marked as rolled, not just the first one.



En serrant



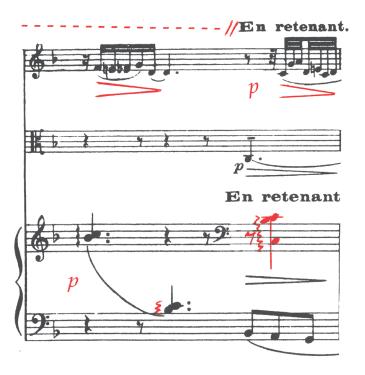
Example 3 ►

Page 2, line 1, measure 1 (measure 8)

rant of measure 7 which continues through beat 6, ending with a *caesura* just before the *en retenant*. There is also a *decrescendo* under beats 1, 2, and 3, and a p on beat 8, followed by a *decrescendo* under beats 8 and 9.).

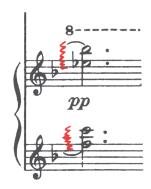
HARP: There is a p at the beginning of the measure. The chord on beat 4 is marked rolled. There is an 8th rest on beat 7 in the right hand, and the chord is played on beat 8 (consistent with 5 after rehearsal 6 at the end of this movement).

FLUTE: There is a dashed line from the en ser-



Example 4 ▶

Page 2, line 2, measure 1 (6 before rehearsal 1) HARP: First chord is marked as rolled.



Rit.



Example 5 ▲

Page 3, line 1, measure 2 (1 before rehearsal 1)

FLUTE: Sostenuto does not appear in the manuscript. Add a crescendo under beats 1, 2, and 3, and a decresendo under beats 4, 5, and 6.

Example 6 ►

Page 3, line 2, measure 1 (rehearsal 1)

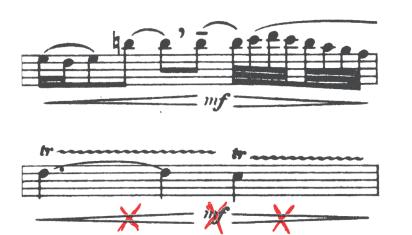
FLUTE: There is a *tenuto* on beat 3.

VIOLA: There is no *crescendo-decrescendo* as there is in the flute and harp parts. There is instead the marking *p* leggiero.



Example 7 ▶

Page 3, line 2, measure 2 (2 after rehearsal 1) VIOLA: Again, there is no crescendo-decrescendo and no mf as there is in the flute.



Example 8 ▶

Page 3, line 2, measure 3 (3 after rehearsal 1)

FLUTE: There is a decrescendo on beats 8 and 9.

FLUTE & VIOLA: There is a dashed line after dim.

ending with a p on the 4th beat (----p).

FLUTE & HARP: There is a dashed line after *rit*. to the end of the measure, ending with (*Rit*.-----//). The viola does not have a *rit*. in the manuscript. But given the fact that the flute and harp both have *ritards*, this must be an oversight on Debussy's part, and a *rit*. should be in that part too.

Example 9 ►

Page 3, line 3, measure 3 (6 after rehearsal 1) HARP: mf is followed by a crescendo to beat 4.



Rit .-

Rit.

Rit.

dim.

Example 10 ▶

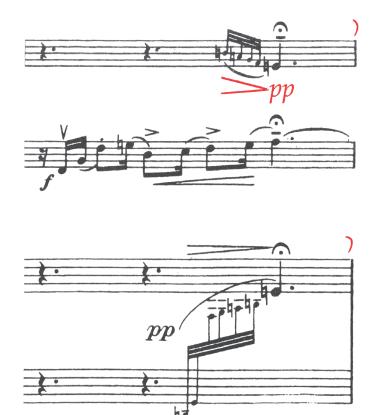
Page 4, line 1, measure 2 (rehearsal 2) FLUTE & HARP: The dotted quarters are marked sfz.HARP: There is no (vibrato).



Example 11 ▶

Page 4, line 1, measure 3 (2 after rehearsal 2) FLUTE: There is a decrescendo under the grace notes ending in pp on beat 7.

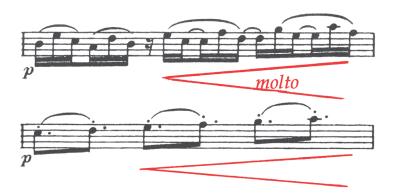
FLUTE & HARP: There is a breath mark at the end of the measure.



Example 12 ▶

Page 4, line 2, measure 3 (5 after rehearsal 2) FLUTE & VIOLA: the crescendo starts on the second large beat in both instruments (the Durand flute part is correct. The viola part is incorrect).

FLUTE: The *crescendo* should read *crescendo molto* (i.e., add *molto*).

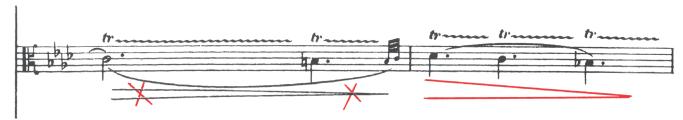


Example 13 ►

Page 4, line 3, measure 3 (3 before rehearsal 3)

FLUTE: There is a decrescendo under large beats 2 and 3.





Example 14 ▲

Page 5, line 1, measures 1 and 2 (2 and 1 before rehearsal 3)

VIOLA: There is no decrescendo 2 before rehearsal 3, but there is a decrescendo 1 before rehearsal 3.

Example 15 ▶

Page 5, line 2, measure 3 (4 after rehearsal 3)

FLUTE: There is no pp in the manuscript..



Example 16 ▶

Page 5, line 3, measure 1 (5 after rehearsal 3)

FLUTE: There is a \boldsymbol{p} at beginning of the measure.

VIOLA: There is a *crescendo* starting on the second large beat to the end of the measure.



Example 17 ▶

Page 5, line 3, measure 2 (6 after rehearsal 3)

FLUTE: There is no p in the manuscript.



Example 18 ►

Page 5, line 3, measure 3 (7 after rehearsal 3)

VIOLA: There are tenutos on the first note of large

beats 1 and 3.

HARP: There is a tenuto on the first note of large

beat 3.



Example 19 ▶

Page 6, line 2, measure 3(1 before rehearsal 4)

FLUTE: There is a dashed line after *molto* to the end of the measure.

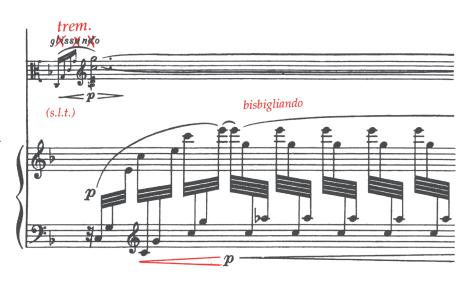
VIOLA: There is a dashed line after *molto* to the beginning of the 3^{rd} large beat.



Example 20 ▶

Page 7, measure 1 (5 after rehearsal 4) VIOLA: (s.l.t.) is written under the grace notes. Trem. is written above the chord. There is no glissando in the manuscript.

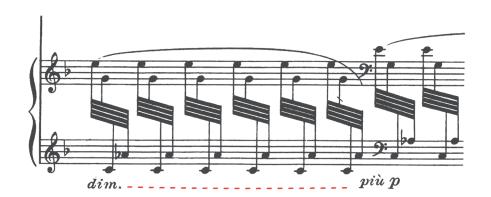
HARP: The *crescendo* starts only after the left hand treble clef. After the first high E is written the word *bis-bigliando*.



Example 21 ▶

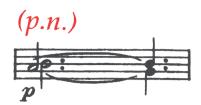
Page 7, line 2, measure 1 (6 after rehearsal 4)

HARP: There is a dashed line after the *dim*. to the *piu p*.



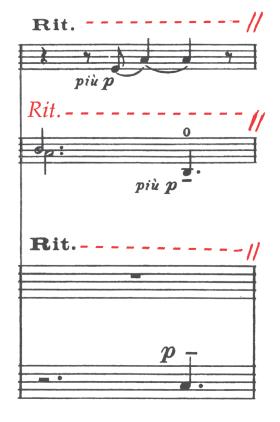
Example 22 ▶

Page 7, line 2, measure 2 (7 after rehearsal 4) VIOLA: The manuscript says (*p.n.*).



Example 23 ▶

Page 7, line 3, measure 2(7 before rehearsal 5) FLUTE, VIOLA & HARP: There is a dashed line after *Rit.* in all 3 instruments ending with a *caesura* at the end of the measure.

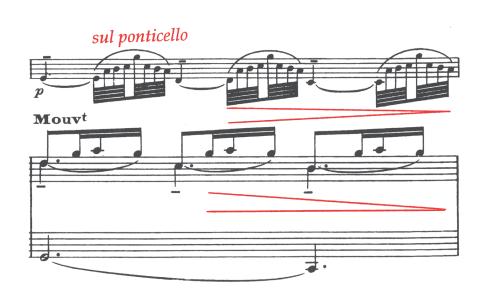


Example 24 ▶

Page 7, line 3, measure 3 (6 before rehearsal 5)

VIOLA: *sul ponticello* is written after the *p* at the beginning of the measure, then a *decrescendo* from the middle of large beat 2 to the end of the measure.

HARP: There is a *decrescendo* from the second half of beat 5 to the end of the measure.





Example 25 ▲

Page 8, line 1, measure 2 (4 before rehearsal 5)

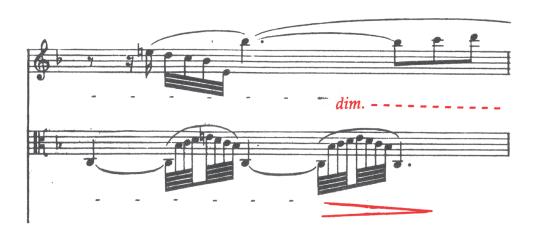
VIOLA: There is no p and no decrescendo as indicated in the harp.



Example 26 ▲

Page 8, line 2, measures 1 and 2 (3 and 2 before rehearsal 5)

FLUTE: The *sostenuto* in the manuscript appears 2 before rehearsal 5, not 3 before rehearsal 5. There is a *crescendo* under beats 8 and 9 of 2 before rehearsal 5, as well a dashed line from the *poco cres*. in 2 before rehearsal 5 to the *dim*. in 1 before rehearsal 5.



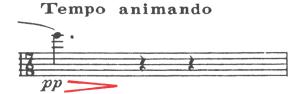
Example 27 A

Page 8, line 3, measure 1 (1 before rehearsal 5)

FLUTE: The *dim.* starts on beat 5 and is followed by a dashed line to the *pp* on beat 1 at rehearsal 5. VIOLA: There is no *dim.* There is a *decrescendo* starting on beat 6 and continuing to the end of the measure.

Example 28 ▶

Page 8, line 3, measure 2 (at rehearsal 5) FLUTE: There is a decrescendo after pp. VIOLA: There is a tenuto on beat 5.

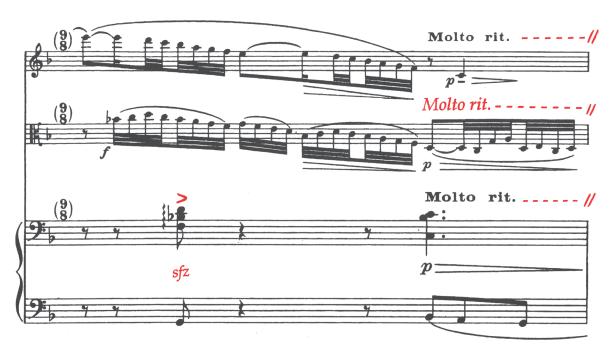




Example 29 ►

Page 8, line 3, measure 3 (2 after rehearsal 5) HARP: There is a decrescendo under the last 2 beats, like the previous measure.





Example 30 ▲

Page 9, line 1, measure 1 (3 after rehearsal 5)

HARP: There is an accent over the chord on beat 3 and an sfz under it, (not mp as in the Durand edition).

FLUTE, VIOLA & HARP: There is a dashed line after the *Molto rit.* to the end of the measure, ending with a *caesura*.

Example 31 ►

Page 9, line 3, measure 1 (4 before rehearsal 6)

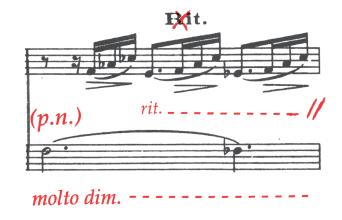
FLUTE: There is a *decrescendo* under the last 5 notes in the measure.



Example 32 ▶

Page 9, line 3, measure 2 (3 before rehearsal 6) FLUTE: rit. starts on beat 4, followed by a dashed line and caesura to the end of the measure (This is correct in the printed flute part).

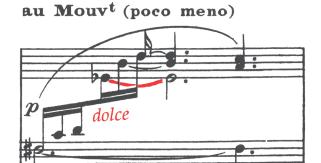
VIOLA: *molto dim.* starts on the downbeat and is followed by a dashed line to the end of the measure. Also, (*p.n.*) is written on (or at) beat 1.



Example 33 ►

Page 9, line 3, measure 3 (2 before rehearsal 6)

HARP: The 2 E-flats are tied, therefore, the second one should not be played. *Dolce* is written under the first E-flat.

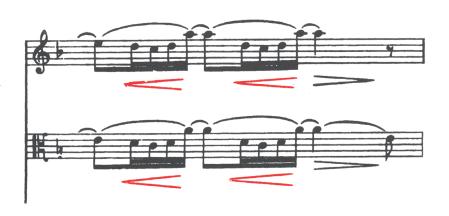


Example 34 ►

Page 10, line 2, measure 1 (3 after rehearsal 6)

FLUTE: The two *crescendos* start on beats 2 and 5, rather than 1 and 4.

VIOLA: There is no *crescendo* marked at all, but I think this is an oversight on Debussy's part and the viola should match the flute.



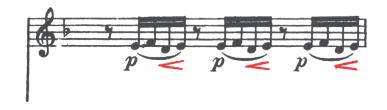
Example 35 ▶

Page 10, line 2, measure 2(4 after rehearsal 6) FLUTE, VIOLA & HARP: There is a dashed line and caesura after the Rit. in all 3 instruments to the end of the measure.



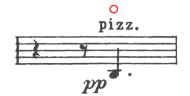
Example 36 ►

Page 10, line 3, measure 1 (5 from end)
FLUTE: a crescendo occurs 3 times and is only
under the last 2 notes of each group, not
under the last 3 as in the printed score(the
printed flute part is correct).



Example 37 ▶

Page 10, line 3, measure 3 (3 from the end) VIOLA: There is a o over the dotted quarter (the same as 7 before rehearsal 5).



Example 38 ▶

Page 10, line 3, measure 4 (2 before the end) HARP: Estinto is written over this measure, followed by a dashed line to the end of the measure. (Estinto means to become extinct, to fade to nothing).

