Corrections to Debussy's 'Sonate pour Flûte, Alto, & Harpe 'Second Movement: Interlude

by Carl Swanson

Editor's note: Because of the large number of corrections for the whole Sonate, the article on the first movement was published in the previous issue of the Journal, Winter 2013, vol. 24, no. 2. The text of that article included considerable background material concerning the autograph manuscript, the nature of the corrections, and some conjecture on how such discrepancies could have happened. This article will not repeat any of that information, but will try to expand on the nature of the corrections to this, the second movement, and also discuss the eye witness account of a harpist who coached this piece with Debussy himself.

The Origins and Early History of the Sonate

On the title page of the manuscript and again at the end of the last movement is the following: Eté 1915, Claude Debussy (Summer, 1915, Claude Debussy). That is when the *Sonate* was begun and finished. It is the second of what was to be six sonatas for various instruments. But Debussy's poor health and ultimate death on March 25, 1918, put an end to the project, with just three of the sonatas completed.

Debussy initially planned this as a piece for flute, oboe and harp. He subsequently decided that the viola's timbre would be a better combination for the flute than the oboe's, so he changed the instrumentation to flute, viola and harp.

The first time that he heard his *Sonate* played was on December 10, 1916, in a private performance at the home of Jacques Durand, his publisher. The performers were Albert Manouvrier, flute; Darius Milhaud, viola; and Susanne Dalliès, chromatic harp. Why a chromatic harpist was used for this performance instead of a pedal harpist is a mystery. Debussy had been commissioned in 1904 to write a

piece for the chromatic harp exams at the Brussels Conservatory. He detested the chromatic harp, but needed the money and so accepted the commission. The result was probably the greatest piece ever written for the harp, the *Danses Sacrée et Profane*, for harp and orchestra. But this does not explain why a chromatic harpist was chosen for this performance of the *Sonate*. After the performance, Jean-Aubry, a critic at *Figaro* and a close friend of Debussy, stated that Debussy told him: "I want to hear my *Sonate* played on something other than that horrible instrument! I want to hear it on an Erard!" (meaning, a pedal harp). So the stage was set for an eagerly awaited hearing on pedal harp.

Pierre Jamet and the Sonate

It is not unusual in music history to find people, instrumentalists, singers, etc., who worked directly with a composer on the performance and interpretation of one or more of his pieces, and who then presented many of the first performances of these works, thereby introducing them to the public and establishing the tempos and interpretative framework desired by the composer. André Caplet was a composer and conductor whose close relationship with Debussy led to his conducting many orchestras in their first performances of Debussy's music. Robert Craft did the same thing with Stravinsky's music, as well as that of other 20th century composers. In the case of the *Sonate pour Flûte, Alto, et Harpe*, Pierre Jamet figures prominently.

Pierre Jamet (1893-1991) was a talented harpist who had studied at the Paris Conservatory under the man who may very well be called the greatest harp teacher who ever lived, Alphonse Hasselmans. Jamet had, and would have for the duration of his

life, a keen interest in new music. Over his long career, he would replace Marcel Grandjany in a quintet and have over thirty new works commissioned for the group. He would also spend twenty-two years as principal harpist of the Paris Opera, and teach at the Paris Conservatory. But in 1917, he was twenty-four years old, and, by extraordinary chance, would meet and work directly with Debussy on two of the most famous pieces in the harp repertoire: the *Sonate pour Flûte*, *Alto*, et *Harpe*, and the *Danses Sacrée et Profane*.

Those of us who studied with Pierre Jamet heard his stories about his meetings with Debussy, usually numerous times. But these were told in conversation, and so lacked precise detail. In 1993, on what would have been his 100th birthday, the International Association of Harpists and Friends of the harp (L'Association Internationale des Harpistes et Amis de la Harpe) printed a memorial edition in which the story of his meeting with Debussy was written in much greater detail. This recounting is based on that edition.

Soon after the *Sonate* appeared late in 1916, Pierre Jamet bought a copy and was learning it when he happened to run into Rose Féart, a singer at the Paris Opera and a well-known interpreter of Debussy's music. When she realized that he was a pedal harpist who was rehearsing the *Sonate* with two other musicians, and knowing how much Debussy wanted to hear the piece on a pedal harp, she said to him, "My boy, how would you like to meet Claude Debussy?" She told Jean-Aubry, the critic at *Figaro*, about Jamet, and Jean-Aubry contacted Debussy. A meeting was set up. Féart gave Jamet some parting advice. "Make sure you are well prepared. If you are not, he'll get up and leave, without even saying goodbye!"

Pierre Jamet's trio included the same flutist from the private performance, Albert Manouvrier, and violist Sigismond Jarecki. On the appointed day, they went to Debussy's apartment at 80 avenue du Boisde-Boulogne (today 60 avenue Hoche). Needless to say, they were very nervous. Debussy was friendly and welcoming, and asked them to play the *Sonate*. He sat quietly and said nothing, letting them play the

entire piece. When they finished, he asked them to play it a second time, and this time stopped them to make comments, to explain what he wanted, and to give them advice on the tempos he was looking for. He stopped for a long time to work with Pierre Jamet on the best way to play the opening measures of the third movement, which, he explained, was an imitation of a tambourin. The solution that Pierre Jamet suggested after some trial and error, and which will be explained in the next article, delighted Debussy. He specifically said that this solution was impossible on chromatic harp.

When the second reading of the *Sonate* was finished, a smiling Debussy, his wife at his side, asked the ensemble if they would like to play the *Sonate* at one of the concerts that he was organizing to benefit the Vêtement du Blessé organization. The performance took place at Laurent, a restaurant on the Champs-Elysées, on March 20, 1917. Also on the concert were Rose Féart, and pianist Walter Rummel.

The first public performance of the Sonate took place in Boston on November 7, 1916. The performers were Arthur Brooke, flute; Florien Wittman, viola; Theadore Cella, harp. All three were members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The first European public performance was in London on February 2, 1917. The performers there were Albert Fransella, flute; H. Waldo Warner, viola; and Miriam Timothy, harp. But Debussy wasn't at either of these, of course, and had no input concerning the performances. The March 20 concert was the first public performance in which Debussy had a very active part. Debussy wrote a note to his friend Jean-Aubry after the concert, in which he said: "The concert went very well, and your harpist friend has a lot of talent, and even understands what he is playing!"

Debussy died a year later, on March 25, 1918. There is no evidence that he ever worked with another harpist on the *Sonate*, or ever heard it performed again.

The Second Movement Corrections

I had stated in the previous article that there were about 100 corrections over the entire *Sonate*. I had not yet finished the work on all three movements, and the result is that this was a gross understatement. Comparing the manuscript to the Durand edition uncovered 124 measures, (from a total of 319 in the entire *Sonate*), that in some way differ from the original autograph. The actual number of corrections, if counted individually, are around 300.

Most of the corrections, as in the first movement, concern primarily musical indications 1) that are not in the printed edition but should be, 2) that are in the printed edition but shouldn't be, 3) that are in the wrong place, or 4) which encompass too many or too few notes. But in the second movement, there are also differences between the manuscript and the printed Durand edition concerning notes. These involve examples 58, 65, 66, and 67, and they raise a number of questions.

It's clear when comparing the Durand edition to the manuscript that the engraver at Durand was looking at something other than this manuscript when engraving these measures. Did Debussy alter the manuscript after these measures were engraved? Did he request changes to the galleys that were sent to him, resulting in the version Durand published? Or did Debussy, after hearing the *Sonate* a couple of times, re-copy the manuscript, making the changes that are shown in these articles, in the hope that Durand would make these changes to the plates and publish this version? Most importantly, which version did Debussy prefer?

Debussy had a reputation for going back to his manuscripts and changing things after hearing one or more performances, so that may be what happened. I must remind the reader here that there is a Durand stamp on the cover page of this manuscript, providing irrefutable evidence that the house of Durand had possession of this manuscript at one time. In any event, an argument can be made for both versions

of each measure in question, and ultimately, the performer will have to decide which version of these measures works best.

An important piece of information that Pierre Jamet got from his coaching with Debussy concerns the tempo of the second movement. It is marked on the score *Tempo di Minuetto*. But when Jamet played it for Debussy, the composer stopped him because he felt the tempo was too fast. Debussy added the phrase *Grave et Lent* (somber and slow) after *Tempo di Minuetto*. So the tempo indication at the beginning of the second movement should read *Tempo di Minuetto*, *Grave et Lent*.

Pierre Jamet gave all of his students the metronome marking of quarter note = 63 for the start of the second movement. He might have gotten that from Debussy at the coaching session, or he might have figured it out when he got home. Either way, I believe it can be trusted to approximate the tempo Debussy wanted. His daughter, the eminent harpist Marie-Claire Jamet, confirms this tempo indication.

Reading the Examples

At the end of the article on the first movement corrections, I explained how to read the examples and make the changes to your copy of the *Sonate*. I will only add here that in this movement, there are places where the full score (that the harpist plays from) is correct but the individual flute or viola part is wrong. In those examples, the corrections for the flute and viola parts are in red, even though the full score is already correct.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carl Swanson is well known to the harp world as a harp builder and restorer, as the author of many articles for this publication, and as a frequent lecturer at American Harp Society Conferences. His researched version of the Sonate pour Flûte, Alto, et Harpe has recently been published by Carl Fischer Music and is now available.

Example 39 ▶

Page 11, line 1, measure 3

FLUTE: The *crescendo* starts on the second G flat and continues to the end of the measure (the full score is correct. The flute part is wrong).



Example 40 ▶

Page 11, line 2, measure 3 (measure 7 from the beginning)

VIOLA: There is no decrescendo on beats 2 and 3 as there is in the harp part.



Example 41 ►

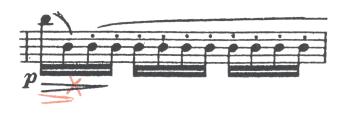
Page 11, line 2, measure 4 (measure 8 from the beginning)

VIOLA: Above the rest on beat 1 is the word (*solo*). (The viola part is correct).



Example 42 ▶

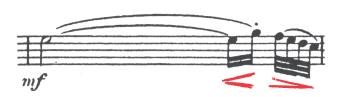
Page 12, line 1, measure 3 (3 after rehearsal 7) VIOLA: The decrescendo is only under the first two notes.



Example 43 ▶

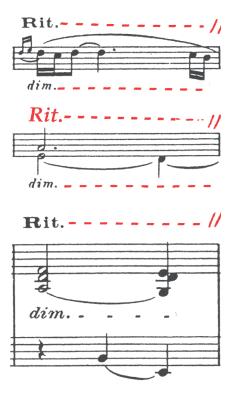
Page 12, line 2, measure 3 (7 after rehearsal 7)

FLUTE: There is a *crescendo* on the first half of beat 3, then a *decrescendo* on the second half of the beat.



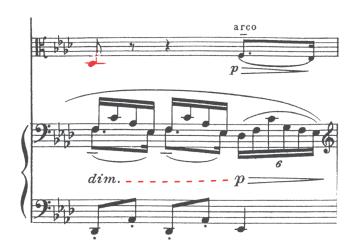
Example 44 ▶

Page 12, line 2, measures 4 (8 after rehearsal 7) FLUTE, VIOLA, & HARP: There is a dashed line after dim. to a *p* on beat 1 of the following measure. Rit. is followed by a dashed line and caesura at the end of the measure.



Example 45 ▶

Page 13, line 1, measure 1 (5 before rehearsal 8) VIOLA: The note on the downbeat is D flat, not F. HARP: There is a dashed line after the dim. to the p.



Example 46 ▶

Page 13, line 1, measures 2 and 3 (4 and 3 before rehearsal 8)

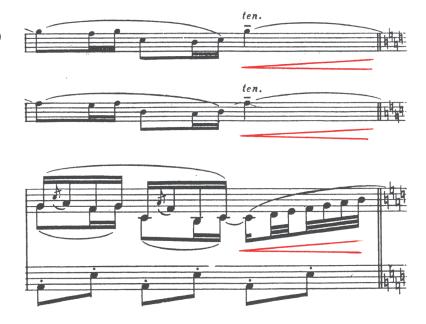
VIOLA: There is a *tenuto* on beat 3 of each measure.

HARP: (*come prima*) is written above the staff at 4 before rehearsal 8.



Example 47►

Page 13, line 2, measure 2 (1 before rehearsal 8) FLUTE, VIOLA, & HARP: There is a crescendo on the third beat to the double bar line.



Example 48 ▶

Page 13, line 3, measure 1 (rehearsal 8) FLUTE: There is a tenuto on the B flat in beat 3. Above the flute part is written: Mouvement: Giocoso.





Example 49 ▲

Page 14, line 1, measure 1 and 2 (4 and 5 after rehearsal 8)

VIOLA: There is a *decrescendo* under the last run of notes in 4 after rehearsal 8. In 5 after rehearsal 8, di - mi - nu - en - do is written out across the whole measure. The full score is correct. The viola part is wrong.

Example 50 ►

Page 14, line 2, measure 1 (7 after rehearsal 8) HARP: The dynamic marking is piu p, not mf.



Example 51 ▶

Page 14, line 3, measure 3 and 4 (4 and 3 before rehearsal 9)

VIOLA: At 4 before rehearsal 9, *solo* is written above the first beat, (the viola part is correct, but the full score is wrong).

HARP: At 3 before rehearsal 9, There is a *decrescendo* under beat 3 (same as the flute and viola).



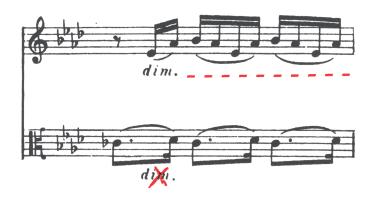


Example 52 ►

Page 15, line 1, measure 1 (2 before rehearsal 9)

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

VIOLA: There is no dim. in the manuscript.



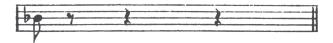
Example 53 ►

Page 15, line 1, measure 2 (1 before rehearsal 9)

FLUTE & HARP: *Rit*. is followed by a dashed line and a caesura at the end of the measure.

HARP: *dim.* is followed by dashed line to a *p* on beat 1 of the following measure.







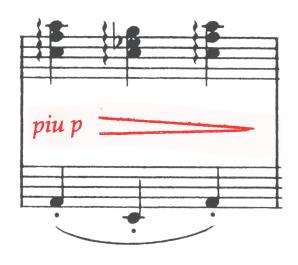
Example 54 ▶

Page 15, line 2, measure 1 (3 after rehearsal 9) VIOLA: The crescendo is only on the last 2 notes of the measure.



Example 55 ▶

Page 15, line 2, measure 3 (5 after rehearsal 9) HARP: There is a piu p at the beginning of the measure followed by a decrescendo for the rest of the measure.



Example 56 ▶

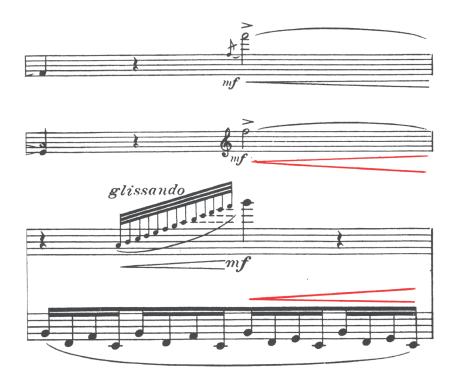
Page 15, line 3, measure 1 (1 before rehearsal 10) FLUTE: There is no decrescendo in the manuscript. There is a dashed line after the *Rit*. to the end of the measure ending with a *caesura*.



Example 57 ▶

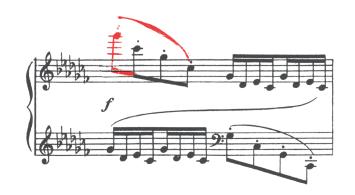
Page 16, line 2, measure 2 (7 before rehearsal 11)

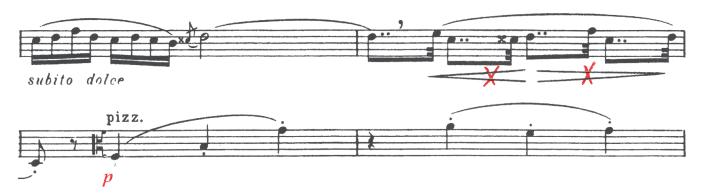
VIOLA: There is a *crescendo*, not a *decrescendo*, after the *mf* (The full score is correct. The viola part is wrong.). HARP: There is a *crescendo* on beats 3 and 4 (after the *mf*).



Example 58 ▶

Page 16, line 3, measure 1 (6 before rehearsal 11) HARP: There is a fourth leger line G flat in the right hand on the downbeat, (replacing the 8th rest). It is marked staccato, and the slur starts on that G and continues to the third space C.





Example 59 A

Page 16, line 3, measure 2 and 3 (5 and 4 before rehearsal 11)

FLUTE: At 4 before rehearsal 11, There is no crescendo/decrescendo in the manuscript.

VIOLA: At 5 before rehearsal 11, the dynamic marking on beat 2 is p, not piu p (the full score is correct.

The viola part is wrong).

Example 60 ►

Page 17, line 1, measure 1 (3 before rehearsal 11)

FLUTE: There is no *decrescendo* in the manuscript.



Example 61 ►

Page 17, line 1, measure 2 (2 before rehearsal 11)

FLUTE: The *crescendo* is on beats 1 and 2, and the *decrescendo* is on beats 3 and 4. The full score is correct. The flute part is wrong.



Example 62 ▶

Page 17, line 1, measure 3 (1 before rehearsal 11) FLUTE: There is piu p at the beginning of the measure (like the harp and viola parts). The 4th beat G sharp is tied to the downbeat G sharp of the following measure.



Example 63 ►

Page 17, line 2, measure 1 (rehearsal 11) FLUTE: There is no *p* in the manuscript. The G sharp on beat 1 is tied to the G sharp in the previous measure and therefore should not be played.



Example 64 ▶

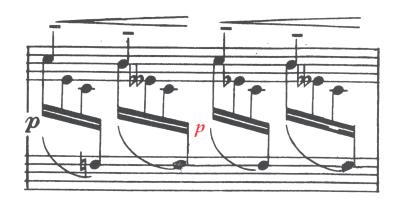
Page 17, line 2, measure 3 (3 after rehearsal 11)

FLUTE: There is no *staccato* on the 16^{th} note C# at the end of the 3^{rd} beat. VIOLA: There is a p at the beginning of the measure.



Example 65 ►

Page 17, line 3, measure 3 (6 after rehearsal 11) HARP: There is a p on beat 3. In the manuscript, the left hand notes are all F naturals.



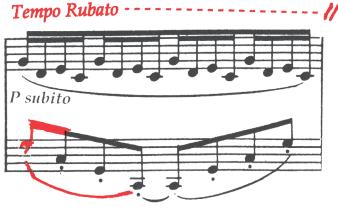
Example 66 ▶

Page 18, line 1, measure 3 (1 before rehearsal 12)

VIOLA: The slur is on the first three notes. HARP: There is a fourth space G flat in the left hand on the downbeat (not an 8th rest). It is marked staccato, and the slur begins on it and continues to the low C.

FLUTE, VIOLA, & HARP: *Tempo Rubato* starts on the downbeat of the measure and is followed by a dashed line and caesura at the end of the measure.





Example 67 ▶

Page 18, line 2, measure 1 (rehearsal 12)

VIOLA: There is a slur on the first three notes, like the previous measure (the viola part is correct). There is no *cresc*. in the manuscript.). HARP: There is a fourth space G flat in the left hand on the downbeat (like the previous measure) that is marked staccato and with a slur continuing to the first low C.



Example 68 ►

Page 18, line 2, measure 2 (1 after rehearsal 12)

VIOLA: *trem.* is written under the first beat. The full score is correct. The viola part is wrong.

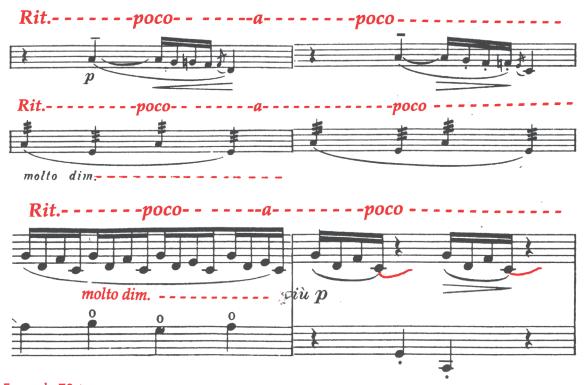




Example 69 A

Page 18, line 3, measures 1 and 2 (3 and 4 after 12)

HARP: There is a *tenuto* and an accent over the A flat harmonic on beat four in each measure.



Example 70 ▲

Page 18, line 3, measure 3 and page 19, line 1, measure 1 (5 and 4 before rehearsal 13)

VIOLA & HARP: At 5 before rehearsal 13: There is a dashed line after *molto dim.* for the rest of the measure. HARP: *molto dim.* starts exactly on beat 2. HARP at 4 before rehearsal 13: There are ties on both C flats, most likely meaning L.V. (let vibrate).

FLUTE, VIOLA, & HARP: *Rit.* - - poco - - a - - poco is spread out over these 2 measures (The flute part is correct).

Example 71 ▶

Page 19, line 1, measure 2 (3 before rehearsal 13) VIOLA: There is no détaché sans sécheresse in the manuscript.



Example 72 ▶

Page 19, line 1, measure 3 (2 before rehearsal 13) VIOLA: There is no crescendo/decrescendo on beats 3 and 4.



Example 73 ►

Page 19, line 2, measure 1 (1 before rehearsal 13)

VIOLA: There is a Rit. like the other instruments (the viola part is correct).



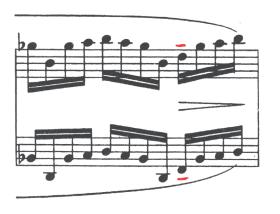
Example 74 ►

Page 19, line 3, measure 3 (5 after rehearsal 13) FLUTE: The crescendo starts on beat 2 (The full score is correct. The flute part is not).



Example 75 ▶

Page 20, line 1, measure 2 (4 before rehearsal 14) HARP: There is a tenuto on the right hand D flat on beat 3. It should probably be on the left hand D flat too, even though it is not in the manuscript.

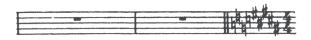


Example 76 ▶

Page 20, line 1, measures 4 and 5 (2 and 1 before rehearsal 14)

FLUTE & HARP: There is a dashed line after *Rit.* over both measures ending with a *caesura* at the key change. (The flute part is correct).



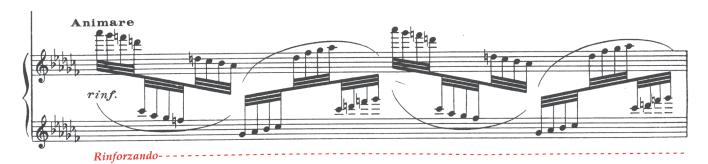




Example 77 ►

Page 20, line 3, measure 1 (2 after rehearsal 14) FLUTE: There is no p in the manuscript.







Example 78 ▲

Page 21, line 3, measure 1 (5 after rehearsal 14)

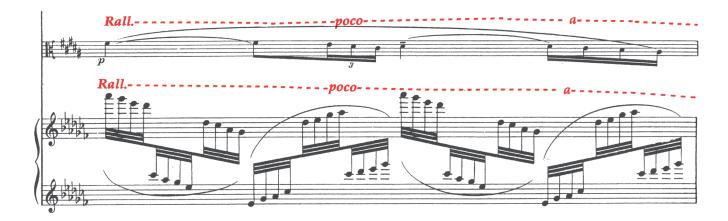
HARP: There is a dashed line from the *rinf.* through this measure to the *pp* in the following measure.

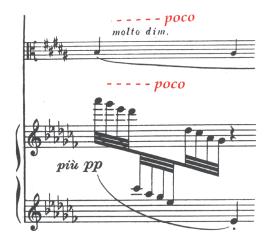


Example 79 ▲

Page 22, line 2, measure 1 (6 before rehearsal 15)

FLUTE: piu dim. has a dashed line to the G sharp. Also, the F sharp on beat 4 has no slur after it.





Example 80 A

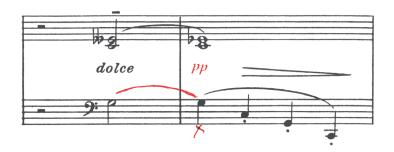
Page 22, line 3, measure 1 (5 and 4 before rehearsal 15)

FLUTE, VIOLA, & HARP: *Rallentando - - Poco - - a - - poco* begins on beat one of 5 before rehearsal 15, and stretches to the second beat of 4 before rehearsal 15.

Example 81 ▶

Page 23, line 1, measures 2 and 3 (3 and 2 before rehearsal 15)

HARP: At 3 before rehearsal 15, the left hand G flat is tied to the G flat on beat one of 2 before rehearsal 15. There is no *staccato* marking on that G flat. At 2 before rehearsal 15, the dynamic marking on beat 1 is *pp*.



Example 82 ▶

Page 23, line 2, measure 5 (4 after rehearsal 15) HARP: There is a pp at the beginning of the measure, not a p as in the Durand edition.



Example 83 ►

Page 23, line 3, measure 1 (5 after rehearsal 15)

FLUTE: There is a *crescendo* on the third beat.



Example 84 ▶

Page 23, line 3, measure 2 (5 from the end) VIOLA: There is no (*s.l.t.*) in the manuscript.



Example 85 ▶

Page 23, line 3, measure 3 (4 from the end) FLUTE: perdendosi is followed by a dashed line through beat one of the second measure from the end.

HARP: There is a piu pp at the beginning of the measure, not a piu p as in the Durand edition.



Example 86 ►

Page 23, last measure of 2nd movement

FLUTE, VIOLA, & HARP: There is no dynamic marking in any of the instruments. Instead, *a piacere* is written over each final note. (*a piacere* means at the pleasure of the performer, especially with regard to tempo and rubato. One need not follow the rhythm strictly).

