

## Part 9

---

# Decoding and Marking Orchestral Parts

## A Manual of Orchestral Notation and Performance Practice

### 9.24 “Is My Part Accurate?” • Misprints, Mistakes, Inconsistencies, “Improvements”

Many orchestral players do not concern themselves with determining the accuracy of their parts. But a conductor must monitor and guide too many different events during a rehearsal to perceive every inaccuracy, let alone to determine in each case if a player made a mistake or if something is wrong in the parts. This is why all players, especially the principals, must share the task of identifying misprints and problematic notation (cf. Ch. 3.4/[G1], p. 21). This includes not only wrong pitches, which are easily detected and corrected during rehearsals, but also many other, less noticeable details. Contributing to the quality of the performance in this manner (and even knowing the appropriate questions to ask) requires

- an open ear, common sense, and a feeling for harmony and style that will develop with time
- familiarity with frequent types of misprints and with editorial principles, which will be outlined here.

The first common type of misprint is a **discrepancy between score and parts**. Engravers and copyists make deliberate changes when they write out parts from a score—such as leaving out metronome markings. They may also inadvertently omit or distort information:

- a** • Often you can detect some of these problems by examining your part carefully. Play or look through this passage and try to find the mistakes. — You should notice the following obvious problems, all of which have been corrected in **b**:
  - missing dynamic signs in mm. 8 and 13
  - no indication of where the concertmaster solo ends
  - too many beats in the last measure.
- b** • Further omissions and mistakes can only be identified through a careful comparison with the full score. All these corrections have been added here. Compare **a** and **b** to see the full extent of the problem.

Engravers or copyists who produce parts from a full score sometimes make similar mistakes:

- They misplace pitches (most commonly by a third), omit or misspell accidentals, and distort rhythms.
- They omit, misplace, or distort rehearsal numbers or letters, repeat signs, *ottava* signs, mute signs, articulation signs, dynamic signs, expression markings, *pont.* markings, *divisi* indications, etc.

**a** Lento espressivo

Puccini, *Manon* III, Intermezzo, unmarked Ricordi/Kalmus ed.

7 13 21 27

1.º Solo  
espress.  
molto rall.

1 And.te calmo

13 pizz.

24 1 f calando

82 mf rit. divisi

6 86 cresc. molto e rit. allarg. dim. ff stent.

13 pizz.  
24 1 f calando  
82 mf rit. divisi  
6 86 cresc. molto e rit. allarg. dim. ff stent.

**b** Lento espressivo

Puccini, *Manon* III, Intermezzo, Ricordi/Kalmus ed. with corrections and markings from the full score

7 13 21 27

1.º Solo  
SOSTENENDO espress.  
molto rall.

1 And.te calmo = 63

13 TUTTI p pizz.

24 1 f calando

82 mf APPASS. rit. divisi

6 86 SOSTENENDO cresc. molto e rit. allarg. dim. ff stent.

13 TUTTI p pizz.  
24 1 f calando  
82 mf APPASS. rit. divisi  
6 86 SOSTENENDO cresc. molto e rit. allarg. dim. ff stent.

The careful proofreading of parts is a time-consuming task. It rarely happens with **first editions**—that is, the editions from which we perform most pieces from the past hundred years and even many pieces from the 19th century. Many reprints in use today such as **a** are reproductions of such uncorrected first editions (🎵 Ch. 12.5/C).

**Task 9.24** • Compare a French part such as the Durand/Kalmus violin part for Debussy’s *La Mer* or *Jeux* with the full score by the same publishers. The experience might drastically change your attitude toward printed scores, and the words “but this is what is printed” might never again come over your lips.

**Ex. 3.4b** • Even the more reliable editions of Strauss’s music have small mistakes. Compare the original part of *Don Juan* (or a reprint found in any of the popular excerpt books) with the excerpt in Ex. 3.4b, which has been corrected according to the printed score. Omissions and mistakes range from missing metronome markings to incorrect dynamics and accents. Unfortunately orchestra librarians, conductors, and players rarely make the necessary comparisons to catch such errors, and the result is that misprints are perpetuated in countless performances and recordings.

**Mistakes in the full score** • In addition to the mistakes discussed so far—resulting from the negligence of the engravers or copyists who produced the parts from the full score—there are other types of mistakes which are more difficult to identify and correct:

- mistakes in the full score, made by the engraver or copyist who misread the composer’s manuscript
- mistakes made by the composer.

**a** • If you play this excerpt at a rehearsal you might hear that the woodwinds and lower strings have a *crescendo* from *p* in m. 21 to *f* in m. 25, whereas the violins have no dynamic sign between *p* in m. 13 and *f* in m. 25—neither in the parts nor

in the score. Puccini generally applies changes in dynamics to the entire orchestra, and there is no logical reason why the violins should not add a **CRESC.** in mm. 21–25 or a **MF** in m. 23, as shown in **b**. Either the engraver who copied the score from the manuscript omitted the dynamic marking, or the composer simply forgot to add it to the violin parts in his score.

In such cases the source of the mistake can only be determined from a careful examination of the manuscript. You can be certain that the editor of your part has made such a comparison if you are playing from a **critical** or **urtext edition** (freely translated as “original text”)—an edition that represents the most faithful, most accurate version of the composer’s intentions.

**a/23** • A quick look at the critical edition (Milan: Ricordi, 2008) reveals in fact that the composer (not the engraver) left out the *crescendo* that is warranted here.

Critical or *urtext* editions are valuable tools for the performer. In the early 19th century publishers and copyists were rather careless with composers’ manuscripts and took many liberties. But in the second half of the century musicologists—many of them excellent performers as well—began to provide reliable *urtext* editions, completed by synthesizing the composers’ autographs, manuscript copies, and early editions. In the full score, any changes, improvements, and additions they made are indicated by means of different print fonts, parentheses, or dotted slurs. However, in the orchestral parts these changes are usually not set apart visually from the composer’s original:

**c** • The dotted slur symbol in the full score shows that it has been added by the editor. (It has been added to match the first trumpet and second oboe which play in unison, and to match the violin part in m. 86.)

**d** • In the part, however, such changes are not set apart visually, and performers need to consult the full score to see what is and is not original.

Bach, *Christmas Oratorio* III/24

**c** 53 |♩. = 48|

Bärenreiter *urtext* ed. (NBA), full score

**d** 53

Bärenreiter *urtext* ed. (NBA), violin part

Critical editions are available for most major composers. Some composers even have two sets—such as the “old” and “new” editions of Bach, Mozart, and Schubert (🌐 Ch. 12.5/A). Three sample passages may illustrate

- why it is generally advisable for orchestras to play from critical editions
- why you should use them generally for auditions too.

**[e], [g]** • In the 19th-century edition, reprinted by Kalmus,

- Mozart’s original *graces* appeared as full note values
- slurs were misplaced
- dynamic signs were changed
- all articulation signs that might be read as either dots or strokes were converted into dots.

**[f], [h]** • The editors of the New Mozart Edition (*NMA*) have cleansed the musical text of any such liberties and provided performers with a more authoritative version, which follows the composer’s manuscript and other contemporary sources.

**[i]–[j]** • The editors of the modern critical edition of Bizet’s *Carmen* have restored the original pitches, facilitated in the first edition.

**Ex.:** Mozart, Piano Concerto 22/i • In some older editions even complete measures are missing. Here, the *NMA* editors have restored two measures at m. 283 missing in the Breitkopf/Kalmus edition.

But for works that were already carefully edited, proofread, and printed in the 19th century, modern critical editions provide only minor improvements.

**[k]–[l]** • The Henle/Breitkopf edition (1996) of Brahms’s First Symphony has only a few slight discrepancies with the old Breitkopf edition (Leipzig, 1926), from which the Kalmus parts and Dover score have been reprinted. Similarly, for the symphonies of Schumann and Tchaikovsky there is no urgent reason to play from modern *urtext* editions.

The image displays six musical score examples, each comparing two different editions of a work. Each example consists of a staff with a treble clef and a key signature, with a measure number and tempo marking at the beginning. The left side of each example shows the Breitkopf/Kalmus edition, and the right side shows the modern critical edition (NMA or urtext).

- Example e:** Mozart Symphony 41/i, *Allegro vivace*, m. 87. The left edition (Breitkopf/Kalmus ed.) shows a dynamic of *f* and a slur over a group of notes. The right edition (Bärenreiter *urtext* ed. (NMA)) shows a dynamic of *f* and a different slur placement.
- Example g:** Mozart Symphony 41/iv, *Molto vivace*, m. 93. The left edition (Breitkopf/Kalmus ed.) shows dynamics of *p* and *f*. The right edition (Bärenreiter *urtext* ed. (NMA)) shows dynamics of *p* and *f*.
- Example i:** Bizet *Carmen* III/20, *All. etto con moto*,  $\text{♩} = 112$ . The left edition (First edition) shows dynamics of *pp* and various slurs. The right edition (Alkor *urtext* ed.) shows dynamics of *pp* and various slurs.
- Example j:** Bizet *Carmen* III/20, *All. etto con moto*,  $\text{♩} = 112$ . The left edition (Alkor *urtext* ed.) shows dynamics of *pp* and various slurs. The right edition (First edition) shows dynamics of *pp* and various slurs.
- Example k:** Brahms Symphony 1/i, *Allegro*,  $\text{♩} = 92-100$ . The left edition (Breitkopf/Kalmus ed.) shows dynamics of *pp*. The right edition (Henle/Breitkopf *crit.* ed.) shows dynamics of *pp*.
- Example l:** Brahms Symphony 1/i, *Allegro*,  $\text{♩} = 92-100$ . The left edition (Breitkopf/Kalmus ed.) shows dynamics of *pp*. The right edition (Henle/Breitkopf *crit.* ed.) shows dynamics of *pp*.

The discussion so far might create the impression that **critical** or **urtext** editions are always accurate and authoritative. This is far from the truth.

**m** • Even critical editions may contain plain misprints (or may perpetuate composer mistakes that the editors did not catch). For the performer who has not yet checked the full score, the clue here is the melodic pattern that is broken in m. 187: the last note must be  $f^2$  instead of  $d^2$ .

**Ex. 9.16c–d** • Editors make subjective decisions all the time, including the interpretation of a composer’s messy handwriting. As illustrated by the ending of the first movement of Schubert’s *Unfinished*, different editorial readings may produce completely different performances. The impact of the ending in Chusid’s reading is completely different from that of Brahms and Mandyczewski: instead of a gesture of resignation one hears a powerful, dramatic finish before the ethereal beginning of the second movement. What might seem at the surface like an academic argument turns out to be a crucial interpretive decision.

**Ex. 9.15yy–zz** • Analogously, should you follow the “dualist” editors of *NMA* in their decision to differentiate between dots and strokes in Mozart, or should you follow Riggs, who could not see any such clear difference in Mozart’s manuscripts?

Mozart  
Symphony 36/iv

**m** 184 Presto  $\text{♩} = 72+$   
*f* Bärenreiter urtext ed. (NMA), violin part

**n** 155 Presto  $\text{♩} = 72+$   
Articulation acc. to Bärenreiter

**o** *f* Articulation acc. to one of the 18th-century copies

Finally, even in critical editions the performer may find troubling issues—details which appear odd but seem neither clearly intentional nor clearly careless, and thus require answers from informed performers. Perhaps the most controversial issue of this kind for any performer is the treatment of **inconsistencies** in the original score of a work. Inconsistency, in this context, may be defined as anything that does not make sense within the “system” that the composer himself established in the piece. Often such inconsistencies catch the attention of players, who then ask: “Should we not play these two spots the same way?”

We will distinguish between

- *vertical inconsistencies*—discrepancies between the parts of different instruments that play the same or similar material at the same time
- *horizontal inconsistencies*—discrepancies between repeated, parallel, or analogous passages in the same instrumental part
- *oblique inconsistencies*—discrepancies between a passage in one part and a repeated, parallel, or analogous passage in another part, earlier or later in the piece.

This opens up a new can of worms. Players need to ask the conductor to provide clear guidelines.

**n-o** • Editors give priority to different sources for the same piece, and an edition can only be as good as its sources. For Mozart’s Symphony no. 36, for instance, the composer’s autograph has not survived. The best available sources are sets of parts that were written by three 18th-century copyists; each is considerably different:

**n** • In mm. 155–57, the Bärenreiter edition (*NMA*) follows the two sources that have no slurs.

**o** • But the third source has slurs here (Bey 2003, h/27). We will probably never know what Mozart intended. Feel free to add three one-measure slurs, which not only sound smoother but also seem compatible with his style during the 1780s.

**f** and **h** • For the *Jupiter* Symphony, however, a beautifully written autograph has survived (facsimile, Bärenreiter, 2005), and performers should refrain from taking liberties with articulations or dynamics. Players and conductors who want to know the extent to which they may take liberties with the printed part or score of a piece should consult the score’s preface or critical report to learn more about the sources.

Most **vertical inconsistencies** are easily identified, easily explained as oversights on part of the composer, and easily corrected accordingly:

**a**/21–25 • As discussed earlier, the violins should share and support the *crescendo* that Puccini wrote for the woodwinds and lower strings but that is not found in his manuscript nor in any of the editions.

Equally unproblematic is the handling of a particular type of **horizontal inconsistency**—apparent shorthand or *simile* notation:

**Ex. 9.13bb** • In the 18th and occasionally the 19th centuries, composers saved time by notating certain details only in the first or first few statements of a melody or motive. Hereafter players were expected to automatically add the same details elsewhere, even if the composer or editor have not done so. In this case, the turn should be replicated.

Far more challenging is the handling of the **horizontal inconsistencies** that occur most typically between exposition and recapitulation or between the first and last sections of an ABA' form. Analyze each inconsistency and consider various factors, including some that reach beyond the passage in question: how many liberties did the composer generally expect the performer to take? how precise is his or her notation? under which circumstances was the work written?

**p** • In the end of the middle section of the aria, Bach added slurs to the material from Ex. 9.20a/8–12. The new articulation is intended either to illustrate the singer's phrase “*schöner prägen*” (shine more beautifully) or simply to add some variety. Articulation was still considered the performer's domain, and Bach may have simply anticipated what his musicians might have done anyway on their own to enliven the performances (even orchestral performances). This improvisational character is also manifested in the lack of consistency in the slurs. In this case, then, you should follow the markings in the edition or add your own slurs.

**q**–**r** • Mozart presumably wrote his recapitulations from memory—and sometimes in a great hurry—and occasionally used slightly different articulation than in the expositions. Such variants present the same material in a slightly different light and illustrate that articulation was not yet an essential musical characteristic of a theme. Following Mozart's score literally and choosing both times the version that seems superior are both legitimate options (Ex. 6.2c).

**s**–**t** • Mendelssohn's notoriously sloppy handling of details requires many interpretive decision from modern performers. Though living in the age after Beethoven, Mendelssohn apparently did not subscribe to Beethoven's notion of the score as a definitive record of the composer's intention. Rather, he thought that performers should just play what sounds best (p. 338). The performer is justified here in designing an “ideal” version for two similar passages, by combining elements from both, as has been done here: add the *crescendo* from mm. 399–400 to mm. 179–80, and add the *sf* from m. 176 to m. 396. (The

*diminuendi* have been added here to support the melodic contours of the phrases.)

**u**–**v** • Dvořák is another composer whose habit of presenting the same material with different dynamics and articulation forces the modern performer to make many decisions. Should we retain the slightly different hairpins, accents, and slurs that he introduced in the recapitulation of the first movement of the New World Symphony or should we assimilate the second passage? Or should we play an “ideal” version in both places, as in **s**–**t**? Those who want to play exactly what is written may argue that his variants are characteristic of the folk music that represented an important source of inspiration for the composer.

**w**–**x** • Brahms shares his highly accurate notation with Beethoven and was generally very consistent about dynamics, phrasing, and articulation. But even his scores show minor inconsistencies. It would be bold to argue that such discrepancies in articulation between the exposition and recapitulation represent deliberate variants. Why should we not adopt the articulation from **x** and use it in **w**, as shown here with dotted slurs?

**Ex. 5.34a–b**, Verdi, *Aida* I/2 (H), (K), III/7 (R), IV/m. 9 • Why should we not assimilate the different articulations that Verdi's scores and parts show for the same music?

**Ex.:** Stravinsky, *Sacre* • Do we apply the same dynamics and articulation in analogous sections, such as (142)–(149) and (167)–(174)?

Most **oblique inconsistencies** should be handled like vertical or horizontal inconsistencies:

**y** • In mm. 228 and 230, add the < > that is found for the same music in 222 and 224 in the second clarinet and second bassoon—unless you want to argue that here *dolce* indicates a more subdued character.

**Ex. 9.23e** • I have added the < and > that are found in the flute and bassoon parts in the two previous measures.

**p** 122  $\text{♩} = 138$   
 Bach, *Christmas Oratorio* 1/4  
*f p* Compare Ex. 9.20a.

**q** 26 **Allegro**  $\text{♩} = 138+$   
 Mozart  
*Symphony 39/i*  
*p*

**s** 175 **Assai animato**  $\text{♩} = 120$   
 Mendelssohn  
*Symphony 3/i*  
*ff sf sf sf ff sf*

**t** 393  
*ff sf sf sf sf*

**u** 129 **Allegro molto**  $\text{♩} = 136$  [112] **v** 350  
 Dvořák  
*Symphony 9/i*  
*p dim. p dim.*

**w** 118 **animato**  $\text{♩} = 66$  **x** 302 **animato**  $\text{♩} = 66$   
 Brahms  
*Symphony 1/iv*  
*p dol. p dolce*

**y** 227 **Allegro con spirito**  $\text{♩} = 112+$   
 Brahms  
*Symphony 2/iv*  
*p dolce*

A special case are “**inconsistencies**” in 18th- and 19th-century scores that are **motivated by the limited playing technique** of the time.

**[z]–[aa]** • Mozart might have simply forgotten to add the trill from the exposition (**[z]**) to the recapitulation (**[aa]**). It is more likely, however, that he did not dare to ask for a trill in this register, with the fourth finger in the third position or with the third or second fingers in the fourth or fifth positions—an interpretation corroborated by other similar passages. What should we play today—the “logical” version with a trill proposed by the *NMA* editors, or the simpler version without a trill that Mozart expected from his violinists?

**[bb]** • Here, Beethoven felt he had to sacrifice the integrity of the voice leading for the technical limitations of his players. Some conductors and concertmasters correct this compromise and ask the first violins and flute to play the four notes in mm. 276–77 an octave up, analogous to mm. 61–62—a musically convincing solution. (Similarly, Brahms left out a high note in his Piano Concerto 2/iv/57 that should be added in analogy with m. 297.)

**[cc]** • The rest in the double-bass part in m. 61 allows a comfortable switch from *pizzicato* to *arco*. The violins, by contrast, start their scale without a rest, and Berlioz hesitated to make them perform the switch within the first two beats. But the violinists of today can manage this switch easily. (A similar situation arises in Beethoven’s Symphony 8/ii/9/ii/vn. 2 and Piano Concerto 4/iii/529).

“Should we improve the score?”

**Performance Philosophies** • These examples illustrate the questions that orchestral musicians need to ask when they come across inconsistencies. Conductors should be prepared to answer them. Some conductors will tell you, “Feel free to change anything if it makes more sense and sounds better.” Others will say, “Play exactly what is printed in your part,” and will use the word *urtext* to suffocate any discussion. In an effort to curb the excessive

liberties that musicians such as Stokowski would take with scores, performers may have gone too far to the other extreme, fearing that the slightest deviation from the musical text mars the integrity of the composition—and fearing the disdain of misguided critics. But performers who have experience working with living composers know that most of them are open to and grateful for any suggestions that clearly enhance the impact of their scores. Should we not bring the same constructive attitude to works of the past? Should we not feel free to choose the most satisfactory solutions to interpretive problems? Should we not improve juvenile scores by major composers and other works by second-rate Classical and Romantic composers? Do we want to document and point out their deficiencies or do we want to bring them back to life and perform them so that audiences enjoy them? Even for orchestral masterpieces by the great composers, excellent performers have developed strategies intended to improve certain details—from adding slurs to creating *alternating* or *complementary divisi* schemes. Orchestral musicians are well advised not to discard the wisdom of such **performing traditions** flatly for the sake of “authenticity.”

**[dd]** • The conductors and players who marked Verdi’s parts for the old Ricordi editions added a number of slurs, subsequently deleted in the critical editions because they were not “original.” (These are shown here as dotted slurs.) But such slurs make fast violin figures sound smoother and should be retained. For other similar improvements, study Zedda’s critical and practical editions of Donizetti’s *L’elisir* or Verdi’s *Otello* for Ricordi (Ex. 8.500).

While reliable editions, historical knowledge, and familiarity with performing traditions can aid us in making interpretive decisions, ultimately our guide is **musical taste**. As stressed in Chapter 3.4, we perform in an age when historical information is overemphasized or frequently misinterpreted: orchestral musicians and conductors must do everything they can to develop their own tastes and feelings for style and have the courage to rely upon them. Part 10 will be devoted to developing these skills.

Mozart  
Symphony 41/i

**[z]** Allegro vivace [♩ = 69]

64 *p* *tr* *tr* 246 *p* *tr* *tr*



**bb** *Molto vivace* ♩ = 116  
 272/802  
 Beethoven  
 Symphony 9/ii

*ff*

**cc** *Allegretto non troppo* ♩ = 72  
 60  
 Berlioz, *Symphonie fantastique*/iv

*pp* *pizz.* *db. pizz.* *p* *arco* *ARCO* *ff*

**dd** *Allegro* ♩ = 132  
 162  
 Verdi  
*Rigoletto* I/5

*pp cresc.*

The dotted slurs are found in the old Ricordi edition but are missing in the new critical edition.