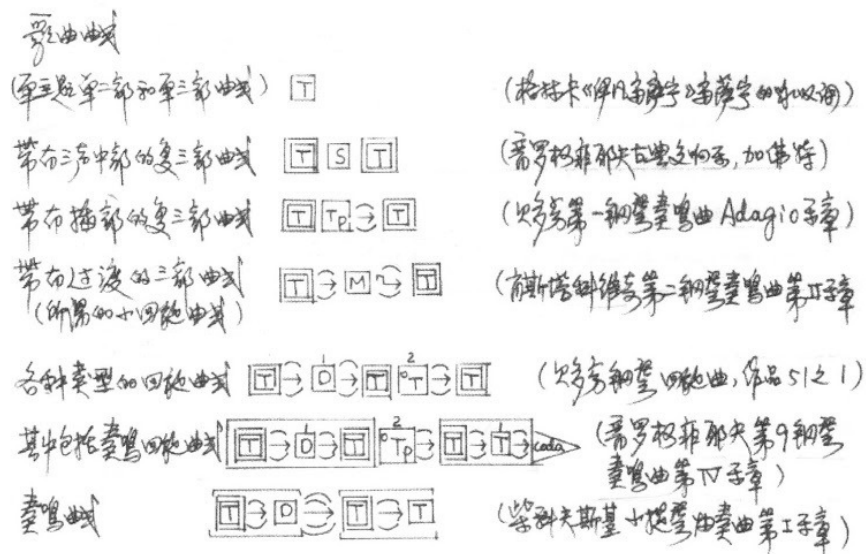


ANOTHER POLARISTIC VENTURE

rhythm & meter in Sigfrid Karg-Elert's work

Karg-Elert's theories are not unknown in Eastern countries; before I discuss Karg-Elert's views on rhythm and meter, I will detail his reception. Recently, my Russian colleague Ildar Khannanov told me that there was Karg-Elert reception in Russia, and indeed, from the well-known Yury Kholopov. I was more than a little surprised, as he is scarcely known even in Germany. Slightly later, I came across an overview of form schemata in a contribution to a conference proceeding by the music theorist Qian Yiping from Shanghai: the typical tonal regions of certain traditional forms were marked with letters such as M or T (see image 1) [13, 171].

Image 1. Extract from Yiping Qian's overview to form schemes



The text is referred, once again, to Kholopov. The last symbol (T) and variations thereof are known from Arthur von Oettingen and also from Riemann's works, as well as from the widely distributed harmony treatise by Stefan Krehl¹: the simply indicates the mode, as this was previous to the time that mode was indicated through the use of capital or

¹ Ludwig Holtmeier [3, column 655] shows Krehl's reception in Russia by Assafjev. Krehl, however, changes the position of the symbol: "For the undertones, however, the symbol ° is necessary <...> the minor tonic is assigned the symbol ° above the note name, the minor subdominant to the left, the minor dominant to the right" [9, Vol. 1, 37]. Thus, the Russian-Chinese theory most closely matches Riemann, who places the symbol ° to the upper left, generally regardless of the function.

lowercase letters. The marking migrated to jazz theory, but changed meanings along the way: there, delineated a diminished chord. In Karg-Elert's work, however, indicates an omitted note. The symbol is placed where the missing note would be; for instance, for a major chord without a root, at the bottom of the symbol. But Sigfrid Karg-Elert uses M in a fashion similar to Qian² and to the way the letter M is occasionally used even today: it refers to the mediant in the sense of a third-related but no longer diatonic chord, which is in opposition to the possible relatives of the tonic³. However, the symbol is expanded through an additional letter to designate the main function from which the chord is derived: in this case by the T (see image 2).

Image 2. From Karg-Elert, "Akustische Ton-Klang- und Funktionsbestimmung", p. 50



The high or low placement of the M differentiates between the (super-) mediant [Obermediante] and the submediant [Untermidiante]. In C, the (super)mediant would be E major, the submediant would be A-flat major, as can be seen in the musical example in the middle of the volume.

Obviously, the symbol M is mostly unknown among Chinese musicologists. Nevertheless, vestiges of Leipzig theories from around 1900 seem to have been transmitted by Kholopov's ciphers. These vestiges survive there, anonymously and no longer unambiguously traceable.

Karg-Elert's music-theoretical works were only influential in a single discipline, harmony, and even there only for a certain amount of time. As Karg-Elert had had some students who became quite powerful (Paul Schenk in Leipzig and Fritz Reuter in Halle, later Berlin), his harmonic theories found their way into conservatory and university praxis.

² Kholopov's schemata, adapted by Qian, refer to a relationship such as E-dur in the home key of C-dur. This becomes clear from the example of the formal schemata he uses: the second movement of Dmitry Shostakovich's Second Piano Sonata (the middle part of the A-dur movement is in C-dur).

³ Georg Capellen also uses the symbols M and °. For him, M means the middle (Mittelklang); he also recognises, for instance, the left and right notes (L and R). Krehl does not use M and designates the chord in question — E-dur in C-dur — the counter chord of the tonic's relative (Tonikaparallelgegenklang; Tp g). [9, Vol. 2, 93]. Schoenberg uses the symbol in the manner still common today to refer to the upper third relationship with identical mode [19, 20: "Chart of the Regions"].

Very soon after Karg-Elert's death at the beginning of 1933 (and perhaps even earlier), the instruction at the Leipzig Konservatorium began adjusting Karg-Elert's teachings to approximate Hermann Grabner's functional theory, which was based on Riemann and was, at its heart, monistic. This was understandable for personal reasons: Hermann Grabner and Paul Schenk both taught in Leipzig, and did not occupy the same level of the academic hierarchy⁴. During the time in which Grabner taught in Leipzig (from 1924⁵, until he moved to Berlin in 1938), Schenk was his colleague. The situation was different in Halle and, later, in East Berlin: There, aspects of Karg-Elert's teachings — in a slightly different version—were propagated by the former Karg-Elert student Fritz Reuter. Though Reuter could rival Grabner intellectually, he suffered impediments in the early years of the GDR: he had to answer to the charge of formalism, and submit to the demands of early East German real socialism. As far as I can see, Reuter survived the attacks without harm, but he had been warned.

In West Germany, traces of Karg-Elert's theories can be found well into the 1970s, mostly among Schenk's many students. Alongside that, however, aspects of Karg-Elert's thought persist in ways that cannot be justified by the teacher-student relationships so highly prized in harmony. An example is Jens Rohwer, who taught in Lübeck⁶.

However, evidence of the inclusion into pedagogical praxis during Karg-Elert's lifetime may be found in entries into a copy of "33 Portraits für Harmonium (aller Systeme)" op. 101, vol. 2 (see musical example 1).

Musical example 1. Extract from "Crucifixus. Alla Reger" from "Portrait für Harmonium", № 29

⁴ Grabner (*1886) was granted his professorship the same year as Karg-Elert (1932). Schenk (*1899), half a generation younger, received his title after the war (1950).

⁵ Grabner came from Heidelberg / Mannheim to Leipzig in 1924; Schenk, according to his own statements, taught at the Leipzig conservatory starting in 1919.

⁶ Rohwer came from the German youth music movement [Jugendmusikbewegung]. He had attended Martin Luserke's reform-pedagogical school at the seaside (on Juist), founded in 1924 and disbanded in 1934. There, he was a student of Eduard Zuckmayer. Rohwer authored the article on harmony in the old MGG. He taught composition and ear training at the institute that preceded today's Lübeck conservatory, and later became that institute's director. The relationship between Rohwer and Carl Dahlhaus, who at that time "organised" from Kiel the contributions to Friedrich Blume's MGG, has not yet been studied. Dahlhaus wrote the Oettingen article in the old MGG, which cites Rohwer's harmony article.



Here, several moments from pieces № 17 “Adoration. Alla Liszt” and № 29 “Crucifixus. Alla Reger” were harmonically analysed. The analysis, which displays the typical Karg-Elert’s functional symbols reflected in the horizontal — and occasionally — vertical dimensions, is presumably the work of the book’s first owner, the then-Leipzig student Margarete Buchholz, who must have been in possession of the volume from June 1928 onwards⁷. But Karg-Elert’s thoughts about rhythm and meter were not taken up by his reception. Of his music-theoretical works, narrowly construed, only his first work “Die Grundlagen der Musiktheorie [Foundations of Music Theory]”, comes under consideration for my project. Even the “Grundlagen” contains no more than vague references to rhythm and meter. One could expect more, however, for the following reasons:

1. Questions of rhythm and meter were of great significance for Riemann and for his successors. As Karg-Elert’s harmonic theories arose as part of a consideration of Riemann’s work, it is surprising that Karg-Elert omitted this other area.
2. Rhythm and meter played an important role in Karg-Elert’s compositions.
3. Karg-Elert himself emphasised the importance of rhythm and meter theory.

The following are possible reasons for why Karg-Elert’s thoughts on harmony left no traces in academic teaching:

1. The main reason is the simple fact that Karg-Elert did not make an effort to explore these other theoretical regions in writing. His thoughts on these matters take the form of

⁷ See the marking on the inner title page. According to the records of the Leipzig conservatory, Margarete Buchholz had the matriculation number 15429. Her city of birth is given as Bydgoszcz (Bromberg). She entered the conservatory in 1926, studying piano with Max von Pauer. She requested Grabner for the theory class (according to the admission test records). The documents do not show, however, who her teacher was in the theoretical subjects. I came to this information through the kind assistance of the library and archive of the Hochschule für Musik und Theater “Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.” The document signatures are: Inskriptionsregister, Inskription, Zeugnisse: A I, 1-3 15429.

proclamations. The power of the written word would have given his theory more force, enabling it to be influential after his death — even though just temporarily.

2. In addition, Karg-Elert was not a theoretician in today's understanding of the word. He barely took note of what others had to say about the topics he wrote on; his knowledge of the discourse was poor, and he clearly was not interested in improving it. His writings on harmony were his only foray into academic debate.

3. Karg-Elert accepted the long-standing hierarchy of the disciplines. Harmony was — still, at that point — the king, followed by counterpoint. Rhythm and meter, on the other hand, were not the subject of their own compositional discipline, but were seen rather as tools for analysis and performance (reading and playing). They were taught “as part of” traditional composition lessons. However, meter could be treated independently in compositional instruction in those cases where it played a role in determining form.

In the following section, I will seek to answer 5 questions:

1. What does Karg-Elert himself say about rhythm and meter?
2. What can be seen in the treatises of Karg-Elert's students Schenk and Reuter?
3. What were Ernst Kurth's contemporary plans?
4. What research on rhythm was performed by Riemann's successors?
5. What rhythmic and metrical concepts can be derived from Karg-Elert's own compositions?

To 1. Karg-Elert's pronouncements

Karg-Elert understood the rhythmic-metrical as elemental for form. The elemental was, of course, the topic of his “Grundlagen der Musiktheorie [Foundations of Music Theory]”. The preface to this work announced his intention to dedicate an extensive third section to this topic⁸. But the work remained a torso. It breaks off in the middle of the second part⁹, while Karg-Elert is still offering considerations about polar harmony.

According to the plan for the last, unwritten (third) part of the “Grundlagen”, the topic of “Rhythm and Meter” was to be addressed as follows¹⁰: “C. The rhythmically structured horizontal and vertical. 7. The following shall be recognised: rhythmic and metric basic types

⁸ This can be seen in the outline for the work given on the back of his portrait, after the inner title page in [4, *iii*].

⁹ See [4]. Part III was not published. In my edition, published in two installments with an answer key, the work breaks off at p. 226; according to Schenk, it should end at page 312, see [17, 32].

¹⁰ Outline for the work, taken from the introduction to [4, *vi*]. The square brackets around “architectonic types” are original (as well as their content).

[Grundtypen] as expressions of time and stress [Gewicht]. These form a collective expression together with the melodic and harmonic elements. 8. The following guidelines shall be given: for the collaborative effect of several independent melodic voices in rhythmic opposition. 9. A rubric shall be developed for: the fundamental laws of form [architectonic types]. Complete total effect [Gesamtwirkung] of all musical elements.” [4, vi preface to vol. 1]

Point 8 indicates that questions of rhythm and meter are closely related to polyphony (as one can surely interpret Karg-Elert’s generalised formulation) and were to be addressed in this section as well. Point 9 offers the closest equivalent to that which Riemann called “metrics”: a theory of musical syntax [Satzbau]. Architectonic types were to be discussed under the heading “The rhythmically structured...” It is no mistake, of course, that Karg-Elert writes of rubrics for fundamental laws of form. Instead, he could have spoken of elementary form [Formenlehre], which is a less challenging topic. However, this was incorporated into the outline as part of a rhythmic theory that includes metrics as an end point, a result. This particular understanding of meter as a higher level of rhythm displays, once again, an affinity to Riemann’s theories. If one rearranges the pairs of words listed under point 7, viewing them as directly correlated, a more traditional image emerges: rhythm = expression of time = melody; meter = expression of stress = harmony. Such correlations are confirmed in Karg-Elert’s preface, where he emphasises the importance of metrical questions. The final (unpublished) part of the work was to include “special areas” [this quotation and those following are 4, v, preface to the complete volume]: “the knowledge of which <...> for the student of the subject, should be urgently promoted <...>. The laws of meter (stress curves [Gewichtskurven] and proportions [Maßverhältnisse]) are indispensable for the apprehension of an artwork! They are a guide through the work to be interpreted, and prevent the danger of reading and playing from barline to barline. This third section, in particular, shall address the one-sidedness of the common theoretical education”.

That the discussion of rhythm and meter was to be carried out from the standpoint of its value for reading and playing might have to do with the fact that Karg-Elert saw himself as a successor, if not a competitor, to Riemann (a relationship which is elsewhere visible in Karg-Elert’s polemics against dualism to the benefit of his own concept of polarity). Karg-Elert shares Riemann’s rebellion against the bar line (in terms of *metric idea*) (at least verbally).

Musical example 2. Trio from “Rondo. Alla Haydn” from “Portrait für Harmonium“, № 8, bb. 26–38



This affinity can be seen in the metric numbers that the student Margarete Buchholz had written on a different piece, the Haydn-portrait from the same collection (see musical example 2). (I am assuming that these and the other entries were made as a result of direct contact with Karg-Elert.)

In the third part of the second volume of his "Grundlagen", a "practical text about polar harmony" [4, iv], Karg-Elert examines stress relationships [Gewichtsverhältnisse] derived from harmonic progressions in well-known melodies such as the Christmas song "Silent Night" [4, 202ff]¹¹.

Image 3. Karg-Elert's metrical scheme for Brahms's "Guten Abend, gut' Nacht"



The figure with which Karg-Elert indicates the stress [Gewichte] in Brahms's "Guten Abend, gut' Nacht" [4, 205] (see image 3) corresponds exactly to that which would be expected from Riemann's theory. However, this consensus is only brief. Karg-Elert turns to maxims, and an opposition emerges: "the metric motive is bivalent: weak-strong or strong-weak" [4, 208]. He names the first the metric-positive type, the second the metric-negative type (see image 4) [4, 208].

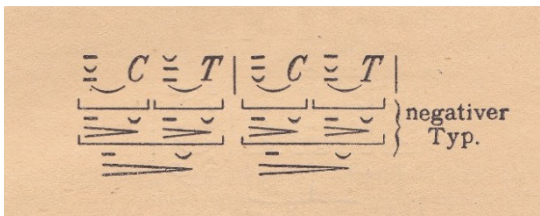
Image 4. Figure p. 208 (excerpt)

¹¹ "Stille Nacht". See also [4, 197]. Waldteufel's "fatal waltz" "Sirenenzauber".

Die einfache Folge $\bar{D} T$ stellt harmonisch die Gegensätzlichkeit: Konflikt—Lösung dar, die dann den „metrisch-positiven Typ“ ausprägt, wenn die Folge als a.) $\bar{D} | T$ || [Taktstrich fällt in das Motiv].
 interpretiert wird. Dagegen ist sie „metrisch-negativ“, wenn sie als b.) $\bar{D} T |$ || [Taktstrich begrenzt das Motiv].
 verstanden wird.

These two types, whose names Karg-Elert probably has derived from the well-known masculine and feminine endings in poetic meter, are both based on the harmonic progression dominant-tonic. In the positive (masculine) type, the bar line falls within the motive (the motive ends on a strong beat), in the negative (feminine) type, the bar line concludes the motive (the motive ends on a weak beat).

Image 5. Schematic illustration of the negative type: Figure p. 211 (excerpt)



Musical example 3. Answer key, p. 45



As an example of the negative type, Karg-Elert analyzes an excerpt from a Rondo from Mozart's 1st Piano Sonata in C-dur (see image 5 and musical example 3). It is significant that he does not attempt to reduce all possible varieties of stress distribution to a single principle. Instead, he postulates a contrary second principle (a negative, a mirror, or a reverse principle). However, he did not manage to produce a long-form written version of these metrical analyses, which proceed from principles that are central to harmony. The chapter dedicated to rhythm and meter should have followed the final unfinished chapter. Both of Karg-Elert's theoretical works based on the "Grundlagen" were published in 1930, around a decade later. They concentrate solely on the question of polaristic harmony. Thus, I must search for the contents of the unwritten part of the "Grundlagen" in other sources.

To 2. What can be learned from Karg-Elert's students?

From samples of the work of Karg-Elert's influential students Fritz Reuter and Paul Schenk, who could have written down what their teacher had said during lessons or conversations, I have found no hints of whether they had ever discussed the issue. When Schenk, who remained Leipzig's household god of theory through the 1990s, discusses rhythm and meter, the phenomena are the subject of intense practice, as in his "rhythmic dictation".

But this slim volume offers no hints as to the source of the exercises, nor to how the various phenomena should be understood. He was not attempting to write a textbook on rhythm and meter, which would have required from him to avoid "all information that is superfluous for the student" in order to serve "the praxis directly." The extremely short definition in the preface is typical for Schenk: "the metrical (metrics as the doctrine of tone stress) <...> the rhythmical (rhythm as the doctrine of tone length)" [15, *preface not paginated*]¹². Even the sequence opposes Riemann (meter would otherwise have been a result of rhythm, and would have thus been presented second).

However, Schenk made some remarks about the rhythmic and metrical idioms in Karg-Elert's own compositions. In his "Monographische Skizze"¹³, published at the end of the 1920s, Schenk named the disciplines that he believed were of the greatest importance to his honored teacher's compositions: 1. Melody, 2. Rhythm, 3. Polyphonic part-writing, 4. Harmony. Of course, this ordering is not random. It should show, as a crescendo, which rank each discipline held for Karg-Elert. With regards to the second aspect, Schenk writes of "free rhythmization and unstable metricization", of "intricate meters and flickering, compounded rhythms" in his teacher's pieces. The unique meters are achieved through "the finest observation of the variations in duration in non-rigid declamations of lied texts". Free, unstable, intricate, flickering, non-rigid: those words do not invoke a system of musical rhythm and meter. What's more, it is not rhythm and meter of music that are given as sources for the composition, but rather language, the text.

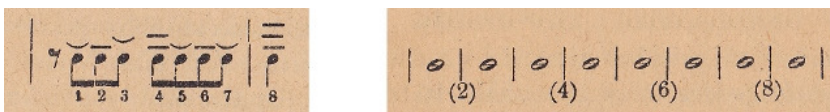
Karg-Elert's student Fritz Reuter has a different approach. It should be mentioned, at this point, that Reuter dedicated his 1928 volume "Harmonieaufgaben [Exercises in Harmony]" to Karg-Elert "with gratitude," and in the expectation "that the Karg-Elert system will prevail" [15, 2]. Reuter, then, did not skimp on references to the origins of his information. However, in his work "Das musikalische Hören auf psychologischer Grundlage

¹² This and the preceding quotations are from [18, 1].

¹³ The following quotations are from [17, 2-3].

[Musical Hearing According to Psychological Principles]”, Reuter does not mention Karg-Elert.

Images 7 and 8. From Reuter’s “Musical Hearing...”, excerpts from pp. 66 and 67



Here, in a clear reference to Riemann, Reuter attempts to “proceed from rhythm to meter”. The two musical examples shown here demonstrate this attempt: the model for the stress relationships in an 8-bar phrase is the form reduced to a 2-bar motive. (Rather, the 8-bar phrase seems like the archetype and the motive seems artificial. Riemann would likely have notated the motives without the initial bar line and the following rest.) The rhythm should indicate whether a note is short or long (its quantity), and whether it is emphasised or not (its quality). Meter, however, is “a sort of rhythm on a higher level”. For bars of equal length, the quantity of the meter is “irrelevant”; the metric quality (strong or weak) “cannot be determined through external observation”. Instead, the “aesthetic inner life should come into effect”¹⁴. For this, Reuter recommends Riemann's differentiation of motives into questions and answers. (Naturally, the answer is presumed to be the stronger one.) He employs metrical numerals to express the stress relationships [Gewichtsverhältnisse] [4, 67–68].

There is no mention of Karg-Elert and his negative metrical type, but there is a (general) reference to Eduard Sievers, whom Reuter dubs the “successful inventor of a new study of types [Typenlehre]” [14, 24] I will return to this point.

To 3. Ernst Kurth’s plan, and a letter

What theories of rhythm might form Karg-Elert’s points of origin? Which ones — aside from Riemann’s — could he be familiar with? In a list of “all good theories,” he listed the authors “Rameau or Fux, Hauptmann or Piutti, Oettingen [sic] or Fétis, Riemann or Capellen, Prouth [sic] or Louis-Thuille, Schenker or Schönberg, Wöß or Leichtentritt, Halm or Juon” [4, *iv*, preface to part II]. These pairs oppose contemporaries to each other. Karg-Elert concentrated on representatives of the main discipline of harmony; “harmony,” here, stands in for “theory.” This is probably the reason why Kurth’s “Grundlagen des linearen Kontrapunkts” is missing from the overview; it is also possible that Karg-Elert had not yet been acquainted with the book. The same could apply to Kurth’s 1920 “Voraussetzungen einer theoretischen Harmonik”. Perhaps Karg-Elert did not view this work as belonging to

¹⁴ All quotations come from [4, 65–67].

the “good theories”; or, was he only considering textbooks rather than theoretical works? Was he simply lacking a theorist whom he could place in opposition to Kurth? The fact that Kurth and Karg-Elert were contemporaries suggests that an examination of Kurth’s finished — or planned — theories of rhythm and meter could be fruitful, even if the two writers were not directly acquainted with each other’s work¹⁵.

What plagued theoreticians of that time? Having completed his book on linear counterpoint, Kurth wanted to develop a “comprehensive theory of rhythm and meter that extends into psychology”¹⁶. He did not plan this to be a music-psychological work, but rather some preliminary thoughts. As expected, Kurth’s “Musikpsychologie [Psychology of Music]”, which appeared a decade and a half later, does not contain any concrete discussions of music. After all, the psychology of music should not “conduct a study of rhythm, but rather examine the psychic functions which are part of the phenomenon of rhythm” [10, 301]¹⁷, as Kurth argued. Psychology should now assist the effort of distancing from Riemann. The turn to the psychological is, of course, to be expected following Riemann’s late works, with an intent either to continue or to distance from Riemann’s train of thought. Those who were familiar with the Leipzig discussions on the topic would perhaps emphasise Wundt’s work in psychology; however, Karg-Elert’s writings are certainly not the place to seek the continuation of this discussion.

In his correspondence, Ernst Kurth offered an unvarnished opinion about Riemann’s metric system, as seen through Riemann’s analysis of Bach: “All of these studies <...> proceed from the opposition of the classical, song-like periodic structure with the rhythmically untethered Bachian line. (That Riemann reduces Bach’s themes to 2-bar, 4-bar, 8-bar etc. metrical schemes seems to me to be an incomprehensible lack of style.) <...> I myself am of the opinion that B.’s untethered lines, his asymmetrical, free periods, are not an anomaly to the 2-bar-group melodic structure (according to Riemann, no other kind of melody exists!), but rather represent a completely different style principle”¹⁸.

¹⁵ A personal meeting of the two might have taken place when Kurth, after his doctoral defense in Vienna, studied piano at the Leipzig conservatory for a short period. Yet, no mentioning of Karg-Elert has been preserved in the heritage “Ernst Kurth” of the Musicological Institute at the University of Bern.

¹⁶ Kurth’s letter to Guido Adler, April 17th 1915, quoted in [16, 167f].

¹⁷ Kurth’s own words show how sublime this should be: “the stress rhythm” remains “a psychic phenomenon,” indicating “only an intuitive corporeality”: “not real, physical sensations of blows and kicks, but a spiritual [geistiges] image of such”. Thus, the corporeality merges with musical accents [10, 302].

¹⁸ Kurth’s sketch of a letter to Guido Adler, 1915, quoted in [16, 170].

The younger contemporaries distance themselves from these “schemes”: Kurth’s strategy is to introduce a so-called linear principle of style [Stilprinzip]. Karg-Elert, for his part, announces his intention to consider the rhythmic-metrical features together with the polyphonic ones; however, finally, through the reversal of Riemann’s positive theory with his own negative type, and, compositionally, simply through consistency (or, perhaps, pigheadedness) in his transference from rhythm to meter, he arrives at an individual stance, to which I will return.

To 4. Riemann’s successors

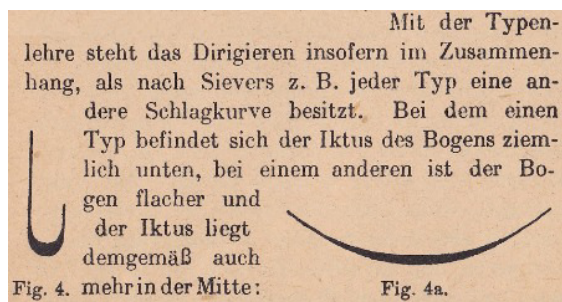
Initially, psychology was not intended to help in distancing from Riemann, but was rather to be used to justify Riemann’s system. Wetzel’s contribution to the Riemann Festschrift published in 1909 (for Riemann’s 60th birthday) attempted such an explanation of Riemann’s system of rhythm on psychological grounds, using the modern psychological theories of Wilhelm Wundt, a Leipzig scholar. The distance between Riemann’s students and their teacher first became evident a decade later, shortly after Riemann’s death, with Gustav Becking. Riemann had, through observations and effort, come to use the idea of “rhythmic undercurrents” for his own theory; it was Kurth who first utilized “psychic undercurrents” with great success [1, 9, note 1]. Becking had famously reckoned with being recognized as Riemann’s direct successor. His “Der musikalische Rhythmus als Erkenntnisquelle [Musical Rhythm as a Source of Insight]”, written in 1921 but first published in 1928, was dedicated to the memory of his teacher¹⁹. It was to be an “avowal to his spirit”, with which Becking also conceded a certain distance from the concrete versions of Riemann’s theories. Becking’s types of movement [Bewegungstypen] represent an explicit continuation of the study of types [Typenlehre] developed by the Leipzig Germanist Sievers, among others, to the realm of music [1, 16ff]. Becking and Sievers had worked together closely between 1919 and 1921. Becking’s three-movement types, similarly, are not based solely on one rhythmic principle. It could not yet be discovered whether Karg-Elert knew Becking, who resided in Leipzig until 1920 or 1921²⁰. Did the two discuss the contents of Becking’s rhythmic studies? May one presume that Karg-Elert took part in any academic discussions about music theory? In any

¹⁹ In the preface, Becking notes that he completed the book manuscript in November 1921 and that it appeared in “the old form” in 1928 [1, 3].

²⁰ From 1914, Becking was Riemann’s assistant in Leipzig. In 1920, he attained the degree of Dr. phil, and in 1922 took a position in Erlangen. See [12, 69, left column, and 970, right column]. This is a musical characterization that attempts to describe and, in part, explain the physio-psychological basic types of human behavior. The typologies that involve music include those of constants of rhythmic motion, to which Becking also contributed.

case, his student Reuter had been acquainted with Sievers's studies on types of movement even before Becking's work was published (see image 9).

Image 9. From Reuter's "Das musikalische Hören"



Not only could one assume that Karg-Elert developed his thoughts without having read other works on the topic but also that he was not involved in discussions on the matter — and may never have wished to be involved. After all, he was not academic.

To 5. What do the compositions show?

Kurth's and Becking's dissolutions of Riemann's rhythm / meter theory share some commonalities. Both come down to an increase in the sources of rhythm: there is no longer just one principle. In Karg-Elert's work, one can observe the hypostasis of a metrical scheme equivalent but contrasting to Riemann's. One can also find compositional examples for a further aspect of the topic: for a consistent transference of the rhythmic properties to the metrical ones. The path away from Riemann, for Karg-Elert, goes hand in hand with his typical habit of thinking in oppositions: if he does not find them in the pre-existing material, he creates them through his compositions. Karg-Elert's works can be read as a mirror of his unwritten and unfinished theory of metrics — metrics that would then gain quantity to match their quality.

After all, it was obviously important for Karg-Elert that he arrange his music into bars (using bar lines, against whose dictatorship he had already argued). He used bar lines not just for the purposes of being orderly, or to assist legibility, but rather as they made musical sense to him. The boundaries and endpoints that are suggested by bar lines need not always be identical with rhythmic-metrical units. In Riemann's view, the motive (conceived as a model, not as a reality; only in the best case would the reality match the model), would reach just over the boundary of the bar line; the bar line was placed in the middle, such bar line represented the high point, the center of the motive — thereby marking the rhythmic-metrical unit. The bar line delineates a transition, from tension to relaxation. A sensible metrical interpretation of a motive, according to Riemann, could be realized through the phrasing and dynamic shading of the performance. But phrasing and dynamic shading play a

very minor role in Karg-Elert's compositions (in comparison to Schoenberg's or Reger's works, Karg-Elert's seem decidedly unmodern). Certain Riemannesque mannerisms (preferably a tie to the second 1; a general antipathy to starting on 1) are, however, not present in Karg-Elert. The contents of a bar are well separated from those of other bars; there is no compulsion to make the one follow the other.

Karg-Elert's opposition is manifest in his compositions as well. His oeuvre can be divided into two sorts of pieces: one is determined by language, the other by dance. Schenk referred to Karg-Elert's free, flickering rhythms, his unstable metricization and intricate meters. He located their source in the exact notation of declamation—in other words, spoken language. Unrelated to this (in fact, without attempting to theorize), Schenk had mentioned the importance of dance for his teacher. This latter aspect can be featured especially in the retrospective works that intentionally and openly take up the pre-existing style. A statistical analysis would likely show that these pieces tend to have no upbeat. In addition (and at a higher level), 2-bar groups with initial weight tend to dominate. In sum, the contours of the body of work exhibit some similarity with Riemann's ideal but rotated internally by 180°. However, it is perhaps precisely this similar contour that would have been more striking around 1920 than the contrasting interior. From a modern composer (in this case, Reger's successor at the Leipzig Conservatory), one would expect a dissolution of the syntax towards musical prose, a gorgeous lurching and blurring. Karg-Elert, in contrast, sticks to the 2-bar norm but interprets or fills in these groups differently than Riemann.

In Karg-Elert's non-retrospective pieces, the rhythms and meters (in this case: time signatures) are often determined by free declamation and thus by spoken language. This will be demonstrated using two examples. The first one is an excerpt from Karg-Elert's "Abendstern" for voice and organ, op. 98/1²¹.

²¹ Op. 98 is dated 1914 in the opus catalogue in [21, column 1495].

In “Abendstern”, the phrases are divided thus: 2 x 9 quarters, 5, 3 x 4, 5, 9, 5, 3 x 4, 3, 4, 5, then 7 quarters per bar, etc. Comparing bar 7 with bars 13-14, one can see that similar material is not necessarily notated in a metrically similar fashion (see mus. ex. 4). The half note that concludes the vocal phrase comes at the end of the bar (bar 7), and at a different place, at the beginning of the bar (bar 14). Karg-Elert does not shy away from long bars; thus, it would have been entirely possible for him to combine bars 13 and 14 into a 7/4 bar. But when Karg-Elert distributes the music over more than one bar, he is reacting to the harmony. In this example, the final note is prolonged in the bass, extending through the next (less emphasized) downbeat (bars 14–15). The setting of the entire first strophe corresponds to the old belief that a larger section should be concluded with an uneven bar which, viewed in detail, also functions as a first bar²².

Karg-Elert’s bars are unstable. Often, other time signatures or bar divisions would seem to make more sense with regard to declamation of the text. Bars 6-7 will serve as an example. One would most likely speak the phrase in 3, 2, 2 and then 2, instead of 4+5 quarters per bar. Why would Karg-Elert notate this differently? (I am indeed assuming that the bars are notated “correctly” and should also be understood as a performance indication.)

²² Schenk’s concept of unstable metricization creates the expectation that regular four-bar periodization has been done away with. However, the changing and irregular bars have exactly the opposite effect: if the 9/4 bars are counted as three separate 3/4 bars, which is suggested by the markings within the bars, regular four-bar groups emerge.

Or, alternatively: why does “in der” (bar 7) fall on a 1? Presumably, because the harmony changes significantly. And thus the deemphasized stress falls on the 1. “Pathetic accents”, as Mathis Lussy called such a phenomenon [11, *throughout*], fall on weak beats: on “-funkel” and “Nähe”. In addition, Karg-Elert writes emphatic upbeats (using articulation, such as tenuto marks), for instance on “meines”, so that the last note of the phrase (“Herrn”) seems like an “intermediary 1.” The bar division can be interpreted as a performance direction. Then the final note of bar 14 would be sung differently than the final note of bar 7: the second time would receive stress in the sense of weight [Gewicht], but no accent. The result is something like lyric poetry (instead of musical prose), with unequally long and non-schematically formed lines, like those found in an ode.

My second example, “The Mirrored Moon”, is the 6th piece from “7 Pastels. From the Lake of Constance” for organ, opus 96²³ (see musical example 5).

Musical example 5. “The Mirrored Moon”, beginning.



The pastel “The Mirrored Moon” arranges 7, 4, 5, 7, 7, 6, 6, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 2, 3, 2 quavers in a bar; the next bars contain variant numbers of semiquavers. How does the declamation of an absent text determine the time signatures? Here, Sievers’s investigations [20, *throughout*]²⁴ can be of assistance: The melodic-rhythmic arch of suspense of this instrumental piece lives on what was taken away from it: the word. This is polar opposite to Riemann’s project: to expel language from music.

Reuter described meter as the higher level of rhythm, for which — for bars of equal length — the aspect of quantity is irrelevant. Meter was confined to being the quality. Karg-Elert introduces quantity to meter. He creates musical reality from the thought that meter could become rhythm.

²³ Op. 96 is dated 1921 in the opus catalogue in [21, column 1496].

²⁴ Sievers is, of course, reacting to Riemann in this study. See, for instance [20, 117, note 1]: As Sievers stated, Riemann gained analogous phenomena in music by his system of musical rhythm and metrics. Whereas Riemann explicitly conceptualizes rhythm and metrics of music in order to expel language, Sievers wishes to prescribe music as a panacea for language.

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