The Flute and Piano Works of Sigfrid Karg-Elert: An Analytical and Contextual Study

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THE FLUTE AND PIANO WORKS OF SIGFRID KARG-ELERT: AN 
ANALYTICAL AND CONTEXTUAL STUDY

by

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Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877-1933) is one of the few composers of the early twentieth century whose style moves fluently between tonality and atonality. His most noteworthy and voluminous body of work was for the harmonium and the organ; however, he also wrote a number of wind compositions. Among these are eight works using the flute in a primary role, almost all of which were composed around the First World War. The seven flute works between 1917 and 1919 stem from Karg-Elert’s time spent in a regimental band, in which he played oboe and sat next to flutist Carl Bartuschat (1882-1959). Of the seven works, there are two for flute alone, one for flute in a chamber ensemble, and four for flute and piano. Though all of these pieces are well-crafted, interesting, and fill a much-needed role in the flute repertoire, only the unaccompanied works are performed with any regularity. Recently there has been a surge in interest in his other flute works.

This study is an in-depth exploration of the four works for flute and piano: *Sinfonische Kanzone*, opus 114, Sonata in B-flat, opus 121, *Impressions exotiques*, opus 134, and *Suite pointillistique*, opus 135. It includes a discussion of their unique place in the flute repertoire as well as their stylistic characteristics. A detailed analysis of each work is provided, including a summary of formal structure, texture, tonal plan, and motivic use. In addition, Karg-Elert’s relationship with Bartuschat and the role of the Boehm flute in the creation of Karg-Elert’s flute music is explored.
This study is divided into five chapters with an introduction and conclusion. Chapter One contains biographical information on Karg-Elert and Bartuschat as well as a comparison of the characteristics of the Boehm flute in contrast to the simple-system Reform flute and an overview of Karg-Elert’s compositional style. Chapters Two through Five investigate the four pieces. Also included is historical and contextual information for each work as well as a theoretical analysis.
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INTRODUCTION

Sigfrid Karg-Elert is one of the few composers of the early twentieth century whose style moves fluently between tonality and atonality. His most noteworthy and voluminous body of work is for the harmonium and the organ; however, he also composed a number of wind compositions. Among these are eight works using the flute in a primary role, almost all of which were composed around the First World War.\footnote{1} The seven flute works between 1917 and 1919 stem from Karg-Elert’s time spent in a regimental band, in which he played oboe and sat next to flutist Carl Bartuschat (1882-1959). They are:

- \textit{Canzona}, op. 81 for soloists, choir, flute obbligato, and organ (1912)
- \textit{Sonata appassionata}, op. 140 for flute alone (1917)
- \textit{Sinfonische Kanzone}, op. 114 for flute and piano (1917)
- 30 Caprices, op. 107, for flute alone (1918-1919)
- Sonata in B-flat major, op. 121 for flute and piano (1918)
- \textit{Impressions exotiques}, op. 134 for flute and piano (1919)
- \textit{Suite pointillistique}, op. 135 for flute and piano (1919)
- \textit{Jugend}, op. 139 for flute, clarinet, horn, and piano (1919)

Of these seven works only the \textit{Sonata appassionata} and the 30 Caprices are played with any regularity. Indeed, they are pillars of the advanced flutist’s repertoire. \textit{Canzona} and \textit{Jugend} are not often performed, most likely because of a combination of unusual instrumentation, length, and technical difficulty. The four remaining flute and piano works are also rarely performed for various reasons, a situation which compels further exploration.

This study focuses on Karg-Elert’s music for flute and piano. In addition to discussing the importance of Bartuschat and the Boehm flute as an impetus for Karg-
Elert’s flute music, this study will provide an in-depth exploration of the four flute and piano works; including an investigation of their contributions to the flute repertoire, as well as their position in Karg-Elert’s output. To support this discussion, an analysis of each work will be provided.

While there is some scholarship available on the unaccompanied works for flute, there is a lack of solid research on Karg-Elert’s flute and piano works. The two chamber works, while interesting, are not included in this study due to their highly specialized instrumentation, in favor of research that would be of interest to a broader audience. The only available scholarship on Karg-Elert’s accompanied flute music is Alwin Wollinger’s *Die Flötenkompositionen von Sigfrid Karg-Elert* (which has not yet been translated into English). The current study expands on Wollinger’s work, which, being the only document of its ilk, it is necessarily broad and general, only dedicating a few paragraphs to specific discussion of each work.

Karg-Elert’s flute works fill a unique role in the flute repertoire. During the early part of the twentieth century the only other significant works for flute and piano (those that are still in our repertoire) were being composed in France, more specifically, for the flute *concours* at the Paris Conservatory. These include works by Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941), Cécile Chaminade’s *Concertino* (1857-1944), and Gabriel Fauré’s *Fantaisie* (1845-1924). These competitive works are generally between five and ten minutes, use very traditional tonal and key relationships, and display only occasional chromatic interest. In addition, Gaubert’s three substantial sonatas, while very subtle in their use of whole-tone scales and colorful harmonies, do not venture into the realm of

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atonality. In stark contrast to this French flute music, orchestral music (such as Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* and Strauss’ *Salome* and *Elektra*) in the beginning of the century was expanding the tradition of extreme chromaticism and escape from tonal and formal restraints that became popular at the end of the nineteenth century. One of Karg-Elert’s aims was to provide a middle ground for the stylistic differences between solo and etude literature for the flute and orchestral music from the same period, as he states in the preface to the 30 Caprices:

"The 30 Caprices originated from the urgent need of forming a connecting link between the existing educational literature and the unusually complicated parts of modern orchestral works by Richard Strauss, Mahler, Bruckner, Reger, Pfitzner, Schillings, Schoenberg, Korngold, Schreker, Scriabin, and Stravinsky; and the most modern virtuoso soli....Besides this, the Caprices explore new and untrodden paths in technique; a technique which may be required from one day to another in some new impressionistic or expressionistic work."³

All of the flute works that were composed within the three-year period during the war were inspired by Karg-Elert’s friendship with flutist Carl Bartuschat, whom he met during their mutual military service. Bartuschat was a flutist in the Gewandhaus Orchestra and later became the flute professor at the Leipzig Conservatory. Either just before joining the military or at the beginning of his service, Bartuschat switched from playing the Reform flute to the Boehm flute⁴ and it was the latter instrument that inspired Karg-Elert to write for the flute. This preference for the Boehm flute is evident in Karg-Elert’s writings (such as in the preface to the *30 Caprices*) as well as in his musical compositions for the flute, which capitalize on the capabilities of that instrument.


⁴ For a discussion on the two flute models see below, pp. 14-19.
Despite Karg-Elert’s importance as a composer whose style contains both tonal and atonal aspects, and Bartuschat’s influence on him, there has been very little biographical scholarship done on either musician. Most biographical information on Karg-Elert traces back to one, thirty-two page book written by Paul Schenk in 1927 (only available in German and Italian). While this source was unavailable to the author, it bears mentioning as it is the primary source for the works referenced. The only substantial biographical information on Bartuschat is a much more recent (1998) dissertation by flutist Andreas Heitkamp, also only available in German. This resource was obtained directly from the author since it is not available from any library.

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Karg-Elert’s Life and Career

Sigfrid Theodor Karg was born on November 21, 1877 in Oberndorf am Neckar, Germany.\(^7\) His father, Johann Baptist Karg (1823-1889), was a newspaper editor and writer and was already in poor health at the time of Sigfrid’s birth. The family moved to Leipzig when Sigfrid was five and this was where he received his first music lessons from Bruno Röthig, cantor for the Johanniskirche choir. His mother, Marie Friederike Ehlert (1839-1908), was left a widow and mother of twelve children (Sigfrid being the youngest) at the time of her husband’s death in 1889, when Sigfrid was twelve.

The death of Sigfrid’s father left his family in financial straits. His mother had to raise twelve children on very little money, and music lessons for her youngest child were not a priority. Luckily, a wealthy Leipzig family bought him a piano so that he would be able to continue lessons with Röthig.\(^8\) During this time Sigfrid began to compose. Without having had any training in music theory, he wrote sacred works for choir, motets, and a Christmas cantata, and even had one of his choral works programmed by his teacher. A couple of years later Röthig, impressed with the progress of his pupil, decided Sigfrid should move to Grimma in order to study to become a school teacher. Sigfrid stayed in the program for two years (in which time he learned to play the flute, oboe, and clarinet) before deciding he did not want to be a school teacher. In 1893 he


\(^8\) Wollinger, 10-11.
moved to Markanstädt, where he studied books on philosophy, natural science, and music theory. He supported himself as a freelance musician playing the piano. He lived in Markanstädt for three years before once again growing restless.

In 1896 Sigfrid moved back to Leipzig where he received a scholarship to study at the Conservatory. While there, he studied composition with Emil Nikolaus von Rezniček (1860-1945) and Carl Reinecke (1824-1910), music theory with Salomon Jadassohn (1831-1902), and keyboards with Paul Homeyer and Karl Wendling (1875-1962). He was also privileged to study piano with Alfred Reisenauer (1863-1907), one of the most influential piano players and teachers of his time. In addition to performing as an orchestral musician, in order to support himself in Leipzig, Sigfrid played piano in cafes. The latter occupation was not one he would boast about, as Douglas Worthen points out, “He dressed up with a fake beard and wig in order to remain incognito, since he was studying at the Leipzig Conservatory, and performing dance music was not approved.”

In 1900 Sigfrid performed the premiere of his first piano concerto at the Conservatory. This performance resulted in an extension of his scholarship as well as a German tour as a concert pianist. When he returned from this very successful tour he began studying composition with Robert Teichmüller (1863-1939), a decision which caused a rift between Sigfrid and his erstwhile supporter, Reisenauer.

In 1902 Sigfrid changed his last name to include a variant of his mother’s maiden name for his appointment as head of the piano masterclass at the Magdeburg Conservatory. Thereafter he was known as Sigfrid Karg-Elert, the alteration being noted in his first published work (a song) in Die Musikwoche. In 1903 Karg-Elert met the first of two friends that would shape the course of his professional career: Edvard Grieg.

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Though there is no conclusive information as to how they met, it was most likely due to their mutual connection to the Leipzig conservatory. Grieg encouraged Karg-Elert to study the contrapuntal techniques and dance idioms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a process which led to a lasting penchant for classicism in Karg-Elert. In addition to this, Grieg’s own compositional style greatly influenced Karg-Elert. Grieg also introduced the younger composer to publishers and would later be called “my unforgettable patron” by Karg-Elert.

At this same time Karg-Elert fell in love and became engaged to pianist Maria Oelze (1884-1963). However, the union was not looked favorably upon by Maria’s father and they were forced to break off the engagement. Following this, Karg-Elert had an affair with Henriette Kretzschmar, who bore him a son in 1904 (Karg-Elert would later marry Henriette’s daughter, Minna). At this point Karg-Elert entered into a state of emotional crisis. He buried himself in his work and began intensive study of the harmonium, probably at the encouragement of August Reinhard.

One of Karg-Elert’s first works for this instrument, 6 Skizzen, was published in 1903 by August Robert Froberg as opus 10 so that it would not seem like the work of a novice composer. However, Froberg did not want to publish any more harmonium music and therefore introduced Karg-Elert to the second person who would shape the course of his professional career: Carl Simon. Simon agreed to publish Karg-Elert’s harmonium works if Karg-Elert familiarized himself with the Kunstharmonium. Karg-

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11 Conley.
12 Conley.
13 Hull, 90.
14 The harmonium is a small reed organ containing a three-octave keyboard, one set of reeds, and a single blowing pedal. The kunstharmonium (art harmonium) used wind pressure division to make it possible to play the bass and treble halves of the keyboard at different dynamics.
Elert became enamored with the instrument. He debuted on the *Kunstharmonium* in 1906 and praised it saying, “The *Kunstharmonium*, with its capacity for expressiveness, its wealth of differentiation of tone and its technical perfection became the instrument which met my highly strung artistic demands.”\(^{15}\) For the following ten years Karg-Elert’s musical output was focused mainly on this instrument and his organ works of that time gained him attention and respect from renowned organists Max Reger (1873-1916) and Karl Straube (1873-1950).

In 1915 Karg-Elert enlisted in the 107\(^{th}\) German Infantry Regiment, but because he was a well-known musician he was not allowed to see action. Instead, he played oboe in the band, where he sat next to flutist Carl Bartuschat. It was during the following years that Karg-Elert composed all of his flute compositions, probably inspired to write for the instrument by Bartuschat.

Following the war, Karg-Elert failed to gain the position of organist at the Berlin Cathedral and underwent a period of professional crisis. Where his first crisis was personal, his second was artistic. He began to think of compositions by some of his contemporaries (especially those in the Impressionist and Expressionist movements) as “fruitless self-indulgence.” He told his friend Paul Schenk that after embracing “the purity of classical and romantic art, I began again in C major and prayed to the muse of melody.”\(^{16}\) In 1919 he succeeded Max Reger as professor of music theory and composition at the Leipzig Conservatory, but never gained a permanent organ position.

\(^{15}\) Conley.

Karg-Elert began to give weekly harmonium recitals on the radio in 1924. These recitals were given from his home, since he was unwilling to move the instrument. It was through this medium that he was able to perform his second sonata for harmonium as part of his 50th birthday celebrations in 1927. Shortly thereafter he was invited to attend the Karg-Elert Festival at St. Lawrence Jewry church in London; however, as his international fame grew, his local fame deteriorated. His countrymen began to see him as being not nationalistic and the frequency of performances of his works in Germany declined. Karg-Elert wrote to his English friend, Godfrey Sceats, on the matter: “Because some of my works have French or English titles I am automatically an ‘Ungerman’, someone to be boycotted…one is immediately dismissed as a Jew, traitor, or Bolshevik.”

For financial reasons, Karg-Elert accepted a recital tour in the United States in 1932. Though he performed more than twenty organ concerts, the tour was considered a disaster by critics, being described as “utterly impossible” and “total chaos.” This failure was attributed to Karg-Elert’s declining health due to heavy smoking, diabetes, and neuralgia. Despite the failure of his concert tour, Karg-Elert was offered the position of organ professor at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh; a position which he was forced to decline due to his poor health. The American tour took an even greater toll on Karg-Elert’s health and he died the following year on April 9. He was buried in the Leipzig Südfriedhof.

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18 Conley.
19 Ibid.
Overview of Karg-Elert’s Works and Musical Style

Sigfrid Karg-Elert began composing when he was a child in the Johanniskirche choir in Leipzig. His first published work, 6 Skizzen, was published as opus 10, so that it would not seem like the work of a novice composer. This inadvertently led to a history of unreliable opus numbers in Karg-Elert’s music. That, along with numerous unpublished or unfinished works, makes it difficult to compile a comprehensive list of compositions. After his death, Karg-Elert’s daughter, Katherina Schwaab, made a list of the unpublished manuscripts that she had seen, but many of his works are still believed to be lost or destroyed.

Karg-Elert was a prolific composer, having experimented with many genres throughout his life, including solo instrumental, orchestral, lieder, choral, chamber, harmonium, organ, and piano works. However, though he had a significant number of vocal and keyboard works, the only ones that have consistently stayed in the repertoire are his organ works. His harmonium works are also, at times, still performed on the organ due to the unavailability of the harmonium.

Of his many harmonium works, only two were composed after World War I. All of the others were composed in the decade following Karg-Elert’s introduction to the instrument in 1903. It is evident from these compositions that the composer was very comfortable writing for the harmonium, since it was through these compositions that he experimented with new musical styles such as atonality (though he never settled into atonality). Like his harmonium works, Karg-Elert’s piano works all originate from before the war. In style they emulate the piano sonatas of Alexander Scriabin but are rarely performed because of their length and difficulty. His vocal works resemble those

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20 For what follows on Karg-Elert’s works and compositional style see Conley.
of Robert Schumann and, like his harmonium and piano works, were mostly composed before the war. During the war years, Karg-Elert’s compositions were almost exclusively for wind instruments. It was this same period that saw the completion of all of his flute works. After the war his compositions become infrequent, with the exception of his organ works. He also wrote a set of caprices and a sonata for the saxophone, two harmonium works, and a couple of vocal works.

It is only through Karg-Elert’s numerous organ works that we can observe three distinct style periods. The first of these style periods includes works composed up to the year 1914. Grieg’s encouragement to study the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is evident in this period. The most notable works from this time, and his first original work for organ, were the 66 Chorale Improvisations (1908-1910), which show the influence of J.S. Bach.²¹ Works from this period also tend to use a number of Baroque and Classical forms. From 1921 to 1924 his works lean toward Impressionism based on Gregorian chant melodies such as in 7 Pastels from the Lake of Constance (1921). His late-period works tend to be more abstract and contain some of his most significant compositions, including the Organ Symphony (1930), and the Passacaglia and Fugue on BACH (1931).

Karg-Elert’s harmonic idiom classifies him as one of the few composers of the early twentieth century who truly operated as an intermediary figure between tonality and atonality. The composer himself indicates a duality between the classic and the modern in his music,

“*But even in art I have two diametrically opposed aims, and I can never honestly bring myself to play one off against the other. If the ardent yearning of a child-like faith comes over me, then involuntarily the music which I write tends to*

adhere to strictness of form and tonality and symmetry of tonal architecture. Shall I reject such inspiration because at other times and under different psychological conditions I write in free tonality and incline to an extravagant diction and bizarre style? Shall I stop my mouth in order that I may more easily be classified as belonging to this or that school?”

As Conley states, Karg-Elert’s music, though rarely atonal (with the exception of some of his harmonium works such as 7 Idyllen, opus 104), uses rich chromaticism, lush harmonies, and complex key relationships. Extended tertian harmonies abound in Karg-Elert’s works and his chordal progressions, though not always functional in the classical sense, are logical nonetheless. As Daniel Harrison notes, “Next to Reger and Strauss, Karg-Elert possessed one of the most fluent compositional techniques in this difficult chromatic art.”

In his treatise on harmony Karg-Elert explains a harmonic system based wholly upon mediant relationships, facilitated by the third-based “Didymean” tuning system rather than the fifth-based “Pythagorean” system. This tuning system would create pure thirds instead of pure fifths and it is through use of this system that Karg-Elert could shift seamlessly to any chord that has some type of third relationship to the preceding chord. The mixture of this along with traditional chord progressions makes up Karg-Elert’s harmonic language.

Formally, Karg-Elert tended to avoid strict structures such as the classical sonata form and the Baroque fugue process. Like other composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when he did compose sonatas, they displayed his own unique concept of sonata form. Though Karg-Elert avoided these structured forms, he excelled

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23 Conley.
25 Ibid., 315.
with extended variation forms such as the passacaglia and chaconne. It is here that his in-depth study of Bach reveals itself in his masterful use of counterpoint.

**Bartuschat’s Life and Career**

Carl Bartuschat was born in Berlin on March 20, 1882. As a child, he was so interested in music that he ran away from home to follow a military band that was passing through town. He made it all the way to the barracks before later having to be returned to his parents by the authorities, but the experience fostered within him an enthusiasm for music that could not be quenched. When Bartuschat joined the school choir, his music teacher discovered that he had perfect pitch and by the age of sixteen he knew that he wanted to pursue music as a career. Bartuschat ultimately ran away from home as a result of his parent’s vehement opposition to his studying music, and moved to Leipzig where he could gain further musical education without their interference.

When Bartuschat arrived in Leipzig, he sought out renowned musician and teacher Maximilian Schwedler (1853-1940) in order to learn the flute. Schwedler already had a reputation of excellence when Bartuschat approached him, as he was the flute professor at the Leipzig Conservatory and the principal flutist of the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Though Bartuschat had no formal knowledge of the instrument when he began study with Schwedler, the teacher probably accepted him as a pupil based on his potential. Schwedler identified potential in prospective flutists based on the properties he outlined in his treatise *Flute and Flute Playing* in which he wrote, “It is not necessary that the young player have a noticeably robust physique, but that his chest appears wide

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and unencumbered, lips and teeth are well formed, his tongue is agile and good eyes allow him to read the notes.”

Schwedler also saw it as a great benefit that Bartuschat had perfect pitch and that he had some experience as a singer, two points that most likely heavily influenced his decision.

As a pupil of Schwedler’s, Bartuschat would have learned to play first on the five-keyed, conical bore flute before switching to Schwedler’s own Reform flute. (For more on the distinction, see below.) Schwedler was familiar with the Boehm system flute, which was widely used in other countries and even other German cities at the time, but considered it an inferior instrument. He was strongly opposed to the Boehm flute because he disliked the brightness of the sound and claimed it could not vary the timbre as much as a conical bore flute. He even owned a Boehm flute but used it only to demonstrate its shortcomings to his pupils. Though Schwedler did not favor the Boehm flute, he did recognize the shortcomings of the simple-system flute, which led him to develop the Reform flute in 1898.

In contrast, Karg-Elert was an outspoken supporter of the Boehm flute. His decision to start writing for the flute was not only due to Bartuschat’s skillful playing, but also because Bartuschat was playing on the Boehm system flute at the time they met. This is evident in Karg-Elert’s preface to the 30 Caprices, in which the composer states, “These Caprices are therefore meant to be a synthesis of all the possible progressive technique demanded by the character and construction of the modern flute, above all the unparalleled ‘Boehm flute’…”

In a separate instance, Karg-Elert was also recorded

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28 Karg-Elert, 30 Capricien, 3.
saying, “We had the first flutist of Leipzig's Gewandhaus in the music corps. For years his gorgeous instrument propelled me to work, unwanted but unavoidable.”

One of the biggest differences between Schwedler’s Reform flute and the Boehm flute was the bore: the Reform flute had a conical bore like the Baroque flute while the newer Boehm flutes had a cylindrical bore. Another prominent difference was that the tone holes on Boehm flutes were much larger than those on the Reform flute, a development Boehm adopted from Englishman Charles Nicholson (1759-1837). Lastly were the key and fingering systems. Schwedler’s key system was largely based on the simple-system mechanism with a few alterations, including a foot joint that strongly resembled that of Boehm’s. The Reform flute therefore used similar fingerings to the mid-century 8- or 12-keyed flute, employing the traditional closed-key system, whereby all keys were closed until opened. Boehm had developed an open-key system (all keys kept open by a spring until closed), and his flute had major fingering differences to the simple-system flute, primarily right hand F-sharp and left hand C and B-flat.

These differences had a number of effects on flutists and flute playing. Schwedler’s flute was easier for seasoned flutist to play than Boehm's flute due to the mechanism which made the fingering system similar to instruments of the past. Because of the tone-hole sizes and bore construction, Reform flutes tended to have a larger tonal variance and Boehm flutes remained fairly consistent throughout the range of the instrument. Intonation was probably about equal on both instruments, though advocates of each system claimed that their own instrument’s intonation was superior. There was a marked difference in facility. Though the Boehm flute only had slightly easier chromatic facility, the larger difference was in response. The Boehm flute had much easier

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29 Heitkamp, 45.
response, especially with upper register playing, than the Reform flute. Schwedler’s student Erich List stated that, “high register passages were especially difficult on the Reform flute because of the amount of air required.”

Bartuschat’s decision to switch from Schwedler’s Reform flute to the Boehm flute was based upon his own experiences and opinions of the shortcomings of the Reform flute in an orchestral setting, as well as in the performance of contemporary music. While there were still many advocates of the Reform flute, he was not alone in his thinking. However, one notable composer who had supported the Reform flute was Johannes Brahms (1833-1897). In a letter to Schwedler following the premiere of Brahms’ Fourth Symphony, the composer said, “I gladly repeat here in writing that I was very pleased yesterday not only about your excellent playing, but in addition about the especially full-bodied, beautiful and powerful tone of your flute! If an invention of yours has helped you in this, then it is to be praised most warmly and to be recommended most highly.”

Richard Wagner (1813-1883), though he died prior to the inception of the Reform flute, had been well known for his opposition to Boehm’s cylindrical flute. Flutist Rudolf Tillmetz (1847-1915) writes on his experience with the composer, “Specifically, he gave it [the cylindrical flute] the name ‘cannon.’”

Some notable supporters of the Boehm flute were composers Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) and Richard Strauss (1864-1949). Berlioz was an advocate of the Boehm flute from the earliest stages in its development, speaking in great detail about its advantages in his Treatise on Instrumentation. He opens the discussion by saying, “This

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30 Bailey, 91.
31 Ibid., 57.
instrument, for a long time so imperfect in many respects, has now achieved such perfection and evenness of tone that no further improvement remains to be desired. We owe this to the skill of some manufacturers and to Boehm’s method, following Gordon’s discovery."

Though Berlioz did not live long enough to become acquainted with Schwedler’s Reform flute, his comment on evenness of tone leads me to believe he would have still preferred the Boehm flute. He goes on to say that he anticipates that the Boehm flute will replace the simple system flute in a few years.

By the time Richard Strauss got around to expanding Berlioz’s treatise in 1904, he added the statement, “Unfortunately, this is still not so in Germany,” (referring to Berlioz’s statement about the Boehm flute replacing the simple system flute). Strauss, familiar at this point with Schwedler’s Reform flute, expanded upon and praised the abilities of the Boehm flute, which was played in Munich where he was born. He also displayed his favoritism for the instrument through his finger-twisting and range-expanding flute parts, which were much better suited for the Boehm flute than the Reform flute. Schwedler himself commented that Strauss’ flute parts were, “an absurdity and an unreasonable demand on the player and the instrument.” In fact, Boehm flutists Franz Peschek and Philipp Wunderlich were hired specifically for Strauss’ three Dresden opera premieres (Salome, Elektra, and Der Rosenkavalier) because the simple-system flutists could not handle the extreme register of the parts.

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34 Ibid., 227.
35 Powell, 199.
Ultimately, however, it was neither the flutist nor the composer that had final say in the integration of the Boehm flute, but the conductor (though many composers were conductors and their opinions were therefore more highly weighed). Tillmetz wrote about this controversy in the same discussion of Wagner’s distaste for the cylindrical flute. Though Tillmetz’s decision to change back to the conical flute was partially based on his own preferences, he does mention being urged by the Royal General Music Director to make the switch.37 Bartuschat himself benefited from this power balance during his audition for the principal position in the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra when Nikisch, who had previously been on record praising Schwedler’s flute, decided to support him at the expense of alienating the older flutist.38

Originally in this debate between the two systems, both instruments were esteemed on grounds of tonal aesthetic. While Schwedler’s conical flute had a smaller, darker sound that lent itself better to tonal modulation, the cylindrical Boehm flute had a larger sound with continuity of color throughout the range of the instrument. Since the direction of orchestral playing was moving toward larger ensembles and concert halls, the Boehm flute’s penetrating sound became a necessity. In an attempt to combat this, Schwedler made modifications on his flute so that its volume would be sufficient; ultimately resulting in its demise. Musicologist Manfred Hermann Schmid stated,

“When [the Reform flute], which was occasionally made of metal, also received plateau keys (Mönnig, ca. 1925), it had matched the Boehm flute in volume of sound. But that was its demise. As long as it cultivated a different tonal ideal, the Reform flute had its raison d’être. But when it wanted to compete with the Boehm flute, it had to acknowledge the more rational conception of the cylindrical bore.”39

37 Tillmetz, preface, v-vi, quoted in Bailey, 156.
38 Heitkamp, 31.
In lessons, Schwedler focused primarily on rhythmic and technical accuracy and talked little about vibrato, breathing, and sound. He was the type of teacher who expected his students to learn by his example. Bartuschat scholar Andreas Heitkamp gives some insight into learning under these conditions. He says, “Difficulties with breathing, vibrato, or intonation were either self-taught or not overcome by the students at all. So they were always anxious to learn the right technique by ‘watching’ their teacher.”

Despite the seeming difficulties of such training, Bartuschat thrived under Schwedler’s tutelage. He learned how to play the Reform flute and in short order was winning competitions on it. He was praised by his teacher and critics alike, one critic commenting on a concert performance, “In the Flute virtuosi, Mr. Bartuzat (Leipzig) one was not misled. He performed with artistic perfection. You had to marvel at the technical assurance with which he performed the extremely difficult compositions and be smitten by the warmth of tone.”

In 1904 Bartuschat had the opportunity to become acquainted with Arthur Nikisch (1855-1922), conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra and director of the Leipzig Conservatory. Nikisch was known for inviting students to perform at special events and, probably upon Schwedler’s recommendation, Bartuschat received one such invitation. After several hours of playing together (Nikisch accompanying on the piano), the director was so impressed with Bartuschat’s playing that he compared him to legendary flute virtuosi Paul Taffanel and Rudolf Tillmetz. This performance substituted for an audition, resulting in Bartuschat’s becoming appointed second flutist in the Gewandhaus.

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40 Heitkamp, 14. Translated by Nadine Birch and Stephanie DiMauro.
41 Ibid., 15-16.
42 Ibid., 28.
Orchestra. From that point forward Nikisch served as a supporter of Bartuschat’s and would go on to greatly influenced his musical career.

Bartuschat began to discover the shortcomings of the Reform flute after beginning his orchestral career. He experienced the difficulties of playing contemporary music on that instrument and, inspired by Taffanel, began to learn the Boehm system flute. The switch did not occur all at once because of the still strong influence of Schwedler and other strong advocates of the conical bore flute throughout Germany. Therefore, Bartuschat played both flutes for a number of years, always playing the Reform flute in the orchestra next to his former teacher.

In 1914, Bartuschat was drafted into the German military. His post was in the 107th Infantry Regiment Band and he took this opportunity to more fully transition to the Boehm flute. While in the band he played the Boehm flute next to Karg-Elert, playing first oboe, and thus began the relationship that stimulated the composition of Karg-Elert’s flute music. Karg-Elert wrote in the preface to the 30 Caprices, “These caprices, as well as my other works for flute composed between 1915 and 1918 …, owe their inception to the eminent artist Carl Bartuschat, principal flutist of the Leipzig Theater and Gewandhaus Orchestra, at whose side I played the oboe in a good military band during the war.”

With Nikisch’s help, Bartuschat was discharged from military service early in order to join the Gewandhaus Orchestra for a concert series in Switzerland.

In 1918, Schwedler retired from the Gewandhaus Orchestra, leaving a principal flute vacancy. At this point Bartuschat, who had still played the Reform flute in the orchestra next to Schwedler, decided to audition for the principal position on the Boehm flute. Scandal ensued. Schwedler, who was on the audition committee for his

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43 Karg-Elert, 30 Caprices, 3.
replacement, vehemently opposed the pupil he had once so highly praised. He argued that he saw in Bartuschat the destruction of the traditional Leipzig sound. However, Nikisch stood up for Bartuschat and in the third round of auditions Schwedler was removed from the audition committee. Bartuschat won the audition on the Boehm flute and became Schwedler’s successor in the Gewandhaus Orchestra.

The ramifications of this were swift and extreme. First, it created a rift between student and teacher that would never be mended. Second, it heralded a new age for flute playing in the Gewandhaus Orchestra. Schwedler’s fears proved founded. Bartuschat’s playing style differed greatly from Schwedler’s. Bartuschat freely used vibrato while playing in the orchestra where Schwedler only used it in solo performances. Also, Bartuschat used a variety of articulations that were musically motivated while Schwedler’s articulation variants were only used for facility of playing. Bartuschat became known as the “Boehm Flutist.” Students came from all over the country to study the Boehm flute with him, and he even taught a number of Schwedler’s own students who could not cope with the Reform flute.

Though Bartuschat’s playing style differed greatly from Schwedler’s, his teaching style was very similar to that of his former teacher. Like Schwedler, Bartuschat left many elements of playing, such as breathing, vibrato, and intonation, for the students to teach themselves. Bartuschat’s popularity as a teacher had already grown, and in 1933 he succeeded Schwedler as the flute professor at the Leipzig Conservatory. This transition marked a new era in the Leipzig School of flute playing, very similar to the Paris Conservatory transition between Henri Altès and Paul Taffanel almost forty years earlier.

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44 Heitkamp, 30.
46 Ibid., 41.
Bartuschat continued playing with the Gewandhaus Orchestra in some capacity (either as part of the section or as a soloist) until the age of seventy-one, only six years before his death. His final performance was the premiere of a flute concerto by Max Dehnert. It was said of the performance, “It is the first time that music from Dehnert is heard in the Gewandhaus, and the last time Bartuzat plays.”47

47 Ibid., 35.
CHAPTER TWO

*Sinfonische Kanzone, opus 114*

Composed in 1917, *Sinfonische Kanzone* is Karg-Elert’s earliest work for flute and piano. It is dedicated to Dr. Joseph Weber-Kassel, a long-time friend of the composer’s and eventual guardian of his daughter, Katherina. This single-movement piece is Karg-Elert’s most conservative work for flute and piano and as a result is strongly Romantic in style. *Sinfonische Kanzone* breaks no new ground for flute music in terms of either form or texture. The presentation and treatment of themes as well as the interaction and counterpoint between the piano and flute parts follow traditional conventions set forth in the Romantic period. The large-scale tonal plan of this work ventures only to either closely-related or mediant keys. However, Karg-Elert’s distinct compositional style begins to become apparent in the chromatic treatment of melodies and small-scale harmonies.

The title of this work gives some implications about the composer’s intentions for it. *Sinfonische Kanzone* literally translates as “symphonic song.” Historically, the term *canzona* has been used in music to depict a work based on vocal models in contrasting sections. These *canzonas* tend to use imitation, similar to the polyphonic chanson of the 16th century. Alwin Wollinger gives another opinion on the title of *Kanzone* in his score notes for the piece, stating: “The genre of the canzona characterized by cantabile melodies and a lyrical style is complimented in this composition by a literary component, since the form of this work is largely based on the structure of the lyrical-literary
‘Canzona’ of Petrarch." This statement is hard to either support or refute since writers about poetry themselves do not seem to have a consensus on the form of a canzone. Turco, in his discussion of poetic forms states, “The canzone is an Italian form structured, like the Pindaric ode, in three strophes or movements. Each strophe is divided into three parts.” If using this definition the argument is valid since the first two large sections of Sinfonische Kanzone are both in three sections and it would only begin to deviate from the form in the final section. However, in The Poetry Dictionary a canzone is defined as, “An Italian lyric form of varying length, metrical patterns, and rhyme schemes…” It goes on to describe canzones that either have six stanzas or have five stanzas plus a tornada (final, short stanza). While the validity of Wollinger’s argument would be dependant on one’s conception of a literary canzone, it seems more reasonable that Karg-Elert is invoking the sixteenth-century canzona.

“Symphonic” could refer to either a symphonic model of composition or to having a symphonic sound. Once again, Wollinger tries to clarify this in his preface by saying,

“It is quite clear that he refers to a model of the symphonic principle…this includes a formal structure that arranges ideas, the working-out and development of themes, ‘cyclic bonds’ by repeating the theme as well as characteristic motifs and variations, and finally a special treatment of the finale by placing particular emphasis on it or by trying to come to a solution.”

While this is indeed the case, the composer also manages to connect the second possible meaning, that he is imitating a symphonic sound. While never sounding labored, Karg-

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48 Sigfrid Karg-Elert, preface by Alwin Wollinger, Sinfonische Kanzone (Frankfurt: Zimmermann, 2010).
51 Karg-Elert, Sinfonische Kanzone.
Elert brings out symphonic qualities in this work through both its density of texture and complexity of counterpoint. Karg-Elert himself gives no clues as to the meaning of the title although he did write an earlier work titled 3 Sinfonische Kanzonen (opus 85) for organ and optional brass; however, those are each given Baroque subtitles such as passacaglia, toccata, and fugue and bear little to no resemblance to the work at hand.

At the time of the composition of this piece most other solo flute music was being written for the flute concours at the Paris Conservatory, and indeed this work fits relatively well into that mold. Though not written as a competition piece, it contains many of the elements found in one, including contrasting slow and fast passages and technical virtuosity. Despite these similarities, Karg-Elert began to set his solo flute music apart by creating more complex patterns and harmonic irregularities for the virtuosic flutist to master.

The work that Sinfonische Kanzone most closely resembles is Cécile Chaminade’s Concertino, from 1902. Roughly the same length, these two works share many of the same formal and thematic characteristics. The overall formal structure of the two works is identical; however, more than that, it is the character of each section that truly ties these two works together. Both works have initial themes that are simple yet soaring. The texture of the piano accompaniment initially consists of blocked chords and later grows in to harp-like arpeggiation. The secondary themes are both animated and agitated with more active accompanimental lines. The middle sections begin with an abrupt change in tempo and texture and both end in measure 111 with a flute cadenza. Both A’

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sections begin with restatements of the primary theme and end with a coda which uses quotes from the A section.

*Sinfonische Kanzone* also resembles the Paris Conservatory compositions in terms of large-scale tonality. The work begins in the key of E-flat major and the A section moves through a series of closely or mediant related keys (E-flat, B-flat, g, a, G, and E-flat) until its final cadence in C minor. The B section moves from C minor through another series of closely related keys (c, g, f, c, and f) and ends back in E-flat major. The only slightly unusual element is that the A’ section begins in E-flat minor, but it quickly returns to the major mode and stays there for the remainder of the piece. Unlike Karg-Elert’s later flute works, almost every section ends on a clearly identifiable authentic cadence. The one exception to this is at the end of the B section just before the cadenza, which ends on a dominant (B-flat) ninth chord, instead of the traditional one six-four. While there is no evidence indicating that Karg-Elert was directly influenced by Chaminade, it is apparent that many (though not all) elements in *Sinfonische Kanzone* fall into the Paris Conservatory mold.

Even though the large-scale tonal plan is conventional, the local harmonic progressions are less conventional. It is in these progressions that Karg-Elert’s distinctiveness can be clearly seen. In the three occurrences of the primary theme throughout the A section (measures 3, 37, and 55), the chord progression seems to be secondary in importance to the counterpoint. Though the harmony changes on every half measure, many of these harmonies have to be interpreted as serving no other function then facilitating chromatic movement in the bass line. See Figure 1. There are moments of stability, with frequent uses of I – ii – V movement, but they are interspersed with
chromatic harmonies that embellish an ascending or descending bass line. It is also important to note that in these sections chromaticism is created through the use of chromatic harmonies rather than chromatic notes outside of the harmony. Though there are non-chord tones in the flute line, they are rarely chromatic non-chord tones, and every note in the piano line falls within the harmony.

**Figure 1: Counterpoint in First Theme**

![Counterpoint in First Theme](image)

In the second theme of the A section, beginning in measure 14, the harmonic rhythm accelerates so that it changes on every beat. This fits with the more agitated character of the theme and the increased number of chromatic non-chord tones in the flute. The piano part is still contrapuntally driven, with a prominent chromatically ascending bass line in measures 15 and 16 and a chromatically descending bass line in measure 18. The piano part still provides the harmonic foundation, containing few non-chord tones. This section, which is tonally unstable, operates transitionally and contains only two cadences. The other potential cadential points are elided and therefore do not actually present a cadence. The first cadence is a strongly felt cadence in D-flat major on
the downbeat of measure 21. The second is a flawlessly prepared and resolved perfect
authentic cadence (i 6/4 – V7 – i) in G minor on the downbeat of measure 25.

The second statement of the original theme in measure 37 is in the key of G
major, but by the end of the A section the theme returns once again to the home key of E-
flat major. The climax here is created by the melody being an octave higher than the
beginning with embellishments in the flute line, and with a much more active bass line in
the piano, though the harmonic rhythm moves once again by half notes. The purpose of
the return to E-flat is to set up a smooth transition to the B section, which begins in the
key of C minor, an extremely traditional transition and key for the middle section of a
work in E-flat major. Indeed, even Chaminade’s Concertino, composed fifteen years
prior to Sinfonische Kanzone, used more distant key relationships; moving from D major
to B-flat major in the A section, then arriving at A minor for the B section. As stated
earlier, this piece is distinctive not because of Karg-Elert’s overall large tonal structure,
but for the small-scale inner workings of chromatic harmonies that were unusual in flute
music at the time.

In the B section, Karg-Elert begins to use passing harmonies at the eighth note in
addition to the main, whole note, progression. There are three large standard
progressions between measures 63 and 72, which provide the framework for numerous
small-scale chromatic harmonies. The first progression takes place in the first five
measures of this section and follows the standard tonic, pre-dominant, dominant, tonic
outline, where measure 63 is the tonic, sixty-five is the sub-dominant, 66 is the dominant,
and the downbeat of 70 is the tonic resolution. This may be difficult to see at first glance
since there are passing chromatic harmonies on almost every eighth note, but upon closer
examination it is obvious that measure 65 is parallel to 63, only a fourth higher (tonicizing F minor) and that measure 66 functions as a dominant (beginning on a G nine chord and ending on a French augmented sixth). Measure 67, instead of resolving to the expected C minor chord, resolves the progression with a Picardy third, cadencing in C major.

The eighth-note harmonic progression serves as harmonic support to the chromatic melody given to the flute. Despite the appearance of numerous accidentals in both the piano and flute parts, Karg-Elert keeps the number of actual non-chord tones to a minimum, using only four for the entire progression. As in the beginning, accidentals here are the result of Karg-Elert’s using chromatic chords. Each of the four non-chord tones can be explained as standard passing tones and chromatic lower neighbors. See Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Mm. 63 – 67, Harmonic Function (non-chord tones indicated)**

![Harmonic Function Diagram](image)

Cm: T trans to Fm  Fm: T(S)  Cm: D  Fr+6 T

In measure 67 there is an immediate transition to the key of G minor, followed by one of the most standard progressions that can be found anywhere in Karg-Elert’s music. A brief G minor tonic chord is presented on the downbeat of measure 69, immediately succeeded by a two-measure secondary diminished chord (vii°7/V). As expected, the
secondary diminished chord resolves to the dominant in measure 70. Though there are a number of passing chords in measure 70, they are essentially used as a dominant expansion, since there is a pedal D throughout the measure and it ends on a D seven chord that resolves to tonic on the downbeat of seventy-one. In measure 71 the harmonic rhythm accelerates, creating expectation of final resolution, with two subsequent i – N6 – V – I progressions. The theme ends on the downbeat of measure 72 with a perfect authentic cadence (PAC) in the key of G minor. Though there are more non-chord tones in this passage than in the previous ones, they are all easily explained as passing or neighbor tones.

The theme is followed by an eleven-measure transition that leads to an exact restatement in terms of harmonic and melodic content. The only difference is that this time the theme begins in F minor and modulates back to C minor with a perfect authentic cadence on the downbeat of measure 92. Had Karg-Elert chosen to end the section there he would have made it tonally closed and independent from the A section with a progression of Cm – Gm – transition – Fm – Cm; however, this cadence leads directly into the only developmental section in the entire piece, from measure 92 to 100, which develops motives from the A section. Even more out of the ordinary is that he follows this developmental section with a restatement of the secondary theme from the A section. All of the melodic and harmonic content is consistent with the original statement of this theme except that it is presented a whole step lower. This leads to a transition back to the key of E-flat major, which sets up the cadenza on a dominant ninth chord in that key.

It is interesting to note where and how Karg-Elert places themes. As stated earlier in this chapter, only the first theme is presented in the final section of this work,
suggesting its form is not truly ternary. If the composer had placed the secondary theme in the final section, where it would typically lie in terms of form, instead of where he placed it here, then the B section would have been tonally closed and the work as a whole would be ternary. However, in choosing to displace this theme he creates a stronger sense of cohesiveness between the large A and B sections. This is also not the only such occurrence. As will be seen in the Sonata in B-flat, opus 121, Karg-Elert enjoys experimenting with the placement of themes, such as introducing a new theme in the middle of the Development section.

The cadenza is substantial in length and, like most cadenzas, does not add any harmonic or melodic value to the piece. It progresses as a virtuosic series of non-thematic scales and chord sequences, more similar in nature to the opening cadenzas in Taffanel’s opera fantasies than the cadenza in Chaminade’s Concertino, which contains thematic material. The cadenza ends with the entrance of the primary theme, given to the piano in the key of E-flat minor. This quickly transitions back to E-flat major and the final presentation of the theme is once again in the piano with a soaring counter-melody in the flute line. The work finds its final harmonic resting place on the downbeat of measure 126, followed by a seven-measure coda.

Essentially this work, even though it was composed in 1917, should be classified as a late Romantic composition with some forward-thinking elements. In addition to the aforementioned Romantic formal characteristics, this piece is also Romantic in texture. The piano line creates the harmonic foundation for the flute with an opening texture is actually quite thin and light, sounding more like French cabaret music than German Romanticism, but as the piece progresses the density of the piano part and the interaction
between the two instruments increases greatly. In fact, the rhythmic structure is such that there is almost constant eighth-note motion between the flute and piano lines. During the moments in which *Sinfonische Kanzone* deviates from the prevalent Romantic texture, it tends to return to the French undertones of the beginning, for example in measures 97 and 98. This type of nationalistic hybrid is one of the reasons Karg-Elert’s music was not well received in Germany. As he once stated in an interview, “…my style makes far less appeal to Germans than to the English and Americans. It is not felt to be in the Bach tradition – not sufficiently severe, and too often impressionistic and in concert-style.”

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53 Grace, 502.
Sonata in B-flat, opus 121

Composed in 1918, the Sonata in B-flat, opus 121, is Karg-Elert’s most substantial work for the flute. It is also his only flute work dedicated to Bartuschat. The scale, difficulty, and complex nature of this work has more in common with large-scale sonatas which came either much earlier or later than this sonata, than it does with contemporary flute works. The only other major flute works being composed around this time were from composers of the French school, and the only major flute sonatas were the three written by Philippe Gaubert (1917, 1929, 1933). This being said, one might try to compare Karg-Elert’s sonata to Philippe Gaubert’s flute sonatas; however, this comparison would be ineffectual, since Karg-Elert’s sonata shares almost no similarities with the sonatas written by Gaubert outside of their three-movement structure. In respect to German flute sonatas of this period, Karg-Elert’s is the only major sonata composed between Reinecke’s Undine Sonata (composed in 1882) and Hindemith’s flute sonata (composed in 1936). This is a fitting place for the work to stand, since it combines many Romantic aspects, such as texture, used in Reinecke’s sonata, with non-functional yet goal-oriented harmonic language akin to that found in Hindemith’s flute sonata.

Of all Karg-Elert’s flute and piano works, this is the only one that is not given an expressive title. Giving a piece only the title of “Sonata” implies certain expectations that were codified in the Classical period regarding form, tonal relationships and motivic development. Obviously, most twentieth-century sonatas do not adhere to all of these standards, but many of them adhere to at least some. In Alwin Wollinger’s book Die
Flötenkompositionen von Sigfrid Karg-Elert, he states that the title “Sonata” does not refer to any formal implications, but rather to the three-movement structure only.\(^{54}\) However, like many other twentieth-century sonatas, Karg-Elert’s sonata contains identifiable elements of sonata form.

Movement one loosely follows Sonata-Allegro form. The three large sections are indicated by double bar lines, both before the Development in measure 42 and before the Recapitulation in measure 85. The three sections also behave in much the same manner that would be expected for sonata form. The Exposition states multiple themes of varying character, has transitional moments from one theme to another, and contains a cadence that clearly delineates it from the Development section. The Development uses motives from the main themes, interweaving them to create a tonally ambiguous section, and contains a retransition with a strong dominant pedal. The Recapitulation presents all three themes in succession. The interest in this version of sonata form occurs in the placement of themes and in tonal relationships.

The Exposition opens with the first theme group in the key of B-flat major. This theme modulates to end on a half cadence in the key of F in measure 8, to set up the second theme group. The second theme group begins unexpectedly in the key of F minor rather than F major, but is itself a modulating theme and only stays in F minor for a brief time. After a modulatory section the second theme is restated in B-flat minor (measure 17) in order to set up smoothly a restatement of the first theme group in measure 23 in the key of D-flat major. This restatement ends in measure 28 and the Exposition ends with a transitional section that is non-thematic. The final cadence is firmly in E (measure 41), a tritone away from the original key. The lack of transitional sections between themes can

\(^{54}\) Wollinger, 44. Translated by Nadine Birch and Stephanie DiMauro.
be accredited to the fact that each theme is modulatory in nature, therefore behaves as both the theme and the transition.

The typical Development is characterized by being modulatory and developing motives from the Exposition. This Development follows this expectation and is cast in three distinct sections: 1) a section of motivic development, 2) a new theme, and 3) a retransition. The first section develops motives from both the first theme and third theme (foreshadowing the full presentation of the third theme which has not yet occurred). The third theme group is stated in the second section of the Development and is, ironically, the most tonally stable of the three themes. It is stated three times in succession: first in G major, then in C major, and finally in B-flat major. At the end of the Development a series of dominant seventh chords begins in a descending fifths pattern. This series of chords leads to a pedal D in the bass, which eventually becomes the root of a dominant seventh chord, which begins the Recapitulation with the first theme group in the key of G. This key fits with Karg-Elert’s philosophies on mediant relationships (referenced in Chapter One).

It is in the Recapitulation that all three themes are finally seen in succession. The first theme is presented in G major, but does not modulate as it did in the Exposition, and instead ends on a half cadence in the same key. The first statement of the second theme is left out in this instance, resulting in only one statement of the second theme, in C minor, which transitions back to the first theme in E-flat major. There is then a brief modulatory passage followed by a statement of the third theme in F major and finally ending with a coda in the same key. See Figure 3.
The movement begins in B-flat major and ends in the key of the dominant (F major), removing any sense of tonal closure and, except for in the beginning, Karg-Elert consciously avoids tonicizing B-flat. It is my belief that this is the very reason Karg-Elert chose to have the performer play each movement without pause. As will be seen, tonal closure will come, but not until the end of the third movement.

The second movement is very similar to the first in overall structure. Like the first movement, it is also structured with an Exposition, Development, and Recapitulation, separated by double bar lines. Like the first movement, this movement presents two main themes in the Exposition. This is followed by a Development that is several times longer than the Exposition, again in three sections. The middle of these sections presents a third theme, and finally the Development ends with a short cadenza for the flute that expands a G-flat major chord. The Recapitulation then presents all three themes in succession, as was the case in movement one. However, though the structure is similar, the second movement is the most tonally problematic of the three in this sonata.

At first glance the movement may seem to have no easily identifiable tonal center even though it is built upon triadic harmonies. The surface structure is indeed highly chromatic, as can be seen in the very first measure, where Karg-Elert writes a B-flat minor chord immediately followed by an F-sharp minor chord. Despite this, when
listening to the piece, clear cadences are audible. These cadences are usually not clear in the typical dominant to tonic logic; rather they are approached by chords containing strong leading tones, leaving no doubt to the listener that there has been tonal resolution. An example of this can be seen in the second half of measure 5, where the G-flat tonic chord is approached by ascending and descending half steps in every voice except the bass, which sustains a pedal G-flat. See Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Movement 2, mm. 5 Cadence**

Upon identification of these cadences, it becomes evident that the movement almost exclusively alternates between G-flat major, D-flat major, and their relative minor keys. In the Exposition the two themes are loosely in G-flat major, and E-flat minor. The third theme, presented in the Development, is once again the most tonally stable theme and is firmly in D-flat major. In the Recapitulation, the first theme is presented in F, the second theme is modulatory, and the third theme closes the movement in D-flat major. See Figure 5.
In this movement Karg-Elert has used the principle of balance to form the tonal structure. Though B-flat major is not used as a key in itself in this movement, he chooses to feature two main keys that are both a chromatic mediant higher and lower than the overall key of the sonata. Even if we never hear B-flat major in the second movement, it is still implied. The fact that D-flat major finally wins the key dual in the second movement makes the third movement’s first measure, which is a fortissimo G-flat over three octaves in the piano, especially jarring. Considering that Karg-Elert immediately follows this G-flat with a theme in B-flat major makes it seem as if he’s saying “WAKE UP,” reasserting the tonal restlessness of the second movement, and then affirming that B-flat major is the ultimate tonal center.

Figure 5: Graph of Movement 2

The third movement of this sonata is the only one that both begins and ends in the “correct” key of B-flat. Within the movement, the small-scale key areas are not structurally important; however, the large-scale the tonal areas are more standard than in either of the previous two movements. The movement is in a five-part rondo, with each new section being indicated by double bar lines. The first section is in B-flat major. The second section begins in F major and modulates to its relative minor, D minor. The third section acts as a Development and is mostly modulatory, briefly tonicizing D minor, G major, and C major. The fourth section, which begins in C major, modulates back to F
major in order to set up the Recapitulation of the first section in B-flat major. The
movement finally ends with a coda that remains firmly in B-flat major. See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Graph of Movement 3

![Graph of Movement 3]

Thematically the third movement is harder to parse than the first two movements.
The first, third, and final large sections each have multiple small themes contained
within. Though this complicates the analysis, it is simplified by the fact that there are
only three main characters throughout the movement. See Figure 7. The first character
consists of agitated, fast moving lines in three/eight, the second, a soaring motive in
three/eight that is characterized by the dotted eighth-sixteenth-eighth figure, and the third
consists of two common time sections beginning with oscillating seconds. The middle,
developmental, section is very interesting because of the way Karg-Elert incorporates and
develops these different characters. He seems to give priority to developing the second
and third characters, the second having not been stated in full yet up to this point.
With respect to themes, the second movement ties the work together as a whole. It is tied to the first movement by the triplet figure seen in the Recapitulation of the second movement, which is reminiscent of the same figure that permeates the first movement (movement one, measure 8; movement two, measure 69). The middle movement, however, is even more strongly tied to the third movement by the oscillating seconds’ theme (movement two, measure 38; movement three, measure 85). See Figure 8.

Figure 8: Motivic links between movements

Movement 1, mm. 8 

Movement 2, mm. 69
While the motivic links contribute to a degree of unity, a much stronger unifying principle can be found in the overall tonal plan. Tonal closure occurs only at the conclusion of all three movements. I believe this is the main reason why the work is to be played without pause. Taken as a whole, the structure of the sonata can be seen to be a sonata-allegro form: the first movement represents the Exposition, moving from B-flat major to F major (the dominant); the middle movement represents the tonally ambiguous Development, being centered around a G-flat major/D-flat major dichotomy; and the third movement represents the Recapitulation, beginning and ending in B-flat major. See Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Sonata in B-flat, op. 121 Tonal Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement 1</th>
<th>Movement 2</th>
<th>Movement 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BbM</td>
<td>FM</td>
<td>Gb/Db</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BbM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BbM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A similar case to this can be found in Schoenberg’s *Kammersymphonie*, opus 9, composed in 1906. This work, like the Sonata in B-flat, is a multi-movement work played without pause. The difference is that whereas Karg-Elert uses tonality to create
the overall sonata form throughout the duration of the piece, Schoenberg uses thematic presentation and development to create a sonata form that spans five movements.
CHAPTER FOUR

Impressions exotiques, opus 134

Impressions exotiques was composed in 1919 and premiered in November of that year by Carl Bartuschat. It is dedicated to composer/pianist Dr. Walter Niemann, a long time friend of Karg-Elert’s and one of his colleagues at the Leipzig Conservatory. Impressions exotiques is comprised of five short movements that are each formally and tonally self-contained. It is also Karg-Elert’s first flute work with explicit programmatic elements, the other being Suite pointillistique (discussion in Chapter 5). These programmatic elements are specifically indicated with both the title of the work as a whole and with the title of each movement: Idylle champêtre, Danse pittoresque, Colibri, Lotus, and Evocation à Brahma.

The style of Impressions exotiques is an example of Karg-Elert’s proclivity for Impressionism. Karg-Elert writes, “I strive for, but not by force, an ever more prominent Impressionistic sound, which lets me avoid the idiom of a sprawling theme: it pushes me onward toward a concentrated aphorism. My quick understanding of situations, my quick gain of inward and outward impressions, my preference for many rapid changes, my inner restlessness loves to express itself in tight but sharp pictures.” This Impressionistic leaning can be found in a number of elements throughout the work, including the fact that it is the first flute and piano work written in short, self-contained movements, rather than the expansive forms favored by the Romanticists such as we saw in Sinfonische Kanzone and the Sonata in B-flat. Throughout the work Karg-Elert

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exploits a wide range of tone colors for both instruments, using both notation and
performance instructions to indicate his intentions. He also adheres to topical norms
found in Impressionist art and music of that time, such as nature, rustic life, and the Far
East.

The first movement, *Idylle champêtre* (Rustic Idyll), is in ternary form (ABA’) and,
as the title implies, depicts peasant life. The main theme is in F Lydian mode and is
indicated to be played sweetly. Karg-Elert’s study of renaissance polyphony is evident in
this. In Harold Powers’ article on the Lydian mode in *Grove Music* he states that, “In
Renaissance polyphony a great many compositions end on an F major triad…and with
prominent cadences on C and A.” This exact outline can be seen in *Idylle champêtre*,
whose first and second sections end with cadences on extended tertian harmonies on C
and A respectively and which ends the movement on an F major triad. The fact that
Karg-Elert uses the Lydian mode instead of a major or minor key is appropriate since it
has been used in modern times to indicate folksong and is distinctively pastoral in
character.

Harmonically, this movement is much simpler than the sonata. Though it does
contain Karg-Elert’s characteristic chromatic harmonies, the tonality never strays for long
from the initial F Lydian mode. Karg-Elert does interject his unique harmonic language
into this movement by writing extended tertian harmonies on almost every single beat.
The only measures that don’t contain extended tertian harmonies are measures 1 through
3, 35, and 36. All of the major cadences are on extended tertian harmonies: a C nine
chord in measure 11 and an A eleven chord in measure 26. Even the very last chord of

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accessed February 5, 2014,
the movement is an F nine chord with an added D. See Figure 10. My reasoning for calling the final chord an F nine instead of a D eleven is that this cadence parallels the cadence in measure 11. In both instances the dominant chord is presented at the beginning of the measure while the final chord is immediately approached by a II7 chord. In addition to this, the octave and open fifth in the left hand clearly indicate that the bass note is the root of the chord and the other notes are added.

Figure 10: Movement 1 Cadential Harmonies

Measure 11: C9  Measure 26: A11  Measure 43: F9

In terms of programmatic elements, there are a number of musical devices Karg-Elert uses to depict “Rustic Idyll.” The first musical device is tonality, which was discussed earlier. Others include sweeping sextuplet passages and quick alternation of thirds in the flute part. See Figure 11. The sweeping sextuplet passages are used to depict swiftly moving water, such as a stream or brook. There is ample precedence for this connection in works of the Romantic period and early twentieth-century music such as in the first movement of Reinecke’s Sonata Undine for flute and piano and in Debussy’s La mer. The measures of high chirpy thirds likely represent bird calls, which would complete the picture for any pastoral scene.
The second movement is titled *Danse pittoresque*, or Picturesque Dance. Like the first movement, the second movement is in ternary form with the outer sections indicated as melancholy and the middle section being a spirited burlesque. The relentless extended tertian harmonies from the first movement are replaced by harmonies that depict distinctly Eastern qualities. For the pianist, the first section contains open fifths (A and E) for all but the final three measures. This treatment creates the ideal canvas for the flute melody, which embellishes chromatic and whole-tone scales in an almost improvisatory manner. It is the lack of the third in the piano as well as the lack of tendency tones in the melody that give this movement both its Eastern qualities and the Impressionistic sense of tonal ambiguity.

Burlesque is defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of Music* as a, “[h]umorous form of entertainment involving an element of parody or exaggeration.” It goes farther to say
they are, “musical works in which comic and serious elements were contrasted.” The middle, burlesque, section of this movement is in C major and, as would be expected, is quick and brilliant. Karg-Elert creates the humor of the burlesque by marking the flute melody at a piano dynamic, and marking the piano (playing only chordal accompaniment) as forte. He also gives the flute and piano different time signatures, making it hard to align strong and weak beats, and further complicates this issue by giving the piano sforzando indications on the last beat of every measure. See Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Movement 2 Burlesque**

In the third and final section of this movement, Karg-Elert returns to the extended tertian harmonies in the piano that were prevalent in the first movement; however, he treats them in a distinctly different way so as to not lose the Eastern feel that he meticulously set up in the first section of this movement. Instead of open fifths, the left hand in the piano repeats octaves on E until the final three measures. The pianist’s right hand has rolled extended tertian chords in the uppermost part of the keyboard with the instruction *quasi Celesta e 4 Viol. Flageolet*, meaning to sound like a celeste and a string.

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quartet playing harmonics. Karg-Elert further solidifies the Eastern qualities by giving the pianist a three note, fifth-based chord (A, E, and B) in the lowest octave on the keyboard. This fifth-based chord is also given the instruction of *quasi Tamtam*. See Figure 13.

**Figure 13: Movement 2, Final Section**

The middle movement of *Impressions Exotiques* is probably the most programmatically obvious. Its title is *Colibri*, or Hummingbird, and is indicated to be played on piccolo. The movement is in two sections and opens and closes with cadenzas for the piccolo that are comprised of the same melodic material. Trills and flutter tonguing are also prominent throughout the movement, both common bird-imitating devices. In addition to this, Karg-Elert wrote both piano staves in the treble clef with melodic content either in or very near to the same register in which the piccolo plays. This unyielding high register adds to the depiction of birdsong and even gives the impression of multiple birds.

The functional logic of the chord progressions in this movement is problematic, and it seems that the piece is atonal at times. The texture is more contrapuntal in nature rather than chordal; however, the piano part does contain many melodic chords and on a few occasions blocked chords. Even with clearly identifiable chords, this movement
cannot be said to be in one specific key. The majority of triads are augmented and most of the harmonies that are not triads are either quartal or quintal harmonies. There are very few major or minor triads. An example of this can be seen in the final four measures of the movement in the piano part. The piccolo line finds its final resting place by moving from an E-flat to a D; however, instead of creating tonal resolution, Karg-Elert writes a series of quartal harmonies, none of which contains either the E-flat or the D at the time they are presented in the piccolo. See Figure 14. Though this may seem unusual, I feel that it actually adds to the affect of the hummingbird imagery. The restless tonality throughout the movement combined with prevailing large slurred leaps in the piccolo give the distinct impression of the hummingbird quickly flitting from one flower to another; always skittish, never still.

**Figure 14: Last Four Measures of Colibri**

There are a few possible explanations for the title of the fourth movement, *Lotus*. One possible explanation seems to indicate that the movement should be paired with the fifth movement, *Evocation à Brahma*, since some Hindu writings state that the god Brahma is self-born in the Lotus flower. This would make sense since both movements once again evoke Eastern imagery by indicating that the piano should mimic a celeste and
tam-tam. Another prominent use of the lotus flower is found in Greek mythology in which it represents the lotus-eater described in the Odyssey. In this story the lotus-eater depicted one who lived on the lotus plant in a drugged, indolent state. While there are some musical devices that can support this, such as the character of the movement being one of aimless wandering, the initial theory which ties the fourth and fifth movements is probably the better one.

This movement is through-composed and has very few cadences. Most phrases either elide with the next or are interrupted. The few phrases that do end are extremely long, causing troublesome breathing issues for the flutist. Harmonically, this movement employs elements from each of the first three movements. There are many extended tertian harmonies as in the first movement, open fifths such as in the second movement (however here they are written as parallel fifths instead of a stagnant set of fifths), and quartal chords as in the third movement. Using parallel fifths was a common compositional technique used in late nineteenth-century exoticism to depict Asian imagery. In fact, the bottom two voices in the piano part are in open fifths for the majority of the movement. When they are not in fifths they are in either fourths or larger intervals. The movement ends on an F minor eleventh chord in first inversion, maintaining the composer’s unique harmonic language.

In addition to the wandering feeling caused by long phrases and drifting tonality, Karg-Elert uses this movement as an opportunity to explore the different timbres of the two instruments. In the flute part this can be observed in the indication of bleich, given to the flutist in measures 7 and 23. This performance indication means that the performer should play with a pale sound and no vibrato. This is not the only time Karg-Elert uses
this indication in a flute composition, but it is the only instance in this work. He uses this indication to contrast with the passionate *espressivo* section at measure 13 and later the sweet *cantabile* section at measure 24. The most obvious use of timbral exploration in the piano is in measure 29 when he gives the indication to play like a celeste. Yet another example in the piano part is at the very beginning where Karg-Elert gives the instruction 1/4 *Verschiebungspedal: Tantentenon*. This instructs the pianist to depress the soft pedal only partially. The resulting sound is one that Alwin Wollinger describes as “indirect,” which would correspond with the sentiment of aimlessness that Karg-Elert is depicting in this movement.\(^{58}\)

The final movement of *Impressions exotiques* is titled *Evocation à Brahma*. Brahma is the Hindu god of creation who is joined in the triad by Vishnu and Shiva. In Webster’s II College Dictionary it describes Brahma as, “Calling forth the divine reality of the universe who was a member of the highest caste, originally composed of priests. The personification of divine reality in its creative aspect as a member of the Hindu triad.” In this movement Karg-Elert uses multiple changing meters and tempo indications to give the work a distinctly chant-like character (much like the movement *Krishna* in Albert Roussel’s *Joueurs de flûte* of 1924). He regularly switches between 7/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 5/4, and even has a measure each of 13/8 and 10/8. In terms of tempo, he begins and ends slowly while gradually increasing speed in the middle section, building into frenzy in measures 25 and 26.

There are two instances where Karg-Elert uses unusual notation for the flute. The first of these appears in measure 3, where each eighth note is written independently instead of being beamed together. This notation fits the chant-like characteristics that the

\(^{58}\) Wollinger, 51.
composer is trying to give this passage. While the notation is unusual for flutists, it is quite common in vocal music, where each eighth note represents a syllable of text. The second appearance of unusual notation comes in measures 18 and 19. Karg-Elert uses what may appear to be multiphonic octaves; however, when it is taken into account that Karg-Elert was a keyboard player, it is clear that he is indicating a rolled affect. See Figure 15.

**Figure 15: Notation in *Evocation à Brahma***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocal Notation</th>
<th>Keyboard Notation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Vocal Notation" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Keyboard Notation" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This movement has once again returned to the ternary form that we saw in the first two movements. It is firmly in C major, but still displays frequent use of the extended tertian and quintal harmonies that permeate the first four movements. Again, the bottom two voices in the pianist’s left hand are mainly in parallel fifths, the stereotype of an Eastern musical procedure. As in the second movement, Karg-Elert instructs the pianist in measure 33 to mimic the sound of a tamtam and gives it a cluster chord of C, D-flat, and E-flat in the lowest octave of the piano. The movement and the piece conclude with one of the most traditional cadences that can be found in Karg-Elert’s music. In the final measure he writes a French augmented sixth chord that is resolved to a C major triad in root position without a single non-chord tone.

Though the movements in this work are self-contained, they each convey the meaning of their respective titles, making it programmatic. Furthermore, the exoticism
created by the Asian-influenced final movements paired with the subjects of nature and rustic life in the first three movements, are all indicative of the Impressionist movement. Tonally, Karg-Elert adheres to musical Impressionism by frequently using scales that equally divide the octave as well as the prevalent use of parallel and open fifths which again create the feeling of exoticism.
CHAPTER FIVE

Suite Pointillistique, opus 135

Karg-Elert’s final work for flute and piano, Suite pointillistique, was also composed in the year 1919, after Impressions exotiques. It is dedicated to Bartuschat’s long time friend and supporter, Arthur Nikisch. Though Karg-Elert and Nikisch were both professors at the Leipzig Conservatory, there is no evidence that they had a close personal relationship outside of the fact that they were, “both counted to be Leipzig’s leading personalities.”59 Like Impressions exotiques, Suite pointillistique is comprised of multiple movements with programmatic indications. The first and last movements are only given characteristic indications, “In the style of an arabesque” and “In the style of a hymn” respectively, while the middle two movements are given specific programmatic titles, Der kranke Mond (The Sick Moon) and Diavolina und Innocenz (Devil and Innocence).

Once again Karg-Elert has given insight to the piece in its title, in this case referring to pointillism. Like so many musical movements, pointillism had its root in art; embodied in the paintings of Georges Seurat. This art movement used a technique in which painters combine and overlap dots of color (usually primary colors) to create a picture. The technique requires the viewer’s eye and mind to blend the dots together in order to see the intended image. In music, pointillism describes a fragmentary style which highlights extreme contrasts in range, color, dynamic, or a combination of the three. It is closely associated with the terms Neo-Impressionism and Klangfarbenmelodie.

Though the latter term is often used within the context of serialism, *Suite pointillistique* is neither a serial piece nor an atonal one; rather, I believe Karg-Elert uses this title to denote the sharply contrasting characters of each movement.

In the first movement of *Suite pointillistique*, Karg-Elert gives the indication “In the style of an *arabesque*.” The term *arabesque* originally meant a piece of music whose melodies imitated Arabic architecture. The music given this label has no actual resemblance to Arabic music, but rather the term is used to describe a florid and delicate work or melody within a work. It has been suggested that this movement loosely fits sonata-allegro form, and it does share some similar characteristics. There are three main sections with multiple themes and a Recapitulation that almost exactly quotes the opening section. There is also a developmental section with a retransition and a coda at the end. The difference is that the developmental section does not have any motivic relationship to the A section, but presents a new theme which transitions through multiple tonal areas. This lack of thematic relationship with the A section is not indicative of sonata form. It almost seems as if the A and B sections are both parts of a sonata form movement, but from two different works. It is only in Karg-Elert’s transitions that the two sections become cohesive as part of the same movement.

In terms of texture, this movement maintains the same lightness that Karg-Elert displayed during *Impressions exotiques* and parts of *Sinfonische Kanzone*. In fact, the piano line in the opening section strongly resembles the cabaret-like piano accompaniment at the beginning of *Sinfonische Kanzone*. This character fits with the florid and delicate line described by the term *arabesque*. Both works use a rhythmic, chordal piano accompaniment intended solely for the purpose of supporting the flute.

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60 *Klangfarbenmelodie* was coined by Schoenberg in his *Harmonielehre* (1911).
melody without the melodic intricacies found in the Sonata. The A section progresses in this manner until just before the beginning of the B section in measure 30. At this point the texture becomes denser, but it is not until the beginning of the B section that Karg-Elert allows true melodic interplay between the two instruments. Karg-Elert prepares the beginning of each new section texturally by having the piano shift early to the new section’s texture. This textural shift takes place in measure 21 to set up the B section and in measure 44 to set up the return of A. The two contrasting textures can be seen best in the opening measures of each section. See Figure 16.

**Figure 16: Movement 1 Texture**

A Section: Blocked chords in an accompanimental figure

B Section: Multiple voices with melodies and counter-melodies

Harmonically, this movement behaves very much the same as Karg-Elert’s other flute and piano music. It features frequent extended tertian harmonies and some traditional progressions interspersed with chromatic harmonies. Though there are no
significant melodic lines in the piano throughout the A sections, it creates the harmonic foundation for the flute melody, as in *Sinfonische Kanzone*. The A section also uses frequent descending fifth sequences, which can be seen especially well in measures 19 and 20, and measures 66 and 67 in the Recapitulation. As stated earlier, the B section behaves as a tonal Development. This section briefly establishes the keys of B-flat major, A-flat major, G-flat major, and G major before beginning the retransition in measure 40, leading to a perfect authentic cadence in G major in measure 48, where the original theme returns.

The movement ends with an extensive coda, beginning in measure 78. It uses the texture of the A section (chordal, rhythmic piano accompaniment) and motives from both A and B sections. The structural cadence is on the downbeat of measure 99 and is followed by a cadential extension for the next five measures. The final cadence in this movement behaves similarly to a plagal “Amen” cadence in a hymn, where all forward rhythmic and harmonic motion has ceased and the cadence is meant to signal the end of the work. However, this is not a IV–I cadence. The penultimate chord is actually a B-flat nine sharp five chord (Bb9#5), which is mainly used in jazz music. It is a chord based off of the whole-tone scale and, in fact, is only missing one note to complete the whole-tone scale (the E-natural). The final chord, as per Karg-Elert’s norm, is a G thirteen chord. See Figure 17.
The second movement is subtitled *Der kranke Mond* (The Sick Moon). It is interesting that Karg-Elert uses this subtitle, since it is the title of the seventh movement in Arnold Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*, composed in 1912. *Der kranke Mond* is the only movement of Schoenberg’s work where the flute is the sole accompanimental instrument to the voice. *Pierrot* is based on a group of poems by Albert Giraud, translated from French into German by Otto Erich Hartleben. The poem for *Der kranke Mond* translates thus:

You nightly death-sick moon  
There on heaven’s black pillow,  
Your face, so feverishly swollen,  
Enchants me, like an alien melody.

Of unquenchable thirst for love,  
You die, of longing inwardly suppressed,  
You nightly death-sick moon  
There on heaven’s black pillow.
The lover, who in love-drunk frenzy
Mindlessly steals to his mistress,
Is diverted by your play of moonbeams,
Your pale, pain-born blood,
You nightly death-sick moon!\(^6^1\)

Though the two movements share the same title, they have no musical or formal similarities, nor does the flute writing in this movement resemble that of the flute writing in *Pierrot*. Karg-Elert’s work, though stretching the limits of tonality to the extreme, is still tonal, while Schoenberg’s is freely atonal. Likewise, Karg-Elert’s movement is rounded binary in form, while Schoenberg’s is through-composed. Karg-Elert probably titled his movement such because the poem fit the character of the piece and as a salute to the more progressive composer. In addition, the title of this movement, more so than anything else in the suite, ties the work to the Expressionist movement and to pointillism because of its connection with the music of Schoenberg and his use of *Klangfarbenmelodie*.

This movement is very closely related to the second movement of Karg-Elert’s flute sonata in both tonality and thematic material, most clearly seen in the main theme of the two movements. While the opening flute melody in the suite is an inversion of the opening theme in the sonata, it shares almost exact intervallic content with the Recapitulation in the sonata. See Figure 18. Even the piano accompaniment, though thinner and simplified in the suite, mimics the piano accompaniment in the sonata.

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Figure 18: Suite vs. Sonata Themes

Suite Mvt. 2, Opening Theme:

Sonata Mvt. 2, Recapitulation

This movement is in ternary form with a very brief (six-measure) middle section. The beginning of the middle section is indicated with a double bar line and time signature change in measure 22. The return of the A section begins after a caesura in measure 28 and is somewhat disguised by the fact that the main melody is in the piano and the flute has a counter-melody above it. The coda, beginning in measure 44, is used to firmly establish the closing key of D-flat major, an odd choice, since that key has yet to be used in the movement.

Even though this movement is tonally restless as in the sonata, Karg-Elert once again gives clear cadential indications that bring the listener’s ear back to the tonic of the
moment. In the second movement of the sonata, the majority of cadences are marked by leading tones, in the suite they are not so simply indicated, but are no less clear to the listener. The majority of cadences in Der kranke Mond are indicated through a slowing of melodic motion and downward leap followed by a rest in the flute line. Though the movement ends firmly in D-flat major, the majority of strong cadences are in D minor. There are also tonicizations of C-sharp major, E-flat minor, C major, F-sharp major, and G minor, the progression of which makes little or no functional sense.

The third movement of Suite pointillistique, Diavolina und Innocenz represents the dichotomy indicated in the title. The outer sections represent the devil and the middle section represents innocence. This movement clearly indicates and conforms to a scherzo and trio form. See Figure 19. It adheres to the conventions of having two distinct sections and a return to A without repeats at the end. The only slight modification is that the scherzo and trio sections each contain an extra non-repeated section at the end; in the scherzo section the main theme returns while the trio section ends with a transition back to the original key and tempo to prepare a smooth return of A.

**Figure 19: Movement 3, Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scherzo</td>
<td>Trio</td>
<td>Scherzo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\begin{align*}
\| a : & : b : & a’ \| & : c : d c’ : & \text{trans} \| a & : b & a’ \\
\text{mm.} & 1 – 96 & 97 – 123 & 124 – 219
\end{align*}
\]

The two scherzo sections are in three-eight meter and represent the character of the devil. If there were any doubt to this, Karg-Elert puts it to rest by giving the
indication, “with a tinge of Mephistopheles” at the beginning. These sections are in the key of A minor and feature frequent use of waltz-like accompanimental figures. There is precedence for the combination of these characteristics representing the devil, as in Saint-Saëns’ *Danse Macabre*. Both works are in a triple meter, in a minor key, and have similar accompanimental figures. Also, though Karg-Elert does not make as overt a use of the tritone as Saint-Saëns, it is still prevalent through frequent diminished chords and is often the interval in the bass both melodically and harmonically.

As would be expected, the trio presents a dramatic character shift from the scherzo. Karg-Elert reinforces the character of innocence by indicating that the flute melody should be “sweet and naïve.” The meter of this section changes between five-four, seven-four, and three-four and is in the key of F major. The piano begins with a tiered entrance outlining a quartal chord followed by blocked chords on each quarter note. The effect of this accompaniment is hymn-like. The flute melody at the beginning of the trio is probably the most tonally stable melody in all of Karg-Elert’s flute music. For four consecutive measures there is not one single accidental in the flute line, despite the chromatic chords used in the piano. This provides a sense of calmness for the listener that is not present in the anxious scherzo. The transition back to the scherzo begins with the trio melody placed in the piano in the key of D minor, giving a mysterious and ominous effect. The flute plays the same motive in F major before the piano reiterates it in D minor and begins accelerating toward the original tempo and key.

In the final section Karg-Elert writes out an exact repeat of the scherzo without repeats, as would be expected in a scherzo-trio form. The only difference in musical

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62 Mephistopheles is a demon in German folklore. He was originally part of the Faust legend, but became a stock character used to represent the devil.
content is the final eight measures of the movement where, instead of using it to transition to the trio, he gives a six-measure cadence in A minor. There are two empty measures at the end of this movement for both the flute and the piano. The reason for this is probably to indicate that the performers should stay set slightly longer at the end before making any motion in order to let the sound dissipate in the room.

Karg-Elert indicates that the fourth movement should be played, “in the style of a hymn.” He reinforces this by giving the piano block chords for the entire first section; however, that character is not maintained throughout the movement. In fact, Karg-Elert uses extremely varied textures in this movement, including blocked chords, melodic interplay, and even harp-like rapid arpeggiation. After the opening section, the piano shifts from fully blocked chords to blocked chords in the left hand with arpeggiation in the right hand, and by measure 26 it has shifted to full arpeggiation without blocked chords. The composer for the most part maintains this texture until the final three measures where he returns to using blocked chords in the piano.

A functional analysis of the harmony of this movement is highly problematic. Though it is chordal, the chords are in no way functional, not even at strong cadence points (of which there are few). It seems as if Karg-Elert purposefully avoids any sense of cadential arrival unless absolutely necessary. He does this by eliding phrases and shifting freely between tonalities. We know the piece as a whole is in G major because the key signature has one sharp and the final cadence is in G major; however, the movement begins on octave B-flats and there is not a G major chord anywhere in the vicinity of the beginning, neither are there any E minor chords within the vicinity (which would be the next tonal assumption). There are, in fact, only two strongly felt cadences
in the entire movement: a D major cadence in measure 19 and a G major cadence at the end. Even these are more felt cadences than functional ones since the D major cadence is approached by a C nine chord with the D in the bass and the final chord of the piece is approached by an A minor seven chord in second inversion. In this circumstance Karg-Elert was most likely presenting his own version of pointillism in terms of tonal color without taking the atonal approach.

This movement is in Karg-Elert’s typical ternary form. Though there is no definite way of determining that the middle section is tonally closed, there are other indications that this is ternary rather than rounded binary, such as melodic and textural independence. At first glance it seems like there is a coda at the end; however, there is no melodic, harmonic, or textural delineation that would indicate where it begins. There is a deviation in the return of A from the original statement, but it is written in such a way that it becomes more of an expansion of the A section rather than a separate section.

*Suite pointillistique* is a true culmination of Karg-Elert’s four works for flute and piano. Each of the four movements draws on compositional elements from his previous flute and piano works in terms of texture, tonality, melodic content, and character. Also, all four movements have distinctly different characters, giving clarity of the title’s reference to the pointillist movement. Each movement creates part of the whole picture, just as each of the four flute and piano works create the picture of Karg-Elert’s compositional style and relationship with both flute and flutist.
CONCLUSION

Karg-Elert’s time spent playing in a military band prompted the composition of the majority of his wind music, the most significant of which was his flute music. Together with his good friend Bartuschat, he was able to explore the range and timbral, chromatic, and expressive qualities of the Boehm flute. In the Boehm flute, Karg-Elert found an instrument that could withstand his demands as a composer and would also challenge him to go beyond the status quo in flute solo literature. Without Bartuschat’s decision to switch to the Boehm flute it is very likely that none of Karg-Elert’s flute music would exist today. There is a small chance that he would have written them anyway, but his praise of the Boehm flute was resolute. The evenness of tone and dynamic control at all extremities of range were essential to his music.

For Bartuschat, Karg-Elert’s unique compositional style must have posed a new and exciting challenge. His stretching of the boundaries of tonality, sudden shifts of character, and unusual virtuosic patterns had yet to be seen in solo flute music. He stretched tonality through unusual chord progressions, extended tertian harmonies, and free use of chromatic harmonies. A performer of his music had to be able to shift seamlessly between French and German style traits, and between Romantic and Impressionist styles. Although virtuosic, Karg-Elert’s music displays a special kind of challenge to the performer, requiring an ability to manage unusual patterns instead of standard scale and arpeggio passages. Bartuschat continued to use the 30 Caprices as teaching tools throughout his career.
When taken as a whole, the four flute and piano pieces fill a unique role in flute solo music which is not found anywhere else in the literature of that time. However, each piece is distinctive from the others and worthy of note in its own right. *Sinfonische Kanzone* most closely fits the traditional competition piece mold. It is tonally and formally standard, and utilizes both Romantic and cabaret textures. It is in the small-scale harmonic structure where Karg-Elert begins to display his unique compositional style, using numerous extended tertian harmonies and frequent chromatic chords, but managing never to lose a sense of tonal center. Though a large portion of the piano part is purely accompanimental, there are moments of intricate melodic interplay between the two instruments that foreshadow the texture of the Sonata in B-flat.

The Sonata in B-flat is the only work to which Karg-Elert did not give an expressive title. This piece simultaneously adheres to the expectations of its title and stretches the limits in deviating from it. Tonally, one must look at all three movements to find a sonata-form structure, while thematically each movement adheres to it with minor adjustments. Karg-Elert’s mastery of texture and interplay between the two instruments can be seen in this work. Harmonically, this work is functional; however, in the middle movement Karg-Elert begins to show his penchant for rapid, unusual harmonic changes which sometimes leave the listener in doubt of the tonal center.

*Exotic impressions* represents a shift in style from the Sonata. Here, Karg-Elert proves that there can be complexity in seeming simplicity. It is the first of his flute and piano works to have explicit programmatic titles. He exploits the full timbral capabilities of both instruments in order to heighten the programmatic aspect of the piece. In much of this work, functional tonality is subservient to color. This can be seen especially well
in the middle movement, played on piccolo. The texture is greatly simplified as compared to both the Sonata and *Sinfonische Kanzone*, in favor of creating caricature-like short, sharp movements.

*Suite pointillistique* is a true culmination of Karg-Elert’s flute and piano works, and can be seen as an amalgamation of stylistic features of the three other pieces discussed. Though the title might imply the work is related to atonal and twelve-tone music, it is only in the final movement that Karg-Elert seemingly abandons a tonal center in favor of coloristic pointillism.

Finally, it is safe to say that Karg-Elert’s flute and piano music holds a unique place in flute literature that cannot be filled by any other works in the repertoire. The tonal and formal structure of each piece is well crafted and deserving of both scholarly attention and exposure through performance. It was not until many years after their composition that composers of flute music began to use the kind of harmonic language and technical challenges that Karg-Elert incorporated into these four works, making him a pioneer in solo flute music. The challenges and unique musical language presented in these four pieces will reward intense study by both flutists and scholars.
Bibliography


