

## ***A revision of Sigfrid Karg-Elert's Op. 153 for saxophone solo; "The saxophone's Cello Suites", and a conversation with the composer***

I will give a brief presentation (section A) of my revision of Sigfrid Karg-Elert's 25 Caprices and Sonata for solo saxophone (to be published by Zimmermann Verlag in the course of this year), after which I will present a pilot of a future theatrical concert (section B) in which I have a (fictional) conversation with the composer Karg-Elert (1877-1933).

### Section A (ca. 6')

In 1986 (I was 18 and barely from school) I bought Sigfrid Karg-Elert's 25 Caprices and an Atonal Sonata Opus 153, written in 1929. It came in two nice old-fashioned volumes. Shortly, I discovered that this was music for me: profound and not too easy. At least this will keep me busy for a while, I thought - and I was right. Now, thirty-four years later, I'm still not done with it.

All the while I have found that this music is special, and by now I am convinced that it is unique. The saxophone has little excellent repertoire from before 1935, and certainly not of German origin. Moreover, the Leipziger Karg-Elert was a composer who worked in a completely different style than most "saxophone composers", most of whom are from Belgium and France. Karg-Elert composed mainly for organ and harmonium. His touchstone was his famous fellow townsman of the past, Johann Sebastian Bach. But during the First World War, in 1915, he was mobilized and employed in a military orchestra, where he learned to play the saxophone. Fourteen years later he composed his opus 153, which has great intensity, versatility and depth. Because it is the first extensive and serious collection of pieces for saxophone solo, I like to call it the "cello suites of the saxophone" - after Bach's cello suites, of course.

The score, of which only one source exists, the 1929 first edition, is unfortunately full with inconsistencies, musical contradictions and apparent errors. Already in 1996 I contacted the publisher, Zimmermann, about a possible re-edition. We did not come to an agreement about it and it stayed in the back of my head until last year, when I took up the task of critically going through the whole score and finding plausible solutions for the many questions that it poses. Since completing this job, I have given the revision to a number of colleagues, who have contributed to this work by giving their comments on my revision. I thank all of them. Of course; a second source, like the original manuscript, could provide inestimable information about how to deal with many of the problems. I am still searching.

After this introduction I will give a few examples of the close to 300 editorial interventions over the 42 pages of the score that I have done.

### Section B (ca. 14')

A (fictional) conversation with Sigfrid Karg-Elert. His answers to my questions will be readable on video screen, while I play some of his Caprices on saxophone, as if he was speaking through his own music. This will portray his tempestuous life, his witty and unyielding character, the circumstances under which his opus 153 came into being, some historical insight in the era and the reason why he unjustifiably did not make the canon of twentieth century composers.



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Multiple prize-winner Raaf Hekkema has an adventurous spirit. Performing mainly his own arrangements, he gives approximately 100 concerts a year the world over. Hekkema has appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras and has given many international masterclasses. The solo CD 'Paganini Caprices for Saxophone' (MDG, 2006) earned him the German Echo Klassik 'Instrumentalist of the Year' title. His compositions and arrangements are published by

Schott Music.

Hekkema is co-founder of Calefax Reed Quintet (since 1985), for whom he has arranged hundreds of works, many of which have been recorded. The ensemble plays at prominent concert venues worldwide, from South America to Japan, appears regularly on international radio and television, and has issued an impressive collection of CD recordings. Calefax has also been the recipient of various prizes and distinctions.

On 'Bach Partitas for Saxophone': 'It's a daring enterprise, but Hekkema soon ends all doubts. In places the saxophone even wins over the violin. Unbelievable.' (Het Parool)

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