
Introduction

When Hugo Riemann died on 10 July 1919, only one week before his seventieth birthday, it was evident that the young discipline of musicology had lost one of its cornerstones.¹ A special issue of the recently founded journal *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, which had been planned as a congratulatory volume for him, now had to double as his obituary. Its editor Alfred Einstein appraised Riemann's achievement, with what appears like uncanny prescience, in terms of its historic significance:

In Hugo Riemann, a piece of the history of musicological research of the past half-century is embodied. Of all the great names, if his is ignored, it becomes virtually impossible to conceive of this history.²

It goes without saying that the celebratory-commemorative occasion for which this eulogy was written called for a certain degree of honey-mouthed exaggeration. But even if we treat Einstein's superlative assessment with some caution, what remains nonetheless is that even during his lifetime, Riemann's work was considered a milestone in the history of musicology. His prodigious output encompassed over fifty books, and countless articles and editions. His music dictionary – compiled entirely by himself – became the standard reference work for generations. And his theories of harmony and metre suggested that the basic codes of music had finally been cracked. In short, Riemann was a key player in what is easily stylised into a heroic pioneering age of the history of the discipline.

At the turn of the century, the academic discipline of musicology was a recent addition to the institutional landscape. After chairs were established in Vienna (Eduard Hanslick, 1870, succeeded by Guido Adler

¹ I am using the term 'musicology' as a translation of *Musikwissenschaft*, although the rigorous, scientific flavour of the German *Wissenschaft* is not fully captured in its English equivalent.

² Alfred Einstein, 'Hugo Riemann zum 70. Geburtstag', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1919), p. 569. 'In Hugo Riemann ist ein Stück Geschichte der musikwissenschaftlichen Forschung im letzten halben Jahrhundert verkörpert. Sein Name ist der, der aus dieser Geschichte am wenigsten, am unmöglichsten wegzudenken ist.' All translations are mine, unless marked otherwise. The original text of longer quotations is provided wherever possible.

Cambridge University Press

0521820731 - Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought

Alexander Rehding

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought*

in 1898), Strasbourg (Salomon Jadassohn, 1897) and several other universities in German-speaking countries that quickly followed suit, musicology was urgently in need of self-definition and a demarcation of its identity as an independent subject. Like Guido Adler before him, Riemann had offered a musicological syllabus covering a number of subdisciplines.³ In Riemann's vision, this canon of subdisciplines covered five areas: acoustics, tone physiology and psychology, music aesthetics, practical music theory, and finally – as 'musicology's best part'⁴ – music history. Riemann's subdisciplines present overlapping areas of study, from physical attributes to perceptual, pedagogical and ultimately historical concerns. At the same time the identity of the object of investigation shifts, almost seamlessly, from sound wave to musical structure, and on to musical style.

The systematic progression of this canon reflected Riemann's personal approach to his subject: the aspects that these subdisciplines examined all came together under the category of 'musical hearing', which Riemann defined and redefined throughout his career. In this sense, Einstein's eulogy noted that in the academic landscape Riemann 'occupies an exceptional position: he is the only [musicologist] who did not start specifically as a historian'.⁵ Rather, in line with the idea of a 'bottom-to-top aesthetics', prevalent in the work of then fashionable thinkers such as Theodor Fechner and Johann Friedrich Herbart, he tried to capture an essential quality of music, starting with the most general and fundamental aspects and then going into the particular and specific manifestations.⁶

³ Guido Adler, 'Umfang, Methode und Ziel der Musikwissenschaft', *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1885), pp. 5–20. Hugo Riemann, *Grundriß der Musikwissenschaft* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1908). On Adler's and Riemann's conceptions of musicology, see Barbara Boisits, 'Hugo Riemann – Guido Adler: Zwei Konzepte von Musikwissenschaft vor dem Hintergrund geisteswissenschaftlicher Methodendiskussionen um 1900', in Klaus Mehner and Tatjana Böhme-Mehner, eds., *Hugo Riemann (1849–1919): Musikwissenschaftler mit Universalanspruch* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2001), pp. 17–29.

⁴ Riemann, *Grundriß der Musikwissenschaft*, p. 3.

⁵ Einstein, 'Hugo Riemann zum 70. Geburtstag', p. 569.

⁶ On 'bottom-to-top aesthetics' see Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1897), pp. 1–7. Riemann adopts the label from 'Der gegenwärtige Stand der musikalischen Aesthetik' (1878) on, in *Präludien und Studien* (reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), vol. 2, p. 50. However, he later claims that his approach had always been 'top-to-bottom'; see 'Ideen zu einer "Lehre von den Tonvorstellungen"', *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters* (1914/15), p. 1. Peter Rummenhüller comments on this apparent paradox in *Musiktheoretisches Denken im 19. Jahrhundert* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1967), pp. 103–4. See also Hartmut Grimm, "'Ästhetik von unten': Hugo Riemanns Konzept der Musikästhetik", in Mehner and Böhme-Mehner, eds., *Hugo Riemann*, pp. 117–30.

Cambridge University Press

0521820731 - Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought

Alexander Rehding

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

This bottom-to-top approach also informed his aesthetics of the musical work, which tended to view musical forms as entities built up from the basic parts to the whole. In his model, the structure of the musical work thus unfolds before the listener, who cannot grasp the totality until it is completed before his or her ears.⁷ As Riemann claimed in his three lectures on aesthetics, *Wie hören wir Musik? (How Do We Hear Music?)* of 1888, listening to musical structures bears great resemblance to viewing a work of architecture, in that both are to be contemplated as aesthetic totalities. However, the means of contemplation is different for music:

The visitor to Cologne Cathedral, however, who is not himself an architect, has one great advantage over any listener to the Ninth Symphony who is not a musician. The former stands in front of the cathedral and can spend as long as he likes absorbing in his imagination first the overall structure and then, gradually, more and more detail, first grasping the large-scale symmetries and passing from these to the smaller scale. Not so the listener. The music does not wait as it enters his ear, and if he does not succeed immediately in grasping it, he has lost the chance of understanding it better by comparing one passage with the next. Everything therefore depends on clearly grasping the most minute figures and their correct relationship to each other, in fact on understanding the smallest points of symmetry.⁸

In this way, Riemann's musical thought was centrally concerned with the aesthetic perception of the work under the category of a structural 'musical hearing'. This form of hearing is presented as a logical activity – and a strenuous one at that, which requires the full concentration of the listener. At the same time, the comparison with Cologne Cathedral – a gigantic medieval Gothic structure that remained incomplete until 1880 – is chosen carefully, resonating as it did in the later nineteenth century with a wealth of historical and political concerns, which appears to lend a distinct cultural dimension to Riemann's concept of musical hearing.

⁷ See, for instance, the entry on 'Formen, musikalische' in Riemann, *Musiklexikon*, 5th edn (Leipzig: Max Hesse, 1900), pp. 332–4.

⁸ Riemann, *Wie hören wir Musik?: Grundlinien der Musik-Ästhetik*, 6th edn (Berlin: Max Hesse, 1923), pp. 43–4, trans. in Bojan Bujić, *Music in European Thought 1851–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 357. 'Der Beschauer des Kölner Doms, der nicht selbst Musiker ist, befindet sich nun aber in einem gewaltigen Vorteil gegenüber dem Hörer der neunten Symphonie, der nicht Musiker ist. Jener steht vor dem Dom, läßt sein Bild, so lange er will, auf seine Phantasie wirken und versteht zunächst den Totalaufbau und allmählich mehr und mehr das Detail; er begreift zunächst die Symmetrien im großen und dringt von diesen allmählich zu den kleineren vor. Anders der Musikhörer. Flüchtig eilt das Tonbild an seinem Ohr vorüber, und wenn es ihm nicht sofort gelang, es festzuhalten, so ist die Möglichkeit, durch Vergleichung mit ihm Nachfolgendem es besser zu verstehen, verloren. Alles hängt also vom scharfen Auffassen der kleinsten Gebilde und ihrer richtigen Beziehung aufeinander, also von Verständnis der kleinsten Symmetrien ab.'

Cambridge University Press

0521820731 - Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought

Alexander Rehding

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought*

I

In the celebratory issue of *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* it was tactfully ignored that despite his towering stature within the discipline, Riemann never received a full tenured professorship, an *Ordinariat*.⁹ After decades of financial insecurity in various minor posts, criss-crossing the country, from Bielefeld, Leipzig, Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), and Hamburg to Sondershausen and Wiesbaden, Riemann finally settled in Leipzig in 1895.¹⁰ Even though he had received a number of international honours – from St Cecilia’s Academy in Rome (1887), the Royal Academy in Florence (1894), the University of Edinburgh (1899), and the Royal Musical Association in London (1904) – his recognition inside Germany grew only slowly. In 1901 he was appointed extraordinary professor at Leipzig; the arrangement was formalised in 1905. In 1908, he additionally became the founder and director of the musicological institute. The University of Leipzig gave him an honorary professorship in 1911. Finally, in 1914, he became director of a newly founded semi-autonomous institute for musicological research.

Paradoxically, perhaps, it is conceivable that the impact and proliferation of Riemann’s work was fostered by the circumstance of his not having the security of a tenured post. As Michael Arntz has recently suggested, Riemann’s incessant publishing activity was mainly due to the lack of a regular income and the dire necessity to earn money to support his family. Since his days in Hamburg (1881–90), he therefore made a habit of working from four o’clock in the morning to ten at night – every day, save Christmas Day.¹¹ Among his prolific output, a range of short ‘catechisms’ and compendia on all aspects of musical activity enjoyed particular popularity, and ensured that his views on music spread fast, even beyond the narrow confines of academia.

⁹ Biographical accounts of Riemann can be found in Willibald Gurlitt, ‘Hugo Riemann (1849–1919)’, *Veröffentlichungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz: Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse* 25 (1950), pp. 1865–1901; Carl Mennicke, ‘Eine biographische Skizze nebst einem Verzeichnis seiner Werke’, *Riemann-Festschrift* (Leipzig: Max Hesse, 1909), pp. vii–xxiv; Michael Arntz, *Hugo Riemann (1849–1919): Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (Cologne: Concerto-Verlag, 1999), pp. 41–175, and ‘“Nehmen Sie Riemann ernst?”: Zur Bedeutung Hugo Riemanns für die Emanzipation der Musik’, in Mehner and Böhme-Mehner, eds., *Hugo Riemann*, pp. 9–16.

¹⁰ It seems that Riemann was briefly considered for a professorship at Bonn as early as 1876 (that is, before he completed his *Habilitationsschrift*, the qualification normally required for academic teaching in Germany). However, due to what were perceived by the committee as Wagnerian leanings and anti-Classical tendencies, Riemann was struck off the shortlist. See Willy Kahl, ‘Der “obskure” Riemann: Ein Brief F. Chrysanders’, in *Studien zur Musikgeschichte des Rheinlandes* (Cologne: Arno Verlag, 1956), pp. 54–6.

¹¹ Arntz, *Hugo Riemann*, p. 45.

Cambridge University Press

0521820731 - Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought

Alexander Rehding

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

Time and again, the outcome of Riemann's systematic musicological project was praised for the cogency and internal coherence with which the individual aspects referred to one another. Thus Alfred Einstein continued his eulogy:

The unity of his oeuvre is exceptional: the theorist is in the service of the historian, the historian provides materials from all areas, whether it be the closest or farthest. If one wants to follow him fully and understand him fully, one must also know him fully.¹²

In the context of Einstein's earlier observation, that Riemann had not begun as a historian but rather – following Adler's basic distinction – as a 'systematic' musicologist, this statement is intriguing. In fact, however, both statements reflect Riemann's development accurately. Riemann had intermittently pursued projects with a historical component, such as his inaugural dissertation (*Habilitationsschrift*), *Studien zur Geschichte der Notenschrift* (*Studies in the History of Notation*, 1878), but the bulk of his research was concerned with the establishment of a thoroughgoing foundation of the general aspects of music.

The music historian Philipp Spitta, who had examined this inaugural dissertation, urged Riemann in a letter of 1890 to 'return to music history'.¹³ But in a way, Riemann had been working on a 'return to music history' all along: once the systematic part of his musical project had been completed, he felt he had established once and for all what music actually *is* and how it is heard. With his theoretical framework in place, he could tackle specific music-historical projects – and it is no coincidence that his major publications on aspects of music history date from the period after he had formulated most of his theoretical views. As the last two chapters will explore, it was in this conceptual frame that much, though not all, of his later music-historical research was carried out.

Given his systematising efforts, it is perhaps not surprising that Riemann showed considerably less enthusiasm for a biographically based approach to music history. Rather, he considered research into the lives of the composers little more than a preliminary stage towards a more rigorous examination of musical structures. At the same time, this move away from biography constituted for him a necessary step in the process of the professionalisation of the discipline. Thus, he explained in 1901, while much of the groundwork had been covered in the nineteenth century by non-musicians skilled in archival work,

¹² Einstein, 'Hugo Riemann zum 70. Geburtstag', p. 570. 'Die Einheitlichkeit seines Schaffens ist außerordentlich: der Theoretiker steht im Dienst des Historikers, der Historiker schafft dem Theoretiker Stoff aus allen, den nächsten und entlegensten Gegenden herbei. Man muß, will man ihm ganz folgen und ihn ganz verstehen, ihn auch ganz kennen.'

¹³ See Arntz, *Hugo Riemann*, pp. 117–18.

Cambridge University Press

0521820731 - Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought

Alexander Rehding

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought*

such as philologists and lawyers, more specialised skills were required nowadays:

Of course, where biographical and bibliographical work stops and questions begin as to the history of art forms or the aesthetic appreciation of artistic achievement, the superiority of philologists and lawyers ends, and musicians begin to make their voices heard. Since music history started examining the development of artistic technique and art theory, as well as stylistic genres and artistic tendencies, and since it has tackled critical editions of older compositions on a larger scale, professional musicians have entered more and more into the front line of music historians. Since historical work cannot successfully be done on the side, musicology has developed into a new branch of the musical profession whose representatives are neither composers nor practising musicians, except perhaps in the second place, but rather musical scientists.¹⁴

Elsewhere, Riemann summarised his contribution to the field of music history as his effort to move interest away from ‘the life stories of the great masters towards the development of tonal forms and stylistic features’.¹⁵ As another eulogy in the 1919 jubilee issue pointed out, this was in aid of a ‘theory of music-historical principles (without which a scientific music history is not possible)’.¹⁶ It was this holistic appeal, the idea that all aspects of the study of music could be unified and related back to one principle, or a small set of principles – that is to say, the tantalising possibility that an underlying essence of music might be discovered and studied by rigorous scientific means – that lent Riemann’s ideas such clout in the academy.

The jubilant contributors of the 1919 *Festschrift* celebrated the organicism of Riemann’s system – Riemann’s image of Cologne Cathedral, mentioned above, seems to be chosen in the spirit of Goethe’s reflections

¹⁴ Riemann, *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven (1800–1900)* (Leipzig and Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1901), pp. 762–3. ‘Freilich wo die biographische und bibliographische Arbeit aufhört und die Geschichte der Kunstformen, die ästhetische Würdigung der Kunstleistungen in Frage kommt, da hört die Überlegenheit des Philologen und Juristen auf und der Musiker kommt zu Worte. Seitdem die Musikgeschichte ernstlicher auf die Entwicklung der Kunsttechnik und Kunstlehre, auf Stilgattungen und Kunstströmungen einzugehen begonnen und kritische Neuausgaben älterer Tonwerke in größerem Maßstabe in Angriff genommen hat, sind deshalb die Fachmusiker mehr und mehr in die erste Reihe auch der Musikhistoriker getreten und es hat sich, da die historischen Arbeiten sich nicht wohl mit Erfolg nebenbei besorgen lassen, mehr und mehr die Musikwissenschaft zu einem neuen Zweige des Musikerberufs entwickelt, dessen Vertreter weder Komponisten noch ausübende Musiker, wenigstens beides höchstens nebenher, vielmehr in erster Linie Musikgelehrte sind.’

¹⁵ Hugo Riemann, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1913), vol. 2/3, p. iii.

¹⁶ Willibald Gurlitt, ‘Hugo Riemann und die Musikgeschichte’, *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (July 1919), p. 586.

Introduction

on Strasbourg Minster in *Von deutscher Baukunst*. A subsequent critical tradition, by contrast, has taken issue with what could well be considered the basic germ-cell of Riemann's musical thought, namely the doctrine of harmonic dualism – in short, the idea that minor triads are symmetrically opposed to major triads and work upside-down. This idea, which will be reviewed in Chapter 1, became the accepted doctrine in late nineteenth-century German music theory but is comprehensively dismissed in contemporary scholarship.¹⁷ Riemann's high-flying aspirations towards a unified musicology seem to come down with a crash: if as central a component of Riemann's all-encompassing musical thought as harmonic dualism is seriously flawed, one would assume that the remainder of his systematic edifice, conceived in the spirit of organicism, would collapse like a house of cards.

Strangely, perhaps, this has not happened: key aspects of Riemann's theoretical work continue to be in everyday use. Particularly in Germany, as well as parts of Central and Eastern Europe, Riemann's theory of harmonic function is common currency, and in fact replaces the Roman-numeral taxonomy common in English-speaking countries. However, the version of the theory that is taught under the name of Riemann is in fact based on the textbooks by Maler and Grabner – whose theories are entirely devoid of harmonic dualism.¹⁸ (This process of removing harmonic dualism from Riemann's theories bears some resemblances to the process of turning Schenker's theories into a working model by decontextualising them and stripping them of any undesirable metaphysical baggage.¹⁹)

These 'monistic' versions of harmonic function are paralleled by a sizeable body of critical literature that has amassed around Riemann's writings. With very few exceptions, the critics are in agreement that harmonic dualism is not merely redundant to the theory of harmonic function but in fact contradicts its essential features. In the words of one recent commentator, exhibiting an uncommon degree of sympathy towards Riemann's harmonic dualism, 'harmonic dualism and harmonic function are independent ideas and emerged in Riemann's work

¹⁷ Some recent music-theoretical approaches, notably the analytical work following Daniel Harrison and David Lewin, take their inspiration from harmonic dualism, but neither would claim to endorse the tenets of this theory to the full.

¹⁸ See Wolf von Forster, 'Heutige Praktiken im Harmonielehreunterricht an Musikhochschulen und Konservatorien', in Martin Vogel, ed., *Beiträge zur Musiktheorie des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1966), pp. 260–1.

¹⁹ On Schenker's de-ideologisation, see for instance Nicholas Cook, 'Schenker's Theory of Music as Ethics', *Journal of Musicology* 7 (1989), pp. 415–39; and Robert Snarrenberg, 'Competing Myths: The American Abandonment of Schenker's Organicism', in Anthony Pople, ed., *Theory, Analysis and Meaning in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 29–56.

Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought

as responses to different problems'.²⁰ Usually the rejection of harmonic dualism is final and complete. To put it in Scott Burnham's terms: the current reception of Riemann has essentialised what he got right – harmonic function – and has discarded what he got wrong – harmonic dualism.²¹

From a practical point of view there is little to be criticised about this 'divorce of convenience' – the monistic version of the theory of harmonic function does indeed work much better than Riemann's original. Riemann himself, on the other hand, was adamant that harmonic dualism was at the centre of his music-theoretical endeavour, and inextricably connected with his ideas of harmonic function:

I cannot quite understand how some men who are acquainted with my theory have been able to see something of a retreat from the territory of harmonic dualism in the introduction of the taxonomy of function (*TSD* etc.) . . . I still stand in the same position as thirty years ago; the only difference is that I have finally liberated myself fully from the legitimation of the principles of harmony through acoustical phenomena and uncovered the true roots of harmonic dualism.²²

The real question here for us is: why would Riemann be so insistent on his concept of harmonic dualism? The criticisms that prompted Riemann's response, and similar ones, have since been made again and again, and have shown, as will be discussed in the first two chapters, that there are some genuine problems.²³ Is it possible that a whole generation

²⁰ M. Kevin Mooney, 'The "Table of Relations" and Music Psychology in Hugo Riemann's Harmonic Theory', PhD dissertation (Columbia University, 1996), p. 12.

²¹ Scott Burnham, 'Musical and Intellectual Values: Interpreting the History of Tonal Theory', *Current Musicology* 53 (1993), p. 79.

²² The symbols *T*, *S*, *D* refer to Riemann's concepts of tonic, subdominant and dominant respectively. They will be discussed in some detail in the following chapters. Hugo Riemann, 'Das Problem des harmonischen Dualismus', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 51 (1905), pp. 69–70. 'Nicht ganz verständlich ist mir, wie mehrere meiner Theorie näher stehende Männer in der Einführung der Funktionsbezeichnung (*TSD* etc.) etwas wie einen Rückzug vom Boden des harmonischen Dualismus haben erblicken können . . . Ich stehe heute noch auf demselben Standpunkte wie vor 30 Jahren; nur habe ich mich endlich ganz von der Begründung der Prinzipien der Harmonie durch die akustischen Phänomene freigemacht und die eigentlichen Wurzeln des Dualismus freigelegt.'

²³ Carl Dahlhaus rejects harmonic dualism in a number of articles on Hugo Riemann, which will be revisited particularly in Chapters 1 and 2. Even Elmar Seidel, who is usually Riemann's stout supporter, has to concede after an extended apologia for Riemann's theory of harmony, in 'Die Harmonielehre Hugo Riemanns', in Martin Vogel, ed., *Studien zur Musiktheorie des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1966), pp. 91–2, that harmonic dualism is unnecessary and should have been discarded from the theoretical body. Recently, Henry Klumpenhouwer has revisited the Belinfante/Dahlhaus criticism and has suggested an alternative interpretation that reconciles Riemann's harmonic dualism with his theory of function. See his 'Structural Relations between Riemann's Function Theory and his Dualism', unpublished manuscript. I am grateful to Professor Klumpenhouwer for making this paper available to me.

Introduction

of scholars in imperial Germany from the late nineteenth century to the First World War – some of them no less than the founding fathers of the discipline – were so fundamentally deceived that they believed in an idea that was not only counter-intuitive but also patently and demonstrably wrong?

This vast discrepancy between the position of Riemann's musical thought in his own age and ours poses a problem. This is not simply a problem of music theory that would be hermetically sealed off in its own discursive space. On the contrary, since harmonic dualism is at the conceptual heart of Hugo Riemann's all-embracing musicological enquiry, its significance spills over into numerous other areas of musicological endeavour. To reformulate our question above: what would have been at stake for Riemann in giving up his doctrine of harmonic dualism, given that we know his system of harmonic function would not have suffered further damage? The answer to this question lies not in narrow music-theoretical concerns but rather leads us towards the wider-ranging consequences of his all-embracing musical thought.

Given that much of Riemann's musical thought was guided by the question *How do we hear music?* – to quote the title of his lectures on aesthetics again, the matter would seem to be further complicated: we can say with some degree of certainty that we do not hear minor triads upside-down, as harmonic dualism posited. Nor should we imagine that many nineteenth-century listeners would have done so. Even Riemann proceeds surprisingly gingerly on the question of how minor chords should actually be heard – a discussion of harmonic dualism is conspicuously absent from *Wie hören wir Musik?* However, in connection with issues of musical hearing, the problem of harmonic dualism can be relocated in the social construction of musical listening. The central question for Riemann's harmonic dualism, as we shall see, was not so much about how we *do* hear music. Rather, as Chapter 3 will examine, he exhibited a utopian concern with how we *ought* to hear music, and conversely, he argues that musical compositions ought to comply with harmonic dualism, even though the existing repertoire does not do so, or does so only partly. On this level, Riemann's musical thought touches aspects that merge epistemological and cognitive concerns with aesthetic ones: his musical thought becomes an aesthetic yardstick for past composers and an ethical guideline for composers of the present and the future.

This implicit 'ought' – in other words, the relentless normativity of Riemann's musical thought – is simply the flipside of his systematic and essentialising approach to music. These concerns combine in a notion of self-assumed responsibility of the principles of music theory (in its aesthetic and practical aspects) towards musical composition, as explored in Chapter 2. The constraints that his musical thought can have on musical

Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought

production are brought to the fore in a rare criticism of Riemann at the beginning of the twentieth century:

He intensely studied older works, took measurements from left to right, from top to bottom, distilled the products in all sorts of aesthetic test tubes, separated, calculated, compared, divided, subtracted, cubed, cohobated, until he had happily found all the *ur*-elements of music. Now from this he construed rules, climbed on top of the mountain like Moses and began: 'Thou shalt –' But the first attempt had already missed the goal. Riemann forgot that one must never ask: 'What ought the artist to do?' but rather: 'What does he intend to do?' and 'Does he possess the artistic power to actualise this intent?' Riemann also forgot that norms in art are pointless, since they cannot be enforced.²⁴

For Riemann, his rigorous musical thought might have formulated normative rules for all music, which he hoped to use as an aesthetic yardstick. The critic here, by contrast, considers it a stick with which to beat composers. The criticism points to a clear tension, a power struggle between, on the one hand, Riemann's musical thought – and by extension, the academic institution of musicology – and on the other, practising composers. No matter which position we side with, the example shows clearly the effects of Riemann's effort to combine normative rules of music theory with documents from the history of music, to arrive at the *ur*-components of music. The criticism goes right to the heart of the matter: what was at stake was no less than the definition of music, and the responsibility that academic musicology took in this matter, whether the composer agreed with it or not.

II

The famous tale of the public break between Riemann and his master pupil Max Reger in 1907 clearly belongs here, and should be briefly recapitulated, as it can serve to introduce some of the issues that will occupy us throughout the book. As a seventeen-year-old, Reger had begun

²⁴ Ferdinand Scherber, 'Degeneration und Regeneration', *Neue Musikzeitung* 29 (1908), p. 235. Reprinted in Susanne Shigihara, ed., *Die Konfusion in der Musik: Felix Draeseke's Kampfschrift von 1906 und die Folgen* (Bonn: Gudrun Schröder, 1990), p. 364. 'Er studierte mit heißem Bemühen ältere Werke, nahm ihnen Maß von links nach rechts, von oben nach unten, destillierte die Produkte in allen ästhetischen Retorten, schied, rechnete, verglich, dividierte, subtrahierte, kubierte, kohobierte, bis er die Urformen fröhlich beisammen hatte. Nun konstruierte er Regeln daraus, stieg auf den Berg wie Moses und begann: "Du sollst –". Doch der erste Schlag war schon daneben gehauen. Riemann vergaß, daß man nie fragen darf: Was soll der Künstler? sondern: Was will er? und: Hat er die künstlerische Kraft, seinen Willen zu verwirklichen? Riemann vergaß auch, daß Normen in der Kunst keinen Sinn haben, weil sie nicht durchsetzbar sind.' (Scherber's critique of Riemann parodies Goethe's *Faust*.)