

Sound Resonators of Acoustic System

The Five Elements

by Marco Kolks

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We are now going to go deep into the unfathomable depths of High Fidelity. We want to be there where measurements are very difficult to define and maybe even no longer play a very important role. We are there where above all emotions count. Where the passionate soul must be opened in order to be able to recognise and to want to accept tonal revelations. We are there where lengthy descriptive patterns no longer have any impact. Here, in this other world, we stumble on seemingly strange sound elements from Acoustic System. What I am writing about is audiophile hardcore. On the one hand completely way-out and on the other totally fascinating. To get to the point, it is quite the most „exciting“ thing I have been able to listen to during the last few years. But I am also certain: some music lovers will hardly be able to believe what tonal effects these elements have. Sceptics be told: you really can hear it all.

Acoustic System comes from France. Here, in Germany, cable-guru Thomas Fast has taken the product

under his wing. His firm has counted as a specialist for complete room acoustics and audio system acoustics for years now. At Acoustic System Franck Tchang, an active musician himself, has a firm grip on the reins of the company. He is really the leading developer of and responsible for the five different sound elements which only differ from one another in their materials and therewith in their effect. Such a sound element is composed of a small metal semi-spherical cup, a holding device and a wooden base. To explain their effect scientifically would be too longwinded and apart from that rather difficult. Essentially it is about establishing a connection between finest overtones, spreading effects and psycho-acoustic perception. Thomas Fast says: „First and foremost the metal bodies are resonators. They are stimulated by the sound waves in the room and add overtones to them. These are subtle overtones that essentially define sound colours which often already disappear during recording. If these are then added again afterwards the sound result is enhanced.“ These small cups made of copper, silver, gold or platinum alloy are rested on small

square bases (49mm x 49mm) made out of either soft or hard maple instrument wood that has been very well seasoned.

They are fixed to the walls with an elastic white mass of a dough type consistency which can be removed from the wallpaper without damaging it. Whoever does not like the natural wood grain of the bases can get painted versions. The five elements are called:

Basic: The components are copper and silver, the bases are made of soft maple instrument wood, the resulting sound characteristics are dry.

Silver: The resonator is an alloy of silver and copper, the silver part making up much more than with Basic, which in connection with soft maple instrument wood results in light, open and airy tones.

Gold: The main part is 18 carat gold apart from silver and copper. The base is made of hard maple instrument wood. A rather brighter tone is achieved and a slightly condensed tone.

Special Gold: With this version the resonator is made up of 14 carat gold as well as copper and silver. Together with a base of hard maple instrument wood you get a more brilliant tone without compression.

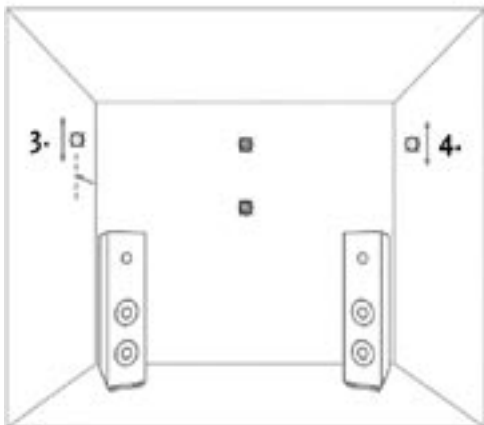
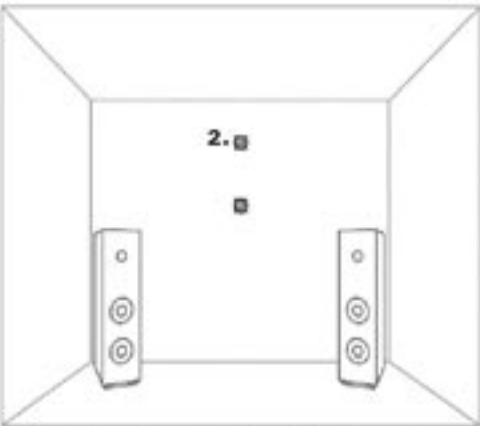
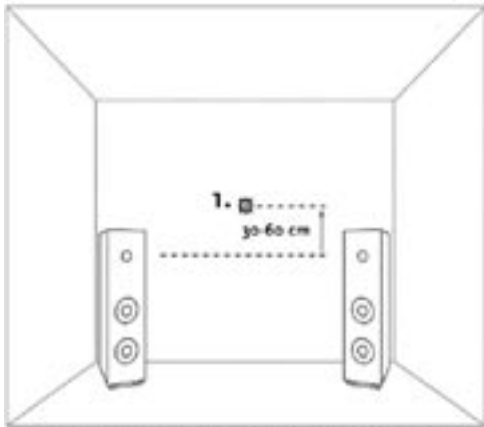
Platinum: With the finest acoustic element the developer uses platinum of 98 percent purity and also hard maple instrument wood. With that the tone within the whole frequency is clearer.

Whoever would like to penetrate the tone nirvana must ideally proceed in six steps. This is providing the room is a normally cut rectangular room. True, my studio measurements differ from the standard, but the “installation system” can be transferred without problems in my studio with slight deviations.

Comments

The use of Acoustic System allows me to experience music differently from how I was used to it before. The total effect is difficult to explain. It is much easier to listen to and feel the music. Newly awakened emotions enrich my perception, although the perception of every person is very different. It will probably be hardly possible to find a common basis of communication. Because what is “graspable” for one is called by another “plastic” and a third person will say “three-dimensional” or even “corporeal”. Again someone else will talk of “lively” and “gripping”. Now, are all these terms and similar ones subsumable under the same phenomenon or must one name different phenomena? Experience shows it is probably better to reckon with a considerable variation of the meaning of terms and it hardly makes sense to restrict oneself to a single form of description. Nominative fixing of terms is not very useful. Above all because with the subject of



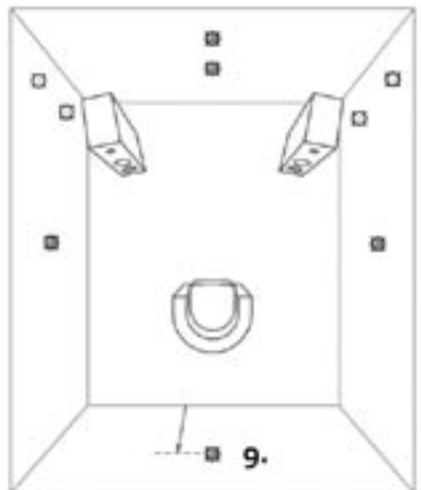
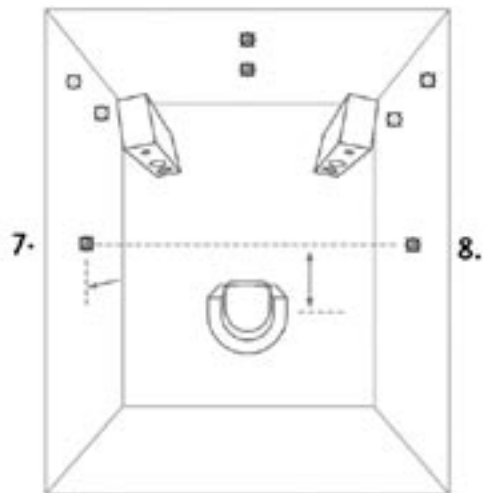
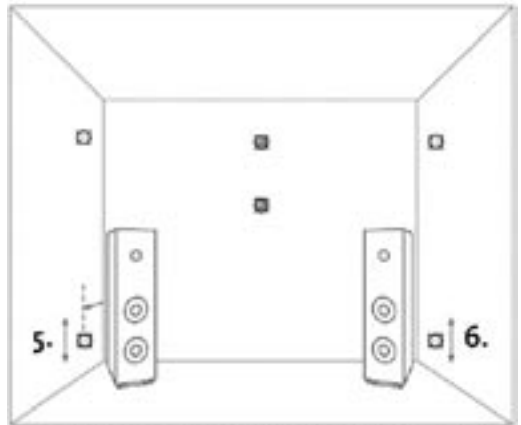


Acoustic System one feels emotionally so strongly.

But why do so many listeners want to experience music emotionally? And how is one to measure what is experienced emotionally. There are according to my knowledge no fixed points of reference for it. The often cited goose pimples or the clearly defined teetering foot are also not sufficient in my opinion. If I were to give myself an answer to these questions, it would certainly not be a final one. Then, when through the happening of sound emotions are awakened within me, can I experience the music, can grasp the musical contents and form. Music defines itself above all in processes of perception and behaviour going on simultaneously and in different possibilities of experience, recognised by a person as being felt or ideally loved. The siren announcing a fire or a police car, or the smashing of a glass fallen to the floor are digested by people cognitively, which means the acoustic signal is reduced purely to the content of information. At least I have never tried to listen for the sound structures when closing the front door. Consequently this means: music reproduction must depict tones in height, depth and width, it must differentiate between the pitches and be able to portray movements. In doing this it shouldn't go as far as that the music is rewritten segmented into individual parts. For me missing

homogeneity means a reduced musical experience. It is a feature of live music that we do not perceive it in a segmented form and that I am always emotionally touched by it. It's at this point that many high-end devices seem to be hopelessly overtaxed, because they are not in a position to transport the actual essence of the music, but their performance is exhausted in purely artificial and drastically reduced imaging. Maybe that is one reason why the second-hand market is flourishing so. It is deep down nothing more than a graveyard of broken audiophile dreams. Franck Tchong is now trying to breath new musical life into music reproduction, which makes it worth listening to again. And that is miles away from what can be measured with conventional equipment – but you can manage quite well with your ears.

I proceeded in numerous steps: the first element (gold) is placed in the middle of the wall behind the loudspeakers about 1.10 metres from the floor. The second element (platinum) a little further above the first one (2.10 metres above the floor). When describing the sound I refer to Tony Bennet “Playin’ with my Friends: Bennet sings the Blues” (Sony Music/ Columbia 5041752000), especially to the title “alright, okay you win”, a duet with Diana Krall. Already using just two elements a change in the sound is made. It is a change that trained listeners perceive immediately,



you can just feel it. I have had similar experiences in the past with Simba Chips and Shaktis. With that I do not mean that these products give rise to similar effects as far as sound goes. They liven up the music according to their intended purpose from within. Acoustic System improves the room. A stage for the sound is opened which then again is dependent on the position of the second element. The music really begins to breathe. The reproduction through the whole frequency is clearer. Repeatedly I remove the resonators and listen without them. With them it's always better. And it isn't just a placebo effect. It's just difficult for me to believe that the resonators alone are responsible for these changes in sound. The voices of Tony Bennet and Diana Krall are more pliable, they are fluent, they breathe and have flair for liveliness. The plucking of the bass profits from it as well, it is sleeker. Faithful to the saying "lots does lots", I put another two elements of silver on the back wall at the same height as the second element, but slightly outside from where the loudspeakers are positioned. As well as that another two elements (silver) exactly under positions three and four about 30 cm above the floor. If there ever was such a thing as a window effect, not anymore. The sound stage is opened once more. The high tone area has gained distinctly in transparency and there is considerable differentiation. It is such a rich measure of fine and

finest imaging for example a brush that touches the drum again and again, that the ear sinks into, fascinated by these nuances. The staggering that doesn't seem to want to end even on the vocals in constantly renewed details of colour are first of all quite uncustomary; after a while you cannot and do not want to do without them. In addition another two elements in special gold. Their place is on the sidewalls on the level of the highest front elements and just in front of the listening position.

Really my equipment is dynamic enough. Even though through the Acoustic System elements it is given on this point too an unexpected surge, which has an additional practical use. Every time I think the chain is going to run out of steam I've still got some reserves left: no breaking off, no limitation, because the single tones have an extremely elongated close. The dynamic characteristics are not only dependent on the listening volume. Good equipment can be played at a low volume and reproduce dynamic shading perfectly, as well.

With Acoustic System's five elements it can happen that such good equipment becomes a prime example for the term "inner dynamics". In addition the two elements mounted last of all reduce the influence of the sidewalls even more. Every instrument, every singer, every small detail remains there where it should be, fixed and enveloped in natural air. Therewith

the natural restriction of the sidewalls is cancelled out. With that I mean said window effect. On this recognition you instinctively breathe in and out more deeply because the resolution has something liberating – again not measurable, but noticeable and audible. In addition the height of imaging can be influenced by moving the two side elements. I placed a last Special Gold element behind the listening position at the same height as the side elements. Again the imaging becomes a little more free.

Then week after week of different types of music. Since the first encounter I have been spellbound and during this time I haven't experienced that the magic might have its boundaries. It is much more the case that the magic produced by the Acoustic System elements has awakened demands and desires that maybe no technical device can deliver. These resonators unfold seemingly quite effortlessly a bouquet of fascinating and at the same time beautiful abilities. There is never a break-off in the sound happening, it's the complete opposite as the homogeneity grows with the number of elements used. For me a new listening feeling has arisen with the use of Acoustic System resonators. It seems to me that I have partly even gained new senses.

In my opinion Franck Tchang has achieved the right balance by adding overtones to the sound happening

using small resonators. These small living-quarter-friendly elements strongly improve above all the high tone resolution. According to my knowledge essentially colour and room information depend on this – two criteria that fill music with life so that emotions are created in the listener. It is just here that it is decided whether the reproduction sounds cut-off, hard and lastly tiring or soft, padded and finally boring. With Acoustic System elements you meet a happy medium, neither cold nor warm, just balanced and emotionally enriched. It is difficult to describe this emotional equilibrium. With Acoustic System the imaging is so to speak pervious. Breathing, strings, the striking of a piano key, fine structures in building up and disintegration of tones: all effortless. There air and colour, nuances and shades can be drawn-up easily. The newly gained power of resolution has always a touch of elegant ease, not of coolness und strictness. Details, I mean the microstructures, are not overemphasised in the foreground but remain part of the complete reproduction – present, conspicuous but unobtrusive but not dominant and always extremely lively. Provided that the recordings are good enough Acoustic System with its five elements will help to attain a simply outstandingly balanced reproduction. But where there is light there's always a shadow: I don't want to think about the prices anymore. MK

The product:

Resonators of Acoustic System

- *Copper*
- *Silver*
- *Gold*
- *Special Gold*
- *Platinum*

Distributor: Fast Audio

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listened with:

Analogue transports: Transrotor Eternita, Musica Nova Piano Forte, Transrotor Fat Bob, Pluto 12a; **Tone arms:** SME V (2x), SME 3012R, SME 312, Pluto 5a Special, Pluto 2 A

Pickup systems: v.d.H. Black Beauty, Transfiguration New Spirit, The Cartridge Man, SPU-Royal, Clearaudio Victory H, Goldring Elite II, Flair from Phonosophie;

MC transformer: Ortofon SPU T 100

CD players: Burmester 916, Phonosophie Impulse 2 Netzteil und Power Control 3;

SACD players: XA Sony 333 ES from Clockwork

D/A converters: Burmester 980, Audio Alchemy DTI Pro 3.2;

Preamplifiers: Burmester 808 MK V, Phonosophie Bi-Control 2 and Power Control 2

Phono amplifiers: Blue Amp Model 42, EAR 834 (3x), TE Audio Phono (Tessendorf/MC teflone version) and filtered power supply (2x),

integrated phono preamplifier 808 MKV

Burmester, Phonosophie and Power Control 2

Power amplifiers: Burmester 911 MK II (Mono), Phonosophie Bi-Stage Twin 1/4;

Integrated amplifiers: Unison Research Simply 845 (Triode), Symphonic Line RG 14 (Version 2003);

Loudspeakers: Acapella Violoncello, Guarneri Sonus Faber, Newtronics Gate active, Bella Luna from CD-Konzertmöbel;

Cables (small signal/loudspeaker/power):

Acapella (silver), Bastanis Epilog, Dolphin Black and Gold, Sun-Wire, HMS Gran Finale, Clockwork, Flatline SPM-Reference, HMS Grand Finale,

Stadthaus 7 and 11 Brains, HMS phono cable,

Ortofon 5000 pure silver phono cable, phono cable

from SAC, phono cable Sun-Wire (3 x), Aural

Symphonics (Digital), Elon III, Bülow, XLO power

power cable, power cable Schäfer und Rompf, Voodoo

power cable (prototype), power cables from

Burmester and Phonosophie, WBT spades, mains

distributors: Phonosophie, XLO, Sun;

Power accessories: Burmester Power Conditioner, power adapters from Hans-Ulrich Rahe (prototype);

Accessories: Copulare Tonbasen, Acapella music

bases (also for loudspeakers), Big Block and Speed

Block from Acapella, Acapella Pucks, SSC bases,

racks from Audio Magic, Ducal cable carriers from

Copulare, cable carriers from Audio Magic, Råke

Pucks, ART Graphite Pucks, Shun Mook, Shaktis,

Enacoms, Pucks Millennium Audio;

Digital accessories: CD-Sound-Improver from

Gläss, CD-mat from ART, Audio Animator from

Art Akustik;

Analogue Accessories: stencils from Stadthaus,

Clearaudio, Music Connection, KAB-Strobe, Pluto,

spirit-levels from Clearaudio, Ortofon and precision

spirit-level, Outer Limit record ring from

Clearaudio, demagnetisers from Audio Physic,

Ring-Mar;

Room tuning: RFA 78 from Harmonix;

Cleaning accessories: Audiotop (Acapella), Last,

record cleaning machine Matrix from Clearaudio,

CD cleaning machine from Gläss

