Pure spin currents carried by magnons, the elementary excitations of the spin system in magnetically ordered insulators (MOIs), have drawn much attention due to their potential applications in information processing at a low dissipation level [1–4]. The MOI yttrium iron garnet (Y$_3$Fe$_5$O$_{12}$, YIG) is a promising candidate for hosting efficient magnon based spin transport due to its low Gilbert damping parameter even in nanometer-thin films [5] and its correspondingly large magnon propagation length [6–9]. Amongst the device concepts enabling logic operation with magnonic spin currents, transistor-inspired devices and even logic gates have been demonstrated [4, 10–13]. Such transistor-like device concepts generally rely on spin-transfer torque for spin current generation. The latter can be realized in bilayers consisting of MOIs and heavy metals with strong spin-orbit coupling via the spin Hall effect (SHE) [7, 14–21]. The magnon transport in the MOI can be controlled via an electrical charge current, and the resulting effect is typically represented by a change in the effective magnon conductivity [4, 10]. At a certain threshold current the injected magnons can even counteract the magnetization damping, which results in an abrupt increase of the effective magnon conductivity. The present understanding is that this threshold effect scales with the saturation magnetization $M_s$ and the magnetic anisotropy of the materials [10, 22]. This warrants to explore the impact of these parameters on controlling the magnon conductivity in MOIs, which has not been pursued so far to the best of our knowledge.

In this Letter, we investigate the diffusive magnon transport in MOIs with significant perpendicular magnetic anisotropy fields $H_k$ and reduced $M_s$. To this end, we biaxially strain the YIG thin film hosting the magnons by growing YIG on yttrium scandium gallium garnet (Y$_3$Sc$_2$Ga$_5$O$_{12}$, YSGG). Our films exhibit low Gilbert damping comparable to YIG thin films grown on lattice-matched substrates. By investigating the magnon transport in three-terminal devices, we find that the threshold current, which defines the onset of the regime with compensated damping, depends linearly on the applied magnetic field. Moreover, we can corroborate the expected scaling with the effective magnetization of the MOI.

For applications making use of magnonic spin currents damping effects, which decrease the spin conductivity, have to be minimized. We here investigate the magnon transport in an yttrium iron garnet thin film with strongly reduced effective magnetization. We show that in a three-terminal device the effective magnon conductivity can be increased by a factor of up to six by a current applied to a modulator electrode, which generates damping compensation above a threshold current. Moreover, we find a linear dependence of this threshold current on the applied magnetic field. We can explain this behavior by the reduced effective magnetization and the associated nearly circular magnetization precession.

In this Letter, we investigate the diffusive magnon transport in Y$_3$Fe$_5$O$_{12}$/Pt nanostructures with reduced effective magnetization. Our experimental approach utilized to enhance the magnon-based spin conductivity is based on the minimization of the ellipticity of the magnetization precession. As sketched in Fig. 1(a), YIG thin films grown on the lattice-matched substrate gadolinium gallium garnet (Gd$_3$Ga$_5$O$_{12}$, GGG) exhibit a finite in-plane effective magnetization $M_{\text{eff}} = M_s - H_k > 0$, and thus an elliptical magnetization precession trajectory with the long axis aligned in the film plane, giving rise to nonlinear damping effects via parametric pumping of higher frequency magnon modes [23]. Recent experiments reported the minimization of the ellipticity of the magnetization precession (approaching $M_{\text{eff}} = 0$) and thereby achieved spin-orbit torque induced coherent magnetization auto-oscillations even in extended magnetic films [24, 25]. For our experiments, we also reduce the ellipticity of the magnetization precession by reducing the effective magnetization of YIG. Approaching $M_{\text{eff}} = 0$, a circular magnetization precession is expected and, hence, nonlinear damping effects should be suppressed (cf. Fig. 1(b)). To be able to control $M_{\text{eff}}$, we biaxially strain the $t_{\text{YIG}} = 12.3\,\mu m$ thick YIG film by growing it pseudomorphically onto an YSGG substrate by pulsed laser deposition (see the Supplemental Material (SM) [26] for growth details). The lattice mismatch of 0.4% between YIG and YSGG induces a biaxial in-plane tensile strain in the YIG thin film. This strain can result in a strong $H_k$ [27], originating from the strain-induced magnetoelastic coupling [28]. Fig. 1(c) shows the $2\theta - \omega$ x-ray diffraction scan of the thin film confirming the in-plane lattice strain. The substrate (444) diffraction peak is clearly visible at $2\theta = 50.7^\circ$, while the corresponding broad film peak is shifted to larger $2\theta$ values due to the tensile strain and appears as a shoulder in the diffraction pattern. Note, that the large width and low inten-
Figure 1. (a) Sketch of the ellipticity of the magnetization precession in YIG thin films grown on lattice-matched GGG. (b) In biaxially strained YIG thin films grown on YSGG, the ellipticity is minimized due to the reduced effective magnetization. (c) X-ray diffraction of a 12.3 nm thick YIG film grown on a (111)-oriented YSGG substrate. The blue vertical line marks the calculated 2θ-position of the (444) reflection of bulk YIG. (d) Resonance field $H_{\text{res}}$ and linewidth $\Delta H$ extracted from FMR measurements of the YIG film on YSGG as a function of frequency. Via a Kittel fit (gray line) we extract $\mu_0 H_{\text{res}} = (56.0 \pm 0.2) \text{ mT}$ and $\Delta H = (3.6 \pm 0.4) \text{ mT}$ and $\alpha_G = (1.5 \pm 0.2) \times 10^{-3}$. The red line is a fit to Eq. (2), resulting in $\lambda_m = (3.6 \pm 0.4) \text{ mT}$ and $\alpha_G = (1.5 \pm 0.2) \times 10^{-3}$. Similar values for the linewidth $\Delta H$ are obtained for an epitaxial high-quality YIG film grown on a (111)-oriented YSGG substrate. The blue vertical line marks the calculated 2θ-position of the (444) reflection of bulk YIG.

We magnetically characterize the strained YIG film using broadband ferromagnetic resonance (FMR) as shown in Fig. 1(d). We determine the effective magnetization $\mu_0 M_{\text{eff}} = (56.0 \pm 0.2) \text{ mT}$ of the thin film by extracting the resonance field $\mu_0 H_{\text{res}}$ applied in the out-of-plane direction as a function of the stimulus frequency of the microwave radiation and linear fitting with the Kittel equation. This value is about three times smaller compared to unstrained YIG films of similar thickness [10]. Moreover, FMR enables us to determine the Gilbert damping parameter $\alpha_G$ (see Fig. 1(d)) [29]. By fitting the FMR linewidth $\Delta H$ to $\mu_0 \Delta H = \mu_0 \delta H + 4\pi f \alpha_G / \gamma$ (blue line) with $\gamma = \mu_0 / 2m$ the gyromagnetic ratio with the Landé factor $g$ and Bohr’s magneton $\mu_B$, we obtain the inhomogenous FMR linewidth $\mu_0 \delta H = (3.6 \pm 0.4) \text{ mT}$ and $\alpha_G = (1.5 \pm 0.2) \times 10^{-3}$. Similar values for $\alpha_G$ were obtained for an epitaxial high-quality YIG film grown on lattice-matched GGG under the same conditions [10].

As a next step, we deposit ex-situ 5 nm thick Pt strips on top of the strained YIG film using electron beam lithography and magnetron sputtering, allowing for an all-electrical generation and detection of pure spin currents [4]. With this sample, we investigate diffusive magnon transport using twin-strip structures as depicted in Fig. 2(a). In our experiments a DC charge current $I_{\text{inj}} = 100 \mu\text{A}$ is fed through one Pt strip (injector) to inject magnons into the YIG via the SHE. The magnons diffuse away from the injector and can then be electrically detected via the inverse SHE at the second Pt strip (detector) as a voltage signal $V_{\text{det}}$. In our sample a constant injector width of $w_{\text{inj}} = 500 \text{ nm}$ is used, while the detector width $w_{\text{det}}$ and the center-to-center distance $d_c$ between injector and detector is varied. Using a current reversal technique we unambiguously can assign the measured detector voltage $V_{\text{det}}$ to the magnons generated at the injector via the SHE [13, 16]. To characterize the magnon transport, we measure the voltage signal $V_{\text{det}}$ as a function of the magnetic field orientation $\varphi$ (cf. Fig. 2(a)) with fixed magnitude $\mu_0 H$ at a temperature of 280 K. The data is shown in Fig. 2(b) for $d_c = 2.2 \mu\text{m}$ and $w_{\text{det}} = 500 \text{ nm}$. The results show the distinctive $\cos^2 (\varphi) \text{ angular variation expected for diffusive transport of SHE-generated magnons from injector to detector}$ [4, 16]. The angle dependence can be fitted with a simple $A_{\text{SHE}}^\text{det} \cos^2 (\varphi)$ function, as exemplary shown for $\mu_0 H = 200 \text{ mT}$ , where $A_{\text{SHE}}^\text{det}$ corresponds to the amplitude of the SHE-induced magnon transport signal. The quantity $A_{\text{SHE}}^\text{det}$ is plotted in Fig. 2(c) as a function of $d_c$ for different $\mu_0 H$. We observe a decrease of...
$A^\text{SHE}$ with increasing $d_c$ as expected for diffusive magnon transport: at distances shorter than the magnon diffusion length $\lambda_m$, $A^\text{SHE}$ follows a $1/d_c$ dependence, while for larger distances the magnon relaxation dominates and an exponential decay is observed [7, 19]. An exponential fit to the data measured for $d_c > 1 \mu$m (red lines), allows us to extract $\lambda_m$. The extracted values are shown in Fig. 2(d) as a function of the magnetic field magnitude $\mu_0 H$. The $\lambda_m$ values are of the order of $1 \mu$m and thus in good agreement with the values found for YIG films grown on lattice-matched GGG [10]. To discuss the physics leading to the magnetic field dependence of $\lambda_m$ in more detail, we consider the magnon relaxation rate $\Gamma^\text{ip}_{\text{mr}}$, which is given by

$$\Gamma^\text{ip}_{\text{mr}} = \left( \alpha_G + \frac{\delta H}{2 \sqrt{H (H + M_{\text{eff}})}} \right) \gamma \mu_0 \left( H + M_{\text{eff}} \right) / 2$$

for an in-plane magnetized film [30]. Taking damping contributions from inhomogenous broadening $\delta H$ into account [31], the damping rate $\Gamma^\text{ip}_{\text{mr}}$ diverges for a finite positive $M_{\text{eff}}$ at $\mu_0 H = 0$. However, in the limit of $M_{\text{eff}} \to 0$, the relaxation rate is constant for $\mu_0 H = 0$ and we expect a strictly linear dependence on the magnetic field. Together with $\lambda_m = \sqrt{D \tau_m}$ and $\tau_m = 1/\Gamma^\text{ip}_{\text{mr}}$ with $D$ the magnon diffusion constant and $\tau_m$ the magnon lifetime, we can describe the magnetic field dependence of $\lambda_m$ determined from the twin-strip transport measurements as

$$\lambda_m = \sqrt{\frac{D}{\gamma \mu_0 \left( \alpha_G + \frac{\delta H}{2 \sqrt{H (H + M_{\text{eff}})}} \right)}}$$

As shown in Fig. 2(d), the experimental data can be well fitted by Eq. (2). Utilizing the values obtained from the FMR measurements and neglecting the field dependence of $D$, we obtain a magnon diffusion constant of $D = (1.75 \pm 0.05) \times 10^{-4} \text{ m}^2/\text{s}$. Similar values were obtained for YIG films on GGG, supporting the quantitative understanding of the phenomenon [32].

Next, we turn to three-terminal devices, which allow us to manipulate the magnon transport between injector and detector via the center Pt strip acting as modulator (see Fig. 3(a)). In this configuration, we apply a low-frequency ($7 \text{ Hz}$) charge current $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{inj} = 200 \mu\text{A}$ to the injector strip, while a constant DC charge current $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod}$ is applied to the modulator strip. The detector voltage $V_{\text{det}}$ is recorded via lock-in detection, where the first harmonic voltage signal $V_{\text{det}}^{(1)}$ can be assigned to the transport of magnons generated via the SHE at the injector. We measure $V_{\text{det}}^{(1)}$ as a function of the magnetic field orientation $\varphi$ for different external magnetic field magnitudes and different modulator currents $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod}$. Exemplary results for a structure with an edge-to-edge distance $d_e = 200 \text{ nm}$ and a modulator width $w_{\text{mod}} = 400 \text{ nm}$, while $w_{\text{inj}} = w_{\text{det}} = 500 \text{ nm}$ and $\mu_0 H = 50 \text{ mT}$, are plotted in Fig. 3(b). For $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod} = 0$ (black data points), $V_{\text{det}}^{(1)}$ exhibits the same $\cos^2(\varphi)$ variation as in our twin-strip structures [4, 16]. As reported previously [10, 11], we observe a significant enhancement of $V_{\text{det}}^{(1)}$ at $\varphi = \pm 180^\circ$ for $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod} > 0$. This observation can be attributed to a magnon accumulation underneath the modulator caused by the SHE-induced magnon chemical potential and thermally generated magnons due to Joule heating. This accumulation increases the magnon conductivity, resulting in a larger voltage signal $V_{\text{det}}^{(1)}$. At $\varphi = 0^\circ$, the magnon transport signal is slightly suppressed, originating from the nearly compensation of the magnon depletion caused by the SHE by thermally generated magnons. For $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod} < 0$, we observe a $180^\circ$ shifted angle dependence of the detector voltage signal, i.e. an increase at $\varphi = 0^\circ$ and a reduction at $\varphi = \pm 180^\circ$. This behavior is fully consistent with the assumption that there are both SHE and Joule heating contributions [4, 10, 11]. For a more quantitative analysis, we extract the signal amplitudes $A_{\text{det}}^{(1)}(+\mu_0 H)$ at $\varphi = 180^\circ$ and $A_{\text{det}}^{(1)}(-\mu_0 H)$ at $\varphi = 0^\circ$ and plot them as a function of the modulator current $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod}$ for different $\mu_0 H$ in Fig. 3(c). For $|I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod}| < 0.25 \text{ mA}$, we observe the expected superposition of a linear and quadratic $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod}$ dependence corresponding to SHE induced magnons and thermally generated magnons due to Joule heating, respectively [4, 10, 11]. However, for larger $I_{\text{dc}}^\text{mod}$ a clear deviation from this be-
havior is observed. In particular, we observe a strongly increased signal amplitude $A_{\text{det}}^{\text{mod}}$. This observation can be attributed to an enhanced effective magnon conductivity underneath the modulator, which causes a strong increase of the detector signal at the same magnon injection rate at the injector. As reported previously [10], this enhanced magnon conductivity can be explained by the presence of a zero effective damping state generated below the modulator electrode via the SHE-mediated spin-orbit torque. We here observe a maximum enhancement of $A_{\text{det}}^{\text{mod}}$ by a factor of 6, a twofold increase as compared to our previous experiments. This strong enhancement can be attributed to the reduction in $M_{\text{eff}}$ and the associated circular magnetization precession. For the two magnetic field polarities, we observe an asymmetry for $|I_{\text{dc}}^{\text{mod}}| > 0.25$ mA in the amplitude signal $A_{\text{det}}^{\text{mod}}$. This is in stark contrast to the results obtained for YIG films on lattice-matched GGG [10, 11]. At present, we can only speculate about the detailed origin of this asymmetry. It may be related to a combination of the following aspects: (i) a misalignment of the magnetic field due to trapped flux from our 3D-vector magnet, (ii) a Joule heating induced modification of the device properties, or (iii) effects related to the crystalline-orientation of YIG. The previously investigated YIG films were (001)-oriented [10], while here we use a (111)-orientation allowing us to make use of the crystalline magnetic anisotropy.

The zero effective damping state and the corresponding peak-like structure in the magnon conductivity at the threshold value $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ was recently discussed by S. Takei [33]. According to this model considerations, one can express the expected dependence of $A_{\text{det}}^{\text{mod}}$ originating from the thermal and SHE injection of magnons by

$$A_{\text{det}}^{\text{mod}} (I_{\text{dc}}^{\text{mod}}; \pm \mu_0 H) = \frac{A + B \sqrt{1 + I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}} / I_{\text{dc}}^{\text{crit}}}}{1 + C \sqrt{1 + I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}} / I_{\text{dc}}^{\text{crit}}}},$$

where the proportionality factors account for the induced magnon conductivity and $A$, $B$, $C$ and $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ are used as fit parameters. Note that the model is only valid up to $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}} = I_{\text{dc}}^{\text{crit}}$ and we thus restrict the fit with Eq. (3) to this region. The fit, indicated by gray lines in Fig. 3(c), reproduces well the measured data points. Although this model does not account for the amplitude asymmetry, it is well suited to extract the threshold current $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$.

For a quantitative comparison of the strained YIG films with reduced $M_{\text{eff}}$ and conventional YIG thin films on GGG, we rely on the dependence of $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ with $\mu_0 H$ in Fig. 4. For the discussed structure (blue circles), we observe a linear increase of the critical current $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ with applied magnetic field for $\mu_0 H > 20$ mT. This is in contrast to the observations in Ref. [10] (black circles), where an increase in $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ with $\mu_0 H$ is only observed for $\mu_0 H > 50$ mT, while for $\mu_0 H \leq 50$ mT $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ remains constant. We note that $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ vs $\mu_0 H$ was associated with damping compensation [10]. Here, the spin injection rate due to SHE results in an interfacial spin transfer torque $\Gamma_{\text{ST}} \propto I_{\text{mod}}^{\text{det}}$, which balances the intrinsic damping of the material. Hence, zero effective damping is achieved, when the condition $\Gamma_{\text{ST}}^{\text{sh}} = \Gamma_{\text{ST}}$ is satisfied [30]. In this regime, we can define the critical modulator current as [10]

$$I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}} = \frac{\hbar \sigma_{\text{Pt}}}{e} \frac{l_{\text{Pt}} w_{\text{mod}}}{\theta_{\text{SH}} \tanh(\eta)} \left( 1 + 4 \pi M_e \frac{\alpha_{\text{eff}}}{\hbar g_{\text{eff}}} \right)$$

$$\times \gamma \mu_0 \left( H + M_{\text{eff}} \right),$$

where $e$ is the elementary charge, $\theta_{\text{SH}}$ the spin Hall angle of Pt, $\sigma_{\text{eff}}$ the field dependent damping rate [34] taking into account inhomogenous broadening. Furthermore, $g_{\text{eff}}$ denotes the effective spin mixing conductance [35], which depends on the interface spin mixing conductance $g^{\uparrow \downarrow}$, the spin diffusion length $l_s$, thickness $l_{\text{Pt}}$, and electrical conductivity $\sigma_{\text{Pt}}$ of Pt (see SM [26]). The variation of $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ with the applied magnetic field taken from Ref. [10] is quantitatively well described by the theoretical model (dashed line). Fitting our data with Eq. (4), we use $w_{\text{mod}} = 400$ nm, $M_e = 80$ kAm$^{-1}$ (from SQUID magnetometry measurements see SM [26]), $\theta_{\text{SH}} = 0.11$, $l_s = 1.5$ nm [36] and $\sigma_{\text{Pt}} = 2.15 \times 10^6$ (Ohm m)$^{-1}$. Furthermore, we use the values of $\alpha_{C}$ and $M_{\text{eff}}$ extracted from the FMR measurements, while $g^{\uparrow \downarrow}$ is the only free fit parameter. We observe good quantitative agreement for large magnetic field magnitudes, but find a clear deviation for $\mu_0 H < 40$ mT. However, if we assume $M_{\text{eff}} \approx 0$, the fit (solid line) corroborates our observed linear magnetic field dependence of $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ in Fig. 4. Moreover, the linear dependence on $\mu_0 H$ is in accordance with the results by Evet el al., who studied Bi:YIG thin films with PMA and nearly vanishing $M_{\text{eff}}$ [24]. Fitting the data, we obtain $g^{\uparrow \downarrow} = (1.7 \pm 0.2) \times 10^{19}$ m$^{-2}$ and $g^{\uparrow \downarrow} = (9.9 \pm 0.4) \times 10^{18}$ m$^{-2}$ in the limit of $M_{\text{eff}} = 0$, comparable to YIG/Pt structures on GGG [10]. Deviations between fit and data are potentially caused by
uncertainties in the fixed parameters, as for example $\alpha_G$ and $M_{\text{eff}}$ are determined from out-of-plane FMR.

In summary, we investigate magnon transport in YIG with strongly reduced $M_{\text{eff}}$ induced via biaxial strain from growth on YSGG substrates [27]. Performing angle-dependent measurements in twin- and three-terminal devices, we find a quantitatively similar behavior as observed for YIG films on GGG for small modulator currents $I_{\text{mod}}^{\text{dc}}$, while differences occur above the threshold value $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$ when damping compensation is reached. Most importantly, we observe an increase of the magnon induced detector signal by a factor of about 6, which is much larger than reported previously [10]. Another important difference is the strictly linear field dependence of $I_{\text{crit}}^{\text{mod}}$. This interesting observation can be attributed to the nearly vanishing $M_{\text{eff}}$ in our film confirming the expected scaling of the threshold behavior with $M_s$ and $H_K$. Our work provides an important step towards the detailed understanding of magnon transport in systems far from equilibrium and the basis for applications based on pure spin currents.

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* janine.gueckelhorn@wmi.badw.de
† matthias.althammer@wmi.badw.de

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[34] $\alpha_{\text{eff}} = \alpha_G + \delta^2 \left(2\sqrt{H(H + M_{\text{eff}})}\right)^{-1}$.

[35] $g_{\text{eff}} = \left[ g^{(4)} \frac{b_0}{2\pi l_s} \right] / \left[ g^{(2)} + \frac{b_0}{2\pi l_s} \right]$ and $\eta = t v_F / (2 b_0)$.

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