The Sound-Colour Relationship in Artistic Practice: Visualising Synaesthetic Principles

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Musical Cross-modality

- High & Low Pitches
- Soft Sound
- Bright & Dull Sound
- Sweet Melody
- Happy/Sad Music
- Heavy/Light Music
- Blue Note
- Colourful Orchestration
- (...
Music-color associations are mediated by emotion (Palmer, 2013)
Colour

Hue → Value

Sound

Pitch → Loudness

Timbre

Rhythm
Characteristics:

- Involuntary
- Fixed
- Idiosyncratic
Synaesthetic Composers:

- Olivier Messiaen
- Franz Liszt
- Alexander Scriabin
- Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
- Michael Torke
- Leonard Bernstein
- Jean Sibelius
- Duke Ellington
- György Ligeti
- (...)
Olivier Messiaen

“I’ll give you a few examples of the colours of my modes. Mode 2 is thrice transposable, so it has only three possibilities of coloration. For me, the first transposition of Mode 2 is defined like this: “blue-violet rocks speckled with little gray cubes, cobalt blue, deep Prussian blue, mauve, black and white. Blue-violet is dominant.” (Samuel, 1986)
Alexander Scriabin

Scriabin and the Possible
(Gawboy, Townsend, 2012)
Olivier Messiaen (1908 - 1992)

Alexander Scriabin (1871 - 1915)

Michael Torke (*1961)
Heat Perception
(Hsin-Ni Ho, et al., 2014)

Attention
(Duyan & Ünver, 2016)

Competition
(Hill & Barton, 2005)
ELEMENTS OF:
Low Complexity
Consonance
Slow Tempi
Simple Rhythms
Repetition
Minor Tonality
Downwards Motion

ELEMENTS OF:
High Complexity
Dissonance
Fast Tempi
Complex Rhythms
Sudden Change
Major Tonality
Upwards Motion
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