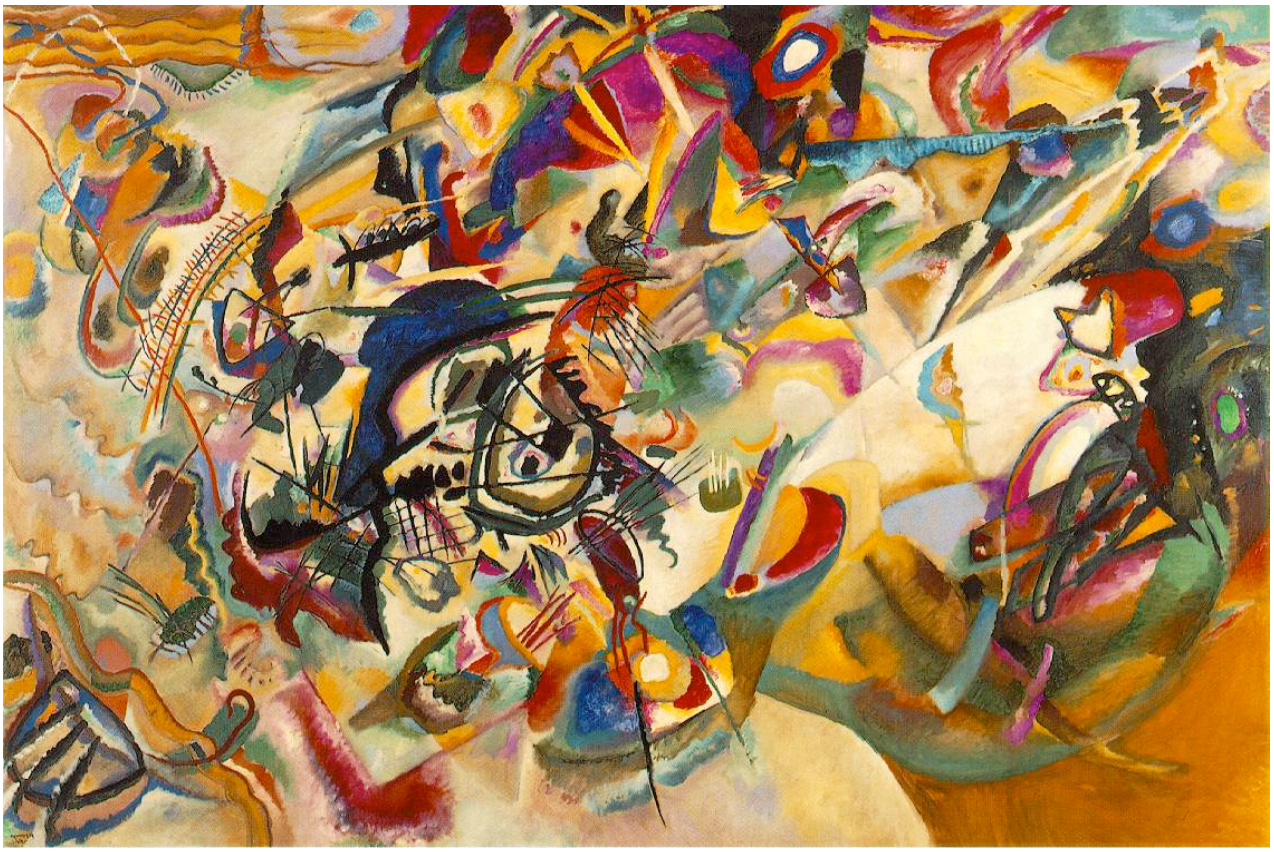
Synaesthesia, Harmony and Discord in the Work of Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg 1909-1914



Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in History of Art to the School of Humanities in the University of Buckingham

Nicolas Nelson

September 2015

Abstract

This project sets out to investigate the early twentieth century crossover between painting and music, with specific reference to the work of Wassily Kandinsky and Arnold Schoenberg between 1909 and 1914. Broadly speaking, to appreciate how two different artistic entities in art and music could be intertwined to produce a unified marriage of aesthetic principles and concerns sets the stage for a more detailed focus on the two aforementioned pioneers of abstraction. The synthesis between art and music is indeed a rich area, particularly during the first two decades of the twentieth century, when artists were searching for new means of expression. In surveying the amalgamation of these dual disciplines, the ephemeral but intense artistic working relationship between Kandinsky and Schoenberg before the First World War is a suitable paradigm for study. Both practitioners shared the same path to abstraction in their pursuit of that interesting cocktail of dissonance and, paradoxically, hidden structure. The atonal and minimalist music of Schoenberg and *The Second Viennese School* found an equivalent in Kandinsky's early abstract canvases, and both *avant-garde* experiments met with ubiquitous outcry. There are many valid parallels between abstract music and abstract painting, and this proves ever the more fertile given Kandinsky the painter was an accomplished cellist and Schoenberg the musician was an amateur painter.

Throughout Kandinsky's writings, it becomes clear that he really 'felt' colours more than others, in a kind of hypersensitive, spiritual and cross-sensory manner. In fact, he purported to be a synaesthete. This neurological phenomenon of synaesthesia has been given greater attention in recent years, not least via Dr Clifford Rose's (Professor of Neurology at University College London) research on 'neurology and the arts'. This growing yet renewed interest in the phenomenon has led to experimental and scientifically investigative live painterly responses to music by synaesthetes, such as at the Cheltenham Science Festival in 2014, for example.

Extant online documentation from the excellent Tate Modern exhibition *'Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction'* of July 2006 and the *'From Russia'* exhibition at the Royal Academy in April 2008, spotlights Kandinsky's 'heroic period' in particular as the richest source in establishing the painter's parallels with music and synaesthesia. Similarly, archive material from the *'Eye-Music: Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz'* exhibition of 2007 at Pallant House, Chichester and the University of East Anglia respectively provide further insight into the realm of 'painting sound' during this period.

The zenith of this early twentieth century experiment in investigating an equivalent of modern painting in modern music culminates in the demi-decade preceding the First World War – notably Kandinsky's 'heroic period'. It was at this point, that Kandinsky endeavoured to share his multiplicity of cross-sensory experiences with fellow members of *Der Blaue Reiter* and, more closely, the experimental composer Arnold Schoenberg. Furthermore, the topic of synaesthesia in modern art was very much 'in the air' at the time, thus making this artistic-musical unification ever stronger.

The Introduction to this thesis provides a broader overview of the crossover between art and music up to the early twentieth century as a contextual scene-setter, stemming largely from Wagner's concept of the *gesamtkunstwerk* or 'total art work' as an experience. The idea of the multi-sensory experience became more prevalent in the late nineteenth century with the Post Impressionists; an era of improved scientific colour theory which coincided with progressive, modern philosophical thinking in Nietzsche, Freud and Jung.

In the early twentieth century, Matisse, Klee and his contemporaries' colouristic musical works set the stage for Kandinsky's *virtuoso* performances, which reached a pinnacle in what Grohmann dubbed 'the heroic years' i.e. 1909-1914. Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation, a focus on selected works of this period was essential in endeavouring to solve how and to what extent music manifests itself at the heart

of Kandinsky's most complex creations. Kandinsky's own quest, in the words of T. Phillips, was 'how to paint a symphony?' It is at this time that Kandinsky sparked a dialogue with the *avant-garde* composer Arnold Schoenberg, whose musical innovations were as radical as Kandinsky's painterly abstractions. Their artistic relationship was intense yet fugitive – the product of written correspondence and shared passions. The fervour for subversion in both is checked by their duality of desire to retain a sense of decorum in the face of the establishment. Thus a 'hidden structure' is inherent in both practitioners' works between 1909 and 1914, in the form of 'order out of chaos'. There are many natural parallels that can be drawn between the two 'performers' at this time, thus the process of forging a number of links in their shared set of ideals is an entirely natural one. As explosive as their artistic creations then were, the two modernists jarred unexpectedly after a period of prolific activity. This was marked by a bitter attack on Kandinsky following Schoenberg's accusations of anti-Semitism during Kandinsky's early spell at the Bauhaus.

The chapters within chart chronologically, Kandinsky's investigation into 'the spiritual in art' through to the glory years when working in psychological tandem with Schoenberg, ending with a 'call to order' when Kandinsky is summoned to the Bauhaus, subsequently severing his friendship with Schoenberg. Investigation into the question of whether Kandinsky is driven by dissonance or discipline has proven that Kandinsky's desire for said discipline usurps his more experimental urge to create. Hence the more spontaneous symphonic works in his *oeuvre* give way to the molecular matrixes of his latter years.

Paul Robertson's theory that musical responses are built into us as part of our ability to communicate before we have language skills, resonates in the work of Kandinsky. They are what he refers to as the syntax of emotional communication and account for why we understand music better. Linked to this, it is to what extent Kandinsky's responses to music are entirely instinctive that I have set out to

investigate in this study. Moreover, a chief quest is to investigate the artist's purported synaesthesia.

The question of Kandinsky's synaesthesia is a complex and interesting one, with theories supporting and refuting evidence of his perceived neurological gift. Inevitably first and second hand sources support such a quest upon which to deduce one's own theories concerning this matter. Various findings, evidence and personal conjecture suggest that Kandinsky was not inherently synaesthetic, rather he felt colour more than others. His desire to *be* a synaesthete far outweighs the neurological evidence, it seems.

There is a wide range of sources available on the issue of Kandinsky's synaesthesia, which is invariably and inextricably linked to his relationship with Schoenberg. Amidst articles, letters, monographs and periodicals, the most direct arterial route to this matter, however, is both Kandinsky's own writings on art and the letters that Kandinsky and Schoenberg shared with each other. Whilst building a case, this has, in the case of Kandinsky's *magnum opus* 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art,' provided greater insight into the mind of the pioneer of abstraction. His diet was indeed a rich one, from the mystic arts and music to Japanese Zen calligraphy and children's art. Kandinsky drew upon a myriad of sources to fuel his ever-imaginative brain with a plethora of stimuli.

Whilst Kandinsky's endeavours were supported through the auspices of the *Neue Künstlervereinigung, Der Blaue Reiter* and the Bauhaus, he comes across more as a mostly nomadic Shaman, save the brief symbiotic artistic alliance with Schoenberg for a select few years. Via the backdrop of theosophy, occultism, mysticism and Zyrian iconography, Kandinsky emerges as a true pioneer of modern thought, determined to capture his penchant for abstract art and music onto canvas. His works are paradoxically both orderly and disorderly, reflecting the dual demeanour of the great man himself: a bookish and bespectacled precisionist drawn to apocalyptic abstractionism and atonalism. It is this dichotomy of character I have tried to investigate in the latter stages of this thesis, most notably in the Conclusion.

Contents

List of Figures

(See separate Booklet of Illustration)

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that my thesis/dissertation entitled '*Synaesthesia, Harmony and Discord in the Work of Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg 1909-1914*' is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text, and is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Buckingham or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or is concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma, or other qualification at the University of Buckingham or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

Signature:

Printed Name: Nicolas Nelson

Date: 30/09/15

Introduction

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.
The Merchant of Venice, Act v, Scene 1.

This section examines the tradition in the arts of fusing music and art - an established practice upon which Kandinsky and his contemporaries later built. Origins of this dualism can be traced back to the ancients, the Greeks. What Kandinsky refers to as "the deep relationship between the arts, and especially between music and painting"[1] by no means begins with Wassily Kandinsky, in fact, as far back as Aristotle, Sophists believed that "colours may mutually relate like musical concords for their pleasantest arrangement, like those concords mutually proportionate".[2]

The concept of the polymath during the Renaissance encouraged an open dialogue across the arts - the archetypal 'Renaissance man' possessing many talents or areas of knowledge, which were valued in accordance with *il paragone.*[3] The art historian Kenneth Clark called Leonardo da Vinci "the most relentlessly curious man in history".[4] Whilst he is known to us primarily as an artist, in presenting himself to Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan, Leonardo described his prowess in music first, "with art being almost an afterthought".[5]

---

[1] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 27
[2] Bishop, B. 'A Souvenir of the Colour Organ with some suggestions in regard to the Soul of the Rainbow and the Harmony of Light' (New Russia, N.Y The De Vinne Press, 1893) Page 3. (The text is reproduced online at http://RhythmicLight.com)
[3] *Paragone* (Italian: paragone, meaning comparison) is a debate from the Italian Renaissance in which one form of art (architecture, sculpture or painting) is championed as superior to all others. Leonardo da Vinci's treatise on painting, noting the difficulty of painting and supremacy of sight, is a noted example.
[4] Kenneth Clark, 'Civilisation: A Personal View' (London: John Murray, 1969) Page 135
[5] Professor Martin Kemp, University of Buckingham MA Seminar, 28th October 2014, London. Leonardo's letter details 10 points of merit unrelated to art in securing the commission, before he states: "I can further execute sculpture in marble, bronze or clay, also in painting I can do as much as anyone else, whoever he may be. Moreover, I would undertake the commission of the bronze horse,

Merechowski writes that the many-sided genius of Leonardo da Vinci devised a system of little spoons with which different colours were to be used, thus creating, "a kind of mechanical harmony".[6]

Beyond the Renaissance, the German polymath Athanasius Kircher wrote about the possibility of visualising a musical language based on an analogy between tone and colour, in his '*Musurgia Universalis'* of 1650. More broadly, Baroque art and architecture of the seventeenth century was motivated by the desire to evoke emotional states by appealing to the senses, often in dramatic ways.[7] Some of the qualities most frequently associated with the Baroque are grandeur, sensuous richness, drama, vitality, movement, tension, emotional exuberance, and a tendency to blur distinctions between the various arts.[8] This approach encouraged the 'total experience' in the Baroque viewer, tantamount to Robert Wagner's later concept of the *gesamtkunstwerk.*

In 1725 the French Jesuit monk Father Louis Bertrand Castel devised the ocular harpsichord; an eccentric contraption consisting of sixty small coloured glass panes, each with a curtain that opened when a key was struck. Castel thought of colour-music as akin to the 'lost language of paradise,' in which "even a deaf listener could enjoy music".[9]

Sir Isaac Newton's analogy between the seven notes of the musical scale and the seven colours of the colour scale"[10] was a source of inspiration for Castel *et al*, in terms of what Baudelaire later referred to as a 'Doctrine of Correspondences'.[11]

---

which shall endue with immortal glory and eternal honour the auspicious memory of your father and of the illustrious house of Sforza". (Letter from Leonardo Da Vinci to the Duke of Milan Applying for a Position, 1484. http://www.lettersofnote.com/p/archive.html

[6] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 76

[7] www.britannica.com/**art**/**Baroque**-period Baroque art and architecture | art | Britannica.com

[8] Helen Langdon, University of Buckingham MA Seminar, 11th November 2014, London

[9] James Peel, 'The Scale and the Spectrum', Issue 22, Summer 2006 (Article) Paragraph 4

[10] Hajo Duchting, 'Paul Klee - Painting Music' (Munich: Prestel, 2002) Page 19

[11] Kathryn Oliver Mills, 'The Poetry Foundation', poetryfoundation.org (Article) Paragraph 42

Newton thought that the spectrum had seven discrete colours, corresponding in some unknown but simple way to the seven notes of the diatonic scale.[12]

Simon Shaw-Miller rightly identifies that "there is certainly a deep link between music and painting – the proportions of time - the geometry of rhythms and the division of spaces."[13] This could be found in the work of the German physicist and musician Ernst Chladni (1756–1827) hailed as the "father of acoustics".[14] He undertook key research into various modes of vibration, through speed-sound resonances, sound impulses and sonorous frequency. Through sonic vibrations, Chladni could determine the path of propagation. This early charting of sound proved influential to the 'musicalists'[15] that followed.

In theoretical terms, Phillip Otto Runge (1777-1810), a man with a 'mystical, pantheistic frame of mind'[16] paved the way for that Wagnerian concept, the *gesamtkunstwerk.* In his work, Runge attempted to express notions of harmony through symbolism of colour and form in a vision of a total work encompassing painting, music, poetry and architecture. Achieving the *gesamtkunstwerk* was a common aspiration for German Romantic artists.

In the year of his death, Runge published *'Die Farbenkugel'* (The Colour Sphere, Figure 1) in which he describes a three-dimensional schematic sphere for organising all conceivable colours according to hue, brightness and saturation. It was the result of years of research and correspondence with Johann Wolfgang von

---

[12] O. Sachs refers to this in his 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 271
[13] Simon Shaw-Miller, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 44
[14] http://9waysmysteryschool.tripod.com/sacredsoundtools/id19.html Paragraph 2
[15] 1940s France group called 'Musicalists' were devoted to interpreting musical compositions in paint Blanc-Gatti (Swiss) had the gift of Synopsia – he could "hear" colours. They created visual translations of Stravinsky, Bach. O. Messiaen owned Blanc-Gatti's 'Brilliance' and Messiaen made chord-colour tables based on synaesthetic responses
[16] Robert W Berger, 'The Art Bulletin', Volume 58, No. 2, June 1976 (Article) Paragraph 4

Goethe.[17] Runge's *'Farbenkugel'* was adopted 150 years later by the legendary German Bauhaus teacher, Johannes Itten, in particular in relation to colours and their different emotional associations. Similarly, Blanc's *Grammaire* of 1867 presented a map of "the entire complicated realm of colour as a six-pointed star (Figure 2)….it was a wonderfully orderly system….But the star was like the musical scale; starting from it, you could plan harmonic effects resembling musical chords".[18] This was to subsequently have a profound impact on Bauhuas theory and pedagogy also.

In Wagner's 1852 essay, '*Oper und Drama'*[19] he describes the way in which poetry, music and the visual arts should combine to form what he called 'the artwork of the future.' These 'music-dramas' were a multi-sensory experience for spectators, delving into many creative and artistic sources, including opera, theatre, music (orchestra), mime and literature. In this sense, Wagner's 'The Ring Cycle' is the paradigm of the *gesamtkunstwerk*. Subsequently, as Lynton outlines, "It was Kandinsky who greatly admired Wagner and saw his fusing of music, text and stage into a seamless gesture".[20] Earlier, however, Charles Baudelaire supported Wagner and his 'theory of correspondences' by writing how "it would be surprising if a musical tone could not elicit a colour."[21]

Given Miller's theory that "Music was founded on balance and harmony for which artists tried to find visual equivalents in the form and colour of their own paintings,"[22] in this vein, the nineteenth century French Impressionist composer

---

[17] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was a German poet, dramatist and scholar involved with the *Sturm* and *Drang* movement
[18] Martin Gayford, 'Musicians in Colour' from 'The Yellow House' (London: Penguin Books Ltd. 2007) Pages 198-199
[19] 'Opera and Drama' is a book-length essay written by Richard Wagner in 1851, setting out his ideas on the ideal characteristics of opera as an art form.
[20] Norbert Lynton, 'Story of Modern Art' (London: Phaidon, 1995) Page 82
[21] Dr Hugo Heyrman, Reflection on 'Art and Synaesthesia: In Search of the Synaesthetic Experience' (Article) Paragraph 4
[22] Simon Shaw-Miller 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 43

Claude Debussy explored Baudelaire's theories further. As Kandinsky himself expressed, "most modern musicians like Debussy create a spiritual impression".[23]

Debussy wrote *'L'Apres-midi d'un Faune'* in 1894 in what has been called the Impressionist style, based on one of Mallarmé's poems. Through a myriad of kaleidoscopic effects, the composer suggests climatic change (clouds, water) and a 'new palette.' His new discoveries culminated in his '*Trois Nocturnes'* of the 1890s, which encouraged the listener to become immersed in the artist's experience - more specifically J.A.M Whistler's *'Nocturnes'* of the 1870s. In this exploration of instrumental tone-colour, Debussy treated harmonies and orchestral *timbres* as the artists treated light and colour. He used chords for their expressive 'colour-effects' rather than obeying traditional rules of harmony. Using allusion and understatement Impressionist music eschewed the emotional excesses of the Romantic era with suggestion and atmosphere. Debussy used short melodic motifs – the *Nocturne*, *Arabesque* and *Prelude*; the equivalent would be the quickly-worked small canvases of '*la band a Manet'.*

The American painter Whistler adopted musical titles for paintings, such as *Symphony No. 1* - the equivalent of which is the composer's use of Opus numbers; the artist believing *"As music is the poetry of sound, so is painting the poetry of sight".*[24] Whistler's Nocturnes of the 1870s directly inspired Debussy's Nocturnes of 1897-9, in which a single instrumental group is exploited such as the strings, in a similar way to the artist exploring the subtle gradations of a single colour; the use of blue in his largely monochromatic canvas, *Nocturne in Blue and Gold, Battersea Bridge*[25] (Figure 3) being a case in point. The abstract nature of this reductivist work

---

[23] W. Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 16
[24] The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg69/gg69-1241.0.html, Paragraph 2
[25] Ruskin attacked the work, shocked by the absence of subject matter and lack of finish, and for "throwing a pot of paint in the public's face" prompting Whistler to sue him for libel. A protracted court case ensued – a result of which Whistler won a farthing but left him bankrupt, so it was a moral victory rather than a financial one. Whistler hung the coin (the smallest coin in UK currency) from his watch fob

prompted Oscar Wilde to state that it was worth looking at for 'about as long as one looks at a real rocket; about 15 seconds'.[26] Whistler called these haunting and elusive crepuscular effects *Nocturnes*, deliberately comparing their lack of narrative content to music. "His greys pulsate with imprisoned colours"[27] was an epithet coined by Frederick Leyland. Equally Stephen Mallarmé's phrase *"to suggest is to dream"*[28] seems applicable here, as Whistler's use of atmospheric perspective prompted the composer Vaughan Williams to create his Whistler-inspired opening to the London Symphony; a notion supported by Stephen Connock, Chairman of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society and Michael Kennedy and friend of Vaughan Williams. This work contained the instruction to the double-basses to wind down the bottom string for an extension, a device for deep or sonorous sound designed to mirror the tenor of Whistler's aforementioned series.

As "Debussy is deeply concerned with spiritual harmony",[29] his musical dissonances are unprepared and unresolved like the canvases of the Impressionists, prompting the Registrar of the Paris Conservatoire to challenge the composer. "So you imagine that dissonant chords do not have to be resolved? What rule do you follow?" "*Mon plaisir*!" [30] Debussy replied. Debussy's new chord-combinations of whole-tone chords, Major 7^{ths}, chromatic inflections and parallel descending 7^{ths} & 9^{ths} prefigure jazz, whilst also pre-empting the atonal dissonance of Arnold Schoenberg. His most unusual harmonic wanderings and the suppression of conventional progression result in 'polytonality' (simultaneous use of more than one key) through his use of super-imposed chords. This device has a parallel with the technique of polychromy in painting.

---

[26] Source: Tate Gallery website: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/whistler-nocturne-blue-and-gold-old-battersea-bridge-n01959, Paragraph 7
[27] Source: Owen Edwards, at Smithsonian.com, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/ist/?next=/arts-culture/the-story-behind-the-peacock-rooms-princess-159271229/
[28] R. Lloyd 'Mallarmé, The Poet and his Circle' (UK Cornell University Press, 2005) Page 32
[29] Simon Shaw-Miller 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 43
[30] Edward Lockspeiser, 'Debussy', The Tablet, International Catholic News Weekly, Page 291

In his *Nocturnes,* Debussy instructs the strings to play *tremolo* on the fingerboard, or *sur la touche* to produce a light 'airy' quality, incorporating stippled notes (as per 'taches' in painting) generated by 'flutter tongue' on the flute, tapping on the violin (*col legno*) and using the mute on the trumpet. He also introduced a 3rd pedal, so that the bass note could be sustained yet the other two parts would not, generating an eerie and unsettled atmosphere. Chopin and Debussy both entitled their works 'arrangements' or 'harmonies' and 'nocturnes', which further strengthens the parallels between art and music.

As Simon Shaw-Miller has noted, "the twentieth century has seen the proliferation of musical and artistic languages",[31] a phenomenon which really gains momentum with the work of Matisse around 1909, when patronised by Sergei Shchukin. A dynamic engagement between music and the visual arts was a critical factor in the emergence of abstraction in early 20th century art in general.[32] For example, the Lithuanian painter Mikalojus Ciurlionis poses the complex question of whether and to what extent the power of the creative imagination helps the artist perceive and transform reality into artistic images. His paintings and compositions were as one. "They were trying to interlink and reference each other, stirring up images or creating harmonious effects".[33] Ciurlionis' imagination turned polyphony and rhythm into visual symbols, prompting the French writer Remain Rolland to hail the artist as the "Christopher Columbus of the new continent of the spirit".[34] Subsequently, "the natural result of this striving is that the various arts are drawing together. They are finding in Music the best teacher".[35]

---

[31] Simon Shaw-Miller, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 29

[32] Judith Zilczer, 'Music for the Eyes: Abstract Painting and Light Art', Kerry Brougher, Jeremy Strick, Ari Wiseman and Judith Zilczer, 'Visual Music: Synaesthesia in Art and Music Since 1900' (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2005) Page 77

[33] www.ciurlionis.net/articles/sepetis.htm. Ciurlionis felt that he was a synesthete, in that he perceived colours and music simultaneously. Many of his paintings bear the names of musical pieces: Sonatas, Fugues and Preludes

[34] William B Parsons, 'The Oceanic Feeling Revisited' (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) Page 21

[35] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 20

Aleksandr Scriabin (1872-1915) independently of Arnold Schoenberg, developed a substantially atonal dissonant musical system. Scriabin was influenced by synaesthesia,[36] pairing colours with the tones of his atonal scale. His colour-coded 'Circle of Fifths' (Figure 4) influenced by Theosophy, was "Scriabin's attempt to intensify musical tone by corresponding use of colour", [37] whilst striking a chord in the young Kandinsky. In Alexander Scriabin's '*Prometheus: The Poem of Fire'* of 1910, the top line is for *'luce;'* a colour organ which flushes a screen in a manner akin to Alexander Rimington's 'Colour Organ' of 1895 "from which we can paint with instantaneous effect upon the screen the colours being at will combined into one chord, or compound tint upon its surface."[38] (See also Figure 5)

"The mood among the *avant-garde*, was that music and art were closely aligned, which is a helpful insight into understanding the work of these pioneers of abstract art".[39] This is entirely correct, to the extent that believing art and music were inextricably linked made one *avant-garde* in those bohemian circles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Moreover, with the explosion of *'Isms* during the first quarter of the twentieth century, European artistic circles "witnessed the advent and practice of abstract painting at the beginning of the 20th century as the translation of music."[40]

Within the climate of the colour-light shows of Scriabin and Rimsky-Korsakov, the 'pure painters' Wassily Kandinsky, Frank Kupka,[41] Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich took this correspondence between the arts to a new level. However, Patricia Railing, in her 2005 essay *'Why Abstract Painting isn't Music'*, contests that

---

[36] Scriabin was a theosophist who had discovered his synesthetic ability at a concert in the company of Rimsky-Korsakov when they both agreed that the piece in D major appeared yellow.
[37] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 51
[38] James Peel, 'The Scale and the Spectrum', Issue 22, Summer 2006 (Article) Paragraph 11
[39] Will Gompertz, 'What are you looking at?' (Audio Series): Kandinsky/Orphism/Blue Rider
[40] Patricia Railing, Philosophy Now, 'Abstract Art & Music', 2005 (Online Article) Paragraph 1
[41] The Czech artist Frank Kupka explored the 'kinetic dimension' plus synesthetic and theosophical ideas. He abandoned the traditional world of figures and objects and set out into the unexplored unknown, where the leading role is played only by colours, their strength and shapes, movement, mutual relations, harmony and composition

"their paintings were not music, nor were they painting music. Rather, they claimed that paintings' colours have an effect on the human being just as music's tones do."[42] This, I will argue, is a moot point, given the complexity of Kandinsky's either innate, congenital or contrived 'condition' of Synaesthesia.

A key protagonist in strengthening the channel of communication between art and music was the painter Henri Matisse, who exerted considerable influence on Kandinsky. Early works such as *Luxe, Calme et Volupté*, based on a Baudelaire poem, features eupeptic brushwork which animates an abstracted Arcadia, heightened by a non-naturalistic use of colour. Indeed the colour clashes were "a deliberate means of expressing emotion",[43] as Matisse put it. A lifelong chromoluminarist, Matisse claimed that "From the moment I held the box of colours in my hands, I knew this was my life. I threw myself into it like a beast that plunges towards the thing it loves".[44]

In Matisse's work, a rhythmic feel is sought, inspired by music. This, coupled with his theories on colour symbolism; blue for the virginal and spiritual healing, yellow for inspiration, for example, impacted on Klee, Kandinsky and *Der Blaue Reiter*. And just as Matisse always played his violin for an hour before painting whilst feeding his cats pieces of brioche, Paul Klee's regimented routine was to play his violin and stamp his feet in a staccato rhythm for two hours before he painted. Matisse's *The Dance* of 1909-10 (Figure 6) with its 'triad' of the three colours red, blue and green arguably represents a musical chord. Claiming "colours are forces, as in music",[45] Matisse in fact devoted his 'Dance' piece to the composer Shostakovich, thus strengthening the artistic alliance.

---

[42] Patricia Railing, Philosophy Now, 'Abstract Art & Music', 2005 (Online Article) Paragraph 28
[43] 'Wild Beasts and Colours' Vision Science and the Emergence of Modern Art, webexhibits.org Paragraph 8
[44] Hilary Spurling, University of Buckingham MA Seminar, 10th March 2015 & Illustrated Chronology online, Paragraph 4
[45] Henri Matisse in interview with Pierre Courthion, 'The Lost Interview' of 1941, Getty Museum

Georges Braque's Cubist works are the instrumentalisation of painting. Inspired by the canonic compositions of Bach, Hajo Duchting in 'Paul Klee - Painting Music' theorises that the multi-layered interweaving of objective and spatial structures represents the multiple parts of the musical score and polyphony of Bach's 'musical architecture.' In a Bach Fugue, the theme is stated successively as canonic, with various staggered entries. This links to the repetition of motifs and limited colour palette of Cubist painting, along with the contrapuntal system (counterpoint); a relationship between two independent parts, which are harmonically related. Incidentally, Cézanne, a progenitor of Cubism, always claimed that colours should modulate, 'as in music'.

The Futurist artist Luigi Russolo's manifesto *The Art of Noises* 1913 (Figure 7) journeyed further into the realms of striving for an abstract pictorial equivalent for a musical chord. Also the Futurists' sound machines, called *Intonarumori,*[46] provided the backdrop for their 'musical happenings;' a form of experimental, surreal musical theatre, somewhere between the Italian opera of their homeland and the Cabaret Voltaire.[47]

The characteristic stippled Futuristic brushwork emulates staccato and pizzicato techniques in music. The artist Giacomo Balla created an abstract *mise en scene* (theatrical arrangement) for Stravinsky's Fireworks, Opus 4 performed in Rome in 1917. The kinetic-acoustic sculptures and lighting effects took over the actors' roles. Parallels can be drawn between these contemporary artistic performances, and the more established tradition of their native Italian opera; simultaneous happenings from the country which gave us Monteverdi, Rossini and Puccini.

---

[46] Intonarumori are a group of experimental musical instruments built and invented by the Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo between 1910 and 1930. Russolo's Phonograph recording made in 1921 included works entitled Corale and Serenata, which combined conventional orchestral music set against the sound of the noise machines. It is the only surviving contemporaneous sound recording of Luigi Russolo's 'noise music'

[47] Cabaret Voltaire, a nightclub in Zurich, Switzerland, founded by Hugo Ball as a cabaret for artistic and political purposes. Events at the Cabaret proved pivotal in the founding of the anarchic art movement Dada

The Delaunays, with their colour-sound analogies of harmony and rhythm, developed simultaneity and light, sound synchronism and *Grapheme*, or colour-graphemic synaesthesia.[48] This naturally chimed with Kandinsky; most notably Sonia Terk's 2 metre long accordion folded book[49] (Figure 8) in which simultaneous colours evoke the movement of train travel as a continuum or flux (a path also being explored by the French philosopher Bergson[50] at the time), and Robert Delaunay's 1914 watercolour illustration in which Arthur Rimbaud assigns colours to the five vowels of the alphabet[51] in his 1873 poem *'A Season in Hell*.'[52] Here, (Figure 9) the poet describes his visions, which link to the condition of grapheme-colour synaesthesia; possibly Rimbaud's own neuropsychological condition? Sarah Best at the University of Chicago challenges this theory, claiming both Baudelaire and Rimbaud seized upon it as a means of innovation; both wished to change fundamentally the way that people read, understood, and experienced poetry, thus steering away from the fact that either were inherently synaesthetic.

The painter R. Delaunay rather describes "movements of colour" and also rhythm, stating: "Seeing is in itself a movement. Vision is the true creative rhythm"[53] which takes us into the realms of cross-sensory experiences, yet not necessarily synaesthesia per se. Simultaneity, as pioneered by the Delaunays and F. Kupka, saw experimentation with multi-sensory discs in simultaneous motion, chiming with the

---

[48] Colour-graphemic synaesthesia is a common form of synaesthesia in which letters or numbers are perceived as inherently coloured. See Appendix 3

[49] 1913 collaboration with Blaise Cendrars; calling their creation "the first simultaneous book," Delaunay-Terk and Cendrars drew on the artistic theory of simultaneity, espoused by the artist's husband, the painter Robert Delaunay, and modern poets. (www.moma.org)

[50] Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941) explored the theory of time as a flux or a continuum. At the core of his philosophy is his theory of "duration". His concept of élan vital, 'creative impulse' or 'living energy' was developed in Creative Evolution, his most famous book. Élan vital is an immaterial force, whose existence cannot be scientifically verified, but it provides the vital impulse that continuously shapes all life.

[51] Podcast Documentary: 'Synaesthesia: the hidden sense' BUFTA, Bond University 2013

[52] Source: Leah Dickerman, 'Inventing Abstraction', 1910-1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art', Museum of Modern Art, 2012, (Article) Page 19

[53] R. Delaunay to A. Macke, 1912: http://www.artchive.com/artchive/D/delaunay.html, Paragraph 5

tuition of E.P Tudor-Hart[54] in terms of the correspondences between colour and musical tones, leading to 'synchrony.'

In effect, "Delaunay was trying to make a picture that vibrated with harmony and tone, not unlike a piece of music, which was the aim of Orphism, alluded to in the movement's namesake, the Greek poet and musician Orpheus."[55] Sonia Delaunay is considered a "pioneer of abstraction; her dynamic forms and vibrant colour captured the dance crazes such as the tango."[56] By 1907, her conscious shift towards abstraction, partly reflects the influence of the chemist M-E Chevreul. Both were developing a theory of simultaneous colour-contrasts, which they called 'simultaneism.' Sonia Delaunay's "vibrant chromatic fields, harmonious to the eye"[57] and often chart her interest in light, dynamism and colour, as is evinced in the whirling colour music of *Vitrine Simultané – Jazz no. 1* of 1924. "Her canvases flirt with forceful abstract patterns, transmitting the verve of a creative personality."[58] It is strongly felt that Sonia Delaunay's Fauvist eruptions must be considered within the cultural backdrop made new by Marx, Freud, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.[59]

Given his sentiment that "one day I must be able to improvise freely on the keyboard of colours,"[60] in terms of his investigations into the synaesthetic and the abstract, Kandinsky was arguably most 'in tune' with his soulmate Paul Klee.[61]

---

[54] Ernest Percyval Tudor-Hart (1873-1955). Canadian painting professor who taught about the correlation between colour and music. Macdonald-Wright and Russell advanced Tudor-Hart's theories and created a style of painting they called Synchromism. They gave their paintings titles such as "Synchromy in Blue" or "Sunrise Synchromy in Violet". The word 'synchromy' intentionally calls to mind its musical equivalent: symphony

[55] Will Gompertz, 'What are you looking at?' 150 Years of Modern Art in the Blink of an Eye (London: Viking, Penguin Group, 2012) Page 153

[56] Juliette Rizzi, 'Sonia Delaunay' The Ey Exhibition handout, Tate Modern, April 15 2015, Page 1

[57] Roger Cardinal, TLS, May 2015 (Article) Page 18

[58] Roger Cardinal, TLS, May 2015 (Article) Page 18

[59] 'Modern Painters' magazine article, May 2015, Page 45

[60] Simon Shaw-Miller, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 112

[61] Paul Klee (1879-1940) the Swiss painter, resident in Germany 1906-33, joined Kandinsky's Der Blaue Reiter group in 1912 and later taught at the Bauhaus (1920-31) Klee was an accomplished amateur violinist, and his images are rife with musical symbolism, as suggested by titles such as 'Organ Tones,' 'Blue-Orange Harmony', and 'Polyphonic Architecture'

Like Kandinsky, Klee was an accomplished musician, in fact a concert violinist. He explored musical notation, the treble clef, stave, structural rhythms, and linear counterpoint, using the word 'polyphonic', as per the Futurists. Through his love of opera, or the combined experience, Klee built upon Wagner's concept of the *gesamtkunstwerk* and, in his own words "studied the tonal values found in music."[62] However, unlike Kandinsky with his penchant for the contemporary composer Arnold Schoenberg, Klee admired the great composers of the eighteenth century, most notably J.S Bach and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Klee's expectations from a work of art were that it should present pictorial harmony, which he viewed as "equilibrium of movement and counter-movement."[63] This is relevant because pictorial 'harmony' can obviously be linked to musical 'harmony.' He devised a colour theory in which he starts with the six colours of the rainbow and explains this natural phenomenon by a related circle divided into six parts. The relationship between the colours in the circle results from two different kinds of movement: a circular movement around the edge and a straight one within the diameter of the circle, which he refers to as 'pendular movement.' From the circular form, he derives a triangle of primary colours, which he subsequently expands into an 'elemental star' including the non-colours black and white. This relationship of colours is symbolic of the relationship of musical notes. Hence, in Klee's work, his use of colour references specific notes, e.g. in works such as *'Polyphony'* of 1908. He believed that "polyphonic painting is superior to music".[64]

As a teacher, it was Johannes Itten who exerted the greatest influence on the students of the Bauhaus. From 1919 to 1922 he taught the basics of material characteristics, composition and colour. His 'student Bible', *The Art of Colour*, describes his 'Colour Sphere' of 12 colours and their correspondences. Itten

[62] Hajo Düchting, 'Paul Klee - Painting Music' (Munich: Prestel, 2002) Page 18
[63] http://www.bauhaus.de/de/das_bauhaus/45_unterricht/
[64] Hajo Düchting, 'Paul Klee - Painting Music', (Munich: Prestel 2002) Page 27

attempted to represent sound as a dreamlike ringing, such as in his *Bluish-Green Sound* of 1917. (See Figure 10 – *Colour Sphere*)

Collectively the Bauhaus teachings of Kandinsky, Klee and Itten encouraged a synaesthesia of the arts, via Itten's pioneering adoption of the neo-Zoroastrian religion *'Mazdaznan'* a physical, spiritual and mental workout.[65] An extrapolation of Itten's theories became contemporary, in-depth investigations into solipsism and theosophy, not least those made by Wassily Kandinsky during his spell at the Bauhaus. Thus a dual interest in the synaesthetic and the spiritual led to "a belief in the primacy of the spiritual and a longing for the interpenetration of the arts;"[66] one of the chief tenets of Kandinsky's *Der Blaue Reiter* Group. Josef Matthias Hauer[67] in discussion with Itten, also shared an interest in the synaesthetic agreement between colours and musical tones, developing, independent of and a year or two before Arnold Schoenberg, a method for composing with all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. But, it is felt that "Kandinsky went further."[68]

In 1922, Kandinsky's Bauhaus course on artistic design included colour classes to explore the psychological effects of colour - an investigation into Synaesthesia through certain sounds and emotions in relation to particular colours. Furthermore, Kandinsky attempted to render music graphically through transcription. Stemming from this, Kandinsky, Macke and Marc discussed by letter, the correspondence between musical dissonances, notes and colour - sparking a dialogue with the-then darling of dissonance, Arnold Schoenberg.

---

[65] Johannes Itten who taught at the Bauhaus, insisted on shaven heads, crimson robes and colonic irrigation. The Nazis proscribed Mazdazman from 1935, a ban that remained in Germany until 1946
[66] David Sylvester, 'About Modern Art', Critical Essays 1949-96 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996) Page 76
[67] Josef Matthias Hauer (1883-1959) was an Austrian composer and music theorist who pre-empts Schoenberg's method for composing with all 12 notes of the chromatic scale. Like Schoenberg, he employed the twelve-tone method. There was and still is great controversy over who was first to employ this method of composition
[68] E.H Gombrich, 'Art & Illusion' (London: Phaidon, 1995) Page 311

Kandinsky wrote in a letter to Schoenberg in January 1911, "I am certain that our own modern harmony is not to be found in the 'geometric' way, but rather in the anti-geometric, anti-logical way. And this way is that of 'dissonances in art', in painting, therefore, just as much as in music. And 'today's' dissonance in painting and music is merely the consonance of 'tomorrow'."[69]

Certainly Jan Gordon proffers an interesting argument in exploring the duality of art and music in theoretical terms, in her *A Stepladder to Painting* edition of 1962:
"Colour has a third aspect, the emotional. In this way colour differs from music. Music can convey emotions, but no note has a peculiar effect."[70] One might argue, however, that not every colour can elicit an emotion…. The blander colours on a painter's palette may leave the viewer cold.

Following the precedent set by the Post Impressionists in van Gogh, Gauguin *et al*, arguably Kandinsky's chief aim was to explore the emotive power of colour, in particular in tandem with music. Vincent and Gauguin occasionally used musical analogies to describe their works, "comparing one to 'a beautiful symphony'…(they) rhapsodized over the rich harmonies."[71] Consequently, Kandinsky's paintings are largely expressive of feeling and sensation, rather than descriptive equivalents of what he saw. In this way, "to let the eye stray over a palette, splashed with many colours, produces a dual result."[72]

Just as Goethe had explored the musical properties inherent within the realm of colour theory, so too would Kandinsky via his "unconscious expressions of an inner impulse."[73] Thus, paradoxically, Kandinsky fluctuates between a theoretical and experimental approach on his path to abstraction, the instructive versus the

---

[69] Source: Patricia Railing, Philosophy Now, 'Abstract Art & Music', 2005 (Online Article) Paragraph 10
[70] Jan Gordon, 'A Stepladder to Painting' (London: Faber, 1962) Page 89
[71] Martin Gayford, 'Musicians in Colour' from 'The Yellow House' (London: Penguin Books Ltd. 2007) Pages 203-204
[72] Jan Gordon, 'A Stepladder to Painting' (London, Faber, 1962) Page 23
[73] 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4 (London: Marshall Cavendish, 1991) Page 2542

instinctive. The latter is best illustrated by his *magnum opus* 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' of 1910 (published 1911).

This study will go on to examine the parallel between painting and music in relation to abstraction and dissonance through concentrated works of Kandinsky and Schoenberg. Stemming from this is the paradox between expressive freedom and the calculated and more mathematical approach of both practitioners. Examining the relationship of concepts associated with Schoenberg's music and theory to Kandinsky's employment of similar ideas in the development of his compositional theory for abstract painting, entails identifying and explaining the specific aspects of Schoenberg's music and theory that Kandinsky noted as being most relevant to his own search for a theory of harmony in painting. This investigation is best carried out in relation to the works of the 'heroic period,' notably 1909 to 1914.

Chapter 1 – Synaesthesia in Art before and during Kandinsky's Period

Erich Hohne in his text 'Music in Art' defined the phenomenon of synaesthesia aptly as follows: "in the realm of science this magic word is rather drily called synaesthesia. That is, the sympathetic arousing of one sensory organ by stimulation from another, from which stems the ability to understand musical paintings."[74] The word Synaesthesia derives from the Ancient Greek *syn*, 'together' and *aisthesis*, 'sensation'. It is a neurological phenomenon (rather than 'condition') whereby an individual's sensations intermingle. It can be defined as the coupling of two or more of the senses, hence, 'with sensation' (from Greek lexicon). "As a psychological phenomenon, synaesthesia is intermodal, inter-sensory (specifically-audio-visual)" [75] and is most simply an instant conjoining of sensations, affecting approximately one in 2,000 people.

This fascinating phenomenon has been viewed paradoxically as both a form of cognitive enhancement and hindrance. The vast majority of definitions refer to it as a 'condition', which may imply some form of 'affliction'. "Some people – a surprisingly large number – "see" colour or "taste" or "smell" or "feel" various sensations as they listen to music – though such synaesthesia may be accounted a gift more than a symptom."[76] I personally view it as more a difference in perceptual experience. Certainly it is a multi-modal sensation, close to Autism.

Synaesthesia can be congenital and hereditary, thus determined by genetic factors.[77] Sachs points out that Galton believed genuine synaesthesia was strongly familial. However, one can become synaesthetic as a result of mental illness e.g. Vincent van

---

[74] Erich Hohne, 'Music in Art' (London: Abbey Library, 1965) Page 8

[75] B.M Galeyev, 'Kandinsky and Schoenberg: The Problem of Internal Counterpoint', Article online, Page 58. Kandinsky explained this term 'internal counterpoint', invented by himself, in that he imagined the painting 'Sudden grief', in which there is a woman, who has received a letter, informing her that she has suddenly become a widow. Kandinsky considers it would be banal to depict the 'feeling of grief' with the 'grief' plot itself and with the 'grief' composition and with the 'grief' drawing and with the 'grief' colouring

[76] O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 31

[77] Podcast: 'Synaesthesia Science', Inside Oxford Science with M. du Sautoy

Gogh,[78] the victim of a stroke, bereavement or a severe fall.[79] The loss of a chief sense or faculty can result in a kind of synaesthetic over-compensation, as in the case of Goya.[80] (This case is further complicated by the fact that Goya's world became largely achromatic).[81] "The only significant cause of permanent acquired synaesthesia is blindness… the loss of vision may lead to intersensory connections and synaesthesias.[82] Blindness inevitably forces one to focus on sounds, to become more sensitive to the auditory. In the case of those born blind, "the massive visual cortex, far from remaining functionless, is reallocated to other sensory inputs, especially hearing and touch".[83] Once stone deaf, Beethoven, for example, continued to compose, and his compositions rose to greater heights as the musical imagery was intensified by his deafness.

Of course there are many different manifestations and strains of Synaesthesia.[84] Some individuals have awareness of colour for a day / week, for example. Others have higher order processing, to evoke questions of imagination, memory and so on. The painter Edvard Munch was an established synaesthete. The 'scream of nature' he witnessed when crossing a Norwegian fjord, is reflected in the pulsating and tumultuous rhythms in the background of *The Scream* of 1893 (Figure 12) which look remarkably like sound waves. (Figure 11)

---

[78] "It is true that synaesthesia, experiencing one sensation in terms of another, can be found in those suffering from mental problems and those under the influence of hallucinogens".
Martin Gayford, 'Musicians in Colour' from 'The Yellow House' (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2007) Page 190

[79] Leigh Erceq was diagnosed with Savant Syndrome after falling into a ravine and suffering spine and brain injuries. She has developed enhanced cognitive ability following a brain injury and is now an artist and poet who "hears" colour and "sees" sound. Acquired Savant Syndrome is rare; the condition gives a person 'vastly enhanced cognitive ability', which they were not born with. She also now experiences synaesthesia – the mixing of the senses. **Source:** Article, Independent News Online, May 2015

[80] Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes' (1746-1828) illness of 1792 left him deaf; he subsequently became introspective. It is felt the loss of one chief faculty meant that he made far bolder statements in paint. See also: Dr Clifford Rose, 'Neurology & the Arts'

[81] Achromatic: from the Greek *a*- 'without' and *khromatikos* from 'colour'.

[82] O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 294

[83] O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 268

[84] See Appendix No. 3 for reference

For Munch the world of sound was a flowing world of shapes; acoustic waveforms of sound colour or tone colour. Those with perfect pitch often compare it to colour and the word 'chroma' is in fact sometimes used in musical theory. Kandinsky had a completely eidetic[85] memory, yet was he technically a synaesthete or an inducer?[86] He is regularly cited as being a synaesthete, and this study will attempt to ascertain how much he wanted to be, or how much of his synaesthetic experience was down to his eidetic memory or a desire to join others in striving to find that 'sixth sense'. A plausible case can be made for believing that he was *nearly* there. Robert Hughes proposes that Kandinsky had "abnormally strong visual senses"[87] and that "he felt some colours as strongly as others feel sounds."[88] Sensibly, Du Sautoy argues that synaesthetic art may refer to either art created by synaesthetes or art created to *convey* the synaesthetic experience.[89] In neurological terms, there is a dual perception system in a hemisphere of the brain, which may account in part for Kandinsky's dual sensory experience.

We know Kandinsky was an advocate of anthroposophy,[90] essentially therapeutic, wellbeing. He knew Rudolf Steiner, founder of anthroposophy, and also the Russian musicologist and theosophist Alexandra Zacharina-Unkovskaya. Unkovskaya used a scale to demonstrate the vibration of sounds in accord with the vibration of colours (this scale is preserved in Kandinsky's Munich estate). In the Spiritual in Art Kandinsky describes the work of Unkovskaya: "to impress a tune upon unmusical children with the help of colours…. She has constructed a special, precise method of 'translating' the colours of nature into music, of painting the sounds of nature, of

[85] In Psychology, relating to mental images having unusual vividness & detail (see also Footnote 90)
[86] M. du Sautoy, 'Synaesthesia Science', Inside Oxford Science, Podcast
[87] Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 300
[88] Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 300
[89] M. du Sautoy, 'Synaesthesia Science', Inside Oxford Science, Podcast
[90] A formal educational, therapeutic, and creative system established by Rudolf Steiner, seeking to use mainly natural means to optimize physical and mental health and well-being, Anthroposophy is a human oriented spiritual philosophy that reflects and speaks to the basic deep spiritual questions of humanity, to basic artistic needs, to the need to relate to the world out of a scientific attitude of mind, and to the need to develop a relation to the world in complete freedom and based on completely individual judgements and decisions

seeing sounds."[91] Kandinsky also knew of the theosophy of Madame Blatavsky, which "augmented his already strong tendency to mysticism."[92]

Kandinsky, a disciplined and scholarly teacher in later life, outlined how unmusical children have been successfully helped to play the piano by quoting a parallel in colour (for example, of flowers). He explains: "On these lines A. Sacharjin Unkowsky has worked for several years and has evolved a method of so describing sounds by natural colours and colours by natural sounds that colour could be heard and sound seen. The system has proved successful for several years both in the inventor's own school and the *Conservatoire* at St. Petersburg. Finally Scriabin, on more spiritual lines, has paralleled sound and colours in a chart not unlike that of Unkowsky. In "Prometheus" he has given convincing proof of his theories. His chart appeared in *'Musik'* (1911)."[93]

Kandinsky also enquired into the recently founded Munich sanatorium's use of colour therapy, which applied music as well: "at times the patient was given single sounds or particular chords in rhythmic repetition during the treatment.[94] On the subject of Chromotherapy[95] (See also Appendix No. 2), attempts have been made with different colours in the treatment of various nervous ailments. As Kandinsky himself wrote, "They have shown that red light stimulates and excites the heart, while blue light can cause temporary paralysis".[96]

John R. Hughes coined the term the 'Mozart Effect' in accordance with a change in neurophysical activity on the temporal and left frontal areas of the brain when

---

[91] Konrad Boehmer, 'Schoenberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter', British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data, (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: OPA, 1997) (Article) Page 67
[92] N. Wolf, 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 2004) Page 52
[93] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Kandinsky's Din: On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 60
[94] Konrad Boehmer, 'Schoenberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter', British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data, (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: OPA, 1997) (Article) Page 73
[95] Chromotherapy is another term for colour therapy; a system of alternative medicine based on the use of colour, especially projected coloured light
[96] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 25

listening to the music of Mozart. Brain maps were generated to plot spiking. The effect is said to be primary or direct on the cerebral cortex. Formerly, the scientist David Schwenter (1585-1636) found that musical sounds even affect the thickness of the blood, thus triggering a physical and physiological reaction of sorts. Similarly the top-class pianist Manfred Clynes moved into the world of psychology and neurology linked to feeling, measuring emotion and music. Relating to this, Kandinsky felt that "relaxing the eye and mind allows what is seen to reach the part of the brain that responds to music."[97]

A series of psychological studies in the 1860s and 1870s culminated in Galton's *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* in 1883. "These served to legitimate the phenomenon and were soon followed by the introduction of the word "Synaesthesia."[98] Interestingly, 'hyperconnectivity' is present in primates and other mammals during foetal development and early infancy, but is "reduced or pruned within a few months after birth…. The newborn's senses are intermingled in a synaesthetic confusion."[99]

My investigation seeks to ascertain whether Kandinsky was a true synaesthete or pseudosynaesthete. Most commonly synaesthesia is both congenital and familial; neither of which seem to apply to Kandinsky.

In claiming "The sound of colour is so definite,"[100] Kandinsky's epiphanic moment came in 1896 when he found his 'imagination running' during a performance of Lohengrin at the Moscow Royal Theatre: "I saw colours before my eyes, while almost mad lines drew themselves in front of me…….Wagner had painted 'my hour' musically." [101] Wagner's Lohengrin revealed "new and expressive means of

[97] Robert Cumming, 'Great Artists', (Annotated Guides) (England, DK, 1998) Page 96
[98] O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 289
[99] O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 292
[100] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 25
[101] Will Gompertz, 'What Are You Looking At?' (Audio Series) Kandinsky/Orphism/Blue Rider

polyphonic instrumentation." [102] In the same year, an exhibition of Monet's Haystacks proved to be a seminal moment also for the 30-year-old Kandinsky: "That it was a haystack the catalogue informed me. I could not recognize it. This non-recognition was painful to me. I considered that the painter had no right to paint indistinctly."[103] For Kandinsky, he had the sense that the object was missing in the picture. "The object was discredited as an indispensable element of a painting."[104] This contributed towards Kandinsky becoming the first abstract artist of the twentieth century, whereupon he "embarked on a totally uncharted and unprecedented course, abandoning trying to depict objective reality."[105]

The two experiences thus planted the seeds in Kandinsky which were to germinate later in a musical-synaesthetic-artistic vein. Monet's striving for 'fugitive effects' led to an almost abstract halation[106] in the Haystack series of the early 1890s, which Kandinsky could take further in terms of the dematerialisation of the object, which biographer Ulrike Becks-Malorny alternatively coined 'the dissolution of the object.' Meanwhile the Wagnerian tenet of the *gesamtkunstwerk* coupled with the multi-modal sensations the music evoked in Kandinsky provided him with the foundations for his research into the synaesthetic.

Coupling these two potent experiences together, "Kandinsky now set out to convey symbolic meanings not only through motifs but through pure lines and colours, their contrasts and harmonies, their 'musicality' and synaesthetic effects.' [107] An illustration of this is outlined by Kandinsky as follows:

---

[102] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 20
[103] Kenneth C. Lindsay, 'Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art' (England: G.K. Hall & Co., 1982) Page 363
[104] C. Gregory, 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4 (London: Marshall Cavendish, 1991) Page 2538
[105] 'Discovering Great Paintings', No. 54 (Milan: A Fabbri Production, 1992) Page 12
[106] Halation: the spreading of light beyond its proper boundaries to form a fog round the edges of a bright image, relating to the Impressionists' characteristic afocal homogeniety
[107] N. Wolf, 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 2004) Page 52

"The sun melts all of Moscow down to a single spot that, like a mad tuba, starts all of the heart and all of the soul vibrating. But no, this uniformity of red is not the most beautiful hour. It is only the final chord of a symphony that takes every colour to the zenith of life that, like the fortissimo of a great orchestra, is both compelled and allowed by Moscow to ring out".[108]

In Kandinsky's article 'The Effect of Colour'[109] of 1911, he talks of the physical effect of looking at a palette of colours, in terms of an experience not unlike lexical-gustatory synaesthesia, "like a gourmet savouring a delicacy". He describes how the tongue is "titillated by a spicy dish" and a finger "touching ice". These, he states, are physical sensations, limited in duration. Similarly, the cross-over between the visual and auditory is never far away in his prose: "Keen lemon-yellow hurts the eye as does a prolonged and shrill bugle note the ear".[110]

As George Heard Hamilton outlines, "Colour, like music, has its 'sounds' and 'tones'.....Colour suggests synaesthetic sensations of the greatest intricacy".[111] Given Kandinsky's confession of 1910 "I felt much more at home in the realm of colour than in that of line", it is possible, that Kandinsky had Synopsia; the ability to 'hear' colours and conversely 'see' sounds.[112] Thus, he connects each instrument of the orchestra with its corresponding colour. (See Figure 13)

For Kandinsky, "Each colour has its own objectively verifiable properties and its own specific effect on the psyche."[113] For example, "Violet is rather sad and ailing. In music it is an English horn, or the deep notes of wood instruments e.g. a bassoon".[114]

---

[108] H. Duchting, 'Kandinsky' (Germany: Taschen, 1991) Page 6
[109] Wassily Kandinsky, *'Uher des Geistige in der Kunst',* Chapter 5, Pages 37-42
[110] H. Chipp, 'Theories of Modern Art' (U.S.A: University of California Press, 1996) Page 153
[111] G. Heard Hamilton, 'Painting & Sculpture in Europe 1880-1940' (U.S.A: Yale University Press, 1993) Page 340
[112] Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 300
[113] Thomas S. Messer, 'Kandinsky' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 25
[114] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 41

As an accomplished cellist himself, Kandinsky would see the colour blue emanating from the instrument as he played it, flooding his peripheral vision, and hence The **Blue** Rider.[115] "The name thus arose of its own accord". (Kandinsky)

As John Gage also notes, "Kandinsky, in the early years of his non-representational style, was much interested in colour temperature and devised colour relationships based entirely on this type of contrast".[116] He was preoccupied around 1910-11 in finding a musical equivalent for each colour. Much of his parallels he outlines in Concerning the Spiritual in Art, such as "In music a light blue is like a flute, a darker blue a cello; a still darker a thunderous double bass; and the darkest blue of all-an organ…..Light warm red has a certain similarity to medium yellow, alike in texture and appeal, and gives a feeling of strength, vigour, determination, triumph. In music, it is a sound of trumpets, strong, harsh and ringing".[117]

In addition to a musical equivalent for specific colours, Kandinsky cites a range of emotions in relation to blues and rose colours, in a similar way to those of Picasso's respective Blue and Rose Periods: "For red and deepened blue, a parallel in music are the sad, middle tones of the cello".[118] Blue 'withdraws from the spectator (concentric motion).' For Kandinsky, a rose colour evokes a soprano's voice, black "acquires an additional resonance of non-human mourning".[119] He goes on to equate white to a pause in music, an effect he describes with the oxymoron 'resounding like a silence'. Paradoxically, in musical terms bright red, he claims, is like the sound of a fanfare, "vermillion like a tuba". Furthermore, "dark blue can be compared to the deep notes of an organ".

---

[115] Formed in 1911 and based in Munich, so-named due to Kandinsky's love of blue and Marc's passion for horses: "We both loved blue, Marc horses and I riders". (W. Kandinsky): A. Nelson, http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2000/11/3/all-the-pretty-horses-franz-marc/
[116] John Gage, 'Colour in Art' (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006) Page 76
[117] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 38
[118] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 41
[119] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 22

In Concerning the Spiritual, Kandinsky theorized that yellow is the colour of middle C on a brassy trumpet and 'streams outward in eccentric motion'. In further sound analogies, he states in *The Language of Forms and Colours* "yellow is disquieting and stimulating, with a shrill sound". Black is the colour of closure and the end of things, and that combinations of colours produce vibrational frequencies akin to chords played on a piano. As Kandinsky himself put it: "Any parallel between colour and music can only be relative. Just as a violin can give various shades of tone, so yellow has shades, which can be expressed by various instruments. But in making such parallels, I am assuming in each case a pure tone of colour or sound, unvaried by vibration or dampers".[120]

The painter Jawlensky, like Kandinsky, was convinced that colours and sounds are interrelated and interchangeable, whereby colours "rang like music in his eyes".[121] Franz Marc similarly shared the above view, claiming that "colours contain counterpoint, treble and bass clef, major and minor just like music".

The Institute of Artistic Culture, known as INKhUK, (1920–24) was an artistic organisation, a society of painters, graphic artists, sculptors, architects, and art scholars set up in Moscow run according to a programme by Kandinsky, involving the psychological reaction of the artist to colours. For example, he believed that red excites activity. He also stated that "The colours are to be studied first individually and then in combinations…...co-ordinated with medical, psychological and occult knowledge and experience of the subject, e.g. colour and sound".[122]

Listening to music has, in extreme cases, had the power to induce Musicogenic Epilepsy, or Musicolepsia; essentially epileptic seizures induced by music. In tests concerning Epileptic form activity, in patients exposed to regular excerpts of Mozart's music, for example, the number of attacks decreased.

---

[120] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Footnote on Page 38
[121] G. Heard Hamilton, 'Painting & Sculpture in Europe 1880-1940' (U.S.A: Yale University Press, 1993) Page 214
[122] C. Gray, 'The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996) Page 234

In 1922, Kandinsky introduced a course at the Bauhaus[123] on artistic design which included colour classes to explore the psychological effects of colour and how Synaesthesia can be experienced through certain sounds and emotions related to particular colours.[124] Sachs, in his text Musicophilia, claims that musical synaesthesia, as encouraged by the Bauhaus tutors, was the most common strain of this complex neurological phenomenon. For Kandinsky, "forms and colours tended increasingly to sound independent chords".[125]

[123] Kandinsky taught at the Bauhaus from 1922-33
[124] More of Kandinsky's theories on colour are outlined in Chapter V11 of his book *The Language of Forms and Colour.* His analogy 'colours in fanfares' is one such statement that sums up the artist's dual interest in colour and musical analogy.
[125] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 25

Chapter 2- The Path to Abstraction

This section seeks to investigate Kandinsky's spiritual journey into the realm of the spiritual in art as a source for the artist's early abstractions. It is important to ascertain to what extent this path to abstraction was instinctive and natural, whether it was governed by pure chance or a deliberate attempt at innovation.

The question of whether Kandinsky's 'Path to Abstraction'[126] was an entirely natural one or not becomes a moot point when one recalls the serendipitous moment in 1908 when the artist encountered one of his own paintings on its side; a work "of indescribable beauty, imbued with an inner flame."[127] All he could recognise were "forms and colours whose meaning was incomprehensible."[128] This prompted a semi-permanent move to non-objective art. "The more abstract is form, the more clear and direct is its appeal,"[129] as Kandinsky put it.

The question of abstraction is an inherently complex one. Abstract art could be defined as "art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of a visual reality but instead uses shapes, colours, forms and gestural marks to achieve its effect."[130] Abstract art is invariably non-representational. It could be based on a subject or may have no source at all in the external world. However, art which is 'abstracted', connotes a tendency to separate or withdraw something from something else, thus extracting and simplifying from reality whilst containing recognisable material forms, albeit in short-hand format.

In describing Abstraction, Kandinsky talks of the rejection of the third dimension when other artists were looking for the fourth, to keep a picture on a single plane.

---

[126] http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/kandinsky-path-abstraction/kandinsky-path-abstraction-room-guide, Paragraph 1
[127] Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 301
[128] Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 301
[129] Wassily Kandinsky 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 70
[130] Source: Tate.org, http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/a/abstract-art, Page 1

Modelling was abandoned, in favour of a 'limitation.'[131] This chimed with the contemporary Modernist doctrine "less is more" as coined by German Modernist architect Mies van der Rohe, and the then vogue for asceticism. That said, abstraction for its own sake held no interest for Kandinsky. He wanted to stress that abstract art was not merely decoration of patterning and so retained certain references to recognisable objects in his early works (e.g. *Cossacks,* 1910). He enjoyed the polymorphous freedom of children's art, for example, yet I am not entirely convinced "his pictures convey a sensation of a state of mind through freely combined shapes and colours without having to represent anything at all."[132]

August Endell talked prophetically of a totally new art which was about to develop - an art with "shapes that meant nothing, represented nothing and recalled nothing, but which had the same emotional effect as music."[133] Yet, at least initially, Kandinsky's abstract works are solipsistic,[134] and are thus esoterically symbolic, rather than 'not representing anything at all.' His early abstract works are certainly often based on memories or experiences[135] albeit in a reductionist format. Thus they are abstractly allegorical. In this way, his symbolic language of shape and colour went beyond the depictive in favour of the spiritual; much like Gauguin's accusation that the Impressionists were searching around the eye and not in the mysterious centre of thought.[136]

The Fauve 'experience' certainly led the way to greater freedom, and "more apparent reduction of representational elements."[137] As Tom Phillips states,

---

[131] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A, Dover, 2000) Page 44
[132] Andrew Graham-Dixon, 'Art' (London: DK, 2008) Page 221
[133] Rosemary Lambert, 'The 20th Century' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) Page 27
[134] Solipsism is the view or theory that the self is all that can be known to exist: extreme egocentrism. Epistemological Solipsism is a type of idealism according to which only the directly accessible mental contents of an individual can be known. The existence of an external world is regarded as an unresolvable question or an unnecessary hypothesis, rather than actually false
[135] For example, 'Improvisation Gorge' of 1914 is based on Kandinsky's memories of boating with his partner and fellow-artist Gabriele Munter
[136] D. Gamboni, Paul Gauguin, 'The Mysterious Centre of Thought' (U.S.A: University of Chicago Press, 2014) Introduction, Page 6
[137] A. Bovi, "Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England, Hamlyn, 1971) Page 20

"Kandinsky, between 1908 and 1912, managed, using music as a key, to unlock the door to this new freedom."[138] Certainly from 1909 onwards, Kandinsky was painting pictures such as *Mountain,* which are considered non-figurative, but "contain ciphers of natural objects."[139] By 1910, in works such as *Composition 11* (lost in WW11), Kandinsky's work was characterised by "liberation from perspective and the free use of line and colour in contrapuntal arrangement,"[140] although he had not yet 'taken the plunge' into the realm of total abstraction.

Around 1911-12, Kandinsky was experimenting with non-objective art. By 1911 he bans all figurative elements; preferring, instead, to make colours "sing." He believed that abstract art contained spiritual qualities and independence from natural appearances and could give art a new autonomy. The nature of colour and its emotional effects Kandinsky explores in his book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art (1910),* insisting that inner-feelings could only be expressed in abstract forms. In fact Kandinsky went on to categorise his paintings 'Compositions' and 'Improvisations' in order to remove any narrative associations, using "forms filtered to the essentials" as Matisse put it.[141]

Interestingly, whilst Kandinsky had a completely eidetic[142] memory and could visualise shape, colours and tones of any object at will, his short-sightedness meant that he tended to see distant things as brightly coloured patches with indistinct contours. This is, as per the impact of developing cataracts on the late work of Turner and Monet, a contributory factor in terms of Kandinsky's journey into the realm of abstraction. Kandinsky's first abstract painting is considered to be a water-colour and ink painting of 1910[143] in which "the range of the visible was freed of all

---

[138] T. Phillips, 'Music in Art' (New York, Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[139] W-Dieter Dube, 'The Expressionists' (London, Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1996) Page 112
[140] H. Düchting, 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany, Taschen, 1995) Page 26
[141] Matisse believed that he had gained 'greater completeness and abstraction' in the cut-outs. 'I have attained a form filtered to its essentials'. Tate.org, The Snail:
http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/matisse-the-snail-t00540/text-display-caption
[142] In Psychology, relating to mental images having unusual vividness and detail
[143] 49 x 63 cm, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris

naturalism and showed him the primary evidence for his eidetic presences and essences through an internal dimension".[144]

Essentially, Kandinsky sought the 'victory of the avant-garde over tradition,' as he stated in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art.* So revelatory was the path Kandinsky forged, he is regarded as the very first modern European artist to break through the representational barrier and carry painting into the strange and unexplored world of total abstraction.[145] He claimed that "generally speaking, colour is a power which directly influences the soul".[146]

Both in terms of his teachings and his own artistic output, improvising freely upon the 'keyboard of colours,' "revealed to him the dramatic and expressive power of pure colour".[147] Leaning towards the spiritual rather than the material, he wanted his painting to describe spiritual states, "epiphanies of the soul."[148] It is true, he had abnormally strong visual reactions and "he felt some colours as strongly as others feel sounds.'[149] Thus, he encouraged people to think and see "behind matter" as he stated in the Blue Rider Almanac[150] of 1912. Kandinsky refers to this phenomenon as 'The Epoch of the Great Spirituality.' Subsequently, he developed an interest in the idea of the 'Geist'[151] or the 'spiritual essence.' He introduced himself to Franz Marc as a spiritually based person,[152] for example. The Czech artist Frank Kupka explored the kinetic dimension plus various synaesthetic and theosophical ideas, sparking a dialogue with Kandinsky and his circle.

---

[144] A. Bovi, "Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England, Hamlyn, 1971) Page 20
[145] H. Arnason, 'A History of Modern art', (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977) Page 127
[146] Janson & Janson, 'History of Art' (London, Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 787
[147] C. Gregory, 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4 (London, Marshall Cavendish, 1991) Page 2531
[148] Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New' (London, Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 301
[149] Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New' (London, Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 300
[150] The editors succeeded in presenting an eclectic mix of material from different cultures and eras – and in doing so, demonstrated an important principle - that all authentic manifestations of art could be united by their expressive form, not by their content. In other words, all art, irrespective of culture, that demonstrated a genuine expressive urge could be placed together in a unity, or synthesis, superficial questions about its technical or artistic quality becoming irrelevant
[151] The spirit of an individual or group (ref. German & related to 'ghost')
[152] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 31

Following the precedent set by Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams* of 1900, Kandinsky was drawn to the metaphysical and the relationship to the inner states of mind.[153] He believed and researched information from Sigmund Freud's writings to help Kandinsky activate it in his work. This notion of interiorisation or introspection was common to the modern Expressionist outlook; in fact Transcendentalism was a shared interest of Kandinsky and *Der Blaue Reiter.* This originally Kantian philosophy prompted Kandinsky's own investigations concerning the spiritual in art and his "mystical belief in a co-relation between musical and colour tones."[154] The pulsating rhythms of disparate colours and abstract hieroglyphic motifs of his mid-late *oeuvre* become "unconscious expressions of an inner impulse.'[155] These unconscious expressions Kandinsky relates to music and spirituality, stating that "Music was seen as the most spiritual art form, the one best suited to expressing the ineffable."[156]

Kandinsky felt strongly that musical sound acts directly on the soul.[157] In particular, he talks of how the piano affects the human soul, for "true harmony exercises a direct impression on the soul."[158] Ultimately, Kandinsky investigated the effects of colours as vibrations of the soul, believing that "the decisive factor in the genesis of a picture should be the inner voice of the artist."[159]

Fascinatingly, some years earlier, Vincent van Gogh had proposed that "there would be a future artist, he predicted, who would do with colour what Wagner had done in sound: mix it in new and beautiful combinations that would soothe the mind and speak to the soul: 'it will come'."[160] Prophetic, no less, and I would conjecture the

---

[153] Shapiro, David/Cecile. *Abstract Expressionism*. 'The Politics of Apolitical Painting' (Cambridge: University Press, 2000) Page 17
[154] 'Discovering Great Paintings', No. 54 (Milan, A Fabbri Production, 1992) Page 26
[155] C. Gregory, 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4 (London: Marshall Cavendish, 1991) Page 2542
[156] Thomas S. Messer, 'Kandinsky' (London, Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 25
[157] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 27
[158] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 15
[159] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 55
[160] Martin Gayford, 'Musicians in Colour' from 'The Yellow House' (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2007) Page 190

'future artist' was none other than Wassily Kandinsky. Meanwhile, his contemporary Paul Klee's repertoire "increasingly included the symbolic language of music".[161]

As C. Gray rightly noted, "Malevich, Kandinsky and the Pevsner brothers……argued that art was essentially a spiritual activity, that its business was to order man's vision of the world."[162] As Kandinsky was a practising member of the Theosophical Movement, he believed that our knowledge of God may be achieved through spiritual ecstasy, direct intuition or special individual relations. Like Madame Blavatsky, he felt a magical correspondence between tones in colour and music, and pursued his interest in Theosophy, Spiritism, Eschatology and the Occult. Similarly, the Belgian poet Maurice Maeterlinck talked of a "darkening of spiritual atmosphere."

In his text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* Kandinsky states "The Theosophical Society consists of groups who seek to approach the problem of the spirit by way of the inner knowledge…..Theosophy is synonymous with eternal truth."[163] However, by way of a challenge, Nietzsche claimed "spirituality is dead." It was in this climate that various societies and orders concerned with mysticism, like the Theosophists and the Rosicrucians[164] had sprung up in an attempt to fill the spiritual gap, whilst a new age dawned, in which materialism would be replaced by spirituality – a concept already explored by German Romantics Friedrich and Philip Otto Runge.

"The idea of music appears everywhere in Kandinsky's paintings. He believed shades resonated with each other to produce visual 'chords' and had an influence on the soul."[165] Robert Hughes cites an enlightening statement by Kandinsky about 'the

---

[161] Hajo Düchting, 'Paul Klee - Painting Music', (Munich: Prestel 2002) Page 30
[162] C. Gray, 'The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996) Page 246
[163] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 13
[164] Secretive society devoted to the study of metaphysical, mystical and alchemical lore; Rosicrucianism emphasized the betterment of mankind through acquired knowledge, but the rise of scientific enlightenment, which placed complete stock in empirical evidence, discarded Rosicrucianism for its more mystical elements.
[165] Gerard McBurney, 'Wassily Kandinsky: The Painter of Sound and Vision: Concertos on Canvas', http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/jun/24/art.art, Subtitle to article online

soul' in his text *The Shock of the New:* "Any impression of taste communicates itself directly to the soul, and thence to the other organs of sense."[166] Yet, as Bovi observed, the range of influences on Kandinsky's art is broad and varied: 'Up to the time of his death in 1944, Kandinsky's work showed a wealth of inspiration."[167] Culturally, he drew upon his native Russia, in 10th – 14th century religious paintings and Russian folklore. Further afield, he looked to the ethnographic, the naïve and the 'primitive arts', namely African and Oceanian. Yet he also focussed on the art of other cultures, such as Bavarian glass painting, Persian textiles, Chinese brush painting, Japanese Zen calligraphy, German prints, Bavarian art and the cult of Egyptian priesthood. Art historically, he drew upon Medieval sculpture, Post and Neo Impressionism; in particular the *cloisonnism* of the Pont-Aven artists, and Symbolism: "Kandinsky's attitude and that of the *Blaue Reiter* group as a whole is essentially Symbolist: the subjective truth, the sacred."[168] Certainly Kandinsky seems to have heeded Symbolist Gustave Moreau's advice "You must copy nature with imagination; that is what makes an artist. Colour must be thought, dreamt, imagined."[169]

Naturally, Kandinsky also drew from the fountain of early twentieth century *'Isms*, in Fauvism, Rayonism, Simultaneism, Orphism and Expressionism. The deliberate clashes of colour that epitomises the work of *Les Fauves* arguably heralds the beginnings of Kandinsky's early move to abstraction and dissonance. Rayonism and Simultaneism both shared an interest in the combined sensory experience, and Orphism celebrated music - a movement eponymously named after the mythical figure of Orpheus. As Bovi states, "Kandinsky stems from the violence of the Fauves and the exacerbated Expressionism of the Brücke."[170] Yet he is most commonly associated with the alternative German group *Der Blaue Reiter.* So abundant were the influences on Kandinsky and fellow-painters of the *Neue Kunstlervereinigung*

---

[166] Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 300
[167] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 36
[168] C. Gray 'The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996) Page 118
[169] www.leith.edin.sch.uk/**art**s/resources/pdf/er/FauvesCubismVorticism.pdf
[170] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 40

München and *Der Blaue Reiter,* they threw their net open so far wide that they termed their approach 'syncretism.'

However, the most profound influence on Kandinsky's artistic *oeuvre* is undoubtedly music, for "Painting and music were calling Kandinsky irresistibly."[171] In combining the influence of music with abstraction, I agree with Stone, in how "he sees Music at the creative apex of the pyramid of composition, since music adheres to abstraction extended through time but painting compresses time with the possibility of rhythm and colour for movement."[172] (Thus raising before its time, the ghost of moving pictures and motion graphics). This question of whether and to what extent music is an abstraction is a moot point, and one that Kandinsky and is contemporaries were preoccupied with.

Ubiquitously, "Music, that great teacher of humankind, was ever present in Kandinsky's life."[173] He recalled hearing a strange hissing noise when mixing colours in his paint-box as a child, and later he became an accomplished cello player. Meanwhile, his contemporary Klee was a concert violinist. Arguably Kandinsky's most significant statement on the correlation between art and music is in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art,* in which he wrote that "Generally speaking, colour is a power which directly influences the soul. Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul."[174]

The synthesis between art and music was an entirely natural one for Kandinsky; he excelled at both in school, playing the cello and the piano. He felt strongly that painting can develop the same energies as music.[175] In fact the vocabulary

---

[171] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 36
[172] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 10
[173] Thomas S. Messer, 'Kandinsky' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 70
[174] Simon Shaw-Miller, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 93
[175] Norbert Lynton, 'Story of Modern Art' (London: Phaidon, 1995) Page 83

Kandinsky uses for both is interchangeable: 'melodic' and 'symphonic,' also 'rhythmic and unrhythmic, harmony, discord'. "Musical references and discussion on colour is often accompanied by timbral, melodic and harmonic analogies".[176] Similarly he uses a musical vocabulary to name his works: e.g. *Colourful Ensemble*, 1938. Kandinsky also talks about his colours as 'sounding' and 'vibrating'. This case is further strengthened when in 1909, he divides his paintings into the categories Impressions, Improvisations, Compositions; the latter two clearly correlating with music, "from melodic to symphonic values-Impression (outward); Improvisation (unconscious); Composition (inward)".[177] In categorising these abstract works, he catalogues his 'pieces' as per musical opus numbers, thus furthering the allusion to music, whilst pragmatically organising an array of untitled abstract experiments.

Furthermore, Kandinsky greatly admired Wagner, and saw his fusing of music, text and drama into a seamless *gesamtkunstwerk* as inspirational.[178] Kandinsky concerned himself with the reciprocal relationship between the arts and colour and the psychological effect which calls forth "a vibration from the soul". Wagner developed an operatic genre, which he called 'music drama'. The synthesizing of music, drama, verse, legend, and spectacle is best epitomised in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.[179]

Will Grohmann[180] considered that "chromatic material becomes decisive as in music and in this respect Kandinsky stands between Mussorgsky and Scriabin."[181] Chronologically this makes sense, yet theoretically Kandinsky sought more for a resonance than their dissonance: for forms and colours should penetrate the beholder, directly impact the soul, reverberate in him and move him in his depths,

---

[176] Thomas S. Messer, 'Kandinsky' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 90
[177] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 11
[178] Norbert Lynton, 'Story of Modern Art' (London: Phaidon, 1995) Page 82
[179] The Ring Cycle was a cycle of four operas, 1847–74
[180] Writer of a comprehensive monograph on Kandinsky: *Il Saggiatore*, Milan, 1958
[181] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (London: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 21

as music does the listener.[182] He talks of an 'inner sound' and the unconscious mind. In this way he echoes the sentiments of Schopenhauer, who claimed of music "It reproduces all the emotions of our innermost being."[183] Most of his contemporary musicians such as Debussy were also deeply concerned with spiritual harmony. Believing that "music has a grammar which, although modified from time to time, is of continual help and value as a kind of dictionary,"[184] Kandinsky attempted to render music graphically via transcription, just as his contemporary Klee used structural rhythms, musical notation and linear counterpoint: "prominent force lines which move in a dynamic crescendo."[185]

Elger believes he saw the free chords and tone rows in music as an analogy of abstract art;[186] Gompertz that "his intended purpose was to create a visual soundscape,"[187] and furthermore the critic Sylvester upholds the belief that painting for Kandinsky ***is*** a form of music in that it needs time not merely to unfold its secrets but begin to mean anything at all.[188] These three theorists' statements amount to the same conclusion, which is that Kandinsky was indeed seeking out a visual equivalent of abstract music – something I have always felt is at the very core of his work of the pre-War years.

With his belief that "The richest lessons are to be learned from music," Kandinsky has been hailed as a 'visual musician', corroborating Sadler's view that Kandinsky was 'painting music'. That is to say, "he has broken down the barrier between music and painting, and has isolated the pure emotion which, for want of a better name,

---

[182] Norbert Lynton, 'Story of Modern Art' (London: Phaidon, 1995) Page 83
[183] O. Sachs 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 28
[184] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Kandinsky's Din: On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 97
[185] Thomas S. Messer, 'Kandinsky' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 92
[186] D. Elger, 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 1991) Page 146
[187] Will Gompertz, 'What Are You Looking At?' (Audio Series) Kandinsky/Orphism/Blue Rider
[188] David Sylvester, 'About Modern Art', Critical Essays 1949-96 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996) Page 79

we call the artistic emotion."[189] Certainly Kandinsky was striving to prove what the analogy is between colour and sound, line and rhythm.

Kandinsky was familiar with Kulbin's *'The Studio of the Impressionists*,' with its passages on hearing colours and coordinating spectral colours with the music scale. Certainly Kulbin sent Kandinsky his brochure *'Free Music: Application of the New Art and Music',* similarly, Kandinsky studied Signac's treatise *'From Delacroix to Neo-Impressionism'* of 1899, in which Signac demonstrates that *'petits intervalles'* are found in Delacroix's work, where they help create intervals between light/dark and warm/cold. This forms a parallel with microtonal effects in music. This, of course, was founded upon the earlier theories of the renowned colour theorists Eugene Chevreul and Ogden Rood.

Ultimately, despite the painter's dichotomy between formula and intuition, "Music provided Kandinsky with a quintessential paradigm that was both structural and ideological."[190] As Tom Phillips points out, "music possesses order, a mathematical elegance." [191] Whether striving for the order or, paradoxically, the dissonant disorder music provided, the artist himself concluded, "Personally, I cannot wish to paint music, because I believe that such art is basically impossible and unattainable."[192] What is undoubtedly inextricably linked for Kandinsky, however, is music and abstraction, "For while it is the most closely tied to the emotions, music is wholly abstract."[193]

Kandinsky envied music – its independence and the freedom of its means of expression. In Schoenberg, he found a temporary soulmate, for "Schoenberg's music leads us into a new realm, where musical experiences are no longer acoustic, but

---

[189] M.T.H Sadler, Introduction, Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page X1X
[190] Simon Shaw-Miller, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 20
[191] T. Phillips, 'Music in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[192] D. Elger, 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 1991) Page 146
[193] O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 87

purely spiritual. Here begins the 'music of the future'."[194] Essentially, Kandinsky simply connected freedom with the inner *geist,* "so once more we are faced with the same principle which is to set art free, the principle of the inner need."[195]

Central to Kandinsky's development artistically, was a cathartic outpouring of the soul, his inner spiritual world made manifest via the mediums of art and music, for "music has been for some centuries the art which has devoted itself not to the reproduction of natural phenomena but rather to the expression of the artist's soul in musical sound."[196]

---

[194] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 61. Wagner tried to describe the "art of the future", which saw him as a synthesis of, the unification of all kinds of arts. This concept was the beginning of pan-aesthetic positions of romanticism. For Wagner embodiments of this synthesis were musical drama productions with application of specific stage of the funds

[195] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Kandinsky's Din: On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 72

[196] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Kandinsky's Din: On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 50

Chapter 3 - Kandinsky's Earlier Work and Encounters with Schoenberg

Serialism & Dissonance: 'The Music of the Future'[197]

Kandinsky admired greatly, the work of a group of experimental Viennese composers active at the start of the twentieth century of which Arnold Schoenberg is considered to be the father. This section outlines the tendencies of Schoenberg and his contemporaries in relation to Kandinsky's early abstractions, for the artist believed strongly that "both arts learn from music that every harmony and every discord springing from inner spirit is beautiful, essential, and alone."[198] Significantly, Schoenberg's seminal concert of 1909 provided the springboard for Kandinsky's development of a series of abstract 'Impressions' from 1911 onwards.

Collectively, Webern, Schoenberg and Berg are often referred to as the Second Viennese School.[199] The master was undoubtedly Arnold Schoenberg, given he taught both serial disciples. Through his innovations he redefined music of the early twentieth century. To quote Patner, "Schoenberg never ceases to be reactionary *and* progressive".[200] This progression is, most significantly, the development of the twelve-tone technique, which will be outlined in more detail during this Chapter.

Anton von Webern, for six years Schoenberg's pupil, developed 'total serialism'. His music was especially stripped-back and precise; his ten-minute symphony is a case in point. Webern composed only thirty-one works, amounting to less than three hours in performance time. In contrast, Alban Berg had a much less abstract conception to his counterparts, and developed a more lyrical and harmonic style. For this reason, he is frequently considered to be the "most easily approached

---

[197] Kandinsky in 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 24

[198] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 104

[199] The First Viennese School being Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, all of whom lived and worked in Vienna, making the Austrian capital the center of musical creation at that time. Although the men all moved in the same circles and knew one another, they were not an actual "school" in the sense of working together to produce musical compositions

[200] A. Patner, 'A Legendary Encounter: Plumbing the Brief, Brilliant Friendship of Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky', 2003 (Article) Paragraph 10

composer of this style".[201] Schoenberg, on the other hand, was "an experimental composer" generating "truly new music".[202]

1908 was 'Schoenberg's painting year', at a time when he developed the use of the 12-tone scale (dodecaphonic [203] construction) with over-expressive leaps. Dodecaphony or Serialism, involves the sole use of the 12 notes of the musical scale in a predestined order; thus producing chromaticism as opposed to conventional diatonicism.[204] Sometimes it would be completely random, at other times it would be in a very particular order. Its basis is a series of 12 different notes, none of which is heard for a second time until all have been sounded.[205] It meant that the music wasn't based on melody, but on mathematics. These mathematical rows were rearranged using the techniques of retrograde and inversion into a series of mathematically ordered and predetermined notes that fail to make harmonic sense in conventional terms.[206] This organised 'architecture' in Schoenberg's music, resonated with the super-organised cerebral cortex in Kandinsky; the pattern of keys marrying with the artist's paint-box.

Whilst Schoenberg's approach was initially viewed as being totally new, its inspiration stems from the work of the revered composer Bach, for it was Bach who composed two sets of 24 preludes and fugues using every major and minor key in chromatic order. While this was to demonstrate the well-tempered system of tuning, hence the title *'The Well-Tempered Clavier'*, Bach's compositional technique was similarly based on mathematical principles. The fugue is a famous example of a musical form governed by contrapuntal guidelines, the subject and counter-subject material following predetermined orders.

---

[201] 'A comparison of the approaches of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern to serialism in their music', Musicteachers.co.uk, Article, Page 4
[202] H.H. Stuckenschmidt, 'Arnold Schoenberg' (London: John Calder, 1959) Page 54
[203] Another term for Twelve-Note Serialism
[204] Diatonic music uses only the notes available within the scale, and chromaticism uses notes outside of the members of a key's scale
[205] E. Smith & D. Renouf, 'Approach to Music' Book 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) Page 68
[206] Source: 'The Second Viennese School: where to start', Classic FM Discover periods online, P5

Like Bach, Schoenberg had to find a way to turn something logical and mathematical into something expressive and meaningful. The 12-tone scale links to J. Itten's '12 colour and tone' system, in that Itten parallels a series of chromatic steps with those of the musical scale, with half-colours mirroring semi-tones and their respective 'black notes'. Itten's scale and Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique have been paralleled with Kandinsky's abandonment of figuration in favour of a more expressive style. Paradoxically, it stylistically represents a mix of dissonance and systematization: "new dissonant melodic and chordal structures of twentieth century music within a more consciously conceived and systematically ordered framework".[207] Kandinsky was so keen to circulate Schoenberg's ideas on 12-tone music and atonality that he commits to a translation of an article without permission.[208]

While "Schoenberg is composing his 'pantonal[209] music' the ubiquitous 'atonal triad,'[210] harmonically speaking, Schoenberg's new musical paradigm meant that 'anything goes', by virtue of an "emancipated dissonance"[211] in which "no motif is developed" in the words of Anton Webern. This approach found its way into painting, via discussions within *Der Blaue Reiter*, namely in a letter by Franz Marc to Auguste Macke, in which he poses: "can you conceive of music in which tonality is completely abolished? It kept reminding me of the great creation by Kandinsky which leaves not the slightest trace of tonality".[212] The use of enormous melodic skips and the extreme chromaticism[213] encouraged "the placing together of clashing notes commonly avoided or resolved in tonal music".[214] The effect is a kind of

---

[207] 'A comparison of the approaches of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern to serialism in their music', Musicteachers.co.uk, Article, Page 2
[208] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 13
[209] Pantone: a system for matching colours
[210] R. Taruskin, 'Music in the Early Twentieth Century' (Oxford University Press, 2009) Page 461
[211] R. Taruskin, 'Music in the Early Twentieth Century' (Oxford University Press, 2009) Page 465
[212] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 110
[213] R. Taruskin, 'Music in the Early Twentieth Century' (Oxford University Press, 2009) Page 460
[214] Frances Guy,'Dissonance' Chapter, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz', Simon Shaw-Miller (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 69

musical abstraction, best epitomised by the ostensibly 'abstract' inventions of Berg.[215]

In terms of a parallel between abstract art and music, Kandinsky felt that "if music could be abstract, ordered, and emotionally charged, then so too could art."[216] This sentiment is shared by art historian Anthony F. Janson who believes that by virtue, "music is inherently non-representational".[217] Kandinsky believed that "discord produces fresh harmonies. Composition dematerialises objects in favour of abstraction. Primary colours."[218] The contemporary neurobiologist Jason Warren of the University College London claims that music is a highly evolved species of patterned sound. This 'patterned sound' is exactly what Kandinsky strove to paint – *timbre*, or tone-colour.

Theoretical writing on music of the time helped decipher this new wave of avant-gardism, namely Schoenberg's article on Music *'The Relationship to the Text',* Thomas von Hartmann's *'Anarchy in Music'* and Aleksandr Scriabin's *'Colour Symphony: Prometheus'* by Leonid Sabaneev. Both Kandinsky and Schoenberg were aware their respective innovations in art and music would cause a sensation. In a letter to Schoenberg, Kandinsky referred to one work entitled *'Musicology'* which "comes from Moscow and will turn many things on their head."[219]

Kandinsky's interest in Schoenberg's discoveries initially stems from the lack of cohesion musically: "Their external lack of cohesion is their internal harmony. This haphazard arrangement of forms may be the future of artistic harmony".[220] Yet, with further study, he concludes: "but I am beginning to feel that there are also definite

---

[215] R. Taruskin, 'Music in the Early Twentieth Century' (Oxford University Press, 2009) Page 525
[216] A. Graham-Dixon, 'Art: The Definitive Visual Guide' (England: DK, 2008) Page 434
[217] Janson & Janson, History of Art (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 787
[218] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 11
[219] Source: from archivist Therese Muxeneder, Schoenberg / Kandinsky Correspondence, The Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna, Austria, schoenberg.at, Paragraph 6
[220] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 49

rules and conditions which incline me to the use of this or that dissonance".[221] Certainly Kandinsky was naturally drawn to the radical and *avant-garde* music flavoured with dissonance, such that "his new atonal music was causing as much interest and hostility as the new art movements".[222]

In addition to discussions with Schoenberg's students Alban Berg and Anton Webern, Kandinsky shared a dialogue with Thomas Mann[223], Igor Stravinsky and the Musicologist Eduard Hanslick.[224] However, the well-documented dialogue between Kandinsky and Schoenberg, "one of the treasures of the century's artistic archive"[225] really got underway in 1911 when the painter sparked a correspondence following a performance of Schoenberg's 3 Piano Pieces, Opus 11 of 1909, on January 2, 1911, in Munich, in which "the distinction between consonance and dissonance and the sense of a home key are banished".[226] Kandinsky made sketches on the night of concert and then wrote just two weeks later to the composer Schoenberg, pouring out his sole. Kandinsky's painterly response was his Impression 111 of 1911, "a linchpin of the world's principal collection of works of the Blue Rider group"[227] – he felt the two of them had "so many points in common".[228] The writing between the two abstract practitioners resounded with the principals of Schopenhauer: "I myself don't believe that painting must necessarily be objective. Indeed, I firmly believe the contrary".[229]

---

[221] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York: U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 17
[222] Rosemary Lambert, The Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) Page 28
[223] Thomas Mann (1875-1955), German novelist and essayist
[224] Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904), German Bohemian music critic
[225] 'How to Paint a Symphony', 'Music in Art', T. Phillips, (New York, U.S.A: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[226] E. Smith & D. Renouf, 'Approach to Music' Book 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) Page 74
[227] A. Patner, 'A Legendary Encounter: Plumbing the Brief, Brilliant Friendship of Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky', 2003 (Article), Paragraph 6
[228] "Please forgive me for taking the liberty of writing to you without having the honour of knowing you, but I have just attended your concert where I experienced great joy. Obviously you know nothing about me and my works, for I have only exhibited once in Vienna some years ago. Nonetheless, our works, our thought and our sensibility have so many points in common that I feel authorised to tell you how much I like you" Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter', (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 112
[229] An excerpt from a letter from A. Schoenberg to W. Kandinsky of January 24th 1911, J. Auner, 'A. Schoenberg Reader, Documents of a Life' (New Haven & London: 1959) Page 90

Kandinsky's *Impression 111* (Figure 14) has been hailed appropriately by Schoenberg as "effecting an exemplary bringing together of painting and music",[230] albeit, I would add, only in its foetal form at this stage, however. Just as Kandinsky was developing his interest in the synaesthetic, so too was Schoenberg, forging "a harmony of sound colours, sound patterns and sound elements",[231] as Schoenberg stated. In this way, he was making music with colours and forms. In Schoenberg's *3 Piano Pieces, Opus 11* of 1911, the composer abandoned accepted organisation of the musical scale for the first time. Kandinsky's visual record of the 'sound-happening', was equally pioneering in its abstract conception; ostensibly childlike, we can make out the primitive form of a grand piano seen from above, and a wave of yellow which represents the sound of the trumpet. This we know, due to Kandinsky's synaesthetic colour chart corresponded to the instruments of the orchestra.

Kandinsky and Schoenberg were also 'in tune' with each other regarding the soul: "The external can be combined with the internal harmony, as Schoenberg has attempted in his quartettes".[232] Furthermore, Schoenberg wrote to Kandinsky about "inner images by means of rhythms and sound values".[233] In the chapter entitled *'Consonance and Dissonance'* of '*Theory of Harmony',* Schoenberg sets out an argument in favour of breaking away from mere artistic reproduction of the natural world, stating "In its most advanced state, art is exclusively concerned with the representation of inner nature".[234] This sentiment mirrors Kandinsky's notion, as seen in Concerning the Spiritual in Art, that the true purpose of art is found in its ability to bring to life the inner world of the spirit rather than just imitate the outer world.

Kandinsky's operatic *'Yellow Sound'* of 1909 oscillates between consonance, a combination of notes which are in harmony with each other due to the relationship

[230] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 109
[231] From Schoenberg's autobiography. Erich Hohne, 'Music in Art' (London: Abbey Library, 1965) Page 7
[232] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 51
[233] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 112
[234] Arnold Schoenberg, 'Theory of Harmony' (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984) Page 18

between their frequencies, and dissonance, a lack of harmony among musical notes. This is similar to Schoenberg's notion of timbre and structure, representing successions of changing tone-colours to create abstract shapes. In Schoenberg's most revolutionary works, such as his *String Quartet Opus 10, Die Gluckliche Hand* & *Pierrot Lunaire*, he allowed sounds to remain dissonant and unresolved in a rejection of conventional structures in music. In response to *'The Yellow Sound,* Schoenberg wrote that it "pleases me extraordinarily. It is exactly the same as what I have striven for in my "Lucky Hand," only you go still further than I in the renunciation of any conscious thought, any conventional plot. "[235] In this way, his approach can be paralleled with that of Debussy, who used chords for their expressive 'colour' effects unhindered by traditional rules of harmony. Debussy's dissonances are unprepared and unresolved. Schoenberg's text *Theory of Harmony* also puts forth arguments for the development of music using a much more "liberal" notion of consonance, which could include a much wider range of notes. "In *Die Gluckliche Hand*…Schoenberg uses the play of colours which are exactly fitted to the music".[236]

The Musicologist Joseph Auner[237] reminds us that Schoenberg has been viewed as a revolutionary modernist, an evolutionary traditionalist, a "reactionary Romantic," a solitary prophet, the founder of a school that has held composition in its clutches for a century, an "irrational expressionist," and a "cerebral sonic" mathematician who recast "modern music in the image of science." Works such as his 'Score for 2 Songs, Opus 1 for Baritone & Piano' advocate his radical approach, in being "totally independent of the harmony, following its own laws and polyphonic tension".[238]

---

[235] An excerpt from a letter from Kandinsky to Schoenberg 1911, Archivist Therese Muxeneder, Schoenberg / Kandinsky Correspondence, The Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna, Austria, schoenberg.at, Page 130
[236] H.H. Stuckenschmidt, 'Arnold Schoenberg' (London: John Calder, 1959) Page 55
[237] Joseph Auner's (Professor of Music in the School of Arts & Sciences at Tufts University) Lecture: 'Schoenberg as Sound Student'
[238] H.H. Stuckenschmidt, 'Arnold Schoenberg' (London: John Calder, 1959) Page 54

Schoenberg introduced *Sprechstimme*,[239] an aurally challenging admixture of half-speaking and half-singing. Whilst Webern became known for the brevity of his music; similarly Schoenberg created his 'miniatures' as per the modernist penchant for rationalism, functionalism and asceticism, and thus a kind of musical minimalism.

1911, a year of Schoenberg's ground-breaking atonal works, saw the duel publication of Schoenberg's *'Theory of Harmony'* and Kandinsky's *'Concerning the Spiritual in Art'.* "On December 9, 1911, by an extraordinary coincidence, the composer Arnold Schoenberg and the painter Wassily Kandinsky received from their publishers the first copies of books that contained two of the twentieth century's most influential programmatic statements".[240]

Kandinsky promptly wrote to Schoenberg about liberation in developing a new means of expression. In short, the pair "discovered a remarkable kinship in their artistic intentions".[241] As Andrew Patner puts it, "Kandinsky, who was at just that moment looking to free visual art from formal structures similar to those that Schoenberg was rebelling against in music".[242]

Kandinsky wrote in a letter of 1911 to Schoenberg, "What we are striving for and our whole manner of feeling and thought have so much in common that I feel completely justified in expressing my empathy".[243]

---

[239] Another term for *Sprechgesang*; a style of dramatic vocalization intermediate between speech and song. It is a technique or recitative or *parlando.* Richard Wagner used the technique in his music-dramas or late German Romantic operas of the nineteenth century

[240] J. Hahl-Koch, 'Arnold Schoenberg & Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures & Documents', (London: Faber & Faber, 1984) Page 221

[241] J. Hahl-Koch, 'Arnold Schoenberg & Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures & Documents', (London: Faber & Faber, 1984) Page 221

[242] A. Patner, 'A Legendary Encounter: Plumbing the Brief, Brilliant Friendship of Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky', 2003 (Article) Paragraph 5

[243] Letter of January 18, 1911: Kandinsky to Schoenberg. J. Hahl-Koch, 'Arnold Schoenberg & Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures & Documents' (London: Faber & Faber, 1984) Page 221. Kandinsky goes on to say: "In your works, you have realised what I, albeit in uncertain form, have so longed for in music. The independent progress through their own destinies, the independent life of the individual voices in your compositions, is exactly what I am trying to find in my paintings".

In January 1911, Schoenberg replied to Kandinsky with the following:
"Our work has much in common…….every formal procedure which aspires to traditional effects is not completely free from conscious motivation. But art belongs to the unconscious! One must express oneself! Express oneself directly! Not one's taste, or one's upbringing, or one's intelligence, knowledge or skill. Not all these acquired characteristics, but that which is inborn, instinctive".[244]

Schoenberg's characteristic unresolved dissonances, the 12-tone system and independence from conventional harmonic arrangements parallels with the cascading abstract forms of Kandinsky's *Composition V1*, in which disparate colour interrelations clash and jar – the leaps of the giant musical intervals mirrored in Kandinsky's "colours leaping up without plan", as the artist himself put it.[245] (Figure 15) There are similarities here with the work of Alexander Scriabin; most notably *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire* of 1910, with the top part for luce,[246] a keyboard with notes corresponding to colours as given by Scriabin's synaesthetic system, specified in the score. "Scriabin's work is an example of parallel streams of colour and sound".[247] Kandinsky alludes to the impact of Scriabin's experiments in his text, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art:* "Scriabin's attempt to intensify musical tone by corresponding use of colour".[248] Schoenberg's interest in colour straddles both music and painting. Writing to Kandinsky, he stated "Perhaps you do not know that I also paint. But colour is so important to me; not 'beautiful' colour, but colour which is expressive in its relationship".[249]

---

[244] Letter of January 24, 1911, 'A. Schoenberg Reader', edited by Joseph Auner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) Pages 90-91
[245] Interestingly, concordant sounds are processed in the right hand side of the brain and discordant sounds on the left
[246] Luce: *clavier à lumières* (keyboard with lights), an instrument invented by Scriabin. Influenced by the doctrines of theosophy, Scriabin developed his system of synaesthesia toward what would have been a pioneering multimedia performance: his unrealized magnum opus Mysterium was to have been a grand week-long performance including music, scent, dance, and light in the foothills of the Himalayas Mountains that was somehow 'to bring about the dissolution of the world in bliss'
[247] C. Gray, 'The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996) Page 235
[248] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A., Dover, 2000) Page 51
[249] Jelena Hahl-Koch 'Schoenberg-Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents' trans. John C. Crawford (Boston, Mass: Faber and Faber, 1984) Page 23

In addition to Scriabin's 'keyboard of light' and the discovery of the Lithuanian painter M.K Ciurlionis, Stravinsky also exerted a profound influence on Kandinsky with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in Paris, giving rise to Kandinsky's 1913 series *'Sounds'*, a collection of prose-poems with black and coloured woodcuts.

"Both Kandinsky and Schoenberg were seeking to create music dramas in which colour would be perceived on the same level as sound and action".[250] Schoenberg's atonal music was, like Kandinsky's contemporary canvases, unconventional and modern, marking "the abolition of the traditional tonal functions and heralded an entirely new treatment of dissonance".[251] Ultimately, in parallel terms, "Schoenberg was leaving tonality behind, Kandinsky representation".[252] Thus the two shared an ephemeral, near-symbiotic artistic alliance, until their rather public falling-out, over Kandinsky's alleged yet misconstrued anti-Semitism during his spell at the Bauhaus. Ultimately, "Schoenberg had staged an equivalent escape from traditional tonality".[253]

The "orchestral colouration"[254] of the Second Viennese School provided the radical painter Kandinsky with inspiration to generate his painterly disports or 'concertos on canvas'. Reciprocally, Schoenberg contributed to the *Der Blaue Reiter* Almanac of 1912. It is worth recognising at this juncture, that Schoenberg was also an enthusiastic painter, dubbed "a scholarly musician but an instinctive painter".[255] Thus, "the two men found they shared the same ideals, both of them breaking time-honoured rules of composition in their own fields".[256] Kandinsky regularly played the piano and his beloved cello, whilst painting also. Meanwhile, Schoenberg was

---

[250] Gerard McBurney, 'Wassily Kandinsky: The Painter of Sound and Vision: Concertos on Canvas', http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/jun/24/art.art, Paragraph 9
[251] 'A comparison of the approaches of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern to serialism in their music', Musicteachers.co.uk (Online Article) Page 2
[252] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter', (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 164
[253] T. Phillips, 'How to Paint a Symphony', 'Music in Art', (New York, U.S.A. Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[254] Konrad Boehmer, 'Schoenberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter', British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: OPA, 1997) (Online Article) Page 10
[255] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Pages 150-151
[256] C. Gregory, 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4 (London: Marshall Cavendish, 1991) Page 2532

producing his experimental paintings, whilst concurrently covering new ground musically. For the more scathing of the critics, however, in order to appreciate Schoenberg's music **and** paintings, it was felt that "One must lose both one's hearing and sight at the same time", and "Schoenberg's music and Schoenberg's pictures together will tear your ears off and put out our eyes at the same time".[257]

Both *avant-garde* practitioners were thus adhering to that Wagnerian doctrine of the *gesamtkunstwerk*, just as the *Der Blaue Reiter* group were attempting to "bring down the barriers which had hitherto existed between painting, music, theatre, dance, and poetry".[258] Influenced by Wagner, both were seeking a 'total art' in which painting and music were mutually associated.[259] Indeed, Kandinsky sought Schoenberg's support for his ideas for his operas of colour 'The Yellow Sound' and 'Violet Curtain' in the Munich Artists' Theatre. In terms of emulating musical configuration, Kandinsky's later work entitled *Rows of Signs* of 1931 (Figure 16) resembles a musical score, with the five lines of a stave hung with notes, thus as Shaw-Miller states, "The idea of musical composition offered an artistic structure for the abstract configurations of lines, colours and forms".[260]

It is evident that Kandinsky wanted art to be like music, which appealed directly to the senses and had no need to tell a story. In his theoretical account *Point and Line to Plane*, first published in 1926, Kandinsky's illustrative symbols proliferate throughout the text, closely resembling musical dynamics. Thus, both 'artists' were creating "examples of theory of rhythm, composition and colour".[261] **(Franz Marc).** Simultaneously, Paul Klee was "transferring comparisons from the world of music into that of the visual arts".[262]

---

[257] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 115
[258] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter', (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 150-151
[259] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 113
[260] Simon Shaw-Miller, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 24
[261] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 97
[262] Hajo Duchting, 'Paul Klee - Painting Music' (Munich: Prestel, 2002) Page 34

A further musical association Kandinsky made is that he believed colour could be used in the same way as sound. His lessons in colour were governed, to an extent, by Goethe's bible on colour, *Zur Farbenlehre* (Theory of Colours) of 1810. Drawing together these various strands and ideas, "he observed the harmony in painting, its relation to music, the mystical content of art and symbolism of colours".[263] Concurrently, Schoenberg was writing: "Kandinsky (and Kokoschka)…. improvise in colours and forms to express themselves as only the musician expressed himself until now".[264] Hence their duality of desire to foster co-curricular links within the arts, and desire to prove how painting is analogous to music.

The microtone, an interval smaller than a semitone, became a shared *leitmotif* for Schoenberg and Kandinsky. Certainly in the latter's case, this subtle gradation of hue stems from Seurat's *Pointilliste* Chromoluminarism and Signac's discourse on colour, '*Delacroix to Neo-Impressionism'.* According to Schoenberg, 'free music' uses all tones: the quarter, eighth, even thirteenth tones. "The microtonal composer's ability to act on the mind is enriched in particular by 'small intervals' which are not perceived by the brain. Such ideas were 'in the air' at that time, but Kulbin was probably one of the first to have noted them and experimented with them".[265] Boehmer wonders to what degree this can be compared with Schoenberg's invention of the *'Sprechstimme'*, the 'speaking' voice that he used in his works, in which the voice oscillates and fluctuates between one tone and another. Interestingly, the microtone's origins in music stems from the Eastern Russian Orthodox Church – something, therefore, Kandinsky would have been *au fait* with since childhood, since "the sensitivity for microtonal effects might have been

---

[263] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England, Hamlyn, 1971) Page 24
[264] Arnold Schoenberg, Der Blaue Reiter Publication, 'The Relationship to the Text' 1912 (Article) Page 92. A point of comparison between Schoenberg's music and art relates to *athematicism* in music and abstraction in painting. The term *"athematic"* refers to pieces that lack a recurring motive or melody, and abstract paintings are those without a distinct representational subject. Both could be thought of as "works lacking clear subject matter." Total abstraction in painting was as radical a step in painting at this time as was athematicism in music. Most analysts of Schoenberg's music argue that at least three works are "athematic": Op. 11 No. 3 for piano, Op. 16 No. 5 for orchestra, and *Erwartun*
[265] 'Schoenberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter', British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data, (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, OPA, 1997) (Online Article), Page 68

particularly strong in Russia, through the priest's finely elaborated way of chanting".[266] The priest's vocal intoning and ululation rises in pitch imperceptibly at particularly dramatic or solemn moments, not through steps or half-steps but through something close to 'microtonal *glissandi*'.[267] Thus there is an almost subliminal registering of what is tantamount to the micro interval: a quarter-tone.

What a study of 'Arnold Schoenberg's Journey' makes clear is that his work was too progressive for its time, just as Kandinsky's was. Both practitioners strove initially to secede from conventional establishments. As his biographer Bovi notes, "Kandinsky struggles throughout his life……to get rid of everything conventional, academic, worn out and banal".[268] This is not necessarily the case across his whole *oeuvre* post-1909, however. Initially Kandinsky had been pejoratively labelled a 'morphia[269] addict' guilty of 'carnival clowning', his early experiments were dismissed as 'idiocy'. Schoenberg's inaugural performance of *Pelleas et Mélisande* was continually interrupted with catcalls, a very public mass exit and the loud slamming of doors.

Whilst there is a case to agree with the statement "Kandinsky assumed a key role in the development not only of an *avant-garde* but a veritably revolutionary art",[270] his work was not intentionally anti-conventional or subversive. Instead, he was merely making ground and being progressive. At his artistic zenith in around 1910 he had "reached the summit of what has now been called Expressionist abstraction".[271] In

---

[266] 'Schoenberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter', British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data, (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, OPA, 1997) (Online Article), Page 18

[267] 'Schoenberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter', British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data, (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, OPA, 1997) (Online Article), Page 58

[268] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 44. In this vein, Kandinsky pursues a similar route to that of the Futurists, who were similarly striving to eradicate the past in terms of any artistic legacy, in order to make strides into the future. This notion to secede stems from the Viennese Secessionists of the late nineteenth centruty

[269] Morphine (old-fashioned)

[270] N. Wolf, 'Expressionism', (Germany, Taschen, 2004) Page 52. Revolutionary here refers to the progressive and innovative work of the artist rather than the art of Revolution which he embarked upon, to an extent, post-1917, when the tsarist regime was overthrown and replaced by Bolshevik rule under Lenin

[271] W-Dieter Dube, 'The Expressionists' (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1996) Page 112

fact by 1919, the term ‘Abstract Expressionist’ had already been used to describe his work, despite the fact that the movement itself didn't really gain momentum until the 1950s. This is further evidence of how ahead of his time Kandinsky was.

Chapter 4 - Kandinsky's Mature Abstractions: The Symphonic Works, 1909-14

The period 1909-14 in Kandinsky's *oeuvre* "left the deepest mark on art history" according to Will Grohmann. He goes further by labelling it the "genius span" and the "heroic years". Similarly, Ulrike Becks-Malorny supports this by stating "The years between the publication of the *Blaue Reiter* Almanac and the outbreak of the First World War were decisive in Kandinsky's artistic development".[272] It was undoubtedly a prolific period for Kandinsky, during which time he developed his unique strain of 'expressive abstraction' when working in Munich pre-World War 1, formulating a newly gained power of pictorial expression, psychological and physiological responses to colour.

This section is thus paramount in establishing to what extent Kandinsky's paintings at their highpoint mirror the music of Schoenberg, and also to what degree they support his reported condition of synaesthesia. There is a strong case to support that between 1910 and 1913 in particular, Kandinsky comes as close as ever, to 'painting a symphony'.

Whilst 1911-14 was "perhaps the artistically most exciting phase of his career when, in his *Impressions*, *Improvisations* and *Compositions*, he retained a modicum of figuration while charging forms and colours with intrinsic effect,"[273] it is important to trace the genesis of this prolific period in Kandinsky's *oeuvre* from earlier, i.e. 1909. This date heralds the beginning of his inimitable *'Improvisations'.*

The *Improvisations* between 1909 and 1914, Kandinsky categorises as 'unconscious' works. They are, in the words of the artist himself, "A largely unconscious, spontaneous expression of inner character, the non-material nature. This, I call an

---

[272] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 98
[273] N. Wolf, 'Expressionism', (Germany: Taschen, 2004) Page 52. In 1911, Kandinsky's 'Impressions' were more anchored in the naturalistic tradition, in that he was responding directly to material sources, rather than relying solely on the unconscious and subconscious as per the 'Improvisations'

'Improvisation'.[274] The term itself is borrowed from music; "Kandinsky was beginning to state his intent by using titles derived from music – *Composition, Improvisation, Lyrical*",[275] the works convey spontaneous emotional reactions inspired by events of a spiritual type. Painted spontaneously, the Improvisations are meant to project the 'inner sound' onto the canvas immediately. There were 35 such Improvisations up to 1914.

The works of this period are largely of imaginary inspiration, having originated in the unconscious. However, there is indeed a 'modicum of figuration' in the earlier Improvisations from 1909, with forms stemming largely from the Murnau landscapes', predominantly architectonic and biomorphic, such as towers, spires and mountains, for example. In time, however, such forms become increasingly distorted, to the point that they become unintelligible. Thus the Improvisations as a whole, chart the painter's 'path to abstraction'.

By virtue, one would assume that the Improvisations were largely intuitive or instinctive works, devoid of predetermined or conscious formal planning, akin to Surrealist Automatism.[276] "Here the word Improvisation is meant to conjure up an *impromptu* composition".[277] Indeed, the general consensus is that his most spontaneous works are the *Improvisations*. Kandinsky himself stated, "I always decide in favour of feeling rather than calculation".[278] Yet, ironically, for each painting, he made numerous preparatory sketches and variations. This mirrors the musical practice of the *capriccio*, in which a caprice is divided up into a theme and eleven variations. Kandinsky's series of Improvisations is numbered from 1 to 35, thus suggesting a conscious system at play. "The series thus forms a fairly extensive

---

[274] Wassily Kandinsky, 'The Art of Spiritual Harmony' (U.S.A: Houghton Mifflin, 1914) Pages 111-112
[275] H. Arnason, 'A History of Modern Art', (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977) Page 127
[276] The avoidance of conscious intention in producing works of art, especially by using subconscious associations as pioneered by the Surrealists J. Miro and A. Masson, whose art is characterized by abstract hieroglyphic wanderings which lack any form of a preconceived plan
[277] T. Phillips, 'Music in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[278] Simon Shaw-Miller, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz' (Chichester: Pallant House, 2007) Page 58

whole".[279] The chronological numbering of this set of works also pertains to the use of *Opus* numbers in music.

As aforementioned, there was a myriad of influences on Kandinsky's work – children's art among them. Like other artists of the early twentieth century,[280] Kandinsky felt that in order to be progressive, the natural starting point was to be regressive. Hence we can detect the influence of Palaeolithic wall paintings on his Improvisations of 1911 in particular, which features horses in hieroglyphic shorthand form. In a modern context, however, like other early twentieth century abstractionists, Kandinsky also appears to have followed Maurice Denis' prophetic instruction that "a painting is essentially a surface decorated with colours arranged in a certain order".[281] As a late nineteenth century Nabi[282] painter, Denis seems to be a descendant of the next generation more than his own.

The line is expressive in this series of Improvisations, (Figure 17) emulating primitive charcoal strokes of Paleolithic rock painting, (Figure 18) gestural Chinese brush painting or the emphatic contour inherent in Japanese calligraphy. "Intuitive rather than descriptive, Kandinsky himself asserted that these details sprang spontaneously from his brush".[283] Paradoxically, the impact of Stern's contemporary 'musical drawings' is apparent, in the way that he moved his pencil across the paper to the rhythm of a piece of music. Kandinsky himself insisted that an artist exercises aesthetic duties: how to paint music, how to give line rhythm.

---

[279] J. Lassaigne, 'Kandinsky: Biographical & Critical Study', (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co., 1964) Page 44

[280] The Dada movement launched in 1916 took its name from the first words a baby utters "da-da", in an attempt to say "daddy", and thus looking to the origins of seeing. "The child sees before it can speak" J. Berger, 'Ways of Seeing' (Englad: Penguin, 2008) Page 1. The Dadaists effectively reappraised the origins and very nature of art, by returning to children's art and the cult of primitivism as a starting point

[281] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 30

[282] Nabi Group of late 19th century Symbolist French painters, indebted to Gauguin. Hebrew word meaning 'Prophet'

[283] J. Lassaigne, 'Kandinsky: Biographical & Critical Study' (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co., 1964) Page 66

One of the chief governing forces in the Improvisation series was music. "It is clear that music had a great influence…..in relation to colour and moving forms in the dynamic of line".[284] In 1913, Roger Fry stated emphatically, that they are pure visual music. Certainly *Improvisation 14* (Figure 19) can be read as the visual equivalent of musical dissonance. As free and subjective explorations of form and colour, Kandinsky was devising concurrently, his prose-poems series of 1908-12, entitled *'Klangs'* (Sounds).

Improvisation Gorge of 1914 is one of Kandinsky's most ambitious abstract works up to this point. According to Yakov Rabinovich, all has turned to whirling light and colour. Movement becomes the governing force, supporting Rabinovich's theory that what holds the vast majority of Kandinsky's abstract compositions together is not a structure based on symmetry and static order, but on *momentum*. In his 1914 *Cologne Lecture,* Kandinsky describes the physics of his non-dimensional visual world, his 'aesthetic chaos' where "up and down, nearer and farther, heavy and light, have ceased to exist". [285] In *Improvisation Gorge*, Kandinsky has transformed everything into light, and in turn, into colour. He obeys the 'non-laws' of pure abstraction, in terms of the abandonment of cast shadows. "Shadowlessness, like the pinions of celestial spirits, is a symbol of perfect, weightless freedom, unconstrained by three-dimensional existence".[286]

Kandinsky's worlds are all realised in the zero-gravity of heaven - the realm of light. [287] Rabinovich's reference to 'the light' marks Kandinsky's temporary dispensation with the temporal in favour of the hieratic, thus chiming with the

---

[284] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 20
[285] Yakov Rabinovich, 'Kandinsky: Master of the Mystic Arts' InvisibleBooks.com: Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, 'Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art' (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1994) Page 400. Rabinovich outlines here how Kandinsky believed that the Twentieth century was "the dawning age of the Great Spiritual". This he suggests is manifest in how the outworn ways of being and thinking would be transformed, under the guidance of the arts in Kandinsky's still figurative but whirling and cataclysmic paintings, one of which, the 1913 *Composition VI*, he also called "the Deluge"
[286] Yakov Rabinovich, 'Kandinsky: Master of the Mystic Arts' InvisibleBooks.com: Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, 'Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art' (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1994) Page 400
[287] Yakov Rabinovich, 'Kandinsky: Master of the Mystic Arts' InvisibleBooks.com, Paragraph 7

artist's growing interest in the spiritual. Rabinovich furthers the analogical reference to physics, with the theory that without weight to help in placement, Kandinsky arrived at the *maelstrom* as a principle of composition.

Conflict becomes an inevitable key theme in the works of this period, by virtue of the outbreak of World War 1, the divorce from his wife and the floating, abstract malaise synonymous with dissonant music, enabling him to employ his maelstrom *leitmotif* with increasing virility. Kandinsky also wrote about Wagner's use of the *leitmotif:* "a motif as a sort of spiritual atmosphere, expressed in music".[288] Furthermore, "something similar may be noticed in the music of Wagner. His famous *Leitmotiv* is an attempt to give personality to his characters by something beyond theatrical expedients and light effect. His method of using a definite *Motiv* is a purely musical method. It creates a spiritual atmosphere by means of a musical phrase ".[289]

Yet Kandinsky's non-dimensional world is not flat or dimensionless as it often is in early twentieth century abstraction in the case of Mondrian, Malevich *et al*, for "The colours . . . lie as if upon one and the same plane but their inner [psychic] weights [values] are different" as Kandinsky himself put it in his *Cologne Lecture* of 1914. Furthermore, he insists that he avoided the element of flatness in painting, which can easily lead and has so often led to the ornamental.

Dubbed "a landscape of sensations"[290] by Rosemary Lambert, *Improvisation Gorge* appears to be possessed and to take on a musical mind of its own, in the sense that both Kandinsky's and Schoenberg's works use alternative strategies without aesthetic justification. It is an onslaught of the senses, and thus the word 'gorge' is

---

[288] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 60
[289] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Pages 43-44
[290] Rosemary Lambert 'The Twentieth Century' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) Page 28. This suggests a map of emotive responses, which chart a host of cross-sensory experiences, tantamount to a pictorial Polygraphic response record

chosen for both geological and gustatory effect. The work brings to mind an entry in Delacroix's journal: "The first virtue of a painting is that it be a feast for the eyes".[291]

Within the ocean of colour in *Improvisation Gorge*, there are still one or two discernible symbols, notably the ladder, which allude to musical notation and the keys of the piano. "The meanings of objects still reverberate like an undertone in the largely abstract structure,"[292] Wolf proposes. The ladder motif aids Kandinsky's evocation of the experience of walking through a steep-sided gorge, suggesting vertiginous and towering height. With the skiff in the foreground and the turbulent waves of a waterfall, Kandinsky calls to mind, esoterically, memories of boating trips with his partner Gabrielle Münter, albeit via a more internalised outcome than his earlier Murnau landscapes. On a broader dimension, the work refers to the Deluge, or great Biblical flood, a "cataclysmic event that ushers in an era of spiritual rebirth".[293] The resultant effect is suggestive of a battle and "a turbulent, conflicting character – as if the maelstroms of paint were in the process of swallowing up the last remnants of objectivity and figuration".[294]

The hallmark leaping lines and splashes of colour, coupled with the aquatic theme inherent in *Improvisation Gorge*, calls to mind Kandinsky's earlier *Improvisation 26* of 1912 (Figure 20). Again an abstraction of a former rowing trip – this time the *Hollental Gorge* of July 1914 with Gabriele Münter. This precursory work represents a freedom of execution and a more pronounced degree of abstraction for 1912. As per *Improvisation Gorge*, *Improvisation 26* amalgamates the painter's dual interests in musicology and mysticism, resulting in "visual equivalents and representational embodiments of pure music in charting his synaesthetic experiences".[295]

---

[291] (E. Delacroix) L. Norton The Journal of Eugene Delacroix, (England, Phaidon Press, 1995) Page 10
[292] N. Wolf, 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 2004) Page 50. Naturally, Wolf's description here incorporates musical analogies as descriptors, as the vibrating strings of the piano reverberate in a subdued or muted tone of sound or colour as per an 'undertone'
[293] Tate Modern: Kandinsky; The Path to Abstraction, Room Guide, Room 7, Paragraph 1
[294] N. Wolf, 'Expressionism', (Germany: Taschen, 2004) Page 52
[295] Annette and Luc Vezin, 'Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter' (Paris: Terrail, 1992) Page 164

In *Improvisation 19* of 1911, "…It seems as if an unknown ritual occurs in *Improvisation 19,* a kind of initiation and enlightenment of figures who can be understood as novices. One sees translucent figures outlined only in black. On the left is a procession of smaller form presses forward to the front, followed by shades of colour. The largest part of the painting, however, is filled with a wonderful, supernatural blue, which also shines through the group of figures shown in profile on the right, who seem to move toward a goal outside the painting. The spiritual impact of these long, totally incorporeal figures draws both on the uniformity (that is, they are all the same height, as in Byzantine pictures of saints) and on the fact that deep blue, almost violet shade in their heads may symbolize extinction or transition….This work underscores Kandinsky's almost messianic expectation of salvation through painting…" [296] The contrast of blue and yellow represent "opposites and contradictions – this is the harmony". **(Kandinsky On the Spiritual in Art)**

There are two geographically disparate elements in this predominantly abstract picture. The left hand side is representative of worldly existence – quotidian or temporal, whereas the right hand side is devoted to spiritual existence or the hieratic. The choice of colours mirrors the two respective realms, with the divine spirit manifest in *de rigueur* blue, which Kandinsky referred to as a "truly celestial colour, creating a supernatural depth". Blue in Medieval and Renaissance art is, of course, invariably synonymous with the Virgin and is often derived from the precious mineral *lapis lazuli.* For Kandinsky, "speaking in musical terms, light blue is like a flute, dark blue like a cello, and in deepest and most solemn shades the sound of blue resembles the sound of an organ"[297] thus strengthening further, his interest in synaesthesia and more specifically, synopsia. Kandinsky himself, entitled *Improvisation 19* 'Blue Sound' (Figure 21) and stated that "blue is the same colour we picture to ourselves when we hear that sound of the word heaven". The celestial

[296] Annegret Hoberg, Curator at the *Städtische Galerie*, Lenbachhaus, Munich, exhibition catalogue entry, Paragraph 9. Whilst inspired by hope or belief in a messiah, this also refers to the fervent or passionate messianic zeal that embodies Kandinsky's work at the time
[297] 'Discovering Great Paintings', No. 54, (Milan: A Fabbri Production, 1992) Page 26

blue he relates to spirituality, insisting that "spiritually enriching experiences could be attained solely through art – vibrations on the soul".[298] This might wrongly lead one, perhaps, into believing that Kandinsky was a true synaesthete.

When *Improvisation 19* was exhibited in 1911, Kandinsky and Marc submitted a small almanac which contained the explanation that their purpose was to show "how the inner wish of the artist takes shape in manifold forms", thus pertaining to the premise of an improvisation in general terms. The May 1912 *Der Blaue Reiter* Almanac featured a musical supplement with facsimiles of short song settings by Schoenberg and two of his pupils, Alban Berg and Anton von Webern. Both Kandinsky and Schoenberg's essays printed in the almanac share a common theme of idealism, a rebellion against form, and external expression of the inner world.[299]

Kandinsky's musical-synaesthetic response is most manifest in the Improvisation series in *Improvisation Deluge* of 1913. "What thus appears a mighty collapse in objective terms is, when one isolates its sound, the hymn of that new creation".[300]
The theme of a deluge recalls the dramatic themes of the Romantic composer Richard Wagner. "The great battle, the conquest of the canvas was completed".[301] Kandinsky himself stated, "I knew that a terrible struggle was going on in the spiritual sphere, and that made me paint the picture".[302]

Despite *Improvisation 28*, 1912 marking a "growing detachment & simplification",[303] a freedom of approach is strongly felt in a "composition according to its own laws". [304] Similarly, he develops this proto-Automatist approach further in

---

[298] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 98
[299] Kandinsky, 'Complete Writings on Art' (Boston, Mass: G.K. Hall, 1982) Page 230
[300] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Sturm' Album, 1912, R. Marchi, Getty Research Journal, No. 1 (LA, California: 2009), Page 65
[301] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 104
[302] Richard Cork, 'A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War' (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) Page 18
[303] J. Lassaigne, 'Kandinsky: A Biographical & Critical Study' (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co. 1964) Page 66

Improvisation No. 30 (Cannons) of 1913, in a "free, painterly, improvisatory, Expressionist, biomorphic manner that would develop through the Surrealist art of Masson, Miro".[305] This sojourn into sporadic spontaneity culminates in the final Improvisation in the series, namely *Improvisation 35* of 1914, "One of the richest and most exuberant of Kandinsky's pre-war abstract works. Totally different elements and shapes are juxtaposed to create a very dramatic effect".[306]

Kandinsky's series he entitled *Impressions*, hail from 1911. He describes the series of works as being 'outward' impressions. He painted six *Impressions* in total, all of which were completed in 1911. These quick-format sketches were "inspired by external nature".[307] In this sense, they are the antithesis of the *Improvisations,* which draw instinctively on the unconscious, whereas an *Impression*, as Kandinsky explained it, is "a direct impression of outward nature, expressed in a purely artistic form. This I call an *'Impression'.*[308]

Perhaps influenced by, as the name suggests, the art of the Impressionists, *Impressions* are still related to a naturalist model, which inspires artistic creation and which also continues in the design of reduced forms. The *Improvisations,* on the other hand, were painted spontaneously and are meant to project the "inner sound" onto the canvas immediately.[309] Despite there being one or two similarities between these two groups of works in Kandinsky's *oeuvre*, clearly the *Impressions* are closer to observation by virtue of their being "derived from nature" and containing elements of draftsmanship and naturalism. In order to 'show the course of constructive effort in painting' Kandinsky divided this 'effort' into two divisions. The first, he labelled *'Melodic'*. He defined this as "a simple composition regulated

---

[304] J. Lassaigne, 'Kandinsky: A Biographical & Critical Study' (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co. 1964) Page 66
[305] H. Arnason, 'A History of Modern Art', (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977) Page 128
[306] 'Discovering Great Paintings', No. 54 (Milan: A Fabbri Production, 1992) Page 18
[307] C. Gregory, 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4 (London, Marshall Cavendish, 1991) Page 2537
[308] Wassily Kandinsky, 'The Art of Spiritual Harmony' (U.S.A: Houghton Mifflin, 1914) Pages 111-112
[309] D. Elger, 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 1991) Page 50

according to an obvious and simple form".[310] This is, I assume, in essence, an *Impression*. The quick notation in Kandinsky's *Impressions* recalls the Impressionists' tendency to paint quickly on the spot, or, as Edouard Manet put it so succinctly, to "put down what you see the first time. If that's it, that's it!". [311]

"The impressions we receive, which often appear merely chaotic, consist of three elements: the impression of the colour of the object, of its form, and of its combined colour and form, that is, of the object itself."[312] There is a simplicity in the *Impressions* series – the calm before the storm that is the *Compositions,* as is evinced in his seminal work *Impression 111, (Concert),* 1911 (Figure 14) painted two days after Schoenberg's concert *Second String Quartet, Op. 10 and Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11* in Munich on January 2nd 1911. The first major public airing of Schoenberg's pioneering musical experiment in atonal music shocked many contemporaries. A review from the *Allgemeine-Musik-Zeitung* indicated that the concert left "no 'impression' but of – to put it mildly – pointless experimentation. There was no shortage of applause, but there was plenty of laughter and cursing as well."[313] Otto Keller described the T*hree Piano Pieces* as "aimless wanderings on the keys with nothing to connect them" and critic Arthur Hahn described the *Second String Quartet* as "seriously muddled". Too ahead of its time, it appears, the "almost hair-raising cacophonies seemed almost too much even for those who up until now had followed the musical revelations of Schoenberg's *weltschmerz* with a straight face.

---

[310] Wassily Kandinsky 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 114

[311] Dallas Museum of Fine Arts: http://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth225285/m1/2/. Manet's words here embody the chef tenet of Impressionism at large, which was to capture immediacy by means of the snapshot, as triggered by the advent of photography in the late 1830s

[312] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 70

[313] Fred Wasserman, 'Schoenberg and Kandinsky in Concert' in Esther da Costa Meyer and Fred Wasserman (Eds.), 'Schoenberg, Kandinsky, and the Blue Rider' (New York: The Jewish Museum, 2003) Page 19

One can only shake one's head in astonishment at the cheek of this sort of thing being taken for what has always been understood as music".[314]

Stylistically retrograde, Impression 111 presents a Gauguinesque / proto-Fauve flatness and simplicity, with a populated left side, and an empty right, yet some believed that "the painting reflects Kandinsky's capacity for intense synaesthetic experience".[315] The two colours which resound, are yellow and black. In Kandinsky's essay *'On the Question of Form'* of 1911, he labelled black negative, destructive, evil, yet here it represents, simply, an aerial view of a grand piano. Emanating from the musician in front of the piano is "yellow, brighter tones, like the shrill sound of a trumpet or the sound of a high-pitched fanfare", as Kandinsky put it in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art.* This is similar to the yellow in *All Saints 11*, which Malorny describes thus: "The picture dissolves into an animated tangle of splintered forms in light, cool colours, thrown into a spiralling vortex by the blast of the trumpet".[316]

According to the exhibition catalogue notes, Munich, 1911, the painting *Impression 111* should be looked upon as: "…one of modern art's most outstanding examples of synaesthesia, correspondences between music and painting that other early twentieth-century artists sought. A dynamic wave of yellow paint flows across the painting from left to right like a great swell of sound that seemingly reverberates to and fro. Above it in the upper half of the painting is an energetic black in a diagonal position. In the preparatory pencil sketches one can clearly decipher the scene with the open, black grand piano as well as the curved backs of the seated listeners and those standing along the wall…"[317]

---

[314] Fred Wasserman, 'Schoenberg and Kandinsky in Concert' in Esther da Costa Meyer and Fred Wasserman (Eds.), 'Schoenberg, Kandinsky, and the Blue Rider' (New York: The Jewish Museum, 2003) Page 19
[315] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 87
[316] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 101
[317] Lenbachhaus, Stadtische Galerie Im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau Munchen, http://www.lenbachhaus.de/exhibitions/sammlungspraesentation/the-blue-rider, Paragraph 3

Kandinsky responded very positively to Schoenberg's concert, writing: "I envy you very much! You have your "Theory of Harmony" already in print. How immensely fortunate (though only relatively!) musicians are in their highly advanced art, truly an art which has already had the good fortune to forgo completely all purely practical aims. How long will painting have to wait for this? And painting also has the right to it: colour and line for their own sake - what infinite beauty and power these artistic means possess! And yet today the beginning of this path is already more clearly visible. In this field as well one may now dream of a "Theory of Harmony." I already dream and hope that I will write at least the first sentences of this great future".[318]

In response, Arnold Schoenberg wrote to Kandinsky on a piece of manuscript: "Dear Mr Kandinsky, I free myself in notes from an obligation which I would have liked to fulfill long ago". [319] Subsequently, Kandinsky borrowed certain aspects of Schoenberg's compositional theories, but transformed them and employed musical terminology when expounding his compositional theories for abstract painting.

Mostly, Kandinsky paints the mixed audience response to this new music in *Impression 111*. Musicologist Susan McClary[320] describes the significance of the rules of the diatonic tonal system for its audience. She characterises the structure consisting of 'establishment of a key, excursion through other keys and return to home as a sort of quest narrative and construes the opposition of consonance and dissonance as providing the illusion of cause and effect'. For audiences used to listening to such tonal compositions, the introduction of dissonance in tonal music thus produced a strong desire for closure in the return to consonance. However, instead of perceiving "aimless wanderings" in Schoenberg's compositions, Kandinsky saw "independent life," and rather than the absence of harmony he found an alternative, modern harmony.

---

[318] Kandinsky to Schoenberg, letter of 1911, Archivist Therese Muxeneder, Schoenberg / Kandinsky Correspondence, The Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna, Austria, schoenberg.at, Page 125
[319] C. Gregory, 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4 (London, Marshall Cavendish, 1991) Page 2532
[320] 'Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Clarity' (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) See particularly the chapter "What is Tonality?" Pages 63-108

The impact of Schoenberg's atonal dissonant music is most strongly felt in Kandinsky's series of *Compositions* of 1910 to 1939, which he classed as 'inward' works. Through this set of ten impactful works started in 1910 and completed in 1939, "we hear the challenging sounds of the twentieth century".[321]

The first three *Compositions* were lost in World War 1, thus seven pre-war works from the series survive. Unquestionably his most mature and ambitious works, they were all large-format paintings, seven of which were painted in Munich. The result of lengthy build-up processes with numerous extant preliminary drawings, the titles are deliberately nondescript. The numerical ordering pertaining to musical *Opus* numbers or "numbered in the way a composer numbered his symphonies or concertos";[322] the higher the number the more abstract the work.

As per a synaesthete 'seeing sound', progressively, throughout the years 1910-12, using the analogies of music, Kandinsky would "develop his themes of spiritual conflict resolved through line and colour".[323] In contrast to the relatively primitive outward Impressions of 1911, the inwardly focussed *Compositions* mostly produced a little after this date, present "complex rhythmic compositions with a strong symphonic flavour"[324] which reache a zenith in *Composition V11* of 1913.

On 'constructive effort on painting', the second division, according to Kandinsky, was 'Symphonic': "a complex composition consisting of various forms, subjected more or less completely to a principal form: hard to grasp outwardly and thus of a strong inner value." This seems to sum up the essence of the collective *Compositions.* Kandinsky clarifies that the body of works represent "an expression of a slowly formed inner feeling, which comes to utterance only after long maturing. This I call a

---

[321] T. Phillips, 'How to Paint a Symphony' from 'Music in Art' (New York: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[322] 'Discovering Great Paintings', No. 54 (Milan: A Fabbri Production, 1992) Page 14
[323] H. Arnason, 'A History of Modern art', (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977) Page 127
[324] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 116

Composition".[325] He claimed that they were more important, deliberate and fully worked-out paintings, which had developed over a long period of time: "summaries of slowly acquired visual experiences".[326] Furthermore, in his *Reminiscences* of 1913, Kandinsky explains how he was "inwardly moved by the word composition and later made it my aim in life to paint a 'Composition'. This word itself affected me like a prayer. It filled me with reverence".

Elger describes the collective *Compositions* as Kandinsky's most mature works; large-format, most radiant, the result of lengthy processes, numerous drawings, sketches and compositions.[327] Sachs, in his text *Musicophilia*, explains how we have to construct a visual world for ourselves to recall a musical piece – "the engraving of music on the brain".[328] This idea seems applicable to the situation, in that Kandinsky's *Compositions* seemingly represent the visual charting of some synaesthetic experience based on Schoenberg's dissonance and rich chromaticism, perhaps best epitomised by *Composition V1*, "a seemingly indecipherable vortex of shapes and colours".[329]

Governed by instinct, dissonance and the unconscious mind, it is clear that contemporary writing between Schoenberg, Schopenhauer and Kandinsky also influenced the *Compositions* of 1910 in particular. "No longer restricted by the need to describe, he selected colours he found most telling and used distortions and repetitions to achieve greater expressiveness of form".[330] Ultimately, he gave free rein to the mid-number works in the series in particular. Kandinsky himself claimed "the greatest necessity for musicians today is the overthrow of the 'eternal laws of

---

[325] Wassily Kandinsky 'The Art of Spiritual Harmony' (U.S.A: Houghton Mifflin, 1914) Pages 111-112
[326] Thomas S. Messer 'Kandinsky' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 20
[327] D. Elger, 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 1991) Page 50
[328] O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 102. One of the most effective methods to recall a piece of music is to envisage the overall work as a visual landscape or map of patterned waves and colours relating to sounds – a sort of enforced synaesthetic procedure
[329] Andrew Graham-Dixon, 'Art' (London: DK, 2008) Page 438
[330] J. Lassaigne 'Kandinsky: Biographical & Critical Study' (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co. 1964) Page 41. This lack of the necessity to describe, Lassaigne largely lays down to the abstract approach adopted by Kandinsky in 1909/10, which obviated the need to depict in favour of a desire to suggest by means of symbols and shapes related to the artist's emotive responses

harmony', which for painters is only a matter of secondary importance".[331] Opinion at the time regarding the work of this period ranges from images of impending doom and apocalyptic visions, to expressions of pulsating and a eupeptic *'joie de vivre'.*

Schoenberg's new music seemed initially to be totally arbitrary, yet ironically it was governed by that strict underlying system, *serialism*. In the same way, Kandinsky's *Compositions* initially seem to belie the logic within, or that "hidden structure". "As soon as we realise that a largely musical impulse lies behind this particular canvas, it changes from a seemingly chaotic parade of visual experiments to a readable sequence of *quasi* notations" (on *Study for Composition V11*, 1913, Munich)[332] Phillips describes what he reads as "large blocks of sound-events, punctuated by white silences, black interruptions". More specifically, in musical terms, Phillips likens *Study for Composition V11* (Figure 22) to the work of Schoenberg's prodigious pupil, Anton Webern: "The diversity of these stacks of sound remind one of Webern, whose construction of musical duration makes the hearing of his work akin to the experience of absorbing a painting".[333]

To this end, the parallel between the music of the Second Viennese School and the abstract paintings of Kandinsky is most apposite in this series, as Kandinsky finds the visual equivalent to what he describes of Schoenberg's innovations: "He resorted to a technique – rather similar to Delaunay's, of daring dissonances and contrasts, giving full play to sonority".[334] Arguably the midway *Compositions* secure Kandinsky's crown as the 'advocate of modernism'.

---

[331] Kandinsky to Schoenberg, letter of 22 August, 1912. Archivist Therese Muxeneder, Schoenberg / Kandinsky Correspondence, The Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna, Austria, schoenberg.at. Page 133
[332] T. Phillips 'How to Paint a Symphony' from 'Music in Art' (New York: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[333] T. Phillips 'How to Paint a Symphony' from 'Music in Art' (New York: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[334] J. Lassaigne 'Kandinsky: A Biographical & Critical Study' (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co. 1964) Page 40. Delaunay's works labelled Orphic strove to find a visual equivalent of sonorous sound

Kandinsky's reference to Delaunay, links to both artists' interest in simultaneity. In the former's case, that being the "synthesis of the complementary elements; the expressive capabilities of music, colour and movement.[335]

The following statement by Kandinsky arguably best illustrates the artist's desire to delve into the subconscious and to experimentally paint music: *"…Lend your ears to music, open your eyes to painting, and… stop thinking! Just ask yourself whether the work has enabled you to 'walk about' into a hitherto unknown world. If the answer is yes, what more do you want?…"*[336]

The neurotically busy pieces conjured by Kandinsky from 1911 onwards derive from music, yet having originated in the unconscious (these he refers to as 'inward'), hence they are largely devoid of material forms. His contemporary Franz Marc does not describe any figures or any perceived relationship between elements of Kandinsky's painting, only "jumping spots" and "spots of colour." The predominance of red in the *Compositions*, most notably *Sketch for Composition V11* of 1913, for example, can be explained by the fact that Kandinsky saw the high-key colour as emblematic of discordance. "Red will provide an acute discord of feeling".[337]

It transpires that 1913 was the painter's *annus mirabilis:* "For Kandinsky, 1913 was the most productive of the pre-war era. He had now mastered the keyboard of abstract forms of expression".[338] The starting point for *Composition 1V* of 1913 is the Deluge. At 2 x 3 metres, it was exhibited at Herwarth Walden's first German Autumn Salon Stürm Gallery in Berlin in 1913. Theosophy supported the belief in a coming apocalypse but the movement also emphasized reincarnation and rebirth. Based on this doctrine, hope was possible only after destruction. This would be a common motif for Kandinsky's pre-war paintings. Emblematically, the painting opens up,

---

[335] Thomas S. Messer, 'Kandinsky' (London, Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 24
[336] Ossian Ward, 'How Kandinsky's Synaesthesia Changed Art' The Telegraph, December 2014
[337] Wassily Kandinsky 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 100. As a standard advancing colour, red, at the end of the spectrum next to orange and opposite violet, is synonymous with danger, blood and fire
[338] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 106

fanlike from the centre, with arbitrary colour. Natural forms melt into painterly passages - mountain, horses, figures and a 'rainbow of conciliation'. Kandinsky believed that form without content was "not a hand, but an empty glove",[339] thus thematically, Richard Cork theorises that Kandinsky's pre-war pictures such as *Composition 1V* are apocalyptic, containing images of the Last Judgement or the Deluge.[340] Zyrian and Theosophical imagery aided Kandinsky in expressing his emotions, especially those of the highly stressed environment building up to the outbreak of the war. For Kandinsky, impending or imminent war and the threat of devastation stemmed from the writings of Rudolf Steiner. By 1910 his focus was on *The Apocalypse* as the significant document for modern times. This coincided with the assumption of many Russian intellectuals, intensified by the earlier 1905 revolution, that the Apocalypse was nearing.[341] "Theosophy also aided in expressing mystical concepts such as the abyss and apocalypse".[342] Meanwhile, culturally, "Zyrian shamanism influenced at least part of his repertoire of pictographs including symbols for horses, suns, boats, mountains, and more".[343]

Composition V of 1911 (Figure 17) represents "the sound echoing forth from a trumpet, a black whiplash contour derived from a Russian folk-art lubok (woodblock) threatens this evocation of a cosmic landscape".[344] As per Kandinsky's orchestral chart of corresponding colours, the yellow represents the travelling trumpet sound, which is countered by the funereal black calligraphic line. The form of oars and a bridge can be detected, thus alluding to Kandinsky's recurrent theme of rowing. The abstract landscape, which reminds one of the cave paintings of Lascaux, pertains to the Last Judgement theme, painted in a manner dubbed

---

[339] 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4 (London: Marshall Cavendish, 1991) Page 2539
[340] Richard Cork, 'A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War' (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) Pages 17-18
[341] Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Occultism, Anarchism, and Abstraction: Kandinsky's Art of the Future' Art Journal 46.1 (1987) Page 40
[342] Maria Stavrinaki, 'Messianic Pains. The Apocalyptic Temporality in Avant-Garde Art, Politics, and War' Modernism/modernity (2011) Pages 372-373
[343] Peg Weiss 'Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman' (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) Pages X111-XV
[344] S. Behr, 'Movements in Modern Art: Expressionism' (London: Tate Gallery, 1999) Page 43

'abstract eroticism'. The contrapuntal movement within, links again to music. With the black line in particular, Kandinsky seems to be pre-empting the work of the Automatists Miro and Masson, particularly given the fact he himself stated he was not thinking about the result.[345] *Composition V* was rejected by the Munich New Artists' Association – a decision which caused Kandinsky and friends to resign. However, as a result, fortuitously the Blue Rider Group was formed.

Composition V1, 1913 (Figure 23) with its passionately energetic colours, bears the traces of his engagement with Schoenberg and how Kandinsky's understanding of Schoenberg's music and theory helps to explain the compositional structure of the painting. The structure is not immediately obvious, but it can be seen within the juxtapositions of lines and colours in the finished work. In *Reminiscences* Kandinsky describes "a coarse red-blue centre, somewhat discordant".[346] Further to this, he writes on the principle of 'anti-logic' and how "colours long considered disharmonious are now placed next to each other".[347]

Despite the painting's spontaneous appearance, Kandinsky said he had the work in his head for one and a half years, trying to dissolve these forms and also attempting to create the picture through "purely abstract" means, but with no success. Kandinsky also describes the primary organization of *Composition VI* in a manner consistent with his theories of dissonant composition for painting. He identifies three centres in the picture, as per *Landscape with the Black Arch* of 1912, one on the left the "delicate, rosy, somewhat blurred centre, with weak, indefinite lines in the middle" a second on the right (somewhat higher than the left) the "crude, red-blue, rather discordant area, with sharp, rather evil, strong, very precise lines" and a third centre, between the two (nearer to the left) which is not initially recognized but emerges as the principal centre; the 'hidden structure'.

---

[345] 'Discovering Great Paintings' No. 54 (Milan: A Fabbri Production, 1992) Page 14
[346] H. Duchting, 'Kandinsky' (Germany: Taschen, 1991) Page 38: "with sharp, strong, very precise and rather malevolent lines. Between these centres is a third which can only later be recognised as a centre, but nevertheless is ultimately the main centre"
[347] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A, Dover, 2000) Page 193

Kandinsky proposes principles of musical consonance and dissonance at play in the juxtaposition of forms on the canvas, and "the jostling, the confluence or dismemberment of the individual form".[348] *Composition VI* is full of such an interplay of antithesis - curved and straight lines, diagonal movements, bright and muted colours, extremes of light and dark, areas of thinner and thicker paint, lines and areas of colour seeming to move in different directions, areas of dense interplay of intersecting lines as in the upper right, and areas of relatively open space as in the rosy section just left of centre. In trying to absorb all of these oppositions in the way Kandinsky specifies, there is no rest for the eye, resulting in an unresolved dissonance illustrative of Schoenberg's agitated atonal music.

Düchting describes an "Inner world of imagination and feeling; apocalyptic atmosphere, abstract means of expression",[349] thus, drawing together the various traits inherent in Kandinsky's work of this period: the interiorisation, emotion, the apocalypse theme, abstraction and unbridled expression. Arnason refers to *Composition V1* and Composition *V11* as masterpieces of 'Abstract Expressionist' painting; a term more generally reserved for the later work of the Gesturalists and Colour Field artists of the 1940s and 1950s. He also describes "pictorial fields in which colours, shapes and lines seem engaged in some furious cosmic battle".[350] The word 'field' here links to the future Abstract Expressionist, Mark Rothko.

Kandinsky's description of the effects he experiences in looking at the painting - the effects of clashing, disorientation, and the independence of colour and line - recalls those he noted in response to Schoenberg's pantonal music. "Then this soul will experience a multitude of vibrations to enter into the realm of art".[351] There is a multitude of contrasts, in large and small areas of the canvas, that produce disorienting and conflicting effects, while his balancing of these tensions across the

---

[348] H. Düchting, 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 48
[349] H. Düchting, 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 50
[350] H. Arnason, 'A History of Modern Art', (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977) Page 127
[351] Wassily Kandinsky, 'On the Question of Form', Almanac essay, 1911, C. Short, 'The Art Theory of Kandinsky 1909-1928' (Oxford: Peter Lang, 1962) Page 65

whole painting produces an effect of a unifying equilibrium via his *leitmotif*, the hidden structure.

Composition V11, 1913, (State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) at 200 x 300cm (Figure 24) is his *magnum opus,* and undoubtedly the most ambitious painting of his career. "Analogous in form and construction to a symphony, the major work of Kandinsky's Munich period is without doubt *Composition V11*".[352] The complexity of themes and motifs is as rich as the colours themselves, which explode like fireworks throughout the canvas in a cornucopia of emotions. "A world of ideas explodes from the more graphically applied centre of the painting".[353] Many read the work as apocalyptic in light of the looming violence of World War 1 and revolution in his Russian homeland. Richard Cork believes that throughout Europe, some of the most alert artists of the emergent generation found themselves perturbed by similar intimations. Although no one could have predicted when such a war would break out, let alone foreseen the prolonged and harrowing course it took, painters of very different persuasions were united in a growing conviction that the world might soon be threatened by awesome devastation.[354]

Although Zyrian folk art did not focus on Christian imagery such as an apocalypse, Kandinsky derived symbols from their culture and relates them to a catastrophic war. The artist also returned to Blavatsky's Theosophy focused on spiritual thoughts such as reincarnation. Nietzsche took Blavatsky's spirituality to a new level by introducing his idea of a super human *(Übermensch)* or a man that transcends humanity. Kandinsky related to this divine human figure through painting. McKay claims colours, specifically, "enabled his transportation beyond empirical reality".[355]

---

[352] H. Düchting 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 52
[353] S. Farthing, '1001 Paintings You Must See Before You Die' (England: Cassell, 2011) Page 618
[354] Richard Cork, 'A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War' (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) Page 13
[355] Carol McKay, 'Kandinsky's Ethnography: Scientific Fieldwork and Aesthetic Reflection' 1994 Page 203

Kandinsky was not alone in his endeavour to represent destruction before the war. The German Expressionist Ludwig Meidner painted many prophetically apocalyptic images in the years before the outbreak of the war in 1914. His *Apocalyptic Landscape* of 1913 shows a man lying in the midst of storms, flooding, fire, and smoke, in a world not far off from the reality of the coming war. Kandinsky's ally Franz Marc also painted devastation after realising the paradise motif he had created could not last. In *The Fate of the Animals* of 1913, trees and animals endure a terrible storm of thrashing lines.[356]

Perhaps it is best to avoid the phrase 'the agony and the ecstasy' in an art historical context, yet the work *Composition V11* teeters on the cusp of both, and relates strongly to the 'creation through destruction' concept pioneered by Nietzsche, and the ideas of apocalypse propagated by Rudolf Steiner. In both *Composition V1* and *V11*, the themes are the Deluge and the Last Judgement, and are thus centred upon the *gottlich* (divine). "Almost superhuman achievement, bringing together a staggering diversity of forms as in some mighty symphony. Each form is subject to its own rules, but all is swept together in a single vast impulse". "Full of movement, breaking into colourful proliferations, with the centre overlaid and strongly emphasised by darker lines and patches, spawning shapes".[357]

In his writings, Kandinsky identified the subject of *Composition VI* as the Deluge, or great Biblical flood, "a cataclysmic event that ushers in an era of spiritual rebirth". He believed that painting itself resembled such a cataclysm: "Painting is like a thundering collision of different worlds that are destined in and through conflict to create that new world called the work".[358] Though one can make out the forms of

---

[356] Gerald 0Izenberg, 'Intellectual-Cultural History and Psychobiography: The Case of Kandinsky' Annual of Psychoanalysis 31 (2003) Page 31. Marc's dystopian visions of apocalypse and doom began to taint his work at this time and could be related to his feelings on the impending war. In a 1915 letter to his wife Maria, Marc explains that this change in his art occurred because he began to see the ugliness in animals which he had previously thought only existed in humans. He states that he was no longer able to see the beauty which animals had once represented for him. The animal motifs which once conveyed a sense of emotion no longer held their appeal and possibility

[357] H. Düchting 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 53

[358] Tate Gallery Online: Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction, room guide, Room 7, Paragraph 1

boats, crashing waves and slanting rain, it is the mood of violence and chaos that is more important than the literal interpretation of objects or narrative. The painting is characterised by a powerful sense of movement, created by contrasting light and dark areas of colour, linked by strong diagonals. Conventional perspective has disappeared. Instead, forms and colours are layered and juxtaposed, interacting to create a swirling, three-dimensional effect. The monumental scale of the work adds to this, giving the viewer the sense of being immersed in the space of the painting. These effects contribute to what Kandinsky described as the 'inner sound' of the picture.[359]

Despite the apparently arbitrary arrangement of ambiguous forms in both *Composition V1* and *V11*, Kandinsky made 30 preparatory or preliminary studies. An entry in Gabriele Münter's diary reads: "In spite of the intensive preliminary work the composition retains the freshness and spontaneity of the first sketches."[360]

Returning to the theme of music and synaesthesia as relating to Kandinsky's works, as aforementioned, this is most apparent in the *Compositions* series, and none more so than in *Composition V1* and *V11*; both of which represent 'orchestration' and synaesthetic experience, "atonality and dissonance with parts clashing and a disruption of space". [361] In building a case to support Kandinsky's alleged synaesthetic condition, with its monumental proportions, enormous forms and thematic complexity, Composition V11 is a symphony of complex, multi-layered forms and colours. Will Grohmann, biographer, described it as "a smouldering fire, approaching disaster, excessive tempo".[362] The musical analogy is thus extended, and some scholars read the work as a visual response to Wagner's work *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring Cycle) and we return to the father of the *gesamtkunstwerk.*

---

[359] J. Lassaigne, 'Kandinsky: Biographical & Critical Study', (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co., 1964) Page 70
[360] H. Düchting 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 53
[361] Khan Academy Smarthistory: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i16sGRY7SZ4
[362] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 109

After a prolific spell during which Kandinsky deployed all of his cosmic props, "A last meeting with Münter in the winter of 1915 rounded off one of the most exciting and eventful periods in the history of modern art".[363] Despite this statement, there were more *Compositions*, up to 1939. Thus the collective body of *Compositions* as a whole runs from the outbreak of the First to the outbreak of the Second World War. The musical theme continues, notably in *Composition V111* of 1923 (Figure 25) with the 'quiet' bubble-like form of the plain white circle, to the 'noisy' solar forms of concentric rings. Interestingly, J.S Reid's recent research into the 'shape of sound' using a CymaScope, reveals analogues of sound and music as being bubble-shaped (See Appendix 1). Cymatics is concerned with how sound energy creates patterns in form via molecular energy. According to neurobiologist Semir Zeki, the V4 complex in the brain constructs colours in the abstract, in that it is not concerned with the objects that the colours vest.

Other non-category works of synaesthetic significance include *Landscape with a Black Arch* of 1912 (Figure 26), which stands alone as an abstract work in its own right as opposed to being one of the *Improvisations, Impressions* or *Compositions.* Kandinsky's own words seem most apt in describing the forces in this painting:
"Painting is like a thundering collision of different worlds that are destined in and through conflict to create that new world called the work. Technically, every work of art comes into being in the same way as the cosmos – by means of catastrophes, which ultimately create out of the cacophony of the various instruments that symphony we call the music of the spheres".

Kandinsky in *Reminiscences* of 1913[364]

As another large-scale work of the 'heroic period' *Landscape with a Black Arch* relies on the power of wholly abstracted form alone, for the composition is dominated by

[363] H. Düchting 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 54

[364] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 102

three colour areas of shapes which press against each other: "rocklike shapes floating in space on a collision course, some sort of cosmic calamity".[365]

In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky describes red and blue as being physically unrelated, but effective if juxtaposed. Thus, like Schoenberg's music, the chromatic clash is deliberate. What U. Becks-Malorny describes as 'a cosmic vortex of inexorable movement' creates a dramatic atmosphere of coalition and opposition between the colours. Typically for Kandinsky, interplay and antithesis are again at work, with hot and cool colours; the red represents the struggle and blue retreat, and the energy is erupted via the black arch. Whilst the work links to music in part with its movement, balance and harmony with the black arch acting as the rhythmic counterpoint to areas of colour, the work is interpreted as an image of a violent struggle – more specifically the divorce from his wife in 1911. Thus Kandinsky uses synaesthetic colour values and finds forms which would have an emotive effect on the viewer.

Like *Composition V1* and *V11*, *Landscape with a Black Arch* is also a cosmic vision, reflecting his interest in Theosophy. Once more we can find Kandinsky's trademark 'hidden structure' which in this case is the black graphic element, which "maintains the composition in a sense of taut equilibrium".[366] The black arch operates like a bent lance, piercing the hearts of the three disparate colour pools.

Black Lines No. 189 of 1913 (Figure 27) is typical of Kandinsky's early expressive, abstract works. Coloured forms, surfaces and areas are seemingly laid out at random. The colours are high-key and vibrant. There is an intense, explosive power in it - the painting has a reality all of its own and does not refer to the objective world or anything other than itself. The black lines, are almost like random doodles, yet add a further sense of structure. The painting is a pure construction of line and colour, reminiscent of Chinese brush painting and Japanese calligraphy.

---

[365] Thomas S. Messer 'Kandinsky' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 84
[366] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 102

The direct, expressive, and 'sensational' value was what Kandinsky was trying to achieve. Such paintings were the product of his imagination and sensation, rather than derived from observation or intellect. The colours, lines, forms, gestures and tones are all employed only for their abstract value. Kandinsky gave these paintings titles without any narrative references, such as his *Improvisations* or *Compositions.*

Fugue, 1914 (Figure 28) shows Kandinsky's continuous fascination with the emotional power of music. Kandinsky regarded this 'inner sound' as crucial to this painting. The connection is made explicit in the title of *Fugue*, which suggests a visual equivalent to a musical fugue, with its overlapping, repeated motifs and themes at different pitches.[367] Unlike the atonal music of his much-admired contemporary composer Arnold Schoenberg, the 'polyphonal order' which Kandinsky sought in this work is found in the mathematical construction of J.S Bach of the eighteenth-century. This reflects the influence of the painter Paul Klee on Kandinsky at the time. Klee enjoyed the polyphony and architectural construction inherent in Bach's fugal constructions.

In contrast to *Fugue*, *Painting with a Red Spot* of the same year features "swirling, almost frenetically activated colours which shoot across the page in a display of painterly fireworks".[368] Principles are overthrown and the independent existence of elements of the composition reflect all that Kandinsky admired in Schoenberg's work. Kandinsky juxtaposed disparate colours which he saw as 'clashing' and creating an unresolved tension - effects comparable with Schoenberg's unresolved dissonance. As he outlined in a letter to Münter in June 1916, "Mixing everything together, it must be like an orchestra".[369]

Kandinsky continued to represent music in his paintings into the 1920s, as is evident in *'Swinging'* of 1925. Here the musical link prevails in the sense that the

[367] Tate Gallery Online: Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction, room guide, Room 7, Paragraph 2
[368] 'Discovering Great Paintings', No. 54 (Milan, A Fabbri Production, 1992) Page 18
[369] W. Kandinsky, 'Delphi Collected Works of Kandinsky' (Delphi Classics Version 1, 2015) Page 45

geometric abstract shapes chart the choreographic steps of dance, pre-empting the jazz fad of the following decade, whilst echoing the metronomic motion of musical metre. Kandinsky called this work the 'pulsation of painting'. *Yellow-red blue* of the same year is similar, in that "the graphic, dynamic and geometrical elements are brought together in a rhythmical relationship with a fascinating note of inner evocation; they emphasise musically the depth of the colours in relation to the space which is being created".[370] Also in 1925, he created a 'Schematic Drawing' in *Small Dream in Red,* which reflects the fact that "Music appeared to possess a pure autonomy which appealed deeply to Kandinsky".[371]

Certainly at his more expressive, as Phillips aptly put it "he even carries the analogy into the physical process of painting, equating the pressure of the brush, broadening the line as it increases, with that of a bow on the strings enlarging the sound".[372]

Kandinsky's spell at the Bauhaus between 1922 and 1933 represents a call to order. Gropius had appointed two members of the Blue Rider as residents at the Bauhaus, Klee in 1921 and Kandinsky as '*Formmeister'* for the painting class in 1922. "Kandinsky was in a position to disseminate his art and his theory of art to a broad public at the Bauhaus".[373] It was at this point that a notable change occurred in his painting style, from "The exuberantly coloured, dramatic, and improvisatory character of his Compositions V1 and V11, to the more geometrically ordered Variegated Circle, 1921"[374] (Figure 29). The shift is to a picture composed of regular geometrical elements, such as the triangle, circle and square, reflecting the impact of the Suprematists and Constructivists in Moscow, namely Malevich and Lissitzky in particular. This contrasts with the more 'Expressionist' work from the Munich period. However, Düchting contests that "Kandinsky's paintings could hardly have

---

[370] A. Bovi 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 34
[371] 'Discovering Great Paintings', No. 54 (Milan: A Fabbri Production, 1992) Page 32
[372] T. Phillips 'How to Paint a Symphony' from 'Music in Art' Page 38 'Music in Art' (New York: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[373] H. Düchting, 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting', (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 62
[374] G. Heard Hamilton, 'Painting & Sculpture in Europe 1880-1940', (U.S.A: Yale University Press, 1993) Page 338

been derived from contemporaneous Suprematist and Constructivist works".[375] This he lays down to a difference in theoretical structure and Kandinsky's expressiveness of form. Kandinsky wrote at this time that "the mutual influence of form and colour now becomes clear. A yellow triangle, a blue circle, a green square or a green triangle, a yellow circle, a blue square - all these are different and have different spiritual values".[376] This reflects the growing impact of Suprematist principles; mirroring Malevich's doctrine in particular.

Theoretically, Kandinsky laid out in his *Point and Line to Plane* of 1926, that "The content of a work of art finds its expression in the composition: that is, in the sum of the tensions inwardly organised for the work".[377] This reminds us of Jackson Pollock's statement "There is no accident. I can control the flow of the paint".[378] Interestingly, Stravinsky's early work, epitomised by *The Firebird,* 1910 or *Rite of Spring,* 1913, was as turbulent as Kandinsky's work of that period. Yet post-1920, Stravinsky's music, like Kandinsky's painting, "was increasingly controlled and composed of elements pre-invented and placed in orders more intellectual than instinctive".[379]

Just as Elger writes "Kandinsky continued his consistent development towards an autonomous, increasingly geometrical art".[380] Kandinsky's biographer Düchting notes that by 1920 "an increasing tendency toward making individual elements more geometrical becomes evident in the abstract works".[381] The turbulent world of form and colour gives way to "cool, rational composition based on the stricter

---

[375] H. Düchting, 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 62
[376] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 64-65
[377] Fons Heijnsbroek, 'W. Kandinsky on Art Theory, Composition, Colour & Line' Online at: http://www.quotes-famous-artists.org/wassily-kandinsky-famous-quotes
[378] The Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, Autumn Rhythm (No. 30) 1950, The Pollock–Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. 2011
[379] H. Düchting, 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 340
[380] D. Elger, 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 1991) Page 151
[381] H. Düchting, 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 61

analysis of form".[382] Concurrently, Paul Klee grew increasingly insistent upon *Faktur* (structural rhythm), which he adopted from bars of musical composition. More broadly, Bauhaus tuition sought to instil *Faktur* as a principal doctrine in its students' programme post WW11.

After his last flutter with representing sound in an abstract way in *'Overcast'* of 1917, Kandinsky continued his synaesthetic journey at the Bauhaus nonetheless, in particular through lessons and experiments in the interaction between colour and form "in view of our synaesthetic association of yellow with sharp, for example".[383] Collectively, however, the Bauhaus years represent a call to order, which Lassaigne defines as follows: "Paradoxically, this intoxicating freedom was ultimately to lead him to the strictest self-discipline".[384]

[382] H. Düchting, 'Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting' (Germany: Taschen, 1995) Page 62
[383] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 142
[384] J. Lassaigne, 'Kandinsky: Biographical & Critical Study', (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co., 1964) Page 74

Conclusion

Kandinsky's painterly journey took him from a colourful Expressionist style to an abstraction which became increasingly pared down. This morphological development is similar to that of the composer Arnold Schoenberg's in music. Both advocates of Modernism, their combined legacy is immense. In the former's case, he straddles much of Modern Art - the first half of the twentieth century, in fact, given he forms the link between Fauvism and Expressionism to Abstract painting and on to Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism. To that end I agree with Arnason who wrote "Kandinsky alone became the father of the free, painterly, improvisatory, Expressionist, biomorphic manner that would develop through the Surrealist art of Masson, Miro, and Matta and to attain its climax in the environmentally scaled, 'holistic' compositions of Jackson Pollock in the years 1947-50".[385] In respect of this, I would add that Kandinsky's impact was on the 'all-over' paintings of the Colour Field Abstract Expressionist group. Certainly his four panel series of 1914 has been read as a journey through the four seasons, and pre-emptive of Pollock's *Summertime No. 9A* of 1948 and *Autumn Rhythm No. 30* from 1950 (or indeed Rothko's Four Seasons Restaurant canvases). Peg Weiss supports the view that Kandinsky's work of 1913/14 was prophetic of later twentieth-century art, notably Abstract Expressionism.

Kandinsky generated a predominantly German Expressionist movement that produced feeling as visual form, not just colour. His daring, complete abstraction or non-objective work led to the elimination of representation altogether. Although imbued with his extensive knowledge of music, literature, science (the atomic theory) and philosophy – the material objects seemingly have no structure or purpose. In terms of the orchestration of colour, form, line, and space, his works became blueprints for an enlightened and liberated society, emphasizing spirituality.

[385] H. Arnason, 'A History of Modern Art' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977) Page 128

As biographer T.S Messer states, "he possessed the necessary intellectual scope to articulate the awareness and was able, therefore, to conduct a meaningful dialogue between theoretical reflection and pictorial realisation".[386] Whatever one's theories on Kandinsky are, it is most helpful that he was both intelligent and highly literate, for it is arguably through his extensive and candid writing that we gain the most valuable insight into his mode of thought and intentions as an artist.

On the question of whether Kandinsky possessed the neurological condition or 'sixth sense' of synaesthesia or not, it is important to make clear and understand that synaesthetic art may refer to *either* art created by synaesthetes *or* art created to convey the synaesthetic experience. In Kandinsky's case, evidence suggests that it is largely the latter. Ossian Ward's point that there is still debate whether Kandinsky was himself a natural synaesthete, or merely experimenting with this confusion of senses in combination with the colour theories of Goethe, Schopenhauer and Rudolf Steiner, in order to further his vision for a new abstract art[387] is a very valid one.

As aforementioned (Sachs, Galon et al) synaesthesia is often congenital, i.e. present from birth, and also invariably familial or hereditary. Researchers S. Baron-Cohen and J. Harrison found that a third of their subjects reported close relatives who also had Synaesthesia. In Kandinsky's case, this does not appear to be so. Scholars and neurologists are understandably eager to distinguish between true synaesthesia and the phenomenon known as 'pseudosynaesthesia'. Psychological testing in relation to this has inevitably become more prevalent in modern times; the work of V.S. Ramachandran and E.M. Hubbard in 1999 is of particular note, for example. A minor point but worth considering also, is that research has revealed that the ratio of female to male synaesthetes is in a ratio of six to one. Thus it is less prevalent in males, and it may be that Kandinsky was drawn to it as it was 'in the air' at the time,

[386] Thomas S. Messer 'Kandinsky' London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 8
[387] Ossian Ward, 'The Man who Heard his Paintbox Hiss' The Telegraph, June 2006

rather than being a true synaesthete himself. Beckett suggests "He even claimed that when he saw colour he heard music",[388] suggesting it is a claim rather than a reality.

However, I do not believe that Kandinsky was a pseudosynaesthete, nor do I think he was a true synaesthete, but agree with Robert Hughes' notion that he had abnormally strong visual reactions and that he felt some colours as strongly as others feel sounds.[389] In essence, then, he certainly had extra sensory perception, and witnessed a degree of inter-sensory experience, but more perhaps, as a result of his interest in spirituality, theosophy and mysticism rather than a raw neurological reaction. J.A. Stone writes in relation to this: "Kandinsky explores the workings of colour on the eye, mind, and soul".[390] For me, the key word here is 'explores' which suggests a quest or a deep delving on the artist's part, rather than an instinctive inner happening. Stone rightly poses the question, is the psychic effect of colour physical or through association? A *tremolo* effect of vibrations without real contact? I believe it was. Biographer Lassaigne concurs with Hughes, stating: "Kandinsky's mental perception is extra-sensory".[391]

It would be possible to suggest by way of explanation of this, that in 'highly sensitive' people, the way to the soul is so direct and the soul itself so impressionable that any impression of taste communicates itself immediately to the soul and thence to the other organs of sense (in this case, the eyes). This would imply an echo or reverberation such as occurs sometimes in musical instruments, which, without being touched, "sound in harmony with some other instrument struck at the moment."[392] As Sachs writes in *Musicophilia*, "Listening to music is immensely enhanced – a rich stream of visual sensations"[393]

---

[388] Sister W. Beckett 'The Story of Painting' (London: Dorling Kindersley, 1996) Page 355
[389] Robert Hughes 'The Shock of the New' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) Page 302
[390] Jennifer Arlene Stone 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 10
[391] J. Lassaigne, 'Kandinsky: Biographical & Critical Study', (U.S.A: The World Publishing Co., 1964) Page 65
[392] Wassily Kandinsky 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 58
[393] O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador, Page 287

In support of Kandinsky's case of synaesthesia, however, the experience of coupling senses is alluded to in his writings. For example, he stated, "The expression 'scented colours' is frequently met with"[394] and how the sound of colours is so definite that it would be "hard to find anyone who would try to express bright yellow in the bass notes or dark like in the treble".[395] Furthermore, in relation to lexical-gustatory synaesthesia (see Appendix 3) Kandinsky wrote that "without tasting blue, that is, without experiencing a feeling of seeing a blue colour".[396] This might seem a point in favour of him having synaesthesia, by virtue of his suggestion that the two senses, taste and sight, are inextricably linked, and he cannot imagine a time when they weren't. Similarly, Kandinsky explained the feeling and emotion he felt when experiencing colour. He felt his chest would burst, and breathing became difficult. In relation to this, Kandinsky believed colour *can* conjure up very specific associations which "set off a chain of emotional responses in the body".[397] He certainly 'heard' colour, for he wrote "blue is the same colour we picture to ourselves when we hear that sound of the word heaven". Those who possess synopsia, are able to 'hear' colour in this way. But for true synaesthetes colour is not *added* to music, it is integral to it. Kandinsky's experience of music in relation to colour, appears a little contrived rather than being entirely integral to it.

Sachs poses an interesting point in *Musicophilia*, which is that synaesthetes always experience the same colour in relation to sound, and the experience is thus preordained. The colours are constant or consistent, instantaneous, immediate and fixed. In the case of Kandinsky, he cites the organ, double bass, flute and cello sounds as all being related to the colour blue. It may well be that the range of instruments is due to the different hues or shades of blue; dark blue he visualises in

---

[394] Wassily Kandinsky 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 59
[395] Wassily Kandinsky 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 59
[396] Wassily Kandinsky 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 59
[397] U. Becks-Malorny, 'Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction' (Germany: Taschen, 1994) Page 64

response to the organ, for example, but it seems that in contrast to Sachs' definition, the colours he associates with the same sounds are not entirely consistent.

For Kandinsky, the colours on the painter's palette evoke a double effect: a physical effect on the eye, yet the effect can be much deeper, however, causing a vibration of the soul or an "inner resonance".[398] I believe that for true synaesthetes, the experience would be less spiritual and more neurological / innate. Kandinsky was very interested in the condition of synaesthesia, however, and made special research into the 'synaesthesia problem' in the Laboratory of Monumental Art (INHUK) he founded, and then in the Bauhaus. Galeyev, in fact, states that, "most people connect the name and theoretical works of Kandinsky with the problem of synaesthesia. Moreover he is often called an artist-synaesthesist".[399] His interest in trying to visualise sound, led him to produce in 1916, the painting *'To The Unknown Voice'* as a visual sound record of his first telephone call to his wife Nina.

Phillips rightly wrote, that: "Schoenberg's music helped liberate Kandinsky from the restraints of reference."[400] The paradox is how both practitioners managed to turn this freedom into discipline. Both artists' early sojourn into abstraction was initially perceived as an unruly experiment, in which 'anything goes'. However, for both, there is a very keen sense of underlying or hidden structure. As Phillips goes on to point out: "Schoenberg, like Kandinsky, was to turn new-found freedoms into rules."[401] George Heard Hamilton writes of how reason, consciousness and purpose play an overwhelming part in Kandinsky's work.[402] The paradox he illustrates through Kandinsky's consciously constructed works from spontaneous

---

[398] Tate Modern, 'Kandinsky: The Path to Abstraction' http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/kandinsky-path-abstraction/kandinsky-path-abstraction-room-guide, Room 7, Paragraph 1
[399] B.M Galeyev, 'Kandinsky and Schoenberg: The Problem of Internal Counterpoint', Article online, Page 67
[400] T. Phillips 'How to Paint a Symphony' from'Music in Art' (New York: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[401] T. Phillips 'How to Paint a Symphony' from'Music in Art' (New York: Prestel, 1997) Page 38
[402] G. Heard Hamilton 'Painting & Sculpture in Europe 1880-1940' (U.S.A: Yale University Press, 1993) Page 211

configurations of colour and line, which were then fitted into a predetermined design.[403]

In the case of Schoenberg, contemporary critics initially dismissed his compositions as being without rules – random and based on "aimless wanderings" in which the composer seemed to select, in the words of Linke, "only the opposite of what sounds 'right' to our ears".[404] Kandinsky was instinctively drawn to this strain of music and recognised the paradox between the haphazard arrangement of forms (the future of artistic harmony) "expressed in mathematical form but in terms irregular rather than regular."[405] Thus, as Kandinsky wrote in a letter to Schoenberg, construction is to be attained by the 'principle' of dissonance; suggesting order through chaos; an epithet fitting of the works of Kandinsky's 'heroic' period.[406] Kandinsky outlines in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, that the need for coherence is the essential of harmony – whether founded on conventional discord or concord. This he supports in the following statement: "Harmony today rests chiefly on the principle of contrast which has for all time been one of the most important principles of art".[407]

There is a paradoxical relationship between structure and dissonance in both painterly and musical form. This is mostly because one is the antithesis of the other, yet both artists strove for a synthesis of the two. In the case of Kandinsky, Bovi describes this as "evidence of the continuously growing osmosis of his mind between a primary need for mathematical and geometrical order in his expressive means and a vital inner dimension of his creative impulse which brings a magical

---

[403] G. Heard Hamilton 'Painting & Sculpture in Europe 1880-1940' (U.S.A: Yale University Press, 1993) Page 212
[404] Karl Linke 'Arnold Schöenberg' (1912), as translated by Barbara Z. Schoenberg and published in Walter Frisch (ed.), Schoenberg and His World (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999) Page 208
[405] Wassily Kandinsky 'Vasily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg' from "Kandinsky's Din." iBooks. https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l, Page 106
[406] Jelena Hahl-Koch 'Schoenberg-Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents' trans. John C. Crawford (Boston, Mass: Faber and Faber, 1984) from Letter 57, Page 51
[407] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Kandinsky's Din: On Ghosts in Art' (New York: Sagabona, 2014) iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l Page 93

movement to forms".[408] And, whilst Kandinsky talked of the quasi-mathematical perfection inherent in music, he concurrently describes 'splashes leaping up without plan' and, in the same breath, 'mathematically accurate construction'. Art historian F. Elger detects this contradiction of approach in relation to *Improvisation 9* of 1910, in believing that the work cannot have been produced quite so spontaneously and automatically with regard to composition. The choice of colour, he feels, is well calculated.[409]

Kandinsky's development is thus from spontaneous recordings *(Improvisations)* to well planned but free *Compositions.* This was to give way later to a quasi-Suprematist vein of abstraction whilst he was instructing at the Bauhaus. In terms of the artist's own achievements and arguments, he claimed that Wagner only achieved the *gesamtkunstwerk* on a superficial level. Kandinsky's own *'Yellow Sound'* is a kind of alternative to Wagner's developments, and the self-proclaimed "prototype for modern stage productions".[410] Arguably, the *gesamtkunstwerk* is most fully realised at the Bauhaus, however. The workshop's collective aim after all, was to create "a new guild of craftsman without the class-distinctions that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsman and artist"[411] in the words of founder Walter Gropius.

Despite the overwhelming amount of supporting evidence that Kandinsky aimed to 'paint sound', interestingly the artist himself counters this theory by stating: "I do not want to paint music. I only want to paint good, living pictures".[412] That said, the word 'living' must either imply progressive (anti-Classical) or animated. The latter is represented in Kandinsky's depictions of the swirling patterns and rhythms he heard and subsequently 'saw' in music. Sister Wendy Beckett's belief is also that

---

[408] A. Bovi, 'Kandinsky', Twentieth-Century Masters (England: Hamlyn, 1971) Page 36
[409] D. Elger 'Expressionism' (Germany: Taschen, 1991) Page 150
[410] Thomas S. Messer 'Kandinsky' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) Page 24
[411] Walter Gropius, from the 1st Bauhaus Manifesto, documented in Frank Whitford's 'Bauhaus' (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995) Page 12
[412] Wassily Kandinsky "Painting as Pure Art' The *Sturm Verlag*, Complete Writings on Art, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay & Peter Vergo, Vol. 1 (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982) Page 535

Kandinsky used colour in a highly theoretical way, associating tone with *timbre* (the sound's character) hue with pitch, and saturation with the volume of sound.[413]

As regards the ephemeral, yet near-symbiotic artistic alliance between Kandinsky and Schoenberg, their correspondence follows a fairly predictable arc of mutual curiosity and respectful exchange which then degrades into rivalries and jealousies, the nadir of which occurs during the period 19th April to 4th May, 1923, with Schoenberg's irate charges of anti-Semitism against Kandinsky.

Kandinsky's desire to purify his art through the dissolution of form, while at the same time resisting against simple ornamentalism, has a strong parallel in Schoenberg's own inner-conflict between formulaic music and his distaste for the ornamental. Furthermore, both artists felt that abstraction was the best means available to them for depicting an unseen realm of quasi-existence. The simultaneous discovery of atonal music for Schoenberg and abstract art for Kandinsky is revealed in the concordant friendship between these two men. Schoenberg's music and theory were an affirmation for Kandinsky that such compositional strategies were suitable for a modern, abstract art.

More than Schoenberg, Kandinsky seemed perennially driven to capture the *Zeitgeist* in his work. Kandinsky perceived unrest, conflict and dematerialization in his contemporary world. He invokes the impact of Nietzschean philosophy, describing his time as one of "enormous questions" in which "everything that had once appeared to stand so eternally…suddenly turns out to have been crushed…by the merciless and salutary question 'Is that really so?"[414]

Schoenberg's own attempt to overthrow the 'eternal laws of harmony' reflects his ideas on the function of art and artists in society, perhaps adhering to Georges

---

[413] Sister Wendy Beckett, 'The Story of Painting' (England: Dorling Kindersley, 1994) Page 355
[414] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Whither the New Art?' in Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo's (eds.) 'Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art' (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1994) Page 103

Braque's doctrine, "art is meant to disturb. Science reassures".[415] Thus his experimentation with atonality and musical dissonance was to meet with such similar shock as the music itself elicited at the time.

Kandinsky advocated: "one art has to learn from another how it tackles its own materials and, having learned this, use in principle the materials peculiar to itself in a similar way, i.e., according to the principle that belongs to itself alone".[416] This statement encapsulates his chief aims: a synthesis of art and music, innovation, principles and instinct. Rather than merely looking to music as a general model for abstract art, Kandinsky explored compositional principles derived from the diatonic tonal system and Schoenberg's pantonal music. He employed the musical concept of dissonance as a framework for thinking about compositional structure in his abstract paintings.

According to Semir Zeki, "My view is that the music, the dissonance, the consonance, the tonality and the ambiguity all reside in the brain, and are indeed a manifestation of brain activity".[417] This prompts the question whether such a thing as a musical brain exists, with regions devoted to the perception and memory of music – distinct from those thought to underlie language. This is the subject of recent research by H. Platel. Furthermore, Thomas Willis located musical functions in the cerebellum back in the seventeenth century. It is thus interesting that Kandinsky saw Wagner as his master, for Wagner was a neurobiologist who certainly understood the internal workings of the brain. Musically too, we seem to have gone full circle with Wagner as Zeki points out, for it was he who introduced the unresolved appoggiatura into harmonic progressions and the resulting diabolic interval of the diminished fifth, thus achieving musical ambiguity.

---

[415] http://www.art-quotes.com/auth_search.php?authid=349#.VeR4VdNViko, Paragraph 2
[416] Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art' (New York, U.S.A: Dover, 2000) Page 154
[417] Semir Zeki in F. Clifford Rose's Neurology of the Arts (London: Imperial College Press, 2004) Page 32

There is a strong case to support Kandinsky's case for finding a visual equivalent of modern music in art, and he successfully found in the period 1910 to 1913 in particular, the ability to chart the atonal qualities of Schoenberg's musical dissonance. This generally seems without doubt. As a cellist-painter himself, Kandinsky was able to transfer modern musical sounds into an abstract painterly vocabulary with some ease.

The question of to what extent Kandinsky was synaesthetic is a much more complex one. Despite the lack of medical proof for Kandinsky's synaesthesia, the correlation between art and music was a lifelong preoccupation for him. Some sceptics have dismissed it as no more than subjective invention, yet *Composition V11*, the largest work he ever made, and arguably his most musical manifestation, was completed in just three days. This, Sean Rainbird, curator of 'Kandinsky' at the Tate Modern, believes represents the fact that for Kandinsky this language was quite internalised.

Despite Kandinsky's curious gift of colour-hearing, which he successfully translated onto canvas as "visual music", to use the term coined by the art critic Roger Fry in 1912, as Ward puts it, Kandinsky "gave the world another way of appreciating art that would be inherited by many more poets, abstract artists and psychedelic rockers throughout the rest of the disharmonic 20th century".[418]

[418] Ossian Ward, 'The Man who Heard his Paintbox Hiss' The Telegraph, June 2006

Postscript – Legacy of Lessons in Music

Kandinsky's profound artistic influence extended to the development of choreographic diagrams in art, in the form of a diagrammatic record of a dance or a move, such as Miro's pirouette of a dancer, entitled *'Danceuse 11'* of 1925. Similarly, Sonia Delaunay, following her studies of flamenco singers, emphasises movement with the concentric circles expanding from the figures.[419] Her work *'Syncopated Rhythm'* of 1967 shows "Spinning incandescent wheels… the notes sing out by her radiant colours and dancing rhythms"[420] and is clearly indebted to Kandinsky.

The 'Musicalists' including Olivier Messiaen, like Kandinsky, found that music provoked a synaesthetic response. The 1940s French group were devoted to interpreting musical compositions in paint. Blanc-Gatti had the gift of Synopsia and the ability to hear colours; he subsequently created visual translations of Stravinsky and Bach. Messiaen, a synaesthete, owned Blanc-Gatti's work *'Brilliance'* which prompted the organist to make chord-colour tables and to devise a screen which would flush with coloured lamps in correspondence with the chromatic textures of his organ works. This mirrors Professor Rimington's earlier experiments with his 'colour organ', Scriabin's work for 'Luce' and Kandinsky's constant striving for a colour-music equivalent more generically.

Mondrian's '*Broadway Boogie Woogie'*[421] (Figure 30) is a more intense and animated version of his 'grid' paintings of previous decades. The pulsating blocks of colour indicate the pace of modernity. Unlike his earlier works, black is omitted. He evokes the sensation of the throbbing rhythm of Manhattan life and of electric lights and

---

[419] Juliette Rizzi, 'Sonia Delaunay, The Ey Exhibition', Tate Modern, April 15, Page 5
[420] Art Quarterly magazine article, Spring 2015, Page 41
[421] Mondrian escaped the war in Europe and went to New York in 1940. The German invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940 and the fall of Paris the following month deeply troubled Mondrian, and many of his artist neighbours had already left London, to escape imminent bombing. Mondrian, who had acquired an American visa, actively sought passage to the United States. His journey was aided by a young American artist and friend, Harry Holtzman.

neon signs. The perpendicular elements are related to the grid planning of American cities and to the movement of traffic. The pattern references the syncopated rhythm of American jazz music. Mondrian studied the Foxtrot, basing his studies on Downtown New York jazz clubs. The double bass notes of the 'walking bass' correlate with the pace of the pedestrians who speed about the metropolis. The systematic composition of the 3 primaries and 2 non-colours which are played out in the strict horizontal/vertical system, links to Schoenberg's Serial Technique with the combination of symmetry and inversion.

Warhol created his 'Dance Step' paintings in 1962: step sequences of the Foxtrot and Tango as schematic diagrams much in the way that Gino Severini captured 'Dynamics of Form', the staccato rhythm of musical pizzicato in polychromy. A. Rodchenko's *'Expressive Rhythm'* anticipates Pollock with his interest in jazz; bebop and free-form jazz synonymous with the famous New York 5 Spot club that he frequented. With Lestor Young on sax, and Dizzy Gillespie on rhythm and tempo, Pollock claimed jazz was the only creative thing happening in his country other than painting. In contrast, De Stijl went for the static not the dynamic to illustrate the rhythms of a Russian Cossack dance in Theo van Doesburg – the artist who also looked at the Tarantella and Ragtime.

Kandinsky thus started a fashion for systematic translations of musical compositions into paintings. Schoenberg's pupil Webern's work has been interpreted by the painter L. Veronesi, for example, who sought to document the sculptural and architectural qualities in his works such as *'Neugeboren'.* The controversial and experimental in Kandinsky resurfaces in the work of Yves Klein. Klein wrote a monotone, one-note silence symphony in 1949, made up of a sustained D major chord, which hovers and gives way to silence for the same length of time (20 minutes in total). Klein's monochrome paintings in *'International Klein Blue'* (IKB) have a sense of mysticism and also *'the infinite expansion of the universe.'* Blue was the colour of the sky and for Klein, of the spirit. This resonates further with

the influence of Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art.* Blue was, of course, Kandinsky's hallmark colour, hence the Blue Rider.

It may well be that Schoenberg and Kandinsky's legacy extends to the experimental performance pieces of Klein, in which he began using nude models as 'living paintbrushes' in his *Anthropomorphies* such as the *'Monotone Symphony'* (1960). Similarly the move to 'plastic sound' with motorised sound and noise sculptures, such as the *Stravinsky Fountain* in Paris by Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle commemorates Kandinsky's contemporary compatriot Igor Stravinsky, who similarly chose to embark upon the path to abstraction via a backdrop of dissonance.

Appendix 1 - Modern Developments / Experiments related to Synaesthesia

Cheltenham Music Festival 11.07.15

James Mayhew, children's author and illustrator 'brings a musical gallery to life before your eyes' Watch as fantastical creatures and landscapes take on a life of their own as James paints Mussorgsky's magical Pictures at an Exhibition

John Stuart Reid (b. 1948)

An acoustics engineer who has carried out acoustics research concludes that sonic energy is spherical or bubble-shaped; an oscillation of sinusoidal motions. He created the CymaScope to produce analogs of sound and music – musical pitches cause a pattern to form on the instrument's membrane.
http://www.cymascope.com/cyma_research/history.html

Michael Torke (b. 1961)

Composer, Synaesthete and colour musician who composed his series of five pieces called Colour Music. He works with colour-key association.

Neil Harbisson (b. 1982)

British-born contemporary artist and 'cyborg activist' is the first person in the world with an antenna implanted in his skull
His 'wifi enabled antenna' allows him to hear extra-terrestrial colours from space.
He was effectively cured of his extreme colour blindness in 2004 when he was fitted with the device which converts 360 colours into different sounds. He now paints with a full colour palette and can "hear" colours he'd not previously been able to see.

More recently a profoundly deaf student at the University of Edinburgh put on a sound-based art show.

2005 article 'Nature'

is the work of a professional musician with music colour and music-taste synaesthesia. Whenever she hears a specific musical interval, she automatically experiences a taste on her tongue that is consistently linked to that musical interval. Her musical-synaesthetic tastes are instantaneous, automatic, and always correct.

Appendix 2 - Synaesthesia & Scientific Developments

Contemporary scientific developments regarding the brain:

New technique called diffusion spectrum imaging, translates radio signals given off by the white matter into a high-resolution atlas of that neurological internet. Bundles of nerve fibres form hundreds of thousands of pathways carrying information from one part of the brain to another.[422]

In terms of the brain's wiring: a network of some 100,000 miles of nerve fibres, called white matter, connects the various components of the mind, giving rise to everything we think, feel and perceive.[423]

A neuroscientist has placed an electrode in the region of a mouse's brain involved in visual perception and then noted whether nearby neurons fire when the animal sees a particular image.[424]

Chromotherapy:

McGill colleagues Peter Milner and James Olds, both neuroscientists, placed a small electrode in the brains of **rats**, in a small structure of the limbic system called the nucleus accumbens. This structure regulates dopamine production and is the region that "lights up" when gamblers win a bet, drug addicts take cocaine, or people have orgasms – Olds and Milner called it the pleasure centre.

Gray matter – density of receptor cells on neurons that respond to neurotransmitters – molecules such as dopamine, serotonin and glutamate that modulate communication among brain cells

Gray matter peaks earliest in what are called primary sensorimotor areas devoted to sensing and responding to sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.[425]

---

[422] National Geographic, February 2014, Page 38 (Article)
[423] Ibid. Page 26
[424] Ibid. Page 55

But:

(Modern life) Multi-tasking creates a dopamine-addiction feedback loop, effectively rewarding the brain for losing focus and for constantly searching for external stimulation. This tweaks the novelty- seeking, reward-seeking centres of the brain, causing a burst of endogenous opioids. Asking the brain to shift attention from one activity to another causes the prefrontal cortex and striatum to burn up oxygenated glucose, the same fuel they need to stay on task. Each of those delivers a shot of dopamine as your limbic system.[426]

---

[425] Jay N. Giedd, Article on the brain, Scientific American, June 2015

[426] Daniel J Levitin, 'Why the Modern World is Bad for You', Neuroscience, The Observer, 18th Jan 2015 (Article)

Appendix 3 - Synaesthetic Strains and Traits: A Reference Guide

Chromesthesia

The association of sounds with colours – colours are triggered by certain sounds.
Can aid perfect pitch: ability to hear/see colours aids them to identify certain notes

Dysaesthesia

Stimulus of one sense is perceived as sensation of a different sense, as when a sound produces a sensation of colour – linked to touch

Grapheme-Colour Synaesthesia

Associated with letters, numbers

Ideasthesia

Activations of concepts evoke perception-like experiences

Lexical-Gustatory Synaesthesia

Spoken and written language causes individuals to experience tastes eg. The taste for a minor key = bitter
Said to be genetic links
V1 in the brain – deals with basic vision

Misophonia

A neurological order, possibly linked to Synaesthesia, in which negative experiences are triggered by certain sounds

Phoneme-Colour Synaesthesia

Colour associated with hearing

Synopsia

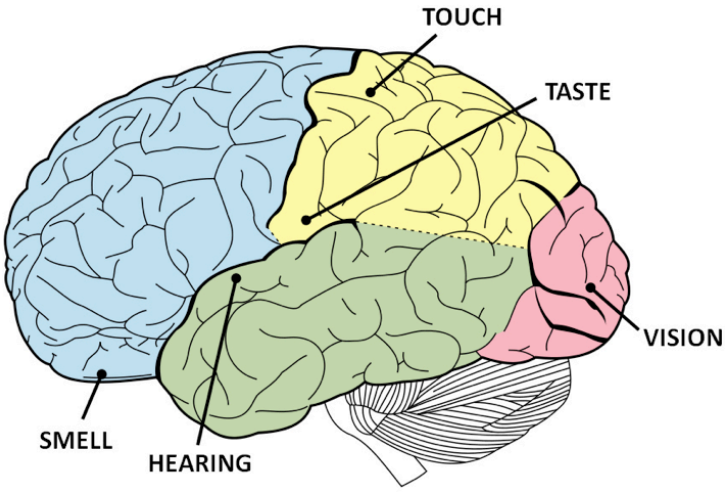
Ability to hear colour and see sound

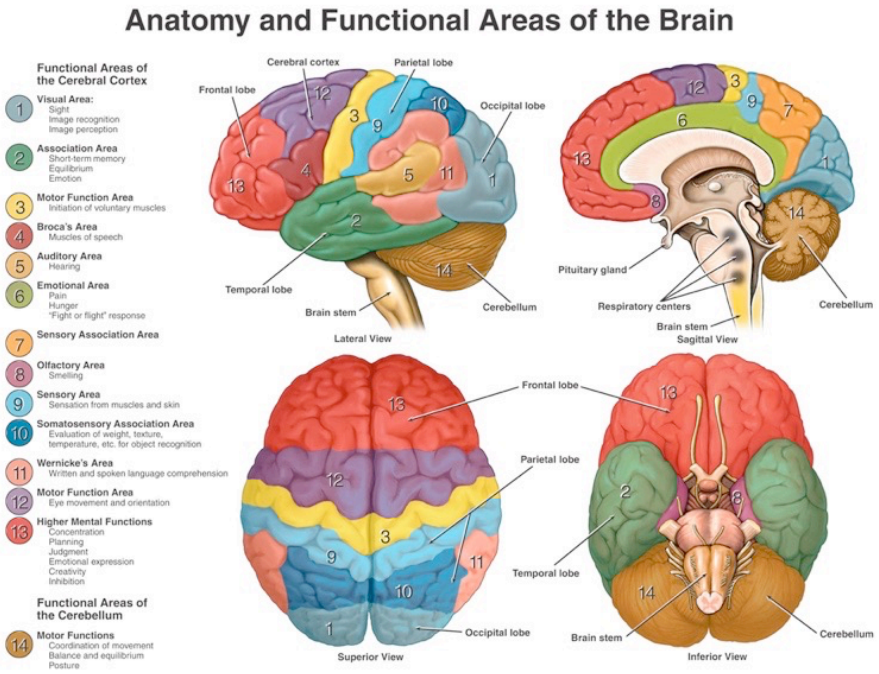
Further associated vocabulary / technical terms

Asynchronus – not occurring at the same time

Sonology – study of sound

Appendix 4 – A Diagrammatic Division of the Senses





Appendix 5 - Sonology and Mapping Sound

Algorithms

Computer mapping is used to chart the patterns of dolphin vocalisation: visual and auditory information in different parts of the neocortex. Computers today, can convert the sound of dolphins into words and play them through a headset.

Essentially this is a series of stochastic oscillations; ululations.[427]

Cymatics

The art of turning sound into visible pattern, that is often geometric in nature, to understand the lexicon of dolphin language. Whilst now technically highly advanced, this 'picture world' has its origins in Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Sound frequency is recorded on a spectrograph, which visually displays the varying frequencies.

Dolphins

Their garrulous sounds: whistles and clicks are part of a sound / sensory system to detect objects underwater using echoes created by sounds. Sound travels four times as fast in water as in air. [428]

Echolocation

The sphere of bat sonar and signals – sound pulses or bio sonar. This is connected to ultrasound and medical imaging, whereby sound waves chart the frequency as being above the upper limit of human hearing, as per a dog whistle.

---

[427] Joshua Foer, 'Understanding Dolphins' Intelligence', National Geographic, May 2015 (Article)
[428] Ibid

Appendix 6 - Biography of Wassily Kandinsky

The artistic career of Kandinsky (1866-1945), who began to paint at the age of thirty, may conveniently be divided into **four major periods:**

Munich (1896-1911)

After experimentation with Symbolism and Impressionism, Kandinsky evolved his own Expressionist style, and became a leader of that movement.

Munich (1911-1914) to Moscow (1914-1921)

This phase began with Kandinsky's creation of the first abstract painting, and was characterized by whirling, chaotic compositions that relied almost entirely on colour and texture for their content.

Bauhaus (1921-1933)

The geometric shapes used by the Russian Constructivists, which Kandinsky only tentatively experimented with in Moscow, now became the central structural elements in his painting.

Paris (1933-1944)

Kandinsky made a paradoxical return to the figurative, with shapes inspired by simple biological forms (cells, embryos. &c.)

Key Dates

1896	Exhibition of Monet's *Haystacks* series in Moscow
1897	Munich Secession exhibition – *Jugendstil* work
1900	Exhibition by the Moscow Artists' Association, Moscow
1901	Kandinsky is elected president of the Phalanx Artists' Exhibiting Society
1902-8	Exhibits with Berlin Secession
1904	Exhibits in the Paris Salon d'Automne
1905	Exhibits at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris & with the Moscow Artists' Association
1906-7	Exhibits with Die Brücke, Salon d'Automne, Berlin Secession
1908	Exhibits in Salon des Indépendants, Paris
1909	Moves towards non-figurative work but which contains symbols of natural objects. Neue Künstlervereinigung München is founded
1910	1st abstract work *"I felt much more at home in the realm of colour than in that of line"*
1911	Concert of Arnold Schoenberg, Munich. First *Der Blaue Reiter* exhibition, On the Spiritual in Art is published
1912	Second *Der Blaue Reiter* exhibition
1913	Exhibits at the Armory Show in New York, Composition V1 & V11
1919	Term **'Abstract Expressionist'** is applied to his work
1920	Co-founder of INKhUK
1922	Takes up post at the Bauhaus
1923	First one-man show in New York
1924	Kandinsky founds *Die Blaue Vier*

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art', New York, U.S.A, Dover, 2000

Letter of January 18, 1911: Kandinsky to Schoenberg. J. Hahl-Koch, 'Arnold Schoenberg & Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures & Documents', London: Faber & Faber, 1984

Letter of January 24, 1911, 'A Schoenberg Reader', edited by Joseph Auner, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003

Arnold Schoenberg, 'Theory of Harmony', Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984

Wassily Kandinsky, 'Painting as Pure Art', The *Sturm Verlag*, Complete Writings on Art, ed. Kenneth C. Lindsay & Peter Vergo, Vol. 1, Boston, G.K. Hall, 1982

J. Hahl-Koch, 'Arnold Schoenberg & Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures & Documents', London, Faber & Faber, 1984

Wassily Kandinsky, 'The Art of Spiritual Harmony', U.S.A, Houghton Mifflin, 1914

Wassily Kandinsky, 'Complete Writings on Art', Boston, Mass, G.K. Hall, 1982

Secondary Sources

Hajo Duchting, 'Paul Klee - Painting Music', Munich, Prestel, 2002

Simon Shaw-Miller, 'Eye-Music, Kandinsky, Klee and all that Jazz', Chichester, Pallant House, 2007

Martin Gayford, 'The Yellow House', London, Penguin Books Ltd. 2007

Norbert Lynton, 'The Story of Modern Art', London, Phaidon, 1995

Judith Zilczer, 'Music for the Eyes: Abstract Painting and Light Art', Kerry Brougher, Jeremy Strick, Ari Wiseman and Judith Zilczer, 'Visual Music: Synaesthesia in Art and Music Since 1900' New York, Thames & Hudson, 2005

William B Parsons, 'The Oceanic Feeling Revisited', New York, Oxford University Press, 1999

Rosemary Lloyd, 'Mallarmé, The Poet and his Circle', UK Cornell University Press, 2005

Lucy Norton, The Journal of Eugene Delacroix, England, Phaidon Press, 1995

Will Gompertz, 'What are you looking at?' 150 Years of Modern Art in the Blink of an Eye', London, Viking, Penguin Group, 2012

David Sylvester, 'About Modern Art', Critical Essays 1949-96, London, Chatto & Windus, 1996

E.H Gombrich, 'Art & Illusion', London, Phaidon, 1995

Jan Gordon, 'A Stepladder to Painting', London, Faber, 1962

Robert Hughes, 'The Shock of the New', London, Thames & Hudson, 1992

Andrew Graham-Dixon, 'Art: The Definitive Visual Guide', England, DK, 2008

Rosemary Lambert, 'The 20th Century', Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981

D. Gamboni, Paul Gauguin: 'The Mysterious Centre of Thought', U.S.A, University of Chicago Press, 2014

A. Bovi, “Kandinsky’, Twentieth-Century Masters, England, Hamlyn, 1971

T. Phillips, ‘Music in Art’, New York, Prestel, 1997

W-Dieter Dube, ‘The Expressionists’, London, Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1996

H. Düchting, ‘Kandinsky: A Revolution in Painting’, Germany, Taschen, 1995

H. Arnason, ‘A History of Modern Art’, London, Thames & Hudson, 1977

Janson & Janson, ‘A World History of Art’, London, Thames & Hudson, 1997

Annette and Luc Vezin, ‘Kandinsky and Der Blaue Reiter’, Paris, Terrail, 1992

Thomas S. Messer, ‘Kandinsky’, London, Thames & Hudson, 1997

U. Becks-Malorny, ‘Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction’, Germany, Taschen, 1994

C. Gray, ‘The Russian Experiment in Art: 1863-1922’, London, Thames & Hudson, 1996

D. Elger, ‘Expressionism’, Germany, Taschen, 1991

Erich Hohne, ‘Music in Art’, London, Abbey Library, 1965

N. Wolf, ‘Expressionism’, Germany, Taschen, 2004

Robert Cumming, ‘Great Artists’ (Annotated Guides) England, DK, 1998

Kenneth C. Lindsay, ‘Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art’, England, G.K. Hall & Co., 1982

H. Chipp, ‘Theories of Modern Art’, U.S.A, University of California Press, 1996

G. Heard Hamilton, ‘Painting & Sculpture in Europe 1880-1940’, U.S.A, Yale University Press, 1993

H.H. Stuckenschmidt, ‘Arnold Schoenberg’, London, John Calder, 1959

E. Smith & D. Renouf, ‘Approach to Music’ Book 3, London, Oxford University Press, 1971

R. Taruskin, 'Music in the Early Twentieth Century', London, Oxford University Press, 2009

J. Lassaigne, 'Kandinsky: Biographical & Critical Study', U.S.A, The World Publishing Co., 1964

Richard Cork, 'A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War', New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994

Fred Wasserman, 'Schoenberg and Kandinsky in Concert', Esther da Costa Meyer and Fred Wasserman (Eds.), 'Schoenberg, Kandinsky, and the Blue Rider' New York, The Jewish Museum, 2003

'Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Clarity', Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000

Maria Stavrinaki, 'Messianic Pains. The Apocalyptic Temporality in Avant-Garde Art, Politics, and War', 2011

Peg Weiss, 'Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman', New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995

S. Behr, 'Movements in Modern Art: Expressionism', London, Tate Gallery, 1999

S. Farthing, '1001 Paintings You Must See Before You Die', England, Cassell, 2011

Sister W. Beckett, 'The Story of Painting', London, Dorling Kindersley, 1996

Karl Linke, 'Arnold Schöenberg' (1912), translated by Barbara Z. Schoenberg and published in Walter Frisch (ed.), 'Schoenberg and His World' Princeton, USA, Princeton University Press, 1999

Frank Whitford, 'Bauhaus', London, Thames & Hudson, 1995

F. Clifford Rose, 'Neurology of the Arts', London, Imperial College Press, 2004

John Gage, 'Colour in Art', London, Thames & Hudson, 2006

Alan Bowness, 'Modern European Art', London, Thames & Hudson, 1985

Matthew Collings, 'This is Modern Art', London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999

Nikos Stangos, 'Concepts of Modern Art: From Fauvism to Postmodernism', London, Thames & Hudson, 1994

Matthew Collings, 'Blimey! From Bohemia to Britpop', London, 21 Publishing Ltd, 1999

Kathleen James-Chakraborty, 'Bauhaus Culture', MN, USA, University of Minnesota Press, 1993

H.W. and Dora Jane Janson, 'Story of Painting', London, Thames & Hudson, 1982

Edward Lucie-Smith 'Lives of the Great Twentieth Century Artists', London, Thames & Hudson, 1999

Robert Cumming, 'Art Eyewitness Companions', London, Dorling Kindersley Ltd, 2006

C. Gregory, 'Great Artists' Part 80, Volume 4, London, Marshall Cavendish, 1991

'Discovering Great Paintings', No. 54, Milan, A Fabbri Production, 1992

Kenneth Clark, 'Civilisation: A Personal View' (London: John Murray, 1969

Other Sources

iBooks, e-Books

Jennifer Arlene Stone, 'Kandinsky's Din 'On Ghosts in Art: Wassily Kandinsky & Arnold Schoenberg, New York, Sagabona, 2014, iBook https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l

O. Sachs, 'Musicophilia: Tales of Music on the Brain', e-Book, Picador

Will Gompertz, 'What are you looking at?' (Audio Series): Kandinsky/Orphism/Blue Rider

Podcast Documentary: 'Synaesthesia: the hidden sense' BUFTA, Bond University 2013

Articles

James Peel, 'The Scale and the Spectrum', Issue 22, Summer 2006 (Article)

Kathryn Oliver Mills, 'The Poetry Foundation', poetryfoundation.org (Article)

Robert W Berger, 'The Art Bulletin', Volume 58, No. 2, June 1976 (Article)

Dr Hugo Heyrman, 'Reflection on Art and Synaesthesia: In Search of the Synaesthetic Experience' (Article)

Edward Lockspeiser, 'Debussy', The Tablet, International Catholic News Weekly (Article)

Patricia Railing, Philosophy Now, 'Abstract Art & Music', 2005 (Online Article)

Leah Dickerman, 'Inventing Abstraction 1910-1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art', Museum of Modern Art, 2012, (Article)

Roger Cardinal, 'Sonia Delaunay at Tate Modern', TLS, May 2015 (Article)

Daniel J Levitin, 'Why the Modern World in Bad for you' Neuroscience, The Observer, 18th January 2015, (Article)

National Geographic, February 2014 (Article)

Jay N. Giedd, Article on the brain, Scientific American, June 2015 (Article)

Joshua Foer, 'Understanding Dolphins' Intelligence', National Geographic, May 2015 (Article)

Ossian Ward, 'The Man who Heard his Paintbox Hiss' The Telegraph, June 2006 (Article)

Ossian Ward, 'How Kandinsky's Synaesthesia Changed Art' The Telegraph, December 2014 (Article)

Journals, Magazines, Publications, Online Documents

Primary Sources

Wassily Kandinsky, *'Uher des Geistige in der Kunst',* Chapter 5 (Document online)

Therese Muxeneder, Schoenberg / Kandinsky Correspondence, The Arnold Schoenberg Center, Vienna, Austria, schoenberg.at

Arnold Schoenberg, Der Blaue Reiter Publication, 'The Relationship to the Text' 1912 (Article online)

Wassily Kandinsky, 'Sturm' Album, 1912 (Document online)

Wassily Kandinsky, 'On the Question of Form', Almanac essay, 1911

Wassily Kandinsky, 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art', LibrVox, Podcast

Secondary Sources

Juliette Rizzi, 'Sonia Delaunay' The Ey Exhibition handout, Tate Modern, April 15, 2015

'Modern Painters' Magazine, Edition May 2015

Gerard McBurney, 'Wassily Kandinsky: The Painter of Sound and Vision: Concertos on Canvas' (Article online)

B.M Galeyev, 'Kandinsky and Schoenberg: The Problem of Internal Counterpoint' (Article online)

Podcast: 'Synaesthesia Science', Inside Oxford Science with M. du Sautoy

Leigh Erceq and Savant Syndrome, Independent News Online, May 2015

Konrad Boehmer, 'Schoenberg & Kandinsky: An Historic Encounter', British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data, Amsterdam, The Netherlands: OPA, 1997 (Article online)

A. Patner 'A Legendary Encounter' Plumbing the Brief, The Brilliant Friendship of Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky, Published December 26, 2003 Issue of The Jewish Daily Forward, (Article online)

'A Comparison of the Approaches of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern to Serialism in their Music', Musicteachers.co.uk, (Article online)

'The Second Viennese School: Where to Start', Classic FM, Discover periods online

Yakov Rabinovich, 'Kandinsky: Master of the Mystic Arts' InvisibleBooks.com: Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, 'Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art', Cambridge, MA, Da Capo Press, 1994

Tate Modern: 'Kandinsky; The Path to Abstraction', Room Guide

Annegret Hoberg, Curator at the *Städtische Galerie*, Lenbachhaus, Munich, exhibition catalogue entry

Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Occultism, Anarchism, and Abstraction: Kandinsky's Art of the Future', Art Journal 46.1, 1987

Carol McKay, 'Kandinsky's Ethnography: Scientific Fieldwork and Aesthetic Reflection', 1994 (Article online)

Gerald 0Izenberg, 'Intellectual-Cultural History and Psychobiography: The Case of Kandinsky', Annual of Psychoanalysis No. 31, 2003

The Musical Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. 1, 1985, (Article online)

'The Scale and the Spectrum', Issue 22 Insecurity Summer 2006

Robert W Berger, 'The Art Bulletin', Volume 58, No. 2, June 1976

Leah Dickerman, 'Inventing Abstraction, 1910-1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art', Museum of Modern Art, 2012 (Online article)

'Musical Canonisation and Decanonisation in the Twentieth Century', Anne C. Shreffler (Online article)

Webliography

http://RhythmicLight.com

http://www.lettersofnote.com/p/archive.html

poetryfoundation.org

http://9waysmysteryschool.tripod.com/sacredsoundtools/id19.html

, http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg69/gg69-1241.0.html

http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/whistler-nocturne-blue-and-gold-old-battersea-bridge-n01959,

http://www.smithsonianmag.com/ist/?next=/arts-culture/the-story-behind-the-peacock-rooms-princess-159271229/

http://forward.com/articles/7368/a-legendary-encounter/#ixzz3QKzC862j

http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/kandinsky-path-abstraction/kandinsky-path-abstraction-room-guide

www.ciurlionis.net/articles/sepetis.htm

www.moma.org

www.bauhaus.de

www.poetryfoundation.org

http://www.sinfinimusic.com/uk/learn/composers/claude-debussy

http://principlesofnature.net/musical_scale_structures/music_and_relativity.htm

Khan Academy Smarthistory: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i16sGRY7SZ4

The Twenty Ten Theme. Blog at WordPress.com: mydailyartdisplay

http://www.artchive.com/artchive/D/delaunay.html

https://itun.es/gb/KD_fW.l

http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2006/jun/24/art.art

Musicteachers.co.uk

http://www.art-quotes.com/auth_search.php?authid=349#.VeR4VdNViko

http://www.cymascope.com/cyma_research/history.html
http://opus111.ca/2012/01/22/innervisions-arnold-schoenberg-the-painter/

https://www.google.co.uk/search?tbm=bks&hl=en&q=kandinsky+performing+on+his+cello#q=kandinsky+performing+on+his+cello&hl=en

http://cso.org/uploadedFiles/1_Tickets_and_Events/Program_Notes/ProgramNotes_Stravinsky_Fireworks.pdf

www.amazon.co.uk