

## **Musical Painting and Painterly Music in Oeuvre of A. Schoenberg and W. Kandinsky**

Music and fine arts are based on opposing parameters. Nevertheless, history teaches that their interaction is possible and mutually enriching. For a rather long historical period efforts to integrate both spheres were rather sparse and hardly successful. It was only in the Romantic Era that this process took a whole new dimension, especially in theoretical field. The attitude of romantics, which bore a sharp mark of general musicality and spirituality, provided a new possibility of the synthesis of arts (including these two opposing spheres), at least in the ideal realm of artistic consciousness. On the practical level, however, these ideas were to be implemented only in the beginning of the 20th century. The problems of interaction between music and fine arts were at the centre of the so-called “Blue circle” group of expressionist-artists based in Munich. It existed between 1911 and 1914, and the leader of the group was Wassily Kandinsky. It is worth noticing that music played quite an important role in the life of many of the artists of this group. The ability to make music with colours, lines and forms was a pursuit of these painters. They used such categories as musicality, inner sound, inner necessity, inner knowledge and inner process. Thus, the perception of creation as inner necessity bore the alliance of two outstanding expressionists – composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) and painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944).

### **The enriching friendship of Schoenberg and Kandinsky**

The friendship of the two artist began in 1911 and lasted for the remainder of their lives. The mutual admiration, sympathies, aesthetic views, remarks and discoveries they described in the letters. Here both also provided mutual evolutions, critiques as well as creative ideas. The last letter was written in 1944, the year of Kandinsky's death. After that dialogue stopped.

Kandinsky has received a good musical education. Therefore, he appreciated Schoenberg's oeuvre, analysed his theoretical works as well as organized and annotated concerts, where his compositions were performed. Kandinsky had exceptional ability to hear the colours. Later it also came out that Schoenberg possessed a musical sense of colour and used to paint pictures as well. Some of his works were exposed in the first exhibition of “Der blaue Reiter” group in the end of 1911. It was intuitive sense of this inner reciprocity between the two great men that pushed Kandinsky to seek acquaintance and later friendship with Schoenberg. In January of 1911 he wrote (Schoenberg, Kandinsky, 1980, p. 19): “... our efforts, way of thinking and emotional mode have so much in common that I feel fully entitled to express my deepest sympathy.” He understood that Schoenberg's investigations in music corresponded to those of his own in painting. More so, the former was the only composer to be in accord with the principle of “inner necessity” of the latter in music.

### **The artistical discoveries in the theoretical works**

The discoveries in music and painting by both artists were summarised in the theoretical works by their own. These were “Harmonielehre” [Study in Harmony, 1911] by Schoenberg and “Über das Geistige in der Kunst” [“On the Spiritual in Art”, 1912] by Kandinsky. Both treatises became the cornerstones in the oeuvre of each of them and also significant accents of modern art. Besides the reciprocity of aesthetical attitudes of the authors, both works have in common the search for the synthesis of several arts. This pursuit brought the composer to the atonal music, while the painter to the abstract painting.

Schoenberg in his “Harmonielehre” formulated principles of the new theory of harmony. The new viewpoint maintained the tone as key means in organizing music. Tone with all its overtones, thus, becomes the perspective in music, in which material and ideal first principles merge. By the means of tonal relations, their horizontal and vertical dimensions, Schoenberg attempted to explain the effect of musical tone to human spirit. This also could be considered as one of the expressions of the aesthetics of expressionism.

Kandinsky in his essay “Über das Geistige in der Kunst” debates materialism in fine arts. Here he also presents the principles of the theory of abstract art. One of the central points of his claim for abstraction in art was grounded in music as a means to express subconscious and subjective quivers of soul. To put in more simple terms, Kandinsky thus strived to fix a notion of colour as an autonomous value and by doing so to eliminate the ‘fossilised’ traditional norms of painting.

Therefore, Schoenberg and Kandinsky gave exceptional significance to respectively tone in music and colour in arts as first principles. These were the point of departure in both of their theories, which led to the novel findings in both respective fields. Both of them with specific means due to each different art sphere were seeking abstraction as well as avoiding and rejecting naturalism. In other words they as if managed to hear the colour of tone and the sound of colour. This sense was formulated as *Klangfarbenmelodie* by Schoenberg, while Kandinsky presented the theory of colours, proceeding from music as its first principle.

### The Schoenberg's discovery of *Klangfarbenmelodie*

Arnold Schoenberg revealed the new quality of musical tone – namely the ability to form the composition with the means of alternations of tone colours. This quality is considered as a new level of evolution of musical tone. The theory of *Klangfarbenmelodie* was introduced in his *Harmonielehre*, while the first practical composition attempt might be seen in his *Farben*, the third piece of his cycle 'Fünf Orchesterstücke', op. 16. Here he attempted to create a composition according to classical laws of dramaturgy, on the basis of development of tone colour. The principal means in that becomes the variation of colour or alternations of timbres.

The instrumental texture of the "colours" of the piece could be divided into two spheres. The first one is grounded in the set instrumental timbres and becomes the basis for the tonal development of colour throughout the piece. The second one, is the group of short motives reappearing on the background harmony of the piece. The principle of *Klangfarbenmelodie* is embodied by the five-sound chord (c – g-sharp – b – e – a), which is played every half bar by one or other instrumental group. The first group consist of woodwinds (flute, clarinet and bassoon), while the second, of English horn, trumpet, bassoon and horn. This combination remains stable throughout the first half of the piece. The special colourful effect is produced by unconventional registers of instruments as well as exceptional timbres of such instruments as piccolo, celest or harp.

Still, more expressively the principle of *Klangfarbenmelodie* is disclosed in the middle section of the piece. Here the instrumentation moves into vibrant and variable spectrum of colours. The development of colour is produced not only with the harmonical means (moves between chords), but also with the use of the sounds of different timbres. The sound material is growing in horizontal, not in vertical line. Quite an amplitude of timbres is used in one line. It consists of various instrumental patterns that are not repeated later in the work. It could be grasped with the example of the following table, that represent the formal structure of several bars of this section.

Although the musical structure is based on five-part harmony, Schoenberg employs huge, quadruple orchestra. His aim is to obtain a wide palette of colours and shades. Unconventional orchestration only increases the significance of conspicuous instrumental timbres. Thus the musical development is disclosed through the changing trajectory of tone-colour. At the same time the musical dramaturgy is produced primarily with the means of instrumental timbre, thus, disclosing the new quality of the important musical attribute. As a result, 'Farben' became a momentous push towards sonoristic experiments and a new step in the history of synthesis of music and fine arts.

	b.13	b.14	b.15	b.16	b.17
I	Fag VI	Hr VI	Pos Trp	Kl Ob	Fl VI
II	Kl EH	Ob Kl	Br EH	Vc VI	EH Br
III	VI Pos	Fag Trp	Br Fag Fag	Pos Fag	Trp Kl
IV	Pos HR	Pos VI Hr	Hr VI	Kl Hr	Bkl Hr
V	Hr Bkl Fag Hr	Bkl Fag Hr Bkl	Br Kfg Kb Br	Kfg Kb Br Kfg	Kb Br Kfg Kb

A. Schoenberg. *Farben*, the third piece of his cycle *Fünf Orchesterstücke*, op. 16

### The Musical Painting of Kandinsky

W. Kandinsky systemized the forms of painting seeking their close cohesion of musical forms. His idea was that fine arts should also be ground on its own forces and means, as did musical substance, and not on imitation of natural forms. According to Kandinsky, the most simple combination of forms is the one where natural forms are combined with the abstract ones. More sophisticated is the one the abstract principle is the leading one, while natural forms are still visible. While the pure abstraction is considered the highest level of such combination. These forms could be conceived only from and by inner necessity. This category is considered to be the principal criterion. Another task of the painter was to define the constitutive parts of the larger composition. The adjustment and harmonisations of these parts determines the inner sound of the composition. For instance, the triangle with its upper sharp angle sounds quietly and steadily, while diagonal one produces a tension. Here we also see an attempt to set conditions that necessary for moving an artistic form.



W. Kandinsky. *Blaue Reiter*



W. Kandinsky. *Impression III (Concert)*. 1911



W. Kandinsky. *Improwizacja 28*. 1912

effect derived from nature and conveyed in purely pictorial form. The second one consists of improvisations. These are the intuitive paintings, a spontaneous, unconscious expression of immaterial nature. The third group is that of compositions. They express the slow forming of inner feeling. It usually takes a scrupulous procedure to paint them, as they are considered to be very precise construction of forms, lines, and colours.

The forms of abstract pictures were divided into two groups by Kandinsky: the first one, was that of simple melodic compositions, and the second, more complex, symphonic compositions, consisting of various forms subordinated to the principal one. There are also forms in between. The simply and symphonic compositions in painting correspond respectively to monodic and polyphonic forms in music.

Kandinsky also paid much attention to the theory of colour effect. He classified colours according to their psychological effect, i.e. the ability to oscillate in the soul of the spectator. The antithetic colours were subdivided according to their 'warmth' and 'coldness' (yellow and blue), calmness and activeness (green and red), lightness and darkness (white and black), active and passive elements within red colour (orange and violet), etc. He made four pairs of antithetic colours, subdividing them once again according to the direction of movement into excentric and concentric. Each colour also had its instrumental equivalent. Many of these coincide with the combinations of timbres and colours as described by Schoenberg. Thus, in essence the theory of the effect of colours of Kandinsky to certain extent corresponded to the theory of intervals in music by Schoenberg.

This theory of forms and colours had to help the artist to freely make music with pure forms, lines and colours. The pursuit of musicality was expressed by rejecting the subject and operating by pure artistic forms. The first painting without subject was made by Kandinsky in 1911. (It is worth remembering the Lithuanian artists M. K. Čiurlionis painted his first "sonatas" three years before that date.) According to the painter himself, his abstract painting could be grouped into three groups, according to the sources of inspiration. The first one are impressions – produced from the direct

## Conclusions

1. The synthetic expression of music and painting the art of Kandinsky and Schoenberg was the result of their inner necessity. It was the expression of this colourly-musical expression that made a major impact for the pursuits and findings in their art. It also brought together both men as congenial creators. In addition, this collaboration opened new dimensions in the art of German expressionism.

2. The findings that were developing collaterally in music and fine arts are as follows:

- a) the development of notion of *Klangfarbenmelodie* [sound-colour-melody] in the music of Schoenberg; theory of colours that maintain music as the prime pattern of painting;
- b) the first one brought the former to the sphere of atonal music, while the second one took the latter to the abstract art.

3. Schoenberg and Kandinsky summarized their artistic finding in theoretical works, which became the cornerstones of their oeuvre as well as the accents of key importance of the modern art.

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## Santrauka

### Muzikaloji tapyba ir tapybiškoji muzika A. Schoenbergo ir W. Kandinskio kūryboje

XX a. muzikos ir dailės menų sąveikos idėjas imta plačiai taikyti praktikoje. Muzikaloji tapyba ir tapybiškoji muzika tapo impresionizmo ir simbolizmo sinonimais. Ekspresionistai perėmė muzikalumo kultą kaip romantikų palikimą. Muzikalumas įgavo vidinio skambesio kategoriją, būtent jis ir tapo kūrinio meniškumo kriterijumi.

XX a. pradžioje dažnai operuojama kategorijomis *vidinis skambesys*, *vidinė būtinybė*, *vidinis žinojimas* ir *vidinis procesas*. Kūrybos kaip vidinės būtinybės suvokimas sujungė du iškilus XX a. skirtingų menų kūrėjus – A. Schoenbergą ir W. Kandinskį. Sintetinė muzikos ir dailės raiška jų kūryboje – vidinės būtinybės pasekmė, ne kas kita, kaip spalvinio-garsinio suvokimo išraiška. Kūrinys, gimęs iš vidinės būtinybės, turi sukelti vidinę suvokėjo vibraciją. Tam, kad kūrinio poveikis būtų galingesnis, reikia sujungti kelis menus – tokia buvo A. Schoenbergo ir W. Kandinskio nuostata. Dailininką Kandinskį siekti draugystės su kompozitoriumi Schoenbergu (jų draugystė prasidėjo 1911 m.) pastūmėjo intuityvus vidinio bendrumo pojūtis. Kandinskis suvokė, kad jo ieškojimai tapyboje atitiko Schoenbergo ieškojimus muzikoje. Kompozitorius siekė savarankiškos garso reikšmės muzikoje įtvirtinimo, atonalumo, o dailininkas – spalvos savarankiškumo ir išskirtinumo, visiško antinaturalizmo. Šie ieškojimai moderniojo meno plėtočiai suteikė stiprių impulsų. Naujas meno formas menininkai apibendrino teoriniuose veikaluose: Schoenbergo „Harmonielehre“ („Harmonijos mokymas“, 1911 m.), Kandinskio esė „Über das Geistige in der Kunst“ („Apie dvasingumą mene“, 1912 m.). Šie veikalai tapo kertiniais akmenimis kiekvieno menininko kūryboje ir svarbiais moderniojo meno akcentais. Abu veikalus sieja autorių estetinių nuostatų bendrumas, o svarbiausia – sinestetinis kelių menų sąlyčio taškų ieškojimas. Spalvinis-garsinis menininkų pojūtis teikė galimybę jiems girdėti garso spalvą ir spalvos garsą. Schoenbergas šį pojūtį suformavo spalvų melodijos („Klangfarbenmelodie“) apibrėžimu, o Kandinskis – spalvų teorija, kuria siekiama išryškinti tapybos muzikalų pradą.