Color, Music, and Emotion

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Background

Systematic associations between classical orchestral music and color dimensions:

Emotional dimension: 1) Select the 3 colors that are most inconsistent with the melody.
2) Select the 3 colors that are most consistent with the melody.

Color-Emotion Associations

Music-Emotion Associations

There are high correlations between the emotional ratings of each melody and the emotional ratings of colors consistent with that melody:

Conclusions

As in the first color, music, and emotion study (Schloss, Lawler & Palmer, VSS-08), both color and music were strongly associated with specific emotions: Happy-Sad, Agitated-Calm, Strong-Weak, Angry-Not Angry.

Better-controlled musical stimuli revealed the significant influence of distinct musical dimensions (major/minor mode, slow/medium/fast note-rate, and low/high register) on color-associations and ratings of emotional content (independent of timbre, dynamics, orchestration, and harmonic mode).

When making color-music associations, subjects seem to have evaluated the emotional content of the melodies and to have chosen the colors that had the same emotional content. This finding supports the Emotional Mediation Hypothesis.

Emotions Mediate Color-Music Associations

These data provide strong support for the emotional mediation hypothesis

References and Acknowledgements


Acknowledgements

We thank Avi Roggo, Amelie Younger, Mathias Zilles and Markku Huichner, (UC, Berkeley) for collecting data. We also thank E.J. Stavitski (at UC Berkeley) for help with programming in Presentation, and facade Philip Palmer at McGill for generating the final musical stimuli from the original event files. We further thank the National Science Foundation (BCS-0749681) and Google for financial support.

Color and Music: Stimuli

Berkeley Color Project (BCP) 37 Colors

46 Mozartian Melodies

4 single-line melodies adapted from Mozart piano themes

1 variation for each melody rated along four dimensions:

1) major vs. minor key
2) fast vs. slow tempo
3) high vs. low register
4) bright vs. dim colors

5 Achromatic Colors: White, Black, Light, Shadow, & Dark Gray

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