

Synaesthesia & Musicology

The idea of Musicology for a synaesthete may not seem to be of any importance. However, the important link between a composer or musician's cognitive and sensory reactions upon hearing music and their own musical output can be hugely revealing, both for a musicologist's understanding of music and a synaesthete's understanding of the condition. At present, the academic field of Musicology does not acknowledge the exploration of synaesthesia as anything other than a novelty. However, this paper challenges this notion and suggests that, although synaesthesia may never be at the forefront of musical research it has a place within musicology that has been overlooked. Using the Sound → Colour form of synaesthesia as an example, this paper submits that by exploring the sources of many well-known synaesthete composers and musicians both past and present (from Nikolaus Rimsky-Korsakov to Billy Joel) we may be able to extract invaluable information ranging from working methods to personal preferences that otherwise may not have been obvious. Such an approach has the potential to further inform and enhance current literature, and in light of this enable us to broach further questions regarding this fascinating symbiotic relationship. In the very least, such an investigation will enable a greater understanding of the effect of synaesthesia within musicology, of which the subject is in great need.