



The Symphony of Colors, composed especially for the color collection 2017, was performed by an orchestra of the Franz Liszt University of Music in Weimar (© Grafe)

## Symphony of Colors

### *Grafe Presents this Year's Color Collection Audiovisually*

The Grafe Design Center has composed music to present the nuances of their colors for the coming season in an interplay of symphonic harmony. Strong contrasts characterize their colors for 2017. Natural variations of blue and green complement seemingly synthetic tones of red and pink, as well as extremely black black.

The very language we use demonstrates a clear connection between color and music. On the one hand, we speak of color tones, and on the other – in a musical sense – of richness of tone. But do we ever actually see this connection? Although colors and music travel in wave lengths, so far no one has been able to establish a physical relationship [1]. Even so, it is actually possible to hear colors, or see tones of color. This is a form of synaesthesia, a term describing the phenomenon in which our sense perceptions become mixed with each other [2]. Depending on the source, it is assumed that somewhere between 0.2 and 4% of all humans dispose of this ability [1], whereby the hearing of colors is the most common version. Thus, for example, colored light activates not only the visual cortex in a synaesthete's brain, but his auditory cortex, as well. What is involved here is not a flash-

back to a previous experience, or a hallucination. Responsible for this is, instead, a physiological cause in the brain – after all, these sensations last a whole lifetime. However, uniform tables cannot yet be established, since each synaesthete recognizes stimuli differently [2]. For example, the synaesthete Sean A. Day reports hearing the tone of a horn in the color orange-yellow, much like that of an American school bus. In the case of an orchestra playing, the colors it evokes can seriously collide with other colors [3]. The famous painter, Wassily Kandinsky, is also said to have had synaesthetic capability [2].

#### *Musical Composition Based on Color Perceptions*

To a certain degree, however, other people can experience such crossed connections. That happens because they assign

feelings, moods, and associations in the same way to colors as they assign them to music. The perceiving person decides which colors appear to fit a particular piece of music. To be sure, cultural and natural ambiances influence the choice of colors to different degrees. Parameters, such as biographical experience and previously acquired color preferences, also play an important role in this [4].

The Design Center of the Grafe Group of Blankenhain, Germany, has borrowed from this latter phenomenon to combine music and color with their Color Preview 2017. A piece of music was composed based on their trend colors for 2017. The symphony was specially composed for them by Daniel Mandler and ultimately performed by an orchestra at the Franz Liszt University of Music in Weimar, Germany (**Title figure**). The "Symphony of Colors" arose from this combination, »



**Fig. 1.** Really beats that drum: The timeless nuances of Harmony Blue in concert with Polyphonic Silver-blue (© Grafe)



**Fig. 2.** The uniformly undulating tones from a trumpet inspire the color combination Rhythmic Apple, Vivo Petrol and Vienna Sun (© Grafe)

sometimes delightfully dreamy, sometimes epically uplifting, in an audiovisual presentation of colors for the coming season. The viewer feels the effect of this interaction during a short film. While he hears the tones, the trend colors help him see them escaping from the instruments. Thus, the bright and velvet oboe takes the viewer along for a colorfully relaxing trip to rugged Northlands. In jaunty harmony, a color combination of Melody Mint, Treble White and Beating Purple plays about the woodwind. The quiet and freshness of this combination is intended to release tension and liberate. The drum shows striking imagery not only by its sound, but also through the colorful interplay of the colors Polyphonic Silverblue and Harmony Blue (Fig. 1). In a swirling cloud of dust, timeless blue and forward-looking silver arise from every tone struck on the instrument. The trumpet forms an additional highlight in combination with the colors Rhythmic Apple, Vivo Petrol and Vienna Sun (Fig. 2). Living colors escape from funnel in uniform undulations, taking the viewer along on an optimistic outing through forests and pastures. The bass clarinet invites us to another world with the colors Opus Gold and Sound Silver. Their fusion plays about the dreamy looking instrument, telling tales of long ago.

### *Relaxed, Shiny and Metallic Questioning*

The trend colors for 2017 are fundamentally characterized by strong, innate contrasts. Thus, green and blue tones assume a dominant position. Especially green appears in very natural versions. Accordingly, the color is pleasing to see when combined with original earthy

tones, thereby bringing the well-known safari style back to life. Blue tones present themselves relaxed and reserved in the same way. In this respect, muted and timeless tones, such as midnight blue or Prussian blue, are full of meaning. This is meant to symbolize an interplay of aqua tones with the naturalness of forest and pasture. Peoples' desire for simplicity, nature and rest finds its expression here figuratively. On the other hand, black assumes a prominent position. This color tone is, as a matter of course, deep and extremely glossy. A radical red joins in, full of elegance and beauty. The special relevance of pink tones appears in a new light. Since they appear very artificial and synthetic, they serve as a strong contrast to the presentations in blue and green. Different, glowing versions reflect a desire for an exotic paradise. In an extremely soft and tender way, the nude tones are also represented in the trend colors for 2017. With only a whisper of yellow or rosé on white, their character is that of refined pallor. At the same time, the coming season would be unthinkable without metallic colors. Besides gold, silver will become important next year, but in a new and different interpretation. Modern silver is always accompanied by an undertone of color. The resulting effect appears to glide through a colorful dust cloud. Particular attention is given to metallic colors that will appear to flow along in the shape of silky, fluid materials. In much the same way, their effects appear full of contrast. This makes it possible to completely do without any shimmer or tinsel and without setting clear glitter accents. Whether the colors are presented solid, translucent or transparent, is a matter of choice.

### *Conclusion*

Seeing and contemplating colors in all their beauty is of itself a visual experience. Hearing them intensifies this. Some synaesthetes actually experience it, but everyone else is capable of combining both senses on the basis of moods and feelings. In this sense, the Color Preview 2017, entitled "Symphony of Colors", can be experienced audiovisually this year. A special kind of naturalness is provided by the green and blue tones, whereas the pink nuances dream of the opulence of unreal paradises. The colorful year 2017 will be relaxed and show that anything is possible. ■

## See and Hear more Online

The complete video "Symphony of Colors" can be seen on YouTube under the keywords "Grafe Symphony of Colors".

## The Authoress

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