

Musical Keys - Colors - Emotions

Affective Musical Key Characteristics

The association of musical keys with specific emotional or qualitative characteristic was fairly common prior to the 20th century.

It was part of the shared cultural experience of those who made, performed and listened to music. When Mozart or Beethoven or Schubert wrote a piece in a Ab major, for example, they were well aware of this was the 'key of the grave' and knew that many in their audiences were as well.

We lose a part of the meaning of their music if we are ignorant of their affective choices.

Although these characteristics were, of course, subjective, it was possible to conceive of each key as unique because each key actually sounded distinct within unequal temperaments.

When equal temperament became the dominant tuning after 1917, the aural quality of every key became the same, and therefore these affective characteristics are mostly lost to us.

(See [Piano's Ivory Cage](#)) One of the most influential descriptions of characteristics shared in German-speaking cultures in the late 18th and early 19th century was from from Christian Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (1806):

C Major

Completely Pure. Its character is: innocence, simplicity, naïvety, children's talk.

C Minor

Declaration of love and at the same time the lament of unhappy love. All languishing, longing, sighing of the love-sick soul lies in this key.

D ♭ Major

A leering key, degenerating into grief and rapture. It cannot laugh, but it can smile; it cannot howl, but it can at least grimace its crying.--Consequently only unusual characters and feelings can be brought out in this key.

C# Minor

Penitential lamentation, intimate conversation with God, the friend and help-meet of life; sighs of disappointed friendship and love lie in its radius.

D Major

The key of triumph, of Hallejuahs, of war-cries, of victory-rejoicing. Thus, the inviting symphonies, the marches, holiday songs and heaven-rejoicing choruses are set in this key.

D Minor

Melancholy womanliness, the spleen and humours brood.

E ♭ Major

The key of love, of devotion, of intimate conversation with God.

D# Minor

Feelings of the anxiety of the soul's deepest distress, of brooding despair, of blackest depression, of the most gloomy condition of the soul. Every fear, every hesitation of the shuddering heart, breathes out of horrible D# minor. If ghosts could speak, their speech would approximate this key.

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E Major

Noisy shouts of joy, laughing pleasure and not yet complete, full delight lies in E Major.

E minor

Naïve, womanly innocent declaration of love, lament without grumbling; sighs accompanied by few tears; this key speaks of the imminent hope of resolving in the pure happiness of C major.

F Major

Complaisance & Calm.

F Minor

Deep depression, funereal lament, groans of misery and longing for the grave.

F# Major

Triumph over difficulty, free sigh of relief uttered when hurdles are surmounted; echo of a soul which has fiercely struggled and finally conquered lies in all uses of this key.

F# Minor

A gloomy key: it tugs at passion as a dog biting a dress. Resentment and discontent are its language.

G Major

Everything rustic, idyllic and lyrical, every calm and satisfied passion, every tender gratitude for true friendship and faithful love,-- in a word every gentle and peaceful emotion of the heart is correctly expressed by this key.

G Minor

Discontent, uneasiness, worry about a failed scheme; bad-tempered gnashing of teeth; in a word: resentment and dislike.

A ♭ Major

Key of the grave. Death, grave, putrefaction, judgment, eternity lie in its radius.

A ♭ Minor

Grumbler, heart squeezed until it suffocates; wailing lament, difficult struggle; in a word, the color of this key is everything struggling with difficulty.

A Major

This key includes declarations of innocent love, satisfaction with one's state of affairs; hope of seeing one's beloved again when parting; youthful cheerfulness and trust in God.

A minor

Pious womanliness and tenderness of character.

B ♭ Major

Cheerful love, clear conscience, hope aspiration for a better world.

B ♭ minor

A quaint creature, often dressed in the garment of night. It is somewhat surly and very seldom takes on a pleasant countenance. Mocking God and the world; discontented with itself and with everything; preparation for suicide sounds in this key.

B Major

Strongly colored, announcing wild passions, composed from the most glaring colors. Anger, rage, jealousy, fury, despair and every burden of the heart lies in its sphere.

B Minor

This is as it were the key of patience, of calm awaiting one's fate and of submission to divine dispensation.

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Major Keys & Relative Minor Key

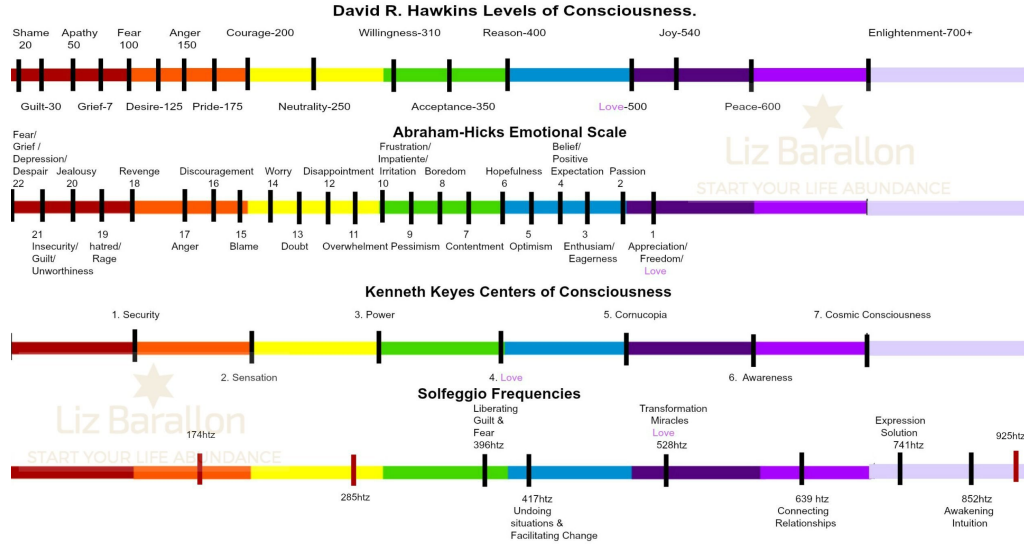
- F** } This key is rich, mild, sober and contemplative.
- D Minor.** } Possesses the same qualities, but of a heavier and darker cast : more doleful, solemn and grand.
- C** } Bold, vigorous, and commanding : suited to the expression of war and enterprize.
- A Minor.** } Plaintive, but not feeble.
- G** } Gay and sprightly. Being the median key, it is adapted to the greatest range of subjects.
- E Minor.** } Persuasive, soft and tender.
- D** } Ample, grand, and noble. Having more fire than C, it is suited to the loftiest purposes. In choral music, it is the highest key, the treble having its cadence note on the 4th line.
- B. Minor.** } Bewailing, but in too high a tone to excite commiseration.
- A.** } Golden, warm, and sunny.
- F sharp Minor.** } Mournfully grand.
- E in sharps** } Bright and pellucid : adapted to brilliant subjects. In this key Haydn has written his most elegant thoughts. Handel mistook its properties when he used it in the chorus, "*The many rend the skies with loud applause.*" Though higher than D, it is less loud, as it stretches the voice beyond its natural power.
- B in sharps.** } Keen and piercing. Seldom used.
- B flat** } The least interesting of any. It has not sufficient fire to render it majestic, or grand, and is too dull for song.
- G Minor.** } Meek and pensive. Replete with melancholy.
- E flat Major.** } Full and mellow ; sombre, soft and beautiful. It is a key in which all musicians delight.— Though less decided in its character than some of the others, the regularity of its beauty renders it a universal favorite.
- C. Minor.** } Complaining, having something of the whining cant of B. minor.
- A flat Major.** } The most lovely of of the tribe. Unassuming, gentle, soft, delicate and tender, having none of the pertness of A in sharps. Every author has been sensible of the charm of this key, and has reserved it for the expression of his most refined sentiments.
- F Minor.** } Religious, penitential, and gloomy.
- D flat Major.** } Awfully dark. In this remote key, Haydn and Beethoven have written their sublimest thoughts. They never enter it but for tragic purposes.

Chinese

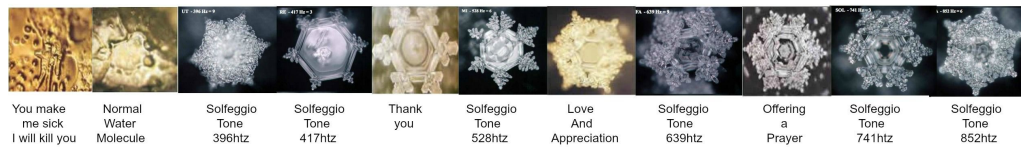
	12	Ratios	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	Calculate	十二律
	Lü	Used for	from	from	from	from	from	from	from	from	from	from	from	from	from	
	Names	Calculations	440.00	469.86	495.00	528.64	556.88	594.39	626.48	660.00	704.79	742.50	792.86	835.31		
	Huang Zhong	1/1	440.00	469.86	495.00	528.64	556.88	594.39	626.48	660.00	704.79	742.50	792.86	835.31	黃鐘	
	Da Lü	2187/2048	469.86	501.75	528.60	564.52	594.67	634.73	669.00	704.79	752.63	792.89	846.67	892.01	大呂	
	Da Cu	9/8	495.00	528.60	556.88	594.73	626.48	668.68	704.79	742.50	792.89	835.31	891.97	939.73	大簇	
	Jia Zhong	1968/1630	528.64	564.52	594.73	635.15	669.07	714.13	752.70	792.97	846.79	892.09	952.59	1003.60	夾鐘	
	Cu Xian	81/64	556.88	594.67	626.48	669.07	704.79	752.27	792.89	835.31	892.01	939.73	1003.46	1057.19	姑洗	
	Zhong Lü	1771/1311	594.39	634.73	668.68	714.13	752.27	802.94	846.30	891.58	952.09	1003.46	1071.06	1128.40	仲呂	
	Rui Bin	729/512	626.48	669.00	704.79	752.70	792.89	846.30	892.01	939.73	1003.51	1057.19	1128.90	1189.34	蕤賓	
	Lin Zhong	3/2	660.00	704.79	742.50	792.97	835.31	891.58	939.73	990.00	1057.19	1113.75	1189.29	1252.97	林鐘	
	Yi Ze	6561/4096	704.79	752.63	792.89	846.79	892.01	952.09	1003.51	1057.19	1128.95	1189.34	1270.01	1338.01	夷則	
	Nan Lü	27/16	742.50	792.89	835.31	892.09	939.73	1003.03	1057.19	1113.75	1189.34	1252.97	1337.95	1409.59	南呂	
	Wu Yi	5905/3277	792.86	846.67	891.97	952.59	1003.46	1071.06	1128.90	1189.29	1270.01	1337.95	1428.70	1505.19	無射	
	Ying Zhong	243/128	835.31	892.01	939.73	1003.60	1057.19	1128.40	1189.34	1252.97	1338.00	1409.59	1505.19	1588.79	應鐘	
			No scale on Huang Zhong base freq.		Shang on Da Cu base freq.			Gong scale on Zhong Lü base freq.		Jue scale on Yi Ze base freq.		Zhi scale on Wu Yi base freq.				

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Consciousness & Colors



Dr Masaru Emoto research on the effects of spoken words and music on water crystals



Liz Barallon - The Emotion Process.



Indian Chakras, Colors & Pitches

Crown	White Gold Violet	Sahasrara (thousandfold)	pituitary brain head	Light	B ngnng "sing"	clear quartz rutilated quartz any clear crystal	sandalwood myrr benzoin neroli lavender angelica St. John's Wort
Brow	Indigo Violet	Ajna (to perceive)	pineal eyes temples	Thought	A mmm nnn	amethyst lapis lazuli sugulite azurite	rosemary lavender peppermint spruce frankincense elemi clary sage
Throat	Blue	Visshudha (purification)	hypothalamus thyroid throat ears jaw neck	Ether Sound	G eee "see"	blue lace agate blue topaz celestite	blue chamomile sage lemongrass hyssop
Higher Heart	Turquoise	---	thymus shoulders	Air Ether	G flat F#	turquoise chrysocolla gem silica aquamarine	helichrysum myrtle litsea rose geranium
Heart	Green	Anahata (unstruck)	heart lungs breasts shoulders arms hands	Air	F ay "play"	aventurine green tourmaline green apophyllite malachite rose quartz pink tourmaline	rose bergamot melissa jasmine rosewood
Solar Plexus	Yellow	Manipura (lustrous jewel)	solar plexus digestive system liver gall bladder spleen pancreas adrenals	Fire	E ah "father"	citrine sulphur gold yellow calcite	juniper vetiver rosemary yarrow petitgrain palmarosa marjoram lemon
Sacral	Orange	Svadhithana (sweetness)	ovaries prostate kidneys bladder sacrum	Water	D oo "do"	camelian/sard red jasper cuprite	ylang-ylang jasmine neroli rose rose geranium orange sandalwood
Root/Base	Red	Muladhara (root/support)	testicles coccyx perineum pubic bone legs & feet	Earth	C oh "note"	black tourmaline smokey quartz bloodstone hematite onyx pipestone	patchouli vetiver myrr frankincense sandalwood cedarwood galbanum benzoin angelica St. John's Wort

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Interval or Interval Type	Associated Emotions
Consonant intervals	Pleasantness, generally positive emotional valence; not as strong or active as dissonant intervals
Dissonant intervals	Generally negative emotional valence, strength, activity
Major intervals	Brightness, strength
Minor Intervals	Dullness, weakness
Large intervals	Power
Small intervals	Weakness
Minor second	Melancholy, displeasure, anguish, darkness
Major second	Pleasurable longing, displeasure (neutral as a passing tone; see Chapter 9)
Minor third	Tragedy, sadness
Major third	Joy, happiness, brightness
Perfect fourth	Buoyancy, pathos (neutral as a passing tone; see Chapter 9)
Tritone (<i>diabolus in musica</i>)	Violence, danger, tension, devilishness (of course!)
Perfect fifth	Cheerfulness, stability
Minor sixth	Anguish, sadness
Major sixth	Winsomeness, pleasurable longing (neutral as a passing tone; see Chapter 9)

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Dominant seventh	Irresolution, displeasure, mournfulness
Major seventh	Aspiration, displeasure, violent longing
Octave	Lightheartedness (i.e., sudden melodic leap)

[Ms. Keeney's Flute Colors](#)

C's - Silvers, platinum, mercury, snow- to transparent...

D's - Reds/cherry, cayenne, bubblegum, maroon, strawberry....

E's - Oranges, tangerine, pumpkin, saffron...

F's - Yellows, - banana, - mustard, lemon, hay...

G's - Greens, forest green, lime green, asparagus...

A's - Blues, ocean blue, midnight blue, sky blue, teal...

B's - Purples, violet, plumb, lavender, orchid...

Three Centuries of Color Scales

		C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B
Isaac Newton	1704	Red		Orange		Yellow	Green		Blue		Purple		Pink
Louis Bertrand Castel	1734	Blue	Teal	Green	Olive	Yellow	Gold	Orange	Red	Brown	Pink	Purple	Purple
George Field	1816	Blue		Purple		Red	Orange		Yellow		Olive		Green
D. D. Jameson	1844	Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Teal	Blue	Purple	Purple	Pink	Pink
Theodor Seemann	1881	Brown	Red	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Teal	Blue	Purple	Pink	Brown	Black
A. Wallace Rimington	1893	Red	Brown	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Olive	Green	Teal	Teal	Purple	Blue	Pink
Bainbridge Bishop	1893	Red	Brown	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Light Green	Green	Teal	Purple	Pink	Pink	Red
H. von Helmholtz	1910	Yellow	Green	Teal	Blue	Purple	Pink	Purple	Red	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
Alexander Scriabin	1911	Red	Pink	Yellow	Blue	Blue	Brown	Blue	Orange	Purple	Green	Blue	Blue
Adrian Bernard Klein	1930	Red	Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Light Green	Green	Teal	Blue	Purple	Pink	Purple
August Aepli	1940	Red		Orange		Yellow		Green	Teal		Blue	Purple	Purple
I. J. Belmont	1944	Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Light Green	Green	Teal	Blue	Purple	Pink	Purple
Steve Zieverink	2004	Light Green	Green	Teal	Blue	Purple	Pink	Brown	Brown	Red	Orange	Yellow	Yellow