Animations

Animator Samantha Moore’s representations of Julie Ristough’s synaesthetic responses to musical notes. (Work in progress)

UK Synaesthesia Association

NEWSLETTER

Do we all have Synaesthesia?

Sitting in the back of the car, my father driving us home late at night was, for me, as a child, a lovely and fascinating experience. Eyes closed and completely indulging myself in hearing, I would see all the wonderful and interesting abstract shapes which came into my mind. How and why the night time sounds looked softer and rounder than the day short time ones was always a mystery, but an enjoyable one. As a child I never once shared this with anyone as I was quite sure at the time it was just me.

In this issue, we hear other readers’ stories about when they first became aware of their experiences in the My Synaesthesia section on the back page. We also take a look at the television programme Child Of Our Time which recently looked at synaesthesia in children (of somewhat briefly), and speak to Julia Simner who helped with the programme’s research. Artist Philippa Stanton shares her view that everyone has synaesthetic children, but some of us lose the ability to use or appreciate it as we grow older.

If you would like to contribute to our next newsletter, the deadline is 1st May 2006. We welcome comments, queries, letters, short articles (two pages of A4 max.) and artwork.

In particular we will be discussing the notion of synaesthesia as either advantageous or an interference. Whether you have done research in this area, or just have a personal, opinion, we’d love to hear from you!

Please submit your contributions by post to: UKSA, PO Box 6258, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 0WP or by email to: Newsletter@UKSA@hotmail.co.uk

Please note: If you are sending artwork in by post please include a stamped addressed envelope if you would like it to be returned.

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NEXT ISSUE

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Sight & Sound of Applause

Phoebe Bateman

"I first realised that things weren't quite as they seemed when, on hearing a piece of music consciously for the first time, I saw the most beautiful patchwork quilt. I asked my mother what it was, and she said that it was an orchestra, made up of lots of musical instruments. I simply could not believe. Shape, colour, movement, texture, these are all I later learned to 'see' music..."
**Annual General Meeting 2006**

The UK Synaesthesia Association are pleased to announce their second Annual General Meeting. This will take place on the weekend of 22-24 April 2006. The venue is centrally located in London’s Bloomsbury district.

Last year’s event was a great success and provided an opportunity for synaesthetes to meet each other as well as to learn about scientific and artistic explorations of synaesthesia. At least 60% of the audience were synaesthetes, the remainder consisting of their family or people with a professional interest in learning about synaesthesia.

The programme this year is very varied with presentations on synaesthesia that may relate to memory, personality and creativity; how synaesthesia can be first discovered and get its name; the genetics of synaesthesia; and many other aspects. The programme will also include a panel debate involving synaesthetes themselves called ‘Me and My Synaesthesia’. We are still looking for a couple more members to take part on the panel. The panel itself will be a semi-structured debate concerning how synaesthesia affects you. Does it have benefits or drawbacks? Do you tell people about it? Is it just something in the background? Do you tell people it’s just for the background? Do you have any unusual types of synaesthesia or an unusual occupation? Participating is easy, you just need to be willing to discuss your synaesthesia.

Full details of the programme, a list of accommodation in the area and other details can be found on the website (www.uksynaesthesia.com), go to ‘members area’.

The cost to existing members is £18 (standard rate) or £13 (students and senior citizens). The cost includes refreshments, tea/coffee, light lunch and a full recovery of your membership and attending the meeting the cost is £38 (standard rate) or £27 (students and senior citizens). This includes a renewal of your annual membership along with the cost of attending the AGM.

Those who wish to attend an optional evening meal on the 22nd April can do so at a cost of £15 per head (including wine, dessert and coffee). This was good fun last year and we hope it will be the same this year.

The conference is organised by Dr Jamie Ward and cheques can be sent to ‘UKSA, PO Box 6258, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 0WP’ or post your details to: UKSA, PO Box 6258, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 0WP.

**Child Of Our Time**

On 5th February at 8.50 PM BBC Two broadcast a new series of The Ricky Gervais Show, ‘Child Of Our Time’. The series features ten couples who have, between them, twenty-two children, all of whom happen to be exactly the same age. Each week the programme makers wanted to look into synaesthesia because synaesthesia has had a lot of attention in the media in the last 2 years. For example, some of the findings from a paper written by Dr Jamie Ward at UCL were featured in a BBC radio documentary, and also in a BBC TV Horizon documentary. Stuff like this has raised awareness about synaesthesia. In this the programme makers knew of the topic after the Horizon documentary in Autumn 2004, and felt that such a ‘fascinating condition’ should be brought to a mainstream audience.

For more information see: http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/synaesthesia1.shtml

**Synaesthesia in the Media**

However, as Julia Simner, who the BBC team used as their synaesthesia expert, explains, it is possible that this is due to the standard of the testing involved. It could also be that the children are perhaps too young to recognize or describe their experiences. After all, not all of us recall that three experiences at an event until much later in life.

Whether the series will ever follow up on the topics again remains to be seen – there are 14 more years to go. As a pure science programme it has probably helped raise awareness of synaesthesia. Steve reap the production team knew of the topic a few times after the Horizon documentary in Autumn 2004, and felt that such a ‘fascinating condition’ should be brought to a more mainstream audience.

**Books**

Almost Blue by Carlo Lucarelli

Publisher: Vintage  • ISBN: 0949549541

SHORTLISTED FOR CWA GOLD DAGGER AWARD

An acquiring editor’s pick, this psychological thriller. The author narrates through the eyes of the protagonist, placing the reader right in the action. The book’s premise is the near-death experience of a young woman, leading the very edge of your seat as she reads this fast-paced thriller.

A rare teller is surviving the students of Dudley. Rundi female detective Gracia Negrin is determined to solve the case. Only one witness can positively identify the killer... and he’s blind.

Simone spends his days in solitude, listening to Elsa Codine’s ‘Almost Blue’ and scanning the radio waves of the city to eavesdrop on other people’s lives. He likes to imagine what people are like based on the tone and colour of their voice - and his acute hearing sets alarm bells ringing upon hearing the voice of the killer.

The perspective alternates between the vulnerable and elusive Simone and this dark and psychopathic killer, with continuous ‘reincarnating’ himself as his latest victim in a frantic bid to escape the torture of his inner demon.

Lazzari’s paces his victim in a brilliant and yet terrifying light and you will have to stop yourself from screaming out to Grazia and Simone to warn them of the looming danger.

Cedric Luzzaro was born in 1963 in Modena, Italy. He has written eleven novel books and his work has been translated into many languages. He has won, and has been nominated for several major awards. His novel ‘Almost Blue’ was recently released in the USA and Canada and is currently being translated into German.

Almmost Blue was recently adopted into a play at Riverside Studios in Hammersmith and for Radio 4.

**A request from UKSA Membership Secretary, Anne Wight**

At present the association is undergoing a reorganisation and, as part of this process, we are updating our database. Therefore, it would be very useful if members could confirm or update us on the following information:

Name: 
Address: 
Phone and/or Mobile Number: 
Email Address: 

It is vital that we have the correct information for you, to ensure that you receive the newsletters and magazines on the AGA etc.

Please send a quick email to uksynaesthesia@hotmail.com or post your details to: UKSA, PO Box 6258, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 0WF  • www.uksynaesthesia.org  • www.uksynaesthesia@hotmail.com  • 020 7679 5394 (e.g. if you don’t have an internet and wish to be mailed the list of correspondence you would need a quick phone number)

We look forward to seeing many of you in London!