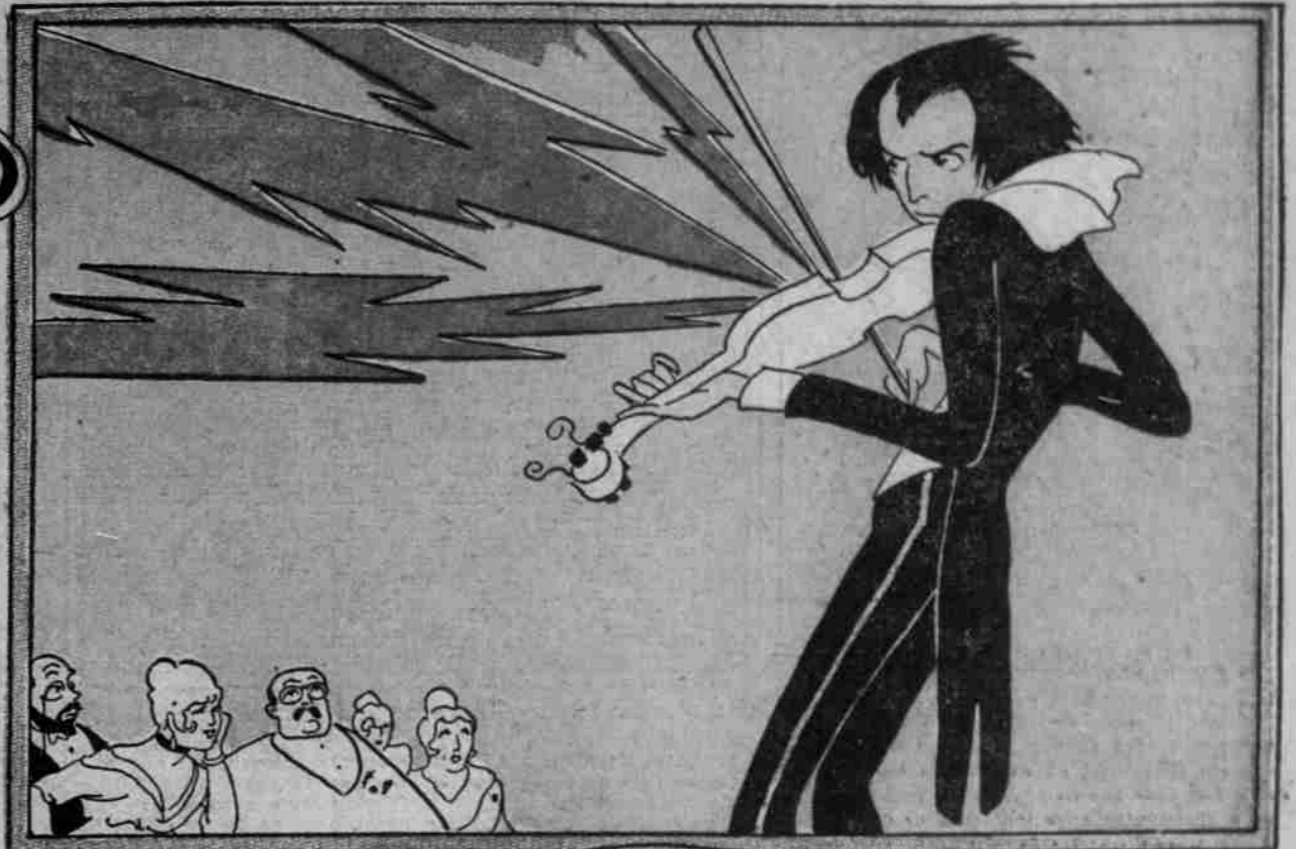


Hearing Colors and Seeing Smells!



LEONARD HOFFMAN, A POET,
AND THE COLOR TONES HE
GAVE TO VARIOUS INSTRUMENTS



THE ULTRAMARINE BLUE
STRAINS OF THE VIOLIN.

"Your voice tonight, beloved, how green it is. As I sit here in the moonlight entranced by the fragrance of your opal rings and see the tender vowels formed by your dear lips my heart with its crimson passions of the day pulses quietly with the ultra-marines of your words."

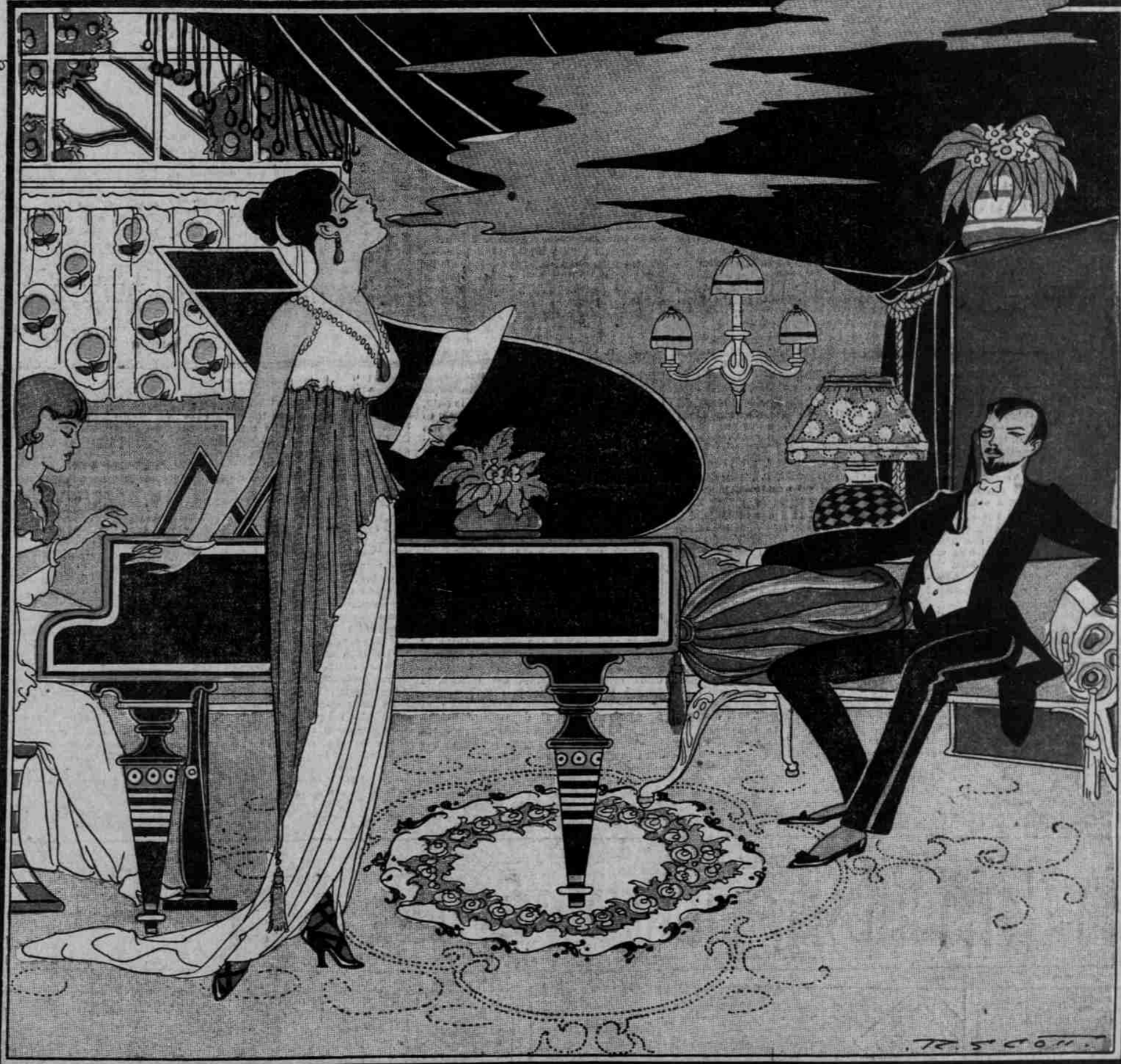
"Nay, dear-heart, overwhelm me not with the perfumes of your purple phrases. My soul is drab tonight and always. Could you but hear the colors of my thoughts when I dream of you and could you but see the clamorous noises of my heart when you are near, then need not my gray words fall upon your eyes in vain to tell me that I love you redly."

NAY, affrighted reader, this is not a love scene from a booby-hatch nor an amorous passage between a futurist novelist and a futurist poetess. It is merely an everyday, matter-of-fact, exchange of love greetings, between two pseudochromesthetists and we may all come to it some day soon if we develop our different senses as scientists say we ought to.

A pseudochromesthetist is not such an awful thing as the length of the name would lead one to believe. A pseudochromesthetist is one who can hear colors, or, the other way about, can see colors in sounds. There are also some people who can smell colors and sounds and can hear or see smells. Now scientists are beginning to ask why all of us cannot develop the ability to make similar interchanges in our senses.

If we do it will mean the awakening of a new art. It will be the most astounding and most satisfying art of all. It will combine sounds of musical instruments in various harmonies and colors in various harmonies, just as is done in the music and the scenes of opera. But more than this it will combine odors in harmonies, and then bring about a complete harmony between odors, sounds and sights.

The amazing things that will be accomplished when sound, sight and color artists combine their genius are almost past the present-day dreams of man, especially when it is considered that while such a combination of arts is being brought about the human race will be developing its ability to smell sounds and colors, to see sounds and smells and to hear smells and colors.



"HOW GLORIOUSLY GREEN YOUR VOICE IS TONIGHT."

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The aim of the new art will be: An art for every sense and the arts of the various senses merged into a single grand art. And why should it not be so? Poets and philosophers have dreamed about it for centuries. Some have even predicted its appearance, and others have taken steps to bring it nearer. Wagner, the great German musical genius, is perhaps the most prominent of recent examples. In the opera house that he persuaded a mad king to build for him at Bayreuth, Germany, he endeavored to weld color and music into one. Yet he made no provision for the perfume art.

For many years there has been a confusion of color and sound terms that shows how natural it is for all of us to hear color and to have our minds translate sound into color. We speak of the harmony of colors and of the color of tones. We have become so accustomed to the blending of sound and sight that we do not realize the interrelation of senses connected with such expressions. When we read in Kipling "the sun came up like thunder," we are just barely



"THE FRAGRANCE OF YOUR OPAL RINGS IS OVERWHELMING, MY DEAR."

moved to curiosity by the translation of a sight into a sound. Yet lines like this, according to the scientists, point to what has been variously called "sensorial synesthesia," "hyper-

chromatopsy," "hyperesthesia," and a host of similar mouth-filling words. The general tendency to telescope one sense into another has long been demonstrated by such phrases as "feeling blue," "dark-

brown taste," "green with envy" and countless other words showing interchange of the senses. But how many of us who have used them thought we were ever going to be called such a name as a "hyperchromatopsist"?

One of the French decadent poets many years ago wrote a piece of poetry in which he tried to give all the nouns the color value which he claimed he could hear in them. For him A was black, E white, I red, U green and O blue.

A French scientist who has investigated this and other instances of color hearing says that such uncommon results come from perfectly natural causes. The hearing of colors, according to him, is an example of the union of two sensations, hearing and sight, in which the first is primary and the latter secondary. Another Frenchman claims that he has found color hearing in 30 per cent of children and in 12 per cent of the adults he has experimented upon. He found that it existed more in youths than in adults and that women were more subject to it than men.

The first hints of the hearing of colors and the seeing of sounds in colors came from artists and poets who, of course, will have to bring about the new art of the union of all the senses. A forgotten poet, Solomon Landolt, used a Jew's harp to give him hints about colors of vowels

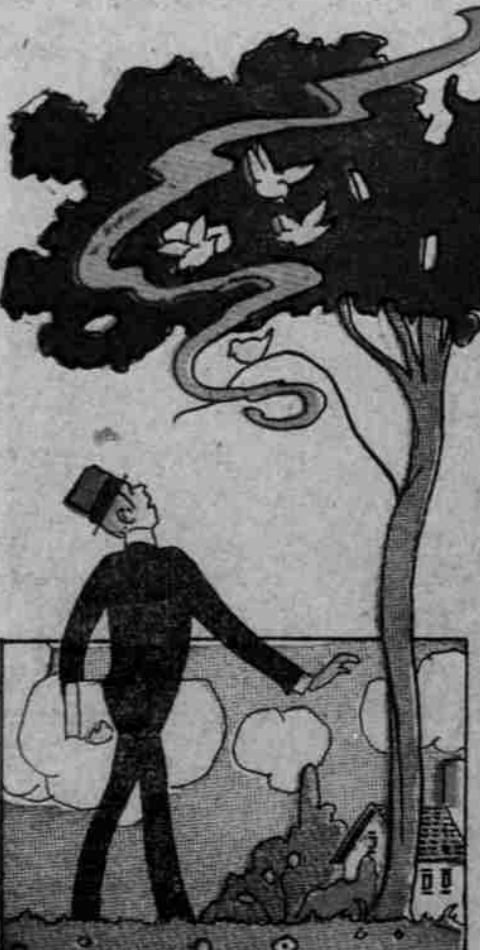


"COULD YOU BUT HEAR THE COLOR OF MY THOUGHTS WHEN I THINK OF YOU?"

and words for his poems. Another poet, Leonard Hoffman, who died in 1786, gave colors to the tones of various instruments. To him the cello was indigo blue, while the violin was ultramarine blue. The oboe was rose, the clarinet yellow, the horn purple, the trumpet red and the flute violet. It is easy enough to imagine a scheme of orchestration based upon the blending of the instruments, according to their color values.

"I have found crimson words to paint the colors of the rose," says a French poet in one of his poems. Another French poet, the famous Baudelaire, was among the first to hint at the new three-arts-in-one when he wrote: "Perfumes, colors and sounds are interrelated. There are perfumes fresh as the flesh of babes, sweet as oboes and green as prairies."

A famous German composer, Joachim Raff, was another who had color hearing highly developed. It was his claim that the flute was a deep azure blue, the oboe yellow, the horn green (from association with the fields). One of the color-hearers, who was examined by a scientist, said: "I was but six years old when I established a comparison between the gray color of my name, Maria, and my sister's name, Jeanne, which was sepia-blue. I felt deep sorrow that my sister should have such a pretty name while mine was so ugly. "Up to the age of fifteen I thought that hearing colors was perfectly natural to everyone, and it was not without an overwhelming shock that I discovered that I was abnormal. To me every word has a color. This does not depend upon the meaning of the word, but upon its sound, and, therefore, includes foreign tongues as well as my own. Thus vitor (Romanian for future) sounds green, while its French translation, l'avenir, sounds yellow. The German nouns Hoffman, Gluck, Pracht are all gray of different shades."



"WHAT A BRIGHT ORANGE IS THE SINGING OF THE CANARIES!"