

## TO TEACH ABSOLUTE PITCH BY COLOR SENSE

Red Recalls "C," Violet "B" and Every Other Note Has Corresponding Hue in Revolutionary "Marcotone" System—Awakening of Our Slumbering Tone Memory Will Make Us a Race of Natural Sight-Readers, Says Edward Maryon, Inventor of Scientific Instruction Method Based on Relation of Tonal and Light Waves—Results Prove Practicability

By A. WALTER KRAMER

Can you think red? Can you think "C"? If you can you are one of those fortunate mortals who have not only an absolute sense of color but also absolute pitch. But the vast majority of persons can only think a color. They can not think a tone.

America is about to have presented to it a method which has been discovered by a distinguished musician, who in his profound studies has psychologically sought out the relation of tone and color and can support his facts by science in presenting the subject to students. Edward Maryon, the composer, now living in America, has developed this system, which he calls "Marcotone," and he will introduce it in lectures and lessons this winter in New York. Coming from a musician of less distinguished abilities one would be unwilling to consider such a system seriously. For only too often have prophets of the relation of color and tone arisen, armed with pretentious theories, which in practice have proved to be failures.

### View of Sight-Singing

Mr. Maryon views the subject, however, from an entirely different standpoint from that of anyone who has essayed it in the past. He has worked out his system to make possible sight-reading for singers and instrumentalists. Sight-reading is, to be sure, taught successfully enough; in France *solfege* is given all music students, irrespective of whether they are studying voice, violin, flute or what not. André Maquarre, the solo flautist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has for years taught *solfege* to the pupils in other branches of various prominent Boston music instructors. Mr. Maryon contends that sight-reading is not sight-reading unless the person sings the exact notes before him in their correct pitch. That is, he does not believe that the ability to read mentally a melodic line is sight-reading. The pitch must be there, otherwise one is not reading the composer's musical phrase. In other words, *solfege* has in the past been simply a measurement of the intervals of the scale between given notes; the pitch of the note has been ignored in teaching sight-reading and sight-singing. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Mr. Maryon as to what constitutes sight-reading is unimportant. We can all agree with him that a method that enables human beings to sing in absolute pitch at sight is worth understanding. And it is that with which "Marcotone" is concerned.

Mr. Maryon has already completed his book on "Marcotone" and has given the writer of these lines the privilege of reading it. It is so important a matter that an article of this length cannot attempt to do it justice. Only the bare fundamental principles on which "Marcotone" is based can be outlined here.

We are assured that before the first of the coming year Edward Maryon will have begun teaching it in New York, and



Edward Maryon, Who Has Advanced a System of Sight-Reading Based on the Scientific Relation of Color and Tone

the new year will in all probability see his book in print.

### System Proves Practical

To answer, before going further, those who might claim that this system is theoretically correct but will fail in practice, the writer wishes to state that Mr. Maryon has already taught it in Montclair, N. J., where he resides, and the results have been entirely successful. Mr. Maryon tells us in his book that "every civilized human unit has an automatic and spontaneous mental conception of color, a gift of atavism. The source of light and sound is vibration, or Motion; hence, in essence, they are identical. Light is the sensation caused by the impact of minute vibrations of ether on the retina of the eye, and sound is the sensation caused by the impact of atmospheric molecules on the tympanum, or eardrum." He contends that the ability to memorize color is "natural, involuntary and spontaneous." On the other hand, tone has been left by mankind, "uncultivated, a potentiality in lieu of an actuality."

In other words, color has played a part in man's life, through which he has been able subconsciously to think color for many years. Tone has not been cultivated. Teachers of music have, few of

them, exact pitch. Consequently the ordinary human being does not possess it. It was Sir William Crookes, the great English chemist, who demonstrated the relation of tone to color about four years ago in his work in chemistry. He measured them simultaneously in light waves and in sound waves. This relation once scientifically established, the rest is psychological. It is an evolution of our inherent ability. Says Mr. Maryon: "If we can think 'violet' we can sing, or hear in our heads, after a little practice, B. And why? Because we use two mechanical parts of the human body, the eye and ear, mere instruments leading to the brain. If the brain responds, vibrates to the color, then if required to, it will simultaneously respond to the tone, for a given tone and a given color produce the same motion or vibration on the brain." This feeling of pitch must become "a natural, spontaneous and involuntary act of nature." Of course, there will be some trouble experienced in arriving at the desired absolute pitch. To put it popularly the author tells us: "You can't think of the anatomy of a monkey and draw an elephant, can you? Well, then you can't think green and sing D or C. If you do, it proves that your brain is not controlled by the thought, and that you have only an impression and not an idea."

### Requires Mental Drilling

One cannot take the position either that one has thought red and not immediately sung C. One must practice this, quite as one practices anything else. One does not take a single vocal lesson and immediately give a song recital! "So many aeons have passed in which the sense of seeing has been evoked by the colors of the solar spectrum that automatically the human will can recall any color it desires without external aid. By, with, and through this common cause we have the one and only natural power to aid us to a precise and spontaneous grasp of tonal pitch. If instinctively we can call before the mind a given color and hold it there, we immediately set up a mental picture of the number of vibrations governing the given color held in our mind." We must then translate our color-picture within the mind into tone. "If the given color is retained in the mind, the tone proceeding from the mouth, by natural law, is forced to contain an equal number of vibrations common to the said color."

It is not to be supposed for a moment that the author, Mr. Maryon, does not realize that there are difficulties to be encountered. He speaks in his book of the "tendency for the brain to occupy itself with one matter only at a given moment; therefore, when the first suggestion has been effected and the color retained in the mind and the second suggestion is encountered, viz., to render the color into tone immediately preceding this second effort, the color is unconsciously dropped with the result that the student sings a ratio of vibrations different from those previously suggested and set in motion by the color. To overcome this danger great care must be taken to retain the given color until it has been sung," so that the same ratio of vibrations is carried on by the voice as tone that was first conceived in the mind as color.

### Taught With Charts

The book contains charts, showing the various tones and their corresponding colors, including the semi-tones. In teaching this system the instructor is, of course, equipped with a color key-board, which Mr. Maryon is patenting. (All the paraphernalia required in the teaching of "Marcotone" will be manufactured and patented by the inventor of the system.) The notes of the scale are taken up in order in a series of "lessons" in the book, each lesson having its

accompanying chart with the color marked thereon. On these charts appear the color, its measurement in trillions and in millimeters. As the lessons progress and the students show a facility in sight-reading difficult exercises, some of them in two and three parts are found, composed by Mr. Maryon, which the pupils are obliged to read at sight. These have been written with keen pedagogic insight, and though difficult (even for an adept musician who has not given much thought to the specific study of sight-reading) they are easily managed by the serious student of "Marcotone."

The series of lessons take us from middle C to the C, one octave above it. For those to whom the sensing of the various octaves may be a matter of concern let it be understood that Mr. Maryon has explained this. He says: "It is the intensity of the color, its vividness, that changes, but never the color itself, so that the connection between the color and the tone is never lost. For each color produces mentally the same ratio of vibrations in each octave; the vividness is deepened or heightened, that is all."

### Sees New Epoch

In his conclusion Mr. Maryon has spoken with a deep understanding of the subject which his system of "Marcotone" is to make clear to the world. "Through the mastery of 'Marcotone,' the science of tone-color, the human race can obtain the same free-will and subconscious command of Tone as an universal heritage, which, in the past, it has acquired over color. Once and for all let those responsible persons occupied with a nation's education realize this new and vital factor in evolution and we shall become a race of natural musicians. Song will be as common a gift as speech is to-day; a new joy will have entered into the hearts and minds of mankind, and a new epoch will have come. This new power will not only affect the musical proclivities of humanity, but will add immeasurably to the clairvoyance of scientists, of all artists and poets, and of those engaged in the more liberal arts and crafts devised by man in his efforts toward a higher and nobler civilization."

Skeptical as musicians are to accept the new, even when it is presented to them on a sound scientific basis (this because few musicians will grant you any bearing of science on art and because in the majority they are scientifically ignorant) this system of tone-color would seem to be one of the biggest and most significant developments of our age. Among the important discoveries of this twentieth century we will find "Marcotone" recorded; we will find that the serious contemplation of scientific facts and their application to the art of music by Edward Maryon must mean to our art of music a penetration of many of its former mysteries and an emancipation from ignorance of many a musician whose ability to read music at sight has in the past been lamentably deficient.

### Letter Received by

**Elsa Fischer**  
**String Quartette**

after concert at

**Lake Placid Club, N. Y.**

Lake Placid,  
Stevens House,  
Sept. 29.

My Dear Miss Fischer:

To-morrow we leave for New York. As probably I will have no more opportunity of seeing you and your colleagues before our departure, I wish to say to all of you (in name also of my associates) how much we enjoyed your concert the other night.

We all admired your style of playing and thought the ensemble was extremely fine and the balance thoroughly excellent. You can be proud of your achievement, indeed!

Please accept, with our best wishes for your success (which seems to me infallibly certain), our heartiest congratulations for the beautiful result you have attained.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) ADOLFO BETTI.

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