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Let music be the teacher. It's a simple paraphrase of an often overlooked and underappreciated piece of advice from *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. It refers to Kandinsky's belief that music, which is inherently non-material and which has no great struggle with issues of reproduction of nature, was, at the time of his own painterly struggles, the most advanced form of art. I find his suggestion refreshing in a work that spends a lot of time serving as a spiritual cheerleader for the lofty "strivings" of the painter. His personification of one art form teaching another art form shifts the argument away from people teaching other people, an activity rife with didactic pitfalls. It is a shift that I find appeals to my students who perk up at the prospect of modeling themselves after music instead of a music teacher.

I am also intrigued by the idea that Kandinsky does not automatically award the prize of "advancement" to the art form with the greatest struggle, as we might expect him to do from all the talk of lower needs and higher purpose. He simply says that music does it better.

Music is to the arts what The Natural is to baseball. Kandinsky does not feel the inner necessity to compete in the way that Leonardo did in his *Paragone* (music is inferior to painting because it dies immediately after it is born, thereby becoming vile through the necessity of repetition). Kandinsky approaches music as if it were a great master whose adolescent struggles were centuries in the past. What can we, the adolescents, learn from it? We can learn that it is possible to borrow the methods of music, not superficially, but fundamentally, "and from this results that modern desire for rhythm in painting, for mathematical, abstract construction, for repeated notes of colour, for setting colour in motion." (p. 19, M.T.H. Sadler translation)

By using music as a surrogate for the spiritual, Kandinsky is able to write about the ineffable without separating his readership into believers and non-believers. One of the least asked questions in regard to music is "What does it mean?" Contrast that with one of the most frequently asked questions one overhears when standing near an abstract painting on exhibit. Kandinsky learned that he could love form and color without first needing to decode it or give it a basis in natural phenomena. He also gives us some good advice when, in speaking about Arnold Schönberg's press for musical experience beyond matters of the ear, he reminds us of Schönberg's observation that although "every combination of notes, every advance is possible... I am beginning to feel that there are also definite rules and conditions which incline me to the use of this or that dissonance." (p. 16–17, Sadler translation. Kandinsky quotes Schönberg's *Harmonielehre*) Kandinsky gives us permission to live within our means while enlarging our boundaries by reminding us that even Arnold Schönberg "realizes that the greatest freedom of all, the freedom of an unfettered art, can never be absolute." (p. 17)