

Introduction

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This support pack contains the following materials:

- the article that you can listen to in the podcast
- an optional language activity based on the article
- links to other activities on the LearnEnglish website on this theme (classical music).

Read the article

Everything you (n)ever wanted to know about Mozart

Among composers of the classical period, the most prolific was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-91) of Austria, who wrote c. 1,000 operas, operettas, symphonies, violin sonatas, divertimenti, serenades, motets. Concertos for piano and many other instruments, string quartets, other chamber music masses and litanies, of which only 70 were published before he died at the age of 35. His opera *La Clemenza di Tito* (1791) was written in 18 days, and the symphonic masterpieces, *Symphony No. 39 in E flat major*, *Symphony No. 40 in G minor* and *Symphony No. 41 in C major (the Jupiter)*, were reputedly written in the space of 42 days in 1788. His overture *Don Giovanni* was written in full score at one sitting in Prague in 1787 and finished on the day of its opening performance.

The longest interval between the known composition of a piece by a major composer and its performance in the manner intended is from 3 March 1791 until 9 October 1982 (over 191 years), in the case of Mozart's *Organ Piece for a Clock*, a fugue fantasy in F min (K 608), arranged by the organ builders Wm. Hill & Son and Norman & Beard Ltd. at Glyndebourne, Great Britain.

In what is believed to be the largest-ever recording project devoted to a single composer, 180 compact discs containing the complete set of authenticated works by Mozart were produced by Philips Classics for release in 1990/91 to commemorate the bicentennial of the composer's death. The complete set comprises over 200 hours of music and would occupy 6.5 feet (1.98 metres) of shelving.

Source: *Guinness World Records*

Researchers at University College, Cardiff, in 1970 announced an important discovery

concerning the formation of musical taste in rats. A group of experimental rats were played Mozart all day long during their infancy. They heard *The Magic Flute*, the *Fifth Violin Concerto K.219*, and two symphonies (unspecified), each four times a day. In later life these rats grew up preferring Mozart to Schoenberg, given the choice. Sceptics might claim that any with taste would do so anyway.

Research shows that newborn babies enjoy Mozart and Vivaldi but tend to sleep through any Beethoven which may be played at them.

Mozart was a keen and skilful billiards player. Haydn once tore the cloth on Mozart's billiard table. Coincidentally, the invention of the game of billiards dates back to 1591, exactly 200 years before the death of Mozart.

Mozart had a slight deformity of his left ear, usually kept covered by his wig.

The principal theme of the last movement of Mozart's *Piano Concerto K.453* was suggested to the composer by a tune whistled by his pet starling. The bird also knew his *Concerto no. 17*, for Mozart had devoted some idle moments to teaching the bird the principal theme of the last movement, a theme that is, admittedly, rather chirpy and bird-like in nature. Yet the starling was an imperfect student. One note it sang wrong every time and, according to the composer, another note was consistently held too long. It seems that even the example of the concerto's creator was insufficient to convince Mozart's starling to sing the piece exactly as written. On May 27, 1784 a strange funeral was held. As usual, hymns were sung at the graveside. Then Mozart recited a poem he'd penned. Finally, the composer's pet starling was laid to rest.

If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing slowly. Though Mozart had only 35 years of life in which to compose all his works, the task of cataloguing these 624 or so pieces of music took Ludwig von Kochel twelve years.

Gustav Mahler's last word before he died was "Mozart".

Source: *The Ultimate Irrelevant Encyclopaedia* by Bill Hartson & Jill Dawson, George Allen & Unwin, 1984

"Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart" is an anagram (a word or phrase made by using the letters of another word or phrase in a different order) of "Among us a grand maestro of opera, waltz music"

"Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart" is an anagram of "A famous German waltz god" and "Gorgeous waltz fan, madam" and "Zealous, warm 'n' mad faggot" and "Warm gazes to a manful god"

"Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart" is an anagram of "Common arts as opera, waltz, fugue: I am so grand!"

"Johannes Chrystostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus 'Amadeus' Mozart" is an anagram of "Just some Austrian. (Composed many half-hour songs/waltzes, though!)"

Source: *Anagram Genius*

After reading

Exercise 1

Below are 11 events from the article, but they are in the wrong chronological order. Decide which is the correct order.

- 180 compact discs containing the complete set of authenticated works by Mozart were produced by Philips Classics.
- A funeral was held for Mozart's pet starling.
- Mozart died.
- Mozart reputedly wrote the symphonic masterpieces (No. 39, 40 and 41) in 42 days.
- Mozart was born.
- Mozart wrote his opera *La Clemenza di Tito* in 18 days.
- Mozart's *Organ Piece for a Clock* was finally performed in the manner intended.
- Mozart's overture *Don Giovanni* was written in full score at one sitting in Prague.
- Researchers at University College, Cardiff, announced an important discovery concerning the formation of musical taste in rats.
- The game of billiards was invented.
- The *Mozartkugel* cake was created by the Salzburg confectioner Paul F

The Mozart effect refers to disputed scientific studies that test a theory suggesting that classical music increases brain activity more positively than other kinds of music, and that listening to certain kinds of complex music may induce a short-lived (fifteen minute) improvement in the performance of certain kinds of mental tasks known as "spatio-temporal reasoning". Two pieces of Mozart's music; Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major (K. 448) and Piano Concerto No. 23 (K. 488), were found to have this effect, giving it its name. Later research also suggested that K. 448 can reduce the number of seizures in people with epilepsy.

In the frequently playful letters of his youth Mozart sometimes would spell his name backwards, viz., Mozart Wolfgang or Trazom. More often he would sign letters 'Mzt'.

The Mozartkugel (English: Mozart ball), known originally as the "Mozartbonbon", was created by the Salzburg confectioner Paul Fürst in 1890 and named after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Fürst still produces the original Salzburg Mozartkugeln by hand according to the original recipe and only sells them in its shops or over its website. As the Fürst confectionary does not own a trademark for Mozartkugeln, there are numerous imitation products, most of which are produced using industrial techniques.

Source: *Wikipedia*

More activities on this topic

You'll find links to all the following activities connected to the theme of Classical Music at:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-central-themes-classical-music.htm>

- **Word game: Orchestra.** Read the text describing the positions of the different instruments, sections and other components of an orchestra and put the names in the correct places.
- **Story: A perfectly fair business deal.** Hobbes-Smith collects antique musical instruments. At a music festival in Italy, he sees a valuable violin which he wants to add to his collection. Is the owner prepared to sell it? Read this story and find out.
- **Story: The Comeback.** When the once-great opera singer Fausto Ruiz returns to the place where he was born, things do not work out as he had expected ...
- **Trivia:** Everything you (n)ever wanted to know about classical music.
- There are also two classical music-related cartoons, and some carefully selected external links.

Answers to comprehension activity: *The correct chronological order is: 10; 5; 2; 8; 4; 6; 3; 11; 9; 7; 1*

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