

Magic flout: new study nixes idea Mozart makes you smarter

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Listening to Mozart does not make you more intelligent, researchers from the Austrian composer's homeland said on Monday, contradicting a popular 1993 study that first coined the "Mozart effect."

A team at Vienna University's Faculty of Psychology compiled studies that have since 1993 sought to reproduce the Mozart effect and found no proof of the phenomenon's existence, the university said in a statement.

The original study showed that adolescents performed better in reasoning tests having listened to Mozart's 1781 Sonata for Two Pianos in D major than those who listened to something else or those who had been in a silent room.

But after analysing around 3,000 individual cases compiled from 40 studies conducted around the world, the University of Vienna team found no proof that the "Mozart effect" actually exists.

"Those who listened to music, Mozart or something else -- Bach, Pearl Jam -- had better results than the silent group. But we already knew people perform better if they have a stimulus," head researcher Jakob Pietschnig told AFP.

The 1993 study at the University of California only involved 36 students, said Pietschnig, whose statistically superior study had the specific objective of reducing the margin of error.

Pietschnig also said the original study was a typical case of "publication bias" whereby scientific journals prefer positive results -- i.e. the benefits of classical music -- to negative or inconclusive results.

When the research was first published in Nature it had a considerable impact on public opinion, leading creches in the United States to play classical music and the southern US state of Georgia to give [newborns](#) a free CD of classical music.

Pietschnig pointed out that the original study was carried out on adults in order to make a one-off assessment of spatial reasoning rather than intelligence.

"I recommend everyone listen to Mozart, but it's not going to improve [cognitive abilities](#) as some people hope," he said.

The "Mozart effect" is ranked sixth in US psychologist Scott E. Lilienfeld's 2009 book "50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology."

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