

Brain Music

Would listening to the musical composition “Moonlight Sonata” for 10 minutes make you smarter? Recent research has shown that listening to certain kinds of music stimulates brain activity. Particularly effective is classical music by composers like Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart.

The complex patterns of classical music seem to have a physical effect on the brain, resulting in a memory and learning boost. This “Mozart Effect” has been studied in a number of schools around the country. Classical musicians have also noticed this phenomenon.

College students at the University of California-Irvine did better on a test of reasoning ability after listening to a Mozart piano sonata for 10 minutes than they did after 10 minutes of listening to a relaxation tape or sitting in silence. Results showed that the increase in brainpower lasted about 25 minutes. After that, it either had worn off or was replaced by whatever the students heard next.

Over time, the effects seem to be more long-lasting. A study in 1995 found that high school students who regularly listened to classical music averaged scores that were 51 points higher on the verbal part of the SAT and 39 points higher on the math portion than scores of other students who did not regularly listen to classical music.

Hudson Valley Community College in Troy, New York, has actually established a Mozart Effect Study Area in the school library. Professors there conducted a study during final exams. Soothing music composed between 1700 and 1825 was played as students studied. Students reported that they were able to remember more material, and their test scores went up.

