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Reassessing the Mozart Effect

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Oral Presentation 2.4

REASSESSING THE MOZART EFFECT

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In 1993, Frances Rauscher, Gordon Shaw, and Katherine Ky reported a finding that listening to Mozart's piano sonata for two pianos in D major, K.448 significantly enhanced a person's performance on abstract reasoning tests from the Stanford-Binet intelligence exam (Rauscher, Shaw and Ky 1993). In 1995, a follow-up study replicated these findings and suggested that the enhancement affected spatial-temporal reasoning (Rauscher, Shaw, Levine, Ky, and Wright 1995). Interestingly, there are no published reports indicating that this enhancement has been replicated. There are, however, reports indicating that the effect was not reproduced (Stough, Kerkin, Bates, and Mangan 1994; Carstens, Huskins, and Hounshell 1995; Newman, Rosenbach, Burns, Latimer, Matocha, Vogt 1995). Clearly, there is some discrepancy with the earlier findings. Accordingly, it was this researcher's intention to investigate a spatial enhancement using two subtests from the Wechsler's Intelligence Exam. The two tests, Block Design and Digit Symbol are designed to measure spatial ability. It is predicted that if no effect is found that the enhancement could be test specific. If an effect is found, there will be more evidence to suggest that it is spatial reasoning specifically which is being enhanced by the Mozart piece. The second part of this study investigates whether the music from a different composer can produce an enhancement in spatial reasoning. Because Haydn is a contemporary of Mozart and it can be argued that their composing styles are similar with respect to time period, a piano sonata in the same key as the famed Mozart piece was selected. If an enhancement is found with the Mozart and the Haydn, new evidence will have been found which offers that the enhancement is not composer-specific. Finally, it was the researcher's intention to investigate whether amount of musical training played any bearing on the degree of enhancement from the music. Accordingly, through the use of a survey, information was recorded to differentiate the participants into "musician" and "non-musician" sub-groups.