

BBC Learning English

6 Minute English

How musical are you?



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Yvonne: Hello, I'm Yvonne Archer, this is 6 Minute English – and I'm delighted that Rob has joined me today! Hello Rob.

Rob: Hello Yvonne, nice to be here.

Yvonne: To start the New Year, BBC Radio 3 ran a Mozart festival, playing 12 days of the genius' classical music. Now, many people believe that we need to be musical to enjoy classical music. So Rob, what makes someone musical in your opinion?

Rob: Hmm – well, I don't think it's just about playing musical instruments. I think it's somebody who appreciates and understands the rhythm of a piece of music or a song.

Yvonne: OK – that means that you'll probably find today's question quite interesting. Are you ready?

Rob: Absolutely.

Yvonne: Listen to these two pieces of music, and, ignoring **the pitch** – that's **the key** they're played in – tell me whether they're

- a) exactly the same or
- b) different

Insert 1: BBC Learning English music test

Yvonne: Well?

Rob: Hmm, it's tricky but I do think they're different. Yes, a different beat in the second piece of music there.

Yvonne: OK, we'll find out whether you're right or wrong later on, Rob. Now that's the sort of question you might be asked in BBC Radio 3's online test to find out about people's musical abilities.

Rob: Hmm - that sounds like fun.

Yvonne: It does. Dr Lauren Stewart of Goldsmith University is one of the scientists running the Radio 3 project. So, is the traditional description of musical people as people who can play a musical instrument or who've had formal music training a good one?

Insert 2: Dr Lauren Stewart

We think that this is far **too narrow**, and even just being **immersed** in our very musical world **engenders** people with a very sophisticated level of musicality that they probably aren't even aware of. So if people can choose the right music for a social occasion, know how music affects their moods and emotions - we say that that's already **a sophisticated skill**.

Yvonne: Dr Lauren Stewart says our view of what makes someone musical is too narrow – it's just too limited. So many people who don't play a musical instrument or haven't had formal music training could actually be really musical too.

- Rob:** Mm, and she also says that we're 'immersed' in a 'very musical world' – we're surrounded by lots of music – and that can also make us musical.
- Yvonne:** I agree with her. We do live in a very musical world. Even the BBC Learning English office is musical – think of all those musical **ring tones** on our mobile phones.
- Rob:** Yes, they can be great fun – but they can also be very annoying too! Anyway, Dr Stewart says all that music helps **to engender us** with music skills – music skills that become a natural part of who we are.
- Yvonne:** We also heard how lots of us probably have a very sophisticated, or advanced, level of musicality, but we don't even know – we're not aware of it. Rob, can you tell us how Dr Stewart explains 'musicality' please?
- Rob:** Mm, certainly. Well, a part of musicality is an understanding of how music can change the way we feel – how it can affect our moods and emotions. And it takes a sophisticated level of musicality to be able to choose music for a social occasion, such as a wedding.
- Yvonne:** So being musical isn't only about playing an instrument, getting the beat, all of that kind of stuff. And even if we think we're **tone-deaf** – totally incapable of humming a few notes in a tune – we may still do quite well on that test.
- Rob:** That's good to know! So we'll have a go later on then, Yvonne?
- Yvonne:** Definitely!

Rob: But I wonder whether some people are simply born musically gifted?

Yvonne: Well, that's what the scientists running the project hope to find out. And as BBC Radio 3 presenter Petroc Trelawny explains, there's also another reason why they want as many people as possible to take that online test...

Insert 3: Petroc Trelawny

Actually, maybe it'll debunk some of the myths about music being frightening and alarming. I think people are often put off by classical music because they think they're gonna make a fool of themselves. This, hopefully, will prove that we've all got it in us.

Yvonne: So Petroc Trelawny hopes the test results will prove that we're all born with musical abilities. But he also hopes the test will **debunk** some of the **myths** – the stories that aren't true - about music being frightening and alarming. Rob, what does Petroc mean by 'debunk'?

Rob: He means to destroy and break down the ideas that make people afraid of music, especially classical music. And I agree that many people are put off by classical music – they don't even listen to it - partly because they think they won't understand it.

Yvonne: And that's a real shame, isn't it? Because I think it's perfectly possible to listen to music that's totally new to us or isn't from our own culture, and still enjoy it in our own way. Now, earlier Rob, I asked you whether two pieces of music you'd listened to were the same or different. Here's a brief reminder of what you heard:

Insert 5: Extract from BBC Learning English music test

Rob: I do think they're different.

Yvonne: And Rob, you were wrong.

Rob: Oh dear, I'm a failure!

Yvonne: Sorry. No! You're still musical in my eyes.

Rob: That's good!

Yvonne: So, why not go to BBC Radio 3's website to find out how musical you are?
Join us again soon for more "6 Minute English".

Both: Goodbye!

Vocabulary and definitions

the pitch	here, the placing of a note – either high or low
the key	the notes used in a piece of music, which are based on a scale, or specific series of notes
too narrow	not wide enough to include all people who have different levels of musical skills
immersed	surrounded by a large amount of
engenders	causes or equips someone with musical skills
a sophisticated skill	an advanced or complicated ability
ring tones	the various sounds which mobile phones make when a call or message is received
tone-deaf	unable to sing in tune or to recognise different melodies
debunk	to show something is untrue or unimportant
myths	stories which are old and well known, but are not based on truth

More on this story: http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/listen_again/newsid_9353000/9353256.stm

Read and listen to the story online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2011/01/110120_6min_english_musicality_page.shtml