

Medical Curiosities in Music History

Music History · Practice Test · 10 Questions

1. Analysis of Ludwig van Beethoven's hair and bone fragments conducted in the 21st century revealed high concentrations of which toxic substance?

- A) Arsenic
- B) Lead
- C) Mercury
- D) Thallium

2. Which genetic connective tissue disorder is frequently cited by musicologists as the likely cause of Niccolò Paganini's extreme joint flexibility?

- A) Osteogenesis imperfecta
- B) Ehlers-Danlos syndrome
- C) Marfan syndrome
- D) Loeys-Dietz syndrome

3. Robert Schumann's career as a pianist ended due to a right-hand impairment now widely believed by modern neurologists to be which condition?

- A) Carpal tunnel syndrome
- B) Rheumatoid arthritis
- C) Multiple sclerosis
- D) Focal dystonia

4. The physiological development of 18th-century castrati was unique because the lack of testosterone caused which anatomical change?

- A) Failure of the bone epiphyses to close
- B) Permanent retention of the thymus gland
- C) Increased ossification of the hyoid bone
- D) Hypertrophy of the thyroid cartilage

5. Maurice Ravel's late-life decline, marked by a loss of the ability to write music while retaining his musical memory, is attributed to which condition?

- A) Alzheimer's disease
- B) Primary progressive aphasia
- C) Huntington's disease
- D) Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease

6. What is the clinical term for the neurological phenomenon experienced by composers like Franz Liszt and Olivier Messiaen where sounds trigger involuntary color perceptions?

- A) Prosopagnosia
- B) Ideasthesia
- C) Synesthesia
- D) Anosognosia

7. A 2017 examination of Frédéric Chopin's heart, preserved in a jar of cognac, suggested the composer died from what specific complication?

- A) Pericarditis
- B) Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy
- C) Mitral valve prolapse
- D) Aortic aneurysm

8. Bedrich Smetana's String Quartet No. 1, 'From My Life', features a high-pitched harmonic E in the final movement to represent which of his symptoms?

- A) Vertigo
- B) Visual aura
- C) Tinnitus
- D) Neuralgia

9. In the 1750s, both J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel underwent botched eye surgeries performed by the same traveling 'oculist,' John Taylor, resulting in what outcome?

- A) Ptosis
- B) Total blindness
- C) Nystagmus
- D) Strabismus

10. Neurological studies suggest that people who stutter can often sing without disfluency because singing primarily engages which part of the brain?

- A) The Broca's area in the left hemisphere
- B) The cerebellum
- C) The right hemisphere's neural networks
- D) The brainstem