

Fake Music Re-Anticipations
Unknown choir – Silent Night
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Anecdotes of inner music abound in the mythos of Western classical music. As a child, Pyotr Tchaikovsky weepingly begged to be "saved" from music heard in his head. Clara Schumann's diaries record her husband's overwhelming end-of-life musical hallucinations that finally resolved into an unceasing and "terrible" A note.

Composers, with their training in transcription and orchestration, are advantaged in their capability to name this affliction inspiration. Such training however is not a precondition of such hearing. Mundane musical hallucinations received scant medical attention until the 1970s apart from scattered undertakings such as W.S. Colman's 1894 "Hallucinations in the Sane, Associated with Local Organic Disease of the Sensory Organs, Etc." And what ear the medical field has lent to music of interior origin has largely been concerned with cure and cause rather than content.

The typical playlist of musical hallucinations comprises orchestral and choral arrangements of theme music, popular songs, and classical favorites. (Is it possible certain music is meant to be heard, or sounds better, in the head? The woman who reports hearing Tchaikovsky is indeed hearing his music in its original format.) In our casual survey of available medical and popular literature and the lengthy comment sections of websites devoted to "musical ear syndrome," by far the most common piece heard is a choral arrangement (usually men) of "Silent Night." In a representative comment, LEAH reports, "Silent Night was also the first song I heard after a sudden hearing loss in the middle of the summer. Drove me crazy until I learned to relax and enjoy the music. The tenor was amazing and ended the song in a way I do not think I ever heard."† And lest the phenomenon be dismissed as an instance of confirmation bias bolstered by social media, in another source entirely Oliver Sacks excerpts the diary of a patient: "his music I keep hearing is slowly driving me out of my head.... I couldn't sleep for hours.... I'm hearing 'Silent Night.'"

These arrangements are not simply earworms. Listeners use metaphors of media, likening their hallucinations to "broken records...turned on and off in [my] brain," "tapes," and "a radio with only a turn-on key." Limited by our lack of first-hand experience of the angelic choir and inexperience in astral media playback devices, the proper format for release of this version of "Silent Night" eludes us.

We appreciate your support.

fakemusic.org
Chicago, Los Angeles, New York

† Neil Bauman, "Musical Ear Syndrome—The phantom voices, ethereal music & other spooky sounds many hard of hearing people secretly experience."
<http://hearinglosshelp.com/blog/musical-ear-syndrome-the-phantom-voices-ethereal-music-other-spooky-sounds-many-hard-of-hearing-people-secretly-experience/>