

# The Sound of Music – Important Questions

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## Evelyn Glennie

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**Q. Why was Evelyn nervous while going to Royal Academy of Music?**

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**Ans.** Evelyn was nervous while going to the Royal Academy of Music as she was just 16 years old and was fresh from the Scottish farms which added to her nervousness.

**Q. What was a priority for Evelyn? Where did she give free concerts ?**

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**Ans.** Giving classes to young musicians was a priority for Evelyn. She gave free concerts in prisons and hospitals.

**Q. When was Evelyn's deafness first noticed? When was it confirmed?**

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**Ans.** Isabel had a doubt about Evelyn's hearing ability when she did not move after her name was called to play on the piano. At the age of 11, it was confirmed when she was taken to a specialist.

**Q. How did Evelyn's deafness come to light?**

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**When did Evelyn's mother notice that something was wrong with her hearing?**

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**Ans.** At the age of 8 when her name was announced to play on piano, she did not respond. At the age of 11, her marks deteriorated. The headmistress urged her parents to take her to a specialist and her hearing impairment was discovered.

**Q. What was James Blade's opinion about Evelyn Glennie ?**

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**Ans.** James Blades, the master percussionist, felt that God might have taken her hearing but he had given her back something extraordinary. He said, "What we hear, she feels – far more deeply than any of us. That is why she expresses music so beautifully."

**Q. When and how did Evelyn lose her power of hearing?**

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**Ans.** Evelyn lost her power of hearing due to gradual nerve damage. At the age of 8 it was noticed and then at the age of 11 it was confirmed that Evelyn had lost her hearing ability.

**Q. How did Evelyn hear music despite being deaf?**

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**Ans.** Evelyn could sense music passing through her body. While playing on the xylophone, she could sense music through her fingertips and would lean against drums to feel. On the wooden floors, she used to remove her shoes and sense music through her feet moving up in the legs.

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**Q. What did Evelyn determine to do?**

**Ans.** Evelyn was determined to lead a normal life and pursue her interest in music. She was determined to make a career in music.

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**Q. Who helped Evelyn to continue with music? What did he do and how?**

**Ans.** When Evelyn wanted to pursue her career in music, everyone discouraged her. It was a percussionist Ron Forbes who helped and encouraged her to listen to the music and feel the music through her body.

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**Q. How has Evelyn Glennie inspired handicapped people?**

**Ans.** When the handicapped people used to see Evelyn Glennie, they used to say, ‘If she can do it, I can’, and so, she inspired them.

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**Q. What is Evelyn’s secret of success? What message does she give to achievers?**

**Ans.** Evelyn’s secret of success was strong determination and hard work. The message that she gives to the achievers is to work hard and get what they want.

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**Q. Write down Evelyn’s message for the people.**

**Ans.** Evelyn’s message to the people is that — Strong determination and hard work with sincerity and honesty leads to success. Aim for your goal and try to reach your goal with full determination and concentration.

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**Q. How did Evelyn succeed in pursuing her interest in music?**

**Ans.** Evelyn decided not to give up. It was Ron Forbes who recognized her potential and supported her. He advised her not to listen through her ears, but to open her body and mind to the vibrations. She mastered the art of interpreting different vibrations of sound on her body to different notes. She could feel the higher drum from the waist up and the lower one from the waist down. After the practice she could sense music in different parts of her body. And by this, Evelyn succeeded in pursuing her interest in music.

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**Q. In spite of her towering success, Evelyn Glennie does not accept any hint of heroic achievement. Explain.**

**Ans.** Evelyn Glennie had a hearing loss and was discouraged by most of the teachers but she did not give up her determination. Ron Forbes guided her to listen through her body not ears. Eventually, Evelyn learnt to open her body and mind to sound and vibrations.

She scored the highest marks in the history of Royal Academy of Music. She also captured many top awards and brought percussion to the front of the orchestra. She has given pleasure to millions and in spite of this towering success, she does not accept any hint of heroic achievement and is a very simple person.

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**Q. How did Evelyn Glennie's struggle with her loss of hearing in the beginning?**

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**Ans.** Evelyn Glennie's loss of hearing was noticed by her mother Isabel Glennie when Evelyn was eight years old. Her mother noticed that something was wrong when Evelyn was waiting to play the piano. The loss of hearing was gradual. People called her but she didn't move. Isabel suddenly realised that she hadn't heard. For quite a while Evelyn managed to conceal her growing deafness from friends and teachers. But by the time she was eleven her marks had deteriorated and her headmistress urged her parents to take her to a specialist. It was then discovered that her hearing was severely impaired as a result of gradual nerve damage. They were advised that she should be fitted with hearing aids and sent to a school for the deaf.

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**Bismillah Khan**

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**Q. Why did Emperor Aurangzeb ban the playing of Pungi in the royal residence?**

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**Ans.** Aurangzeb banned the playing of the Pungi in the royal residence because of its shrill and unpleasant sound. It was regarded more as a noise maker than a musical instrument.

**Q. How did 'pungi' transform into a Shehnai?**

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**Ans.** 'Pungi' a musical instrument was banned because of its shrill and unpleasant sound. But a Nai (barber) modified and perfected it and played it for the first time in Shah's chamber. Thus, it came to be known as 'Shehnai'.

**Q. How did 'Pungi' get its new name? What was it?**

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**Ans.** Pungi was modified and perfected by a barber which was very much appreciated by the emperor. Since, it was played for the first time in Shah's chamber by a Nai, it came to be known as 'Shehnai.'

**Q. What inspired Bismillah Khan to play the Shehnai ?**

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**Ans.** Bismillah Khan was fascinated to watch his maternal uncle, Ali Bux, play the Shehnai when he was barely three year old. He started accompanying his uncle to the Vishnu temple where the latter was employed to play the Shehnai. He started taking lessons from his Uncle and practiced through the day. The flowing waters of the Ganga also inspired him to invent many ragas.

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**Q. What is the difference between a Pungi and a Shehnai?**

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**Ans.** The difference between a Pungi and Shehnai can be noticed by the difference in their shapes and the sound produced by them. A Shehnai is longer than a Pungi. The latter has a shrill, unpleasant sound whereas, the former has a soft, melodious sound.

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**Q. What place did Shehnai have in the past? What place has it now?**

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**Ans.** In the past, the Shehnai was a part of the traditional ensemble of nine instruments found at royal courts. Then, it was used in temples and weddings but now, it is used in the classical concerts also.

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**Q. Who had brought Shehnai to the classical stage? What was he honoured with?**

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**Ans.** Shehnai was brought to the classical stage by Ustad Bismillah Khan. He started picking up the finger nuances of Shehnai under the guidance of his maternal uncle Ali Bux. He had been honoured with Padmashree, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Vibhushan.

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**Q. Why did Bismillah Khan regularly go to the nearby Bihariji temple in his childhood and what did he earn?**

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**Ans.** At the age of 5, Bismillah Khan would regularly visit the Bihariji temple to sing Bhojpuri “Chaitya”. For his melodious singing he used to earn a laddu weighing 1.25 kg from the local Bhojpuri King.

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**Q. In films of which two languages, did Ustad Bismillah Khan work? What was that about the film world which the maestro couldn't come to terms with?**

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**Ans.** Ustad Bismillah Khan worked in a Hindi and a Kannda film. He couldn't come to terms with the artificiality and glamour of the film world.

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**Q. When and how did Bismillah Khan get the break?**

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**Ans.** Bismillah Khan, at the age of 14, accompanied his uncle to Allahabad Music Conference where Ustad Fayaz Khan patted his shoulder. He got encouraged and worked hard and got a big break from the All India Radio in 1938.

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**Q. Where did Bismillah Khan play the Shehnai on 15th Aug, 1947? Why was the event historic?**

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**Ans.** Bismillah Khan was the first Indian to greet the nation with Shehnai and played ‘Raag Kafi’ from the Red Fort. The event was historic because the audience included Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who gave the famous speech – Tryst with Destiny.

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**Q. How do we know that sound of Shehnai is considered auspicious?**

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**Ans.** We know that the sound of the Shehnai is considered auspicious because it is played in temples, and is a must for all happy occasions like marriages.

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**Q. What were the recurring themes of Bismillah Khan's music?**

**Ans.** The recurring themes of Bismillah Khan's music was the relationship between the human beings and the flowing waters of the Ganga. He thought that Benares and Dumraon were the most wonderful towns of the world.

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**Q. Why did Bismillah Khan refuse to start a Shehnai school in the U.S.A.?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan refused to start a Shehnai school in the U.S.A. because he was a true patriot and loved India, he could not live away from India. He was in deep love with Banaras and Dumraon and missed it whenever he was abroad.

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**Q. How did young Bismillah develop his interest in Shehnai?**

**Ans.** Bismillah was fascinated watching his uncle practice the Shehnai when he was only three. He was deeply fascinated by the music of Shehnai. Soon Bismillah started accompanying his uncle Ali Bux, to the Vishnu Temple of Benares where Bux was employed to play Shehnai. Bismillah picked up the finer nuances of Shehnai and practiced for hours on the banks of river Ganga. The themes of his music were deeply affected by the sounds of flowing water of the Ganga. At the age of 14, Bismillah accompanied his uncle to Allahabad music conference where Ustad Fayaz Khan patted his shoulder which inspired and encouraged him to work harder.

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**Q. Give a brief character sketch of Ustad Bismillah Khan.**

**Ans.** Ustad Bismillah Khan was a Shehnai master of national and international fame. He was a great musician. Ali Bux, his Maternal Uncle perfected him in music. Shehnai was brought to the classical stage by Ustad Bismillah Khan. He practiced for hours and worked very hard to attain perfection. It was his melodious music that made him the first Indian to greet the independent India. Ustad Bismillah Khan created many new ragas. He was given many awards and he even received the "Bharat Ratna". He was a true patriot, who declined many offers to settle abroad. He was a true artist but a simple man. He had great regard for Hindustani Classical Music.

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**Q. Why did Bismillah Khan refuse to start a Shehnai school in the U.S.A.?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan was exceedingly fond of Benaras and Dumraon. According to him they were the most wonderful towns of the world for him. The students promised to recreate the atmosphere of Banaras, but he asked if they would be able to transport River Ganga as well. Whenever, he was in a foreign country, he yearned for Hindustan. In Mumbai also he thought of only Benares and the holy Ganga. Thus, he refused to start a Shehnai School in the U.S.A.

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**Q. How was Bismillah Khan's music recognized internationally?**

**Ans.** Bismillah Khan was not only a renowned musician in India but also internationally. He promoted Shehnai to international levels by participating in the World Exposition, Cannes Art Festival and Osaka Trade Fair. He became the first Indian to be invited to perform at the prestigious Lincoln Central Hall in the United States of America. He became internationally so well known that an auditorium in Tehran was named after him, 'Tahar Mosiquee Ustaad Bismillah Khan.'

**Q. What does Ustad Bismillah Khan's life exemplify?**

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**Ans.** Ustad Bismillah Khan's life exemplifies artistic excellence and rare humanity. His life proves that there is no shortcut to success. One has to work hard to achieve expertise in any field and reach the pinnacle of success. It was Ustad Bismillah Khan who took shehnai to every common man and brought it on the classical stage. He was conferred upon with a galaxy of most prestigious awards for his globally-acclaimed prowess in playing the flute. He was the first Indian to be invited to perform at the prestigious Lincoln Centre Hall in the United States of America. But he was humble and humane till his last breathe. Ustad Bismillah Khan's life is a perfect example of the rich, cultural heritage of India. A devout Muslim like him could very naturally play the shehnai every morning at the Kashi Vishwanath temple. For him, religion and country are two different entities. He was a devout Muslim who was Indian by spirit.

**Q. Imagine Ustad Bismillah Khan is going to play the Shehnai in your school annual function. You have been given the duty to introduce and welcome him. How would you introduce him?**

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**Ans.** The man who popularised Shehnai brought this instrument onto the classical stage is none other than Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan. Born on 21 March 1916 to the legacy of great shehnai players, Rasool Bux Khan, the shehnainawaz of the Bhojpur king's court, he started taking interest in Shehnai from the age of three. At the age of 14, Bismillah accompanied his uncle to the Allahabad Music Conference, there he was recognised and motivated by none other than Ustad Faiyaz Khan. With the opening of the All India Radio in Lucknow in 1938 came Bismillah's turning point. Ustad Bismillah Khan was the first Indian to greet the nation with his shehnai on 15 August 1947. Vijay Bhatt named the film Gunj Uthi Shehnai to honour the Maestro. The honour of being the first Indian to be invited to perform at the prestigious Lincoln Centre Hall in the United States of America also goes to Ustad Bismillah Khan. He also took part in the World Exposition in Montreal, in the Cannes Art Festival and in the Osaka Trade Fair. An auditorium in Teheran was named after him — Tahar Mosiquee Ustaad Bismillah Khan. He was awarded the highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna in 2001.