Musical surgery: Flutist plays Bach & Mozart as doctors cut out her brain tumor

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Surgery to remove a brain tumor is terrifying at best, but one patient decided to make the process a little more bearable, by playing the flute during the operation, providing surgeons with a recital in the most unusual of places.

Sofia Pinaeva, 28, underwent the surgery at University Hospital in Graz, Austria. She opted to stay awake for the surgery; if asleep, the patient runs a higher risk of losing brain function in the procedure.

But staying awake is one thing. Playing the flute while surgeons slice into your brain is another.

“From the outside, that's rather unusual,” 28-year-old Pinaeva said, while laughing, as reported by Kurier. However, the music teacher said there was *“no question”* about whether she would perform during the operation.
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“Bach, Mozart, I played everything that came to mind,” she said.

While it seems crazy, her surgeons would have had to make sure that Pinaeva’s mind was active and cognizant in another way, had she not chosen to play the flute.

“We are looking for tasks and functions that are easy to answer during the operation,” psychologist Karla Zaar said. *“That would be different for every patient. Some have to describe pictures in a whole sentence, for example: 'This is a tree.'”* The clinic has also had patients who identified dinosaurs from photos or who completed mathematical equations during such procedures.

Pinaeva is now recovering from her operation, which removed about half of the tumor – more than would have been possible were she to have slept during the surgery. She is doing well, and even arranged a garden party with friends just days after the surgery.

“I have a brain tumor,” she said. *“Some people react as if I'm already dead. But it goes on. It is important to me to show that this diagnosis is not a death sentence.”*