MESMER THE MUSICAL

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

1781: Invented the Glass Armonica after seeing water-filled wine glasses played in Cambridge, England in May 1761

1776-85: America's Ambassador to the court of Louis XI

1782: Mesmerism had become such a craze that many intellectuals and institutions began to worry that irrational thought would spread throughout society, not to mention the shrinking practices and profits among conventional medicine.

1784: He was seen as the 'Elon Musk' of today - a visionary - and was therefore asked to create the Franklin Commission

MARIA THERESIA VON PARADIS (MTP)

1759: Born (25 years younger than Mesmer). Was the Goddaughter of the Empress of Austria, Maria Theresia

A phenomenal pianist who learned over sixty concertos by heart and was great friends with Mozart

1770-75: She was treated by her doctor, von Störck, for 5 years; Störck persevered in the application of traditional remedies: blisters, purgatives, fumigations, and purgatives—There was no success.

1771: Störck plaster cast of her head.

1772: Recieved electroshock therapy

1776-78: Treated by Mesmer; it partially worked, and she could see, but she actually didn't like seeing.

1778: Treatment with Mesmer was stopped by Anton Von Störck

1779: Wrote to Mesmer - saying "I'm your happy and most grateful 'Daughter'"

March 1784: She performed 14 concerts in Paris

ANTON VON STÖRCK

1731: Born (3 years older than Mesmer) Personal physician of the Emperor and MTP

1771: Störck encased MTP's head in a plaster cast helmet for TWO months, intended to stop the head and, therefore, eyes from moving and twitching. It was a failure.

1772: He decided to try electroshock therapy here. He administered over 3,000 powerful shocks from a Leyden jar to the eyeballs of MTP.

This caused more agonizing pain, and a return of the former cycle of fits and delirium. To counter these side effects, battalions of leeches were marshaled into combat. MTP was bled to within an inch of the grave.

1776: He intervened in Mesmer's treatment of MTP and he was frustrated and embarrassed that Mesmer seemed to be somewhat successful

MESMER

1734: Born in all the 'Godenses' (his child cri) Father was a Lumberjack

1753: Studied theology but also Metaphysics, Philosophy and Math.

1759: Moved to Vienna and studied medicine and law at the University of Vienna.

He was a medical student of Gerard Swieten, the personal Doctor of Maria Theresa (Empress of Austria) - his that was his connection to the Austrian Royals.

1766: Received his degree from the University of Vienna in 1766 for a dissertation on the influence of the planets on the human body, entitled 'Dissertatio physico-medica de planetarum influxu' (Physical-Medical Treatise in the Influence of the Planets).

1767: Became a member of staff at the Faculty at the University of Vienna

1768: Married the wealthy Maria Anna von Posch, and they moved into a house that had a laboratory and Mesmer's medical office.

He also commissioned Wolf Mozart to write the opera, Bastien und Bastienne, which premiered in the garden of Mesmer's house.

1773: Started to play on glass armonica for fun

1774: Tried to heal patients the conventional way, but got stuck on the problem of Mesmerism - when a young female "hysteric" who was suffering from convulsions in Vienna.

Mesmer was inspired by Astronomer Maximilian Hell to use magnets as form of treatment - during one such experiment, Mesmer noticed that Hell had placed the plates on the naked bodies of his patients to cure them of their rheumatism.

Father Hell's experiment had a pronounced effect on Mesmer, who soon began to conduct some experiments of his own. However, Mesmer believed this cure could be more effectively applied to medicine more broadly, relating all disease to the imbalance of a magnetic fluid present in bodies that was susceptible to gravitational force.

Although Mesmer first believed he could bring the body's natural magnetic fluid into balance using magnets (he made Österlin drink iron particles to enhance the magnetic movements), he soon realized that the magnetic power he was seeking sit along was inside himself, and unlike Hell, he believed the universal power wasn't based outside but inside the body.

This thesis was based on the fact that all is affected by a "Fluidum" or "the oil life" that runs through the human body, and this "flow of energy/fluid/the oil life" can be blocked - and with that, causes illnesses.

He called this discovery of his ability to manipulate magnetic fluids his "animal magnetism."

In order to remove the 'blockage' and cure the illness, contact with a "conductor" (magnetic conductor) was necessary. Since the conductor itself - or any object magnetized by it or Mesmer himself - was capable of restarting the circulation, Maximilian Hell's magnets were therefore not needed anymore for Mesmer.

While Österlin was convulsing, Mesmer would place plates on her body and then magnets, explained she could feel "painful currents of a subtle material". shooting through her body. She reported that the currents helped to reduce her convulsions significantly.

Over the next 2 years of treating Österlin, Mesmer came to realize that he could produce the same effect on her simply by passing his hands over Österlin's body in the direction he learned the magnetic fluid to travel.

1775: Mesmer sees an exorcism, and believes it's the crucifix that helps the patient, not Gassner.

Mesmer does, however, intervene in the Gassner affair to support him, stating, "he's not doing anything different than I do, I'm using Animal Magnetism.) He acknowledged that, in fact, he had achieved some genuine cures.

1776: Begins treatment on MTP

Treatment over 2 years had some success. She could see, but she complained that it was painful to see the fingers on the keyboard, and her Father said she looked 'like she was struck by lightening everytime she saw light from a candle, as it was so overpowering'.

May 1778: MTP was taken out of Mesmer's hands by order of the Emperor, Joseph II, Störck, Medicine, von Störck, after the intervention of the Empress and the Bishop of Vienna, Cardinal Migazzi.

22 June 1778: Leaves for Paris, leaving behind his wife. His reputation in Vienna (and that he had been banished). On the contrary, Mesmer asserted that he had left of his own accord, taking with him a letter of introduction from the Austrian Chancellor of state and foreign minister to the Austrian ambassador in Paris, Count Mercy d'Argenson.

The academic world of Paris had already been warned about Mesmer's cures, and that he suffered a complete rebuff from the Académie des sciences and the Société royale de médecine as soon as he arrived. On the other hand, he received support that would prove to be decisive: that of the patients and, soon afterward, that of the public.

He also had a great flair for the dramatic and theatrical, dressed impressively in a lilac taffeta gown.

He opened a large practice, attended by a growing number of patients, and word of mouth spread like crazy. He was besieged by more patients than he could hope to treat individually – as many as 2,500 a day. He soon devised what he called the bauquet to accommodate groups at a time. Because the reactions Mesmer provoked seemed to be contagious, the dramatic effects were exacerbated in a Crowded room.

He became so popular and busy that he invented the idea of Group Therapy.

Patients gathered, joined by ropes, around baquets, tubs filled with miscellaneous bits of glass, metal, and water, from which flexible iron rods protruded. They pressed these rods to the ailing parts (usually upper abdomen), and joined their thumbs to increase the communication of the magnetic fluid. Alternatively, they opposed knees and thumbs to the extremities of the magnetizer (Mesmer himself or one of the many followers he quickly attracted by placing their knees between his. He then pressed and prodded their bodies with a mesmeric wand, or, more rarely, with his hands, depending on these initiating patients. He permitted the notorious mesmeric crises.

For especially violent crises, mesmeric salons included separate rooms lined with mattresses. Unable to attend to all the ailing Parisians who arrived in droves on his doorstep, Mesmer was forced to designate a surrogate he "magnetized" a tree near the porte Saint-Martin to accommodate the overflow.

1780: Mesmer approached the Academy of Sciences for sponsorship. Jean Baptiste La Roy, a member of the Royal Sciences, invited Mesmer to present his theory at an Academy meeting and hosted a demonstration of it in his own laboratory. This first display of Mesmer's science in Paris was a complete and total failure. Afterward, La Roy would have nothing to do with Mesmer.

He then approached the Faculté de Médecine in Paris, asking it to supervise a trial of the results of his treatment of patients using Animal Magnetism.

He insisted that such a trial should only be about the results of his treatment, whose details he would keep a trade secret. Mesmer proposed two groups of twenty patients, who were to be assigned to a group by "the method of lots", one group to be treated by conventional methods and the other by Animal Magnetism. Venereal diseases were to be excluded. Afterward, he made no conditions about which disorders could be included.

The trial was to be overseen by the government, but the arrangements were to be made by the Faculté.

The Faculté rejected the proposals out of hand and condemned one of their members, d'Eslon, who had presented the petition on Mesmer's behalf.

1781: Marie-Antoinette has arranged for Mesmer and d'Eslon to be "heard and judged" by a representative of the King. In this interview, they all agree:

1. some of Mesmer's patients are genuinely cured, the King's "commissioners".
2. Mesmer was to remain in France and could not leave except by permission of the King
3. If the commissioners' reports were favorable, the government would issue a letter to support his treatments.

Mesmer rescinded his agreement within 2 weeks, saying he was under duress. A new "interview" was conducted, with the Minister of State, Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, saying:

"the King, informed of of Mesmer's dislike of being investigated by commissioners, wished to excuse him from the trial and would instead grant him a life annuity of 20,000 French livres and pay 10,000 livres a year for the instruction of students, of whom three were to be selected by the government.

Once again, Mesmer rejected the offer and wrote an extraordinary open printed letter to the Queen of France, in which, 20 years earlier, would have meant imprisonment in the Bastille, where he announced his intention to leave France (which he immediately withdrew), stating "that while there are many circumstances in which the King's will is law for all the people, there are still many more in which public opinion prevails over that of kings"

Obviously, the KING and Queen were pissed at this.

1784: Both Mesmer and Marie Antoinette attended a concert by MTP in Paris - the society were laughing at Mesmer saying "well done for treating the blind pianist"

At the King's instigation, the Baron de Breteuil, minister of the Department of Paris, appointed two commissions to investigate the practice. One was drawn from the Royal Society of Medicine, and the other from the Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine.

The chemists Antoine Lavoisier and Benjamin Franklin, experts on the imponderable fluids of heat and electricity, respectively, chaired the Academy and Faculty Commission.

The inquiry was a landmark event: the first government investigation of a medical claim based on an entire fluid, but the power of imagination.

However, the super-important point to understand here is that the commissions were NOT asked only or how the power of imagination could treat an illness.

A top secret supplementary report, for the King's eyes only, noted that mesmeric patients were usually women and mesmerists always men. In light of this, the report proposed that so-called "mesmeric crises" were in fact, not the manifestations of a different "convulsive state" arising from the latter sex's ability to "arouse" the former.

The commissioners began by assuming that mesmeric effects were due not to a nervous fluid, but instead to the faculty of imagination.

They devised a method for, in their terms, isolating the action of imagination from other effects from the action of the patient's imagination. One of their main instruments, which they meticulously described in their report, was a blindfold. They used it, for example, on one of their experimental subjects, a present woman with ailing eyes.

While she wore the blindfold, one of the commissioners played the role of d'Eslon, who had agreed to serve as the commission's mesmerist, and pretended to "magnetize" her, successfully causing a mesmeric crisis.

In fact, d'Eslon was in another room attempting to magnetize the gusty and ill-tempered Franklin, a healthily skeptical, Franklin. The commissioners also had d'Eslon magnetize subjects from behind a screen, concealed from view, and recorded that in these cases, the treatment had no discernible effect.

They concluded that mesmeric effects were due to an as yet largely unknown power: not a nervous fluid, but the power of imagination.

1782: Mesmer is supported by his best friend, Charles d'Eslon, and Franklin, who is invited to the Faculté de Médecine in Paris to investigate Animal Magnetism, to be able to confirm publically that it works.

1783: Mesmer and d'Eslon have a huge argument, and publically, they no longer support each other

1784: Following the roundly negative conclusion of the investigation - both commissions had found no evidence of an invisible magnetic fluid - Mesmer left Paris and moved about for a period in England and on the continent.

During the French Revolution, he lost all the money he had made in France, but afterward, he successfully negotiated with Napoleon's government for a pension, which was unprecedentedly low profile for the remainder of his life, which he spent mostly in his native land, and died in Meersburg, near Lake Constance, on 5 March 1815.

ANNA MESMER

1724: Born (10 years older than Mesmer)

1768: Married Mesmer

1778: Her husband leaves her to flee to Paris

1779: Mozart rides with Anna and not Franz - and starts to take the piss out of him

1790: Died in Vienna

MOZART

Born 1756 (22 years younger than Mesmer)

Mesmer was friends with Leopold Mozart, and therefore also knew little Mozart

1768: Mozart commissioned to write the first-ever opera, Bastien und Bastienne, which premiered in the garden of Mesmer's house.

1773: Mozart performed a concert at Mesmer's house - this is where is saw the glass armonica for the first time

1789: Wrote Cosi fan Tutti - created a role (Despina) taking the piss out of Mesmer

1791: KV 617 Wolfgang wrote a piece for glass armonica

CHARLES D'ESLON

Was Docteur-régent of the Paris Faculty of Medicine, and the one-time personal physician to the King's brother, Charles Philippe, Comte d'Artois.

He is the best friend of Franz Mesmer.

Was a one-time patient and pupil of Mesmer

He said "in relation to Animal Magnetism, it is the same, I don't know how it works, but I do know that it does work. If it were to be true that Mesmer had no other secret than that he has been able to make the imagination exert an influence upon health, would he not still be a wonderful doctor? If treatment by the use of the imagination is the best treatment, why do we not make use of it?"

7 October 1780: Made an official request "that an investigation of the authenticity and efficacy of Mesmer's claims and cures be made. The Faculté rejected his plea, and in refusing accused d'Eslon personally of misdemeanour".

15 May 1782: Presented the Faculty with his (ego-centric) theory of the 24-page pamphlet and then, on 26 October 1782, was finally struck from the [Faculty's] roster and forbidden to attend any meeting for a period of two years".

28 December 1783: d'Eslon acrimoniously parted ways with Mesmer. He wrote a letter to the Journal de Paris, which not only described the difficulties he had experienced with Mesmer, but also announced that he was opening his own (entirely independent) clinic.

21 August 1786: Once d'Eslon had been expelled from the rank of docteur-régent, his membership of the Faculty of Medicine was never reinstated, and unlike Mesmer, he remained in Paris following the publication of the reports of the two Commissions.

Although apparently in good health in the preceding months, he died somewhat suddenly in Paris, at the age of 41, from a complex of disorders including pneumonia, a malignant fever, and renal colic.

GASSNER

Priest who specialised in Exorcism. Mesmer saw an exorcism and believed it wasn't Gassner that had a successful effect on the patient - but actually the metal crucifix that rocked the energy blockage.

Fundamental point of the character:

Gassner represents with his exorcism the "miracle" side of the church that were "approved", because it's a miracle by god.

Mesmer took the "miracles" away from the church and handed it to humanity, and claimed it was science, not a miracle.

1774: He became a famous exorcist, and in July to August alone, treated 1340 people in the Lake Constance monastery.

1775: Gassner is in trouble - people find his methods unorthodox, and the public is starting to revolt against him.

For Mesmer, on the contrary, Gassner's only error was to believe that he was driving out the devil, when in fact he was unknowingly magnetizing.

1776: Gassner was stuck between a rock and a hard place - either he accepted publically the help of Mesmer (which was powerful), but that meant he turned away from religion - or he denied the help of Mesmer, to stick with religion, but he would then be seen as the 'mad priest'.

The controversy surrounding Gassner died away. Under pressure from the Emperor, he was obliged to retire to a remote parish in March, and was then ordered by the Pope to stop practising his skill.

Mesmer also managed to persuade the Emperor to ban all exorcisms.

He blamed Mesmer for getting him retired, because as far as he was concerned, Mesmer added to the controversy.

Mesmer held the materialist position – that his therapies, which involved easily understood, systematic natural principles, were "physiological", rather than "psychological" interventions – in contrast to the supernatural positions of Gassner.

Mesmer got it the wrong way around – he believed the physical changed the psychological - whereas we now know it's the other way around.