

Background on *Miserere mei Deus*

Miserere mei Deus was composed in 1638, and was forbidden to be performed outside of the Sistine Chapel in Rome. According to the popular story (backed up by family letters), fourteen-year-old [Mozart](#) was [visiting Rome](#) when he first heard the piece during the Wednesday service. Later that day, he wrote it down entirely from memory, returning to the Chapel that Friday to make minor corrections. Less than three months after hearing the song and transcribing it, Mozart had gained fame for the work and was summoned to Rome by [Pope Clement XIV](#), who showered praise on him for his feat of musical genius and awarded him the Chivalric [Order of the Golden Spur](#) on July 4, 1770. Some time during his travels, he met the British historian [Charles Burney](#), who obtained the piece from him and took it to London, where it was published in 1771. The work was also transcribed by [Felix Mendelssohn](#) in 1831 and [Franz Liszt](#), and various other 18th and 19th century sources survive. Since the lifting of the ban, Allegri's *Miserere* has become one of the most popular [a cappella](#) choral works now performed.