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Prodigies on YouTube: Finding the Genuine Artist in Youth

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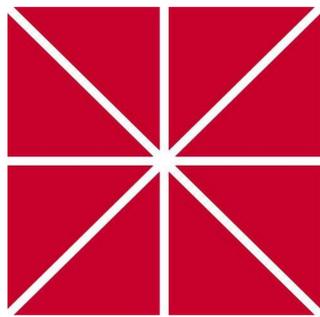
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Prodigies On YouTube

Finding the Genuine Artist in Youth

Peraza, Priscilla



Virtuoso vs. Prodigy

A common misconception is to use these words interchangeably, where as they should be used sequentially.

Prodigy:

A prodigy is a younger person, normally younger than 18 years of age, that excels at his or her art form in musical and technical ability. They are usually considerably more proficient than others of the similar age. According to *The New York Times Magazine*, "Prodigies are able to function at an advanced adult level in some domain before age 12. 'Prodigy' derives from the Latin 'prodigium,' a monster that violates the natural order."

Virtuoso:

A virtuoso is simply defined as someone who is exceptionally skilled at his or her art form and is an experimenter or investigator of it (Merriam-Webster). These people are generally adults that have many years to perfect and master the art form. We know these artists to be skilled and knowledgeable. They are the artists we know and love, like Lang Lang, Yo-Yo Ma, Jascha Heifetz, Leonard Bernstein, Renée Fleming, Lee Morgan, Sabine Meyer, and Robert Childs.

Sujari Britt

Sujari was featured on the YouTube channel THNKR in the "Prodigies" series. She began cello when she was four years of age and had the opportunity to perform for President Obama at the age of eight. In 2013, she was featured as a soloist at Carnegie Hall.



Abstract

There seem to be more child prodigies today than ever before. This growth can be attributed to the way society contributes to and facilitates young talent. For instance, shows such as "America's Got Talent", "American Idol", and "The X Factor" cultivate the younger generation to desire fame. Though these children are exceptionally talented, they are also discovered and forgotten at such a rapid pace as well, no doubt due to the amount of social media accessible in the 21st century. YouTube has become a part of the easily accessible social media trend and is often used as a common source to discover these children. Therefore, an untrained society now determines what constitutes musical talent and ability. There is an overemphasis on the performance of technical ability as opposed to the performance or scholarly interpretation. Children may be capable of musical abilities but to what extent is it imitation as opposed to individual creativity? At 300 hours of video per minute, at what point do these prodigies stop becoming extraordinary and will their story stand the test of time? This research explores how child prodigies are pushing the technical boundaries of our century but also asks whether genuine musicianship can be found in each one.

Case Studies

Alma Deutscher

Alma began playing piano at the early age of two years old and violin at the age of 3. She began composing at age 4 and by the age of 7 she had completed her first short opera. She has since composed more large works featured in her album "The Music of Alma Deutscher", released in 2013. She is often referred to as 'Little Miss Mozart', a name she is not fond of. She has been featured on Ellen DeGeneres's YouTube channel twice.



Joey Alexander

Joey is from Bali and began playing the piano at the age of six years old. At that age he was able to pick up jazz standards by ear. Through his dad, he was able to cultivate his classical jazz and improvisational skills. At the age eight, he played solo jazz piano for Herbie Hancock during his visit to Indonesia. He recently released an album entitled *My Favorite Things*. Joey's talent has led him to play with acclaimed jazz musicians. He was recently featured on Ted Talks YouTube channel.

Conclusion

In conclusion, several factors can contribute when determining a genuine artist, namely performance etiquette, creativity, and repertoire. Prodigies are anxious to get their repertoire at a lighting-fast tempo but it is not always done tastefully. With some of these prodigies on YouTube, we can see obvious imitations of greater performing artists. Prodigies that compose or improvise seem to have more musical creativity. Prodigies strive to attain mastery over difficult repertoire meant for musicians with many more years of experience. However, a prodigy must gain the musical maturity to evoke the musical character of the music. Overall, the public genuinely supports these prodigies as shown by the enthusiastic response of the audiences in the video clips on the "Ellen DeGeneres" show. There is no way of telling who will be the genuine artist better than time. It is a race to stand the test of time, and the indicators are society which makes it vital to educate to the public to recognize what a genuine musician looks like.

YouTube, Music, and Mozart

YouTube was invented in 2005 by a group of former Paypal employees. They had the idea for website where videos could be uploaded and shared. Since then, video sharing has also become TV clips, music videos, blogging (vlogging), and even educational videos. Suddenly everyone had access to videos from people and events occurring halfway across the world. For musicians, a wealth of historical and musical information was made possible. YouTube's motto, "Broadcast Yourself," has not only promoted a culture of marketing yourself to others, but an avenue of discovering others that are talented or extraordinary.

Mozart is most likely the earliest and most precocious composer the musical world has ever witnessed. Wolfgang was exceptionally good at playing the violin and harpsichord as well as improvising, which was why his father led and his sister all throughout Europe performing. It can be said that these tours were Mozart's "YouTube". It was his way of being discovered and known throughout different countries.

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