Prodigies on YouTube: Finding the Genuine Artist in Youth

Priscilla Peraza
Chapman University, peraz105@mail.chapman.edu

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Peraza, Priscilla

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 medial 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 judicators are society which makes it vital to educate to the public to recognize what a genuine musician looks like.

Selected References


