

**CHILD'S PLAY:
MUSICAL PRODIGIES
AND CHILD LABOR**

JACQUELINE WARWICK, DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Why do we like to see children perform?

The performing child embodies the “search for the self and the past that is lost and gone [...] since the end of the eighteenth century, the lost object has come to assume the shape and form of a child.”

-- Carolyn Steedman, 1995: 174.



Shirley Temple in HEIDI



A 20th Century
Fox Production

AUTHORIZED EDITION

No. 1771



DANIEL RADCLIFFE
AS DAVID COPPERFIELD

THE DELICIOUS MUSICAL BASED ON THE CLASSIC CHARLES DICKENS NOVEL

OLIVER!



Anne
of Green Gables

Sullivan
entertainment
www.sullysboutique.com

Why do children like to perform?

Making believe is the gist of [the child's] whole life ...

- R.L. Stevenson, 1878.

Mimicry is thought of as the natural ability of children. But we need to understand [it] not as natural reactive instinct, but as skilled response in the guise of effortless spontaneity.

-- Jayna Brown, 2008 (40).



Addie Card,
cotton spinner, Vermont 1910



Shirley Temple,
Little Miss Marker, 1934



Baby Burlesks

The Kid 1921



Jackie Coogan,
b. Los Angeles, 1914

Bigger than Big, and Smaller than Small



- emotional maturity + physical immaturity
- adorable incompetence
- appeal to audience's protective instincts
- teaching "true meaning of goodness"



Prodigies

a child under the age of ten who is able to perform at or beyond the standard of a trained adult in a cognitively demanding domain.

-- David Henry Feldman, 1991.

precocious, rapid acquisition of skill

fierce motivation, a rage to master

idiosyncratic learning style, minimal adult intervention

No Leave, No Love 1946



Frank "Sugar Chile" Robinson
b. Detroit, 1938



René Simard
b. Chicoutimi, 1961

Child Singers: Two Archetypes

“the child with the voice of an angel”



“the little child with the great big voice”



Aired in France 1965-70
Britain 1967-78

Mehdi el Glaoui,
b. Choisy-le-Roi (France) 1956



I know the shining mists,
The rosy snow of winter mornings.
I could find you easily,
White hare whom no one ever sees.
But the bird has flown away
And I will never find it,
For I have seen the bird fly away.
I saw the bird, I know it was leaving,
I heard the bird weeping,
The beautiful bird chased by the wind.

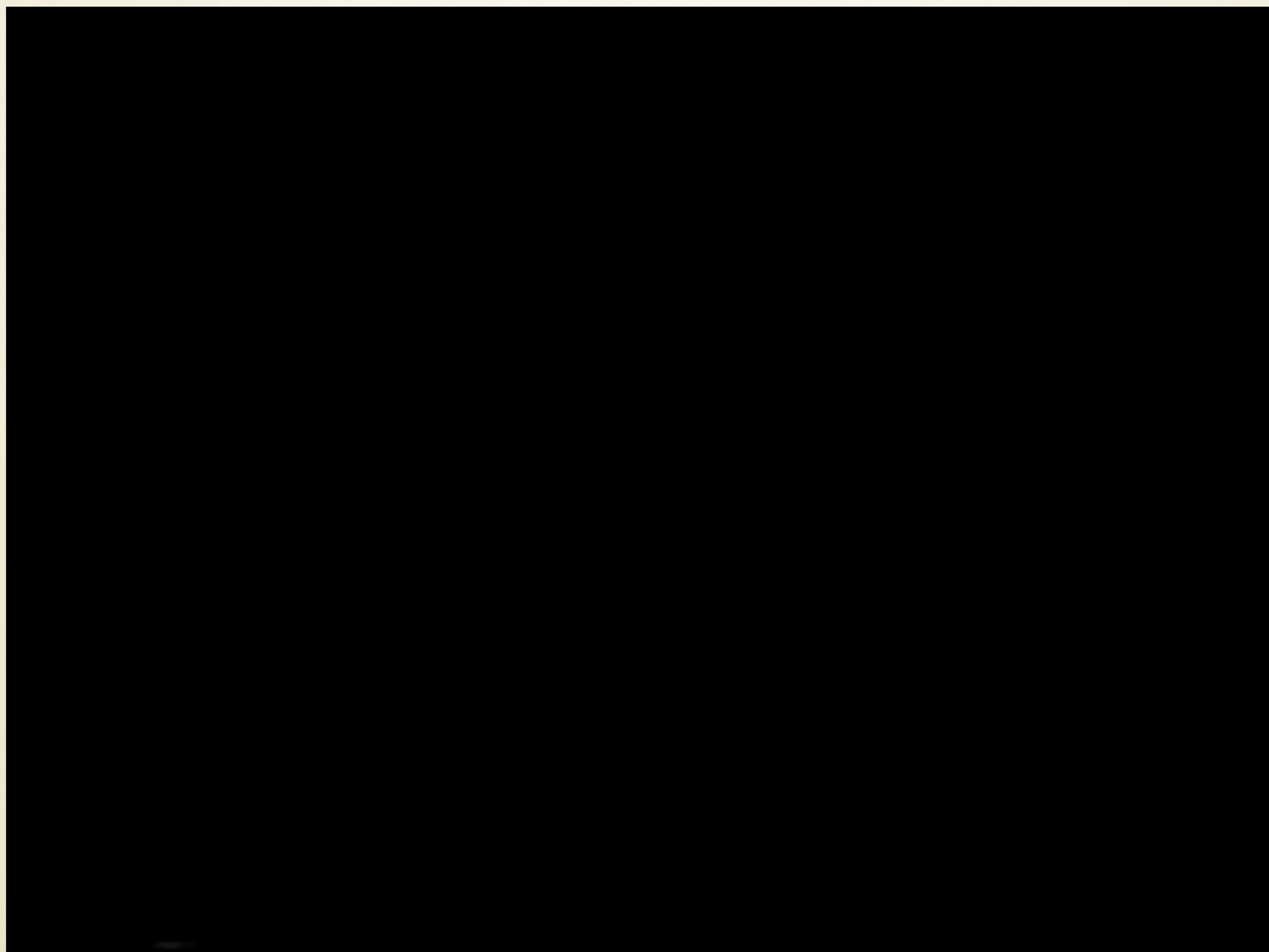
Cécile Aubry,
Eric Demarsan &
Daniel White

I would like to give you everything,
But you, why do you tell me nothing?
What is your great secret,
A secret of men, I understand well.
I could tell you
How regretfully the bird left,
If one day you listened to me.
You could teach me all that you know.
The bird departs and then returns
You'll see, maybe tomorrow.

If I ever meet
The beautiful bird that flew away,
If he comes back from his voyage
To be close to you along the shore,
I will tell him how much he meant to you.
It's the bird that you loved,
The jealous bird, I have guessed.
If he comes back from his voyage,
I will tell him that you waited for him.

René Simard, "L'Oiseau," 1971





1972

“Voulez-vous danser, grand-mère?”
1980



Nathalie Simard,
b. Ile d'Orléans, 1969

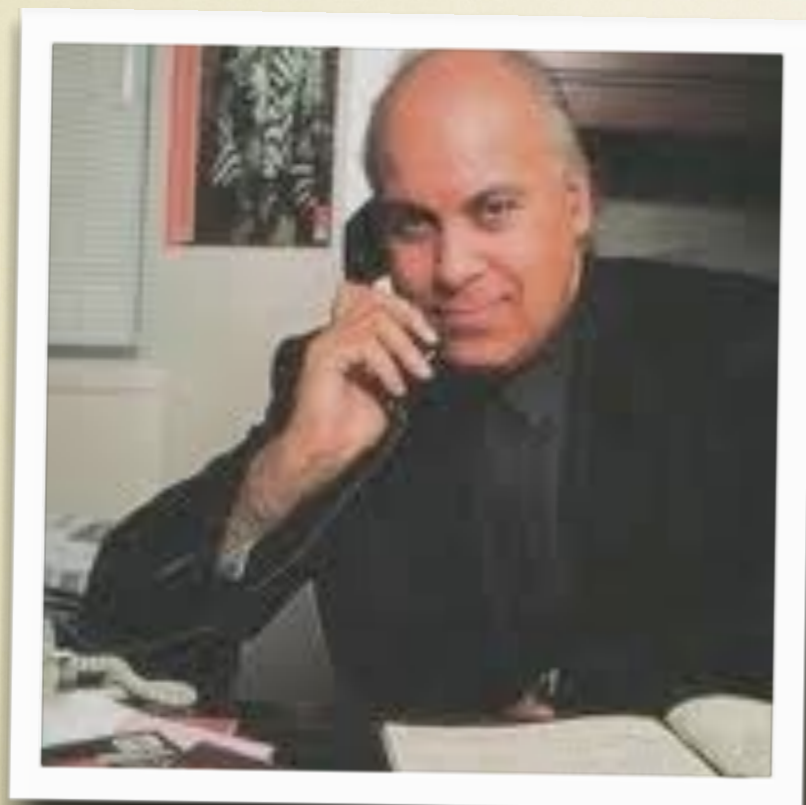




Nathalie Simard,
b. 1969



Guy Cloutier,
b. 1940



René Angélil,
b. 1942



Céline Dion,
b. 1968

the division between adult and child ... has been for at least the last two hundred years heavily eroticized: the child is that species which is free of sexual feeling or response; the adult is that species which has crossed over into sexuality.

-- James Kincaid, 1992 (31).



EMILIE

MARIE

ANNETTE

YVONNE

CECILE

The Dionne Quintuplets at Callander, Ontario, Canada.

3.

Copyright N.E.A. Service, Inc., 1937

[Child stars] represent the divine wonder-child, a symbol of hope and completeness which the human psyche has always had a longing to see manifest in material form. We need them because they are what we can never be again and their “natural” charm makes us believe in the ultimate goodness of people in their uncorrupted, pre-adult state.

– Jane O’Connor, 2008, 142.

PRODIGIOUSNESS

Mozart's premature and almost supernatural talents [made him a symbol of] the child's **unlimited potential** for creative and moral **development** ... the quintessential, perfect child ... who exemplified the **infinite perfectibility** of the child, and by inference, of mankind.

-Maynard Solomon, 1995 (4).