

# Review Article

## Enter Children, with Childhood

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Adeline Mueller, *Mozart and the Mediation of Childhood*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2021. xiii + 287 pp. ISBN 9780226629667 (hard cover); 9780226787299 (ebook).

Anglo-American musicology is having a childhood moment. The foundation of the American Musicological Society's Music and Childhood Study Group marked this moment most clearly, together with the launch in 2021 of an accompanying website maintained by Susan Boynton and Ryan Bunch.<sup>1</sup> Not that children and childhood are anything new as a topic of enquiry in music studies: since the mid- to late twentieth century, children's musical cultures have formed a steadily expanding subject for ethnomusicologists, to some extent predating the institutionalization of the study of childhood in anthropology generally.<sup>2</sup> Since Boynton and Roe-Min Kok published an early state-of-the-field collection in 2006 (as the outgrowth of an International Musicological Society conference), studies of music and childhood have burgeoned principally at the intersection of ethnomusicology and other fields – notably popular music, as in Kyra D. Gaunt's *The Games Black Girls Play*, as well as music education and technology studies, both of which intertwine in Tyler Bickford's *Schooling New Media*.<sup>3</sup> At present, the relation between popular music, mass media and youth culture forms the most prominent subject of musicological debate about childhood.<sup>4</sup> Contrary, then, to the implications of this article's title, we might say as music scholars that children have always been around, but that large parts of the discipline have not paid them much attention.

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<sup>1</sup> <[childhoodyouth.ams-net.org](http://childhoodyouth.ams-net.org)> (accessed 1 October 2022). The website's bibliography is an invaluable resource for those both new to and familiar with the field.

<sup>2</sup> See Patricia Shehan Campbell and Trevor Wiggins, 'Giving Voice to Children', in *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Musical Cultures*, ed. by Patricia Shehan Campbell and Trevor Wiggins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 3–22 (p. 3).

<sup>3</sup> *Musical Childhoods and the Cultures of Youth*, ed. by Susan Boynton and Roe-Min Kok (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006); Kyra D. Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Tyler Bickford, *Schooling New Media: Music, Language, and Technology in Children's Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> See, among many others, Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s* (New York: Routledge, 2007) and Tyler Bickford, *Tween Pop: Children's Music and Public Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020). Another emerging discussion point is musical theatre; see *Children, Childhood, and Musical Theater*, ed. by Donelle Ruwe and James Leve (London: Routledge, 2020).

This is especially true of historical musicology, for clear reasons. Since both musical cultures and children's cultures are predominantly oral, historical children's musical experiences have proved doubly resistant to archival preservation (although as historians might point out, this does not necessarily distinguish children's lives greatly from those of other subaltern groups). Notwithstanding some important studies, historical musicology has remained relatively marginal in music scholarship on childhood.<sup>5</sup> This may change with the appearance of Adeline Mueller's *Mozart and the Mediation of Childhood*, the first historical–musicological monograph on a significant pre-1945 topic to engage deeply with broader debates in childhood studies.<sup>6</sup> By the 'mediation of childhood', Mueller means the close relationship between late eighteenth-century print culture and the burgeoning significance of children as both subjects and objects of the marketplace. 'Mozart is an event in the history of the mediated child' (p. 3), a history whose recent chapters we are much more familiar with. The book introduces numerous figures – critics, biographers, pedagogues and, of course, the Mozarts themselves – who developed and exploited a sort of Mozart 'brand' through the possibilities of printed media. At the heart of this brand lay Mozart's identity as a child, which far outlived his childhood.

Any single reviewer is unlikely to share the various specialisms interwoven throughout the book: Enlightenment studies, print culture, childhood studies and Mozart. The following chapter summary does what justice a synopsis can to the book's various threads. My comments thereafter consider the project's contribution to what we might call – partly in anticipation – musicology's childhood turn, which brief acts of stock-taking will help to propel. Mueller places her book in the context of childhood studies with extreme deftness, avoiding the indulgence of a literature review. Through *Mozart and the Mediation of Childhood*, many musicological readers may encounter for the first time the flourishing study of childhood across the humanities; those readers may therefore appreciate a general assessment of the book's relation to some fundamental points of debate in that study. My assessment focuses on some essential debates in the historiography of childhood in the last two decades, taking up Mueller's own hints as to how the introduction of historical musicology to childhood may be mutually instructive.

In Chapter 1, 'Precocious in Print', Mueller investigates how Mozart's achievements as a child composer shaped Enlightenment debates about rationality. Contrary to Locke's and Rousseau's assumptions about children as passive beings shaped by adult society, Mozart's celebrity set in train an alternative Enlightenment view of children as active, potentially autonomous collaborators with adults. Eighteenth-century commentators, Mueller argues, took Mozart as essentially representative of children (as they did contemporaneous child-scholar celebrities), rather than as the lone, quasi-divine figure bequeathed by the Romantic mythologization of Mozart. The chapter's central case studies are two late eighteenth-century legal disputes in which Mozart served as an example of children's capacities generally (his

<sup>5</sup> Childhood in the German Democratic Republic, for example, has emerged as a topic of historical-musicological discussion. See Anicia Chung Timberlake, 'Brecht for Children: Shaping the Ideal GDR Citizen Through Opera Education', *Representations*, 132 (2015), 30–60, and Joy H. Calico, "'We are Changing the World!': *New German Folk Songs* for the Free German Youth (1950)", in *Musical Childhoods*, ed. by Boynton and Kok, pp. 145–69.

<sup>6</sup> An edited collection that does so is Susan Boynton and Eric Rice, *Young Choristers, 650–1700* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008). This is not to ignore earlier forays into possibilities of a 'childist' music history; cf. Barry Cooper, *Child Composers & Their Works: A Historical Survey* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), p. 73. Other volumes, of course, contain much that could contribute to debates in childhood studies, including Robert O. Gjerdingen, *Child Composers in the Old Conservatories: How Orphans Became Elite Musicians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

achievements supported contradictory assessments in each case). Through the rulings of each dispute, as Mueller observes, Mozart's musical activities indirectly affected the lives of a great many eighteenth-century children.

How state interventions in children's lives were negotiated through printed media is a strand that emerges most clearly in Chapter 2, 'Music, Philanthropy, and the Industrious Child', which examines Mozart's roles in three late eighteenth-century child welfare and education initiatives. Mozart served not only as a 'celebrity endorser' of these state-sponsored enterprises; he was also a model for the industriousness of the children in their care. Such institutions exemplified the Habsburg project of reforming children's services as a means of developing productive citizens. Mueller's second case-study, Vienna's Taubstummeninstitut (literally, 'Deaf-Mute Institute'), best illustrates her consistent intertwining of archival information, broad social-historical narratives, and a refreshing attention to the historical importance of the 'pleasures of sound', as she puts it in the acknowledgements (p. 198). In the late 1780s, Mozart contributed two songs to a children's periodical produced on the Institute's own printing press. The periodical served to demonstrate the fruits of the state's investment in impaired children, while encouraging a sizeable juvenile readership to make productive use of its free time. In 'Die kleine Spinnerin' ('The Little Spinner-Girl', K.531), Mozart helped such ideals slip down more easily by emphasizing musically the playfulness of the household work promoted in the song's text.

In Chapter 3, 'Acting Like Children', Mueller investigates the image and experiences of child performers in two forms of theatre prominent in late eighteenth-century Salzburg: *Schuldrama*, performed by students at the Benedictine University, and the visits of the *Kindertruppen*, touring groups of child actors who spoofed and adapted adult drama. The *Kindertruppen*, in particular, sparked considerable debate concerning the moral appropriateness of children's theatre. The selling-point of these performances was not only child performers' unnerving ability to imitate adults, but the amusement derived from their specializations in more risqué content. Even children's journals, Mueller shows, lamented young performers' loss of innocence for the sake of profit. Mozart was aware of such debates when contributing music for *Apollo et Hyacinthus*, K.38, an *intermedium* in a *Schuldrama* of 1767. The chapter links the Mozarts in various ways to debates about child performers, which formed a focus for the burgeoning essentialization of childhood as a natural state of innocence to be nurtured and sequestered.

Complementing the public promotion of work as play examined in Chapter 2, Chapter 4, 'Kinderlieder and the Work of Play', explores in a domestic context the Enlightenment idealization of play as productive. Mueller examines Mozart's Kinderlieder ('children's songs') in the context of the development of a distinct literature for children in German. The chapter is extremely informative about the genre as a whole, and the moralizing age-appropriate publications to which they contributed. Its focus is the marking of 'increasingly separate spheres of boyhood and girlhood': close readings of several of Mozart's Kinderlieder reveal their participation in 'theaters of girlhood' (p. 127); the *Liedersammlung für Kinder and Kinderfreunde* (K.596–98) exhibits more contradictory promotions of boyhood. Adult supervision, we learn, was composed into the performance of many Kinderlieder, but some relatively uncircumscribed publications may in reality have facilitated the unscripted, unsupervised play that some contemporaneous commentators feared.

In Chapter 5, 'Cadences of the Childlike', Mueller continues her turn towards the domestic sphere, examining the instrumental music dedicated to families as ritualizations of the 'new ideal of the affectionate family' (p. 143), which the Mozarts themselves were often taken to

embody. Her examples are the Concerto for Three Pianos (K.242), the Concerto for Flute and Harp (K.299) and the Sonata for Piano Four-Hands (K.521). Mueller provides concise but detailed analysis of the textures and voicing, adapting familiar approaches to eighteenth-century music developed by Edward Klorman, Wye Jamison Allanbrook and others. Mozart dedicated K.299, for example, to a duke and his late-teenage daughter, who would soon be leaving her parental home. Contrasting Mozart's use of texture with that of equivalent concertos, Mueller hears the piece as preparing this event, staging a narrative of growing 'filial autonomy' (p. 169).

The final chapter, 'Toying with Mozart', proposes that our own associations of Mozart's music with naivety and child-friendliness emerged through marketing strategies in the first third of the nineteenth century. Mozart was 'made easy', Mueller proposes, in part through his publishers' courting of the domestic sheet-music market, offering 'light' arrangements of his music to anthologies for piano students. The misattribution of dice games to Mozart (misattribution is a prominent theme in this chapter) entrenched the perception of his music as embodying an aesthetic of sublimated playfulness, which early biographers such as Nissen exploited by presenting Mozart's juvenilia as revelatory relics. Mueller's detective skills are here fully displayed. She demonstrates, for instance, that an oft-repeated anecdote about Mozart the 'child-man' first appeared in a pedagogical text for young musicians in 1803. The example illustrates how the commercial draw of the early market for juvenile readers exerted a hitherto unacknowledged influence on the mythologies of Mozart that continue to hold sway.

At the end of the introduction, Mueller describes her book as advancing 'a new understanding of the history of childhood as a dynamic, lived, *performed* experience, rather than (as more commonly understood) solely as theory, projection, or fantasy' (p. 10; emphasis original). As Mueller acknowledges, this statement broadly aligns her project with the approach taken by many historians of childhood since the 1990s – though less so, she implies, by historians of childhood in the Enlightenment. In the 1960s, Philippe Ariès popularized the idea that childhood was socially and culturally contingent; some took him to argue that childhood was an 'invention' of modernity.<sup>7</sup> Three decades later, scholars detected in subsequent writing a rather exclusive reliance on the understanding of childhood as a set of ideals and conditions fashioned by adults, which neglected the historical force of children's own activity and experience.<sup>8</sup> Mueller's detailed excavations in a rich archive certainly reveal the glimpses of

<sup>7</sup> This is a common summary of Ariès's claims in *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Seuil, 1960), translated by Robert Baldick as *Centuries of Childhood* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962). A more sensitive summary of one of his claims is that, before the seventeenth century, adults did not think of children as having a particular nature that distinguishes them from adults. As Hugh Cunningham observes, much commentary on Ariès relied on a mistranslation of one particular sentence: 'Histories of Childhood', *The American Historical Review*, 103/4 (1998), 1195–1208 (p. 1197). For a critique of Ariès's argument and approach, see Adrian Wilson, 'The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès', *History and Theory*, 19/2 (1980), 132–53.

<sup>8</sup> This moment in childhood scholarship was marked by the emergence of the 'new social study of childhood', articulated primarily by sociologists, who proposed that 'childhood' was a socially and culturally constructed identity (akin, for example, to gender), but emphasized that children were agents shaping the processes of construction. The most frequently cited outlines of this study include *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, ed. by Allison James and Alan Prout (London: Routledge, 1990), and Allison James, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout, *Theorizing Childhood* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998). For an assessment, see Patrick J. Ryan, 'How New Is the "New" Social Study of Childhood? The Myth of a Paradigm Shift', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 38/4 (2008), 553–76.

lived experience prized by social historians of childhood. In Chapter 3, for example, a letter from Leopold Mozart uncovers some disturbing information about the famous eighteenth-century Berner troupe; via the account of a friend, Leopold reports that Berner's daughter accused her father of prostituting her and her peers. If reliable, the letter virulently refutes the narrative crafted by the troupe's main contemporaneous chronicler and extended by twentieth-century historians. The account conforms instead to historians' views about the abhorrent exploitation of child performers in equivalent troupes. Examining from a new perspective some material we thought we knew (the Mozarts' letters), Mueller makes a discovery of considerable import to childhood studies and to eighteenth-century history generally. The passage presents in microcosm, then, Mueller's Mozart project as a whole.

Such insights into children's lived experiences are self-evidently important. For Mueller, at least by implication, they constitute the book's most urgent contribution to eighteenth-century childhood studies. But this social-historical work does not, at least in itself, best represent the book's engagement with more recent developments in the historiography of childhood. That contribution emerges more in Mueller's elevation of an overlooked Enlightenment perception of relations between children and adults as collaborative, reciprocal, and mutually transformative, while evidently manifesting a 'lopsided power dynamic' (p. 172). As Mueller points out, versions of that perception have gradually reanimated historical, literary and sociological scholarship on childhood in our own time. Anna Mae Duane, among many others, has proposed that '[t]he figure we now recognize as the child was created in tandem with forms of modernity that the Enlightenment generated'.<sup>9</sup> Those include, in the broadest terms, the notion of the individual, autonomous, rational subject promoted by Enlightenment intellectuals, and naturalized by political and philosophical traditions of liberalism. Childhood has served, in Tyler Bickford's summary, as 'a constitutive Other' of that subject.<sup>10</sup> Modern understandings of childhood are inextricable from our tendency to elevate autonomy and agency as attributes opposed to the condition of dependence. Current childhood scholarship seeks to collapse such oppositions, conceiving all relations as characterized by some form of 'authentic interdependence, rather than an illusory independence'.<sup>11</sup> The precedents of this

<sup>9</sup> Anna Mae Duane, 'Introduction', in *The Children's Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities*, ed. by Anna Mae Duane (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2013), pp. 1–14 (p. 4). Globally-oriented histories are helpful in illustrating that co-creation, and also in questioning sweeping connections between 'modernity' and modern childhood. See Nara Milanich, 'Latin American Childhoods and the Concept of Modernity', in *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*, ed. by Paula S. Fass (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 491–508.

<sup>10</sup> Bickford, *Schooling New Media*, p. 27. For the classic historical investigation of (part of) this relationship, see Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Duane, 'Introduction', p. 5. This development is encapsulated most clearly in debates about that fraught buzzword of childhood studies: 'agency'. Acknowledging and enabling children's agency was an essential tenet of the 'new social study of childhood', but that notion of agency soon received critique, as a simplistic understanding against which childhood itself is implicitly defined, or even just as the legacy of a Romantic individualism. (For the latter, in particular, see Ryan, 'How New Is the "New" Social Study of Childhood?'). This is a longstanding concern especially in sociology-oriented facets of childhood studies, which currently promote children's agency less as the willed attribute of individual subjects and more as something distributed, emerging relationally through actions. See Spyros Spyrou, Rachel Rosen, and Daniel Thomas Cook, 'Reimagining Childhood Studies: Connectivities ... Relationalities ... Linkages', in *Reimagining Childhood Studies*, ed. by Spyros Spyrou, Rachel Rosen and Daniel Thomas Cook (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 1–20, and David Oswell, *The Agency of Children: From Family to Global Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

attitude that Mueller finds at the heart of the Enlightenment therefore seem particularly significant to childhood studies. Such precedents played out in the everyday details of the Mozarts' life to which she draws attention. Unsurprisingly, Mozart acquired considerable social, cultural and political capital when strikingly young (by the age of twenty-one he was petitioning aristocrats to employ his father, rather than vice versa); but throughout Wolfgang and Nannerl's youth, as Mueller points out in Chapter 3, Leopold had to remain vigilant that his children did not fall prey to the abuses experienced by other child performers.

In ways such as this, Mueller's book answers Duane's call to move scholarly discussions of childhood 'off the children's table'. Separate and often out of earshot from the adult one, the children's table allegorizes the marginality of childhood studies, widely assumed to be incapable of contributing to serious humanities talk. In the prominent volume that made this demand, Duane and her contributors propose instead that '[t]o include the child in any field of study is to realign the very structure of that field'.<sup>12</sup> Historians have made similar calls, often invoking Joan Scott's influential article of 1988 about gender, which demanded that women's history do more than simply excavate women's experiences through detailed social histories, and aim also to reshape the discipline's ways of thinking.<sup>13</sup> Childhood scholars might do so most obviously through reference to understandings of dependence and subjectivity noted above. What distinguishes recent scholarship, in Corinne T. Field's words, is the insistence that 'concerns about childhood are often broader meditations on the workings of power and dependency that implicate people of all ages'.<sup>14</sup> Because of this, the study of childhood is particularly well-placed (alongside the study of disability and ageing) to mark an escape route from what Duane calls the 'crumbling theoretical ground that assigns partial, dependent, mediated subjectivity *only* to childhood'.<sup>15</sup> Exploring some historical precedents for an alternative theoretical ground is not the only way that Mueller keeps off the children's table. Mozart, of course, has always been the talk of the adult musicological table, but Mueller's emphasis on print media's role in the Enlightenment should grant her additional seats at non-musicological ones. Indeed, Mueller's book shares this distinction with other prominent studies of music and childhood, which seem – perhaps from necessity – especially good at intersecting with other topics. Gaunt's formal methodological focus, for example, is much more on questions of race, gender and embodiment than those of childhood; Bickford's ethnography rethinks some deep-lying assumptions in

<sup>12</sup> Duane, 'Introduction', p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', in Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). See Julia Grant, 'Children versus Childhood: Writing Children into the Historical Record', *History of Education Quarterly*, 45/3 (2005), 468–90. Sociology-oriented scholarship also consistently stresses the importance of keeping up with broader theoretical developments, noting that the way in which scholarship in the 1990s promoted discovering and amplifying children's voices often ran counter to a burgeoning methodological emphasis on 'decentering' the subject. See Allison James and Alan Prout, 'Introduction', in *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, pp. 1–6; and Spyros Spyrou, *Disclosing Childhoods: Research and Knowledge Production for a Critical Childhood Studies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), especially Chapter 2.

<sup>14</sup> Corinne T. Field, 'Why Little Thinkers Are a Big Deal: The Relevance of Childhood Studies to Intellectual History', *Modern Intellectual History*, 14/1 (2017), 269–80 (p. 272). Field is referring specifically to Duane's volume.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*; my emphasis. Matías Cordero Ace works towards the possibility of a 'dutiful, interdependently autonomous legal subject' that could represent both adults and children in 'Who is (to Be) the Subject of Children's Rights?', in *Reimagining Childhood Studies*, pp. 170–82 (p. 181).

technology studies; Jacqueline Warwick's study of girl groups in the 1960s sheds considerable light on North American racial politics.<sup>16</sup>

Historical musicology's belatedness may help it to step round the methodological concern in which the history of childhood seems repeatedly to become mired: simplistic and overdrawn distinctions between 'children' and 'childhood', which produce an impression that social and cultural histories of childhood are somehow oppositional. Since Ariès, as Field observes, historians 'have spent a great deal of time debating the distinction between childhood, as a social construction, and children, as historical actors.'<sup>17</sup> Such distinctions have often encouraged an historiography according to which, as Robin Bernstein puts it,

'imagined' childhood shapes the lived experience of 'real' juveniles, who respond by unevenly colluding or resisting their construction as 'children'. [...] Because this model embeds opposition into the very foundation of childhood studies, the field has had difficulty accounting for the simultaneity and mutual constitution of children and childhood.<sup>18</sup>

While it is evidently possible conceptually to distinguish children from childhood, the two are in practice, as Sarah Maza puts it, 'no more separable than the dancer and the dance'.<sup>19</sup> This will hardly be a revelation to readers new to the field, but as recently as 2020 Maza herself threatened to resuscitate a version of the oppositional model in an exchange in the *American Historical Review*, by promoting a distinction between 'history through children' – a reformulation of Duane's call to move off the children's table – and the 'history of children' – social-historical excavations of children's experiences for their own sake. Maza's respondents agreed at least on one thing: that those two kinds of history are not, cannot, and should not be conceived as separate. As Stephen Mintz pointed out, historians have for some time been quietly getting on with holistic combinations of both.<sup>20</sup> Mueller's is just such a study. Had the *AHR* exchange appeared before her book went to press, Mueller might have felt it unnecessary to explain that she uses the 'history of children' to do 'history through children', which is what her introduction effectively declares. Indeed, to this reviewer the book's richest contribution lies in Mueller's proposal that Mozart, a 'real' child, gave shape to a 'threshold moment' in the cultural history of childhood (p. 4) by embodying both the possibility of perfection to which Enlightenment pedagogy aspired and – through printed media's fixing of his image as a young boy – the eternal lostness of childhood to which Romanticism clung.

Mueller's monograph, in short, weaves into musicological enquiry sophisticated recent thinking elsewhere in the humanities; but what possibility does the book offer for engagement in the other direction? In her introduction, Mueller refers tantalizingly to musicology's potential to contribute to childhood studies, a reference that is pursued more implicitly than

<sup>16</sup> See notes 4 and 5.

<sup>17</sup> Field, 'Why Little Thinkers Are a Big Deal', p. 275.

<sup>18</sup> Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), p. 22. This sense of opposition may, of course, characterize some adult-child relations, especially those formed through the social and spatial sequestering of children according to rigid developmental models, which institutionalizes notions of childhood difference. Our methodology for studying childhood should not unwittingly, of course, be an artifact of this contingent phenomenon.

<sup>19</sup> Sarah Maza, 'The Kids Aren't All Right: Historians and the Problem of Childhood', *American Historical Review*, 125/4 (2020), 1261–85 (p. 1285).

<sup>20</sup> Steven Mintz, 'Children's History Matters', *American Historical Review*, 125/4 (2020), 1286–92 (p. 1292).

explicitly in the remainder of the book. Her suggestion is that musicologists' experience in thinking about performers as 'mediators between composers and listeners' may help in negotiating the complexity of historical 'encounters between adults and children' (pp. 4–5) – for her focus on music, as noted above, aims to emphasize childhood as, specifically, a '*performed*' experience (p. 10). Historians have been particularly taken by Bernstein's notion of the collaborative performance of childhood, by children and adults, as a way of conceiving the 'processes through which children and childhood give body to each other', thereby moving beyond the reductive constructionist dialectic.<sup>21</sup> Performance, in Field's summary of Bernstein, is 'the means by which children enact a repertoire of childhood, modifying and improvising as they go'.<sup>22</sup> This notion of performance is not identical with, or reducible to, that commonly associated with Judith Butler's arguments about gender, although they share many features. Conceiving of childhood as a (collaborative) performance serves partly to supplant assumptions about childhood experience as something instantiated in a 'unique, unadulterated [inner] voice', from which scholars must scrape away layers of adult mediation.<sup>23</sup> In particular, it emphasizes actions – or rather, interactions, with people and environments – as the sphere in which children's voices emerge. Bernstein's wish to 'coax the archive into divulging the repertoire' corresponds to Mueller's interest in 'actions' as well as 'texts and objects'.<sup>24</sup> There is certainly potential for musicologists to refine and develop such ideas; we might, for example, question Bernstein's suggestion that the ephemeral nature of performance is necessarily infused with 'mourning and loss', which seems derived from a viewpoint within literate (and adult) culture.<sup>25</sup>

Musicological expertise does not merely help historians think about performance in a more abstracted sense. Mueller's emphasis on the actions of childhood entwines with musicological ideas about performance especially in Chapter 5, with her application of analytical approaches to musical sociability. One of Bernstein's more specific ideas, which adapts methods in the study of material culture to tackle archival limitations, is that of 'scriptive things': objects (most obviously toys) whose materiality invites and prohibits certain kinds of action, suggesting certain behaviours in which children engaged.<sup>26</sup> In Chapter 5, Mueller treats the combination of score and keyboard as a scriptive thing, modelling certain interactions and types of play that performers might have embraced, rejected, or adapted. Music's function as play, as a resource through which repertoires of childhood emerge, underpins its centrality to the anthropology of childhood (Bickford's ethnography, for example, effectively examines mp3 players as 'scriptive things', revealing just how much children's uses of those things may depart from the script). Mueller's study therefore suggests that holistic, discursive and adventurous forms of music

<sup>21</sup> Robin Bernstein, 'Childhood as Performance', in *The Children's Table*, pp. 164–71 (p. 164). (This is a slight re-writing of the end of the introduction in *Racial Innocence*.) The final chapter of *Racial Innocence*, in particular, explores examples in which children and adults 'collaborate' in their behaviour to change prevailing assumptions about the nature of childhood.

<sup>22</sup> Field, 'Why Little Thinkers Are a Big Deal', p. 275. The term 'repertoire' refers to Diana Taylor's distinction between 'archival' memory – material sources available for sequestering in libraries – and the 'repertoire' – the oral practices and corporeal behaviours that survive in different ways. Cf. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Spyrou, *Disclosing Childhoods*, p. 86. The context of this remark is the practice of research in the social sciences.

<sup>24</sup> Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Bernstein, 'Childhood as Performance', p. 165.

<sup>26</sup> See in particular Chapter 2 of *Racial Innocence*.



analysis may help to unlock comparable historical insights about childhood that are beyond the reach of other disciplines. Her monograph, in other words, is not only a superb example of the integrated approach to childhood for which historians have long been calling, but also serves as a model for closing some institutionally maintained methodological fissures – notably between analysis and history – within musicology.