Who is this for?

Critical Childhood Studies and Music

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This is an invitation for us to think together about what the field of childhood and music studies is, and who it's for. I'll attempt a partial survey of the field, but I'll also ask questions about what it might be. I'm grateful to the members of the Childhood and Youth Study Group for starting this conversation through our reading group and previous AMS sessions.[1] I have many questions about how childhood and music relate to each other, as well as how childhood *studies* and music *studies* relate to each other. How can childhood studies and music studies transform each other? How do they challenge our assumptions about childhood and music? How can we unpack the discourses and practices that have defined and marginalized childhood and music, often in terms of each other? What are historical musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory, music education, and popular music studies already doing with childhood or childhood studies, and what are they not doing?

For the past few years, I've been studying in the childhood studies department of Rutgers University-Camden. One of my peers there advised me once to make a habit of asking "Who is this for?" What are people and institutions asking us to do, and why? I want to pose this question

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[1] Including but not limited to Tyler Bickford, Susan Boynton, Lori Custodero, Sarah Tomlinson Fumarola, Kate Guthrie, Kate Hamori, Roe-Min Kok, Alexandra Krawetz, Ben Liberatore, Rose Mauro, Matthew Roy, Cristina Saltos, Demitrius Shahmehri, Alicia Timberlake, Jacqueline Warwick, Lindsay Wright, and Amanda Winkler. This session was inspired by a series of exchanges in the *The American Historical Review* 125, no. 4 (October 2020), 1260-1322, started by Sara Maza's article "The Kids Aren't All Right: Historians and the Problem of Childhood," with responses by Steven Mintz, Nara Milanich, Robin P. Chapdelaine, Ishita Pande, and Bengt Sandin. Janice Stiglich is who taught me to ask "Who is this for?"

specifically about who our work as scholars of music and childhood is for. Are we doing it for each other, that is, for other scholars? For the children? For our careers? I propose that when we study children's music critically, we change the understanding of music, the understanding of childhood, the status of music and children in the world and the academy, and the practices of the academy itself.

Our group's description speaks of "centering [children's] agency as music makers, students, performers, and audiences" to better understand music as a cultural and historical phenomenon.[2] This is harder in practice than it might sound. Challenges face us across the variety of methods and multidisciplinary approaches that are available. Archives and primary sources are not often curated so that childhood or "the child" can easily be found in them. Ethnography, a core method of childhood studies, aligns with ethnomusicological practices, but there are particular difficulties in the power relations between adult researchers and child subjects. Kids' tastes dictate entire sectors of the music industry, but this fact often lingers around the edges of popular music studies without necessarily receiving rigorous critical analysis. And musical works for and about children inscribe adult desires about childhood, the past, and the future. Centering this music has the potential to transform our understanding of musical canons, but whom does this work ultimately serve?

Good intentions alone are inadequate. In recent years, there have been calls for a "critical childhood studies" to better address our unexamined assumptions about childhood and pose questions about whether and how childhood studies can be a force for change. At minimum, the "critical" part of critical childhood studies refers to an "interpretive methodology" recognizing

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[2] "About," *The Childhood and Youth Study Group*, American Musicological Society, https://childhoodyouth.ams-net.org/about, accessed August 9, 2022.

and detailing the cultural construction of childhood.[3] But Daniel Cook, Rachel Rosen, and

Spyros Spyrou insist that a critical childhood studies is not only reflexive about its work but also

intentionally political and ethical, striving to bring about new social realities.[4] This effort, Leena

Alanen notes, requires us to specify and articulate what a better childhood would be.[5]

Additionally, Joan Faulkner and Magdalena Zolkos argue that the marginality of childhood

studies in academic institutions necessitates a disciplinary flexibility and even a challenge to the

very notion of discipline.[6] Mark Nagasawa and Beth Blue Swadener emphasize reciprocal

mentoring, collaboration, activism, and personal narrative to disrupt assumptions about

childhood its study through Indigenous, Global South, and Black, Latinx, and feminist lenses.[7]

Finally, according to Spyrou, we should consider for whom we produce our knowledge. Is it for

each other or a wider public, and how does this audience influence our work in turn?[8]

       The job of music and childhood studies can't be simply to study music by, for, or about

children. To bring the studies of music and childhood together in a truly critical way, we need to

identify how music and childhood are co-constitutive in existing structures in whatever contexts

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[3] *Critical Childhood Studies: A Long 19C Digital Humanities Project*,
https://ccsproject.org/mission/, accessed July 23, 2022.
[4] Spyros Spyrou, Rachel Rosen, and Daniel Thomas Cook, eds., *Reimagining Childhood Studies* (Bloomsbury Press, 2018); Spyros Spyrou, *Disclosing Childhoods: Research and Knowledge Production for a Critical Childhood Studies* (Springer, 2018); Spyros Spyrou, "An Ontological Turn for Childhood Studies?" *Children and Society* 33, no.4 (2019): 316-323.
[5] Lena Alanen, "Critical Childhood Studies?" *Childhood* 18, no 2 (2011): 147-150.
[6] Joanne Faulkner and Magdalena Zolkos, eds., *Critical Chldhood Studies and the Practice of Interdisciplinarity* (Lexington Books, 2016).
[7] Mark K Nagasawa and Beth Blue Swadener, "Be/Longing: Reciprocal Mentoring, Pedagogies of Place, and Critical Childhood Studies in the Time of Trump," *Global Studies of Childhood* 7, no. 2 (2017): 207-221.
[8] Spyros Spyrou, "A Preliminary Call for a Critical Public Childhood Studies," *Childhood* 28, no. 2 (2021), 181-185.

we study them and with whatever methods we use. Doing this can help us figure out who it's all for with more intentionality.

Western music and modern childhood can scarcely be comprehended without each other. Consider some of the keywords and concepts they share in discourse and practice. Both are believed to be "authentic," communicating in expressions transcending or preceding spoken language.[9] Both are "natural," but believed to require cultivation and taming in order to avoid being corrupted. Both are "innocent" of politics while being used for political ends. They are instrumentalized in the regulation of race, gender, class, nation-building, and globalization. Both are promoted as "universal," understood across borders and key to international cooperation, multiculturalism, and world-saving. Both are heavenly, angelic and close to God while also being devilish and unruly. Both are associated with human interiority and subjectivity.[10] As such they are markers of identity and creativity. Both are "emotional." Both are concerned with "voice." Both sublimate sexual desire.[11] Both raise questions of autonomy and agency at work and play. Both, as currently conceived, are products of modernity. Their most cherished characteristics are derived from Enlightenment and Romantic ideals. They are used to justify projects of colonization, globalization, cultural imperialism, and the infantilizing discourses that deprive the colonized of their autonomy.[12] Both are subject to analysis. Both are subject to

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[9] For childhood, see Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Macmillan, 1984); for music, see Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton University Press, 2003).

[10] Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930* (Harvard University Press, 1995).

[11] See among others Rose; James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence* (Duke University Press, 1998); Suzanne G. Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight," in *Queering the Pitch* (Routledge 2013), 79-96.

[12] On the uses of childhood, metaphorically and in practice, in projects of colonialism and hegemony, see for example Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*

periodization and stages, treated as developing and evolving. Both are favorite subjects of psychology and cognitive study. Both simultaneously highlight and deny the body in their perceived transcendence. They rely on both normative and extraordinary conceptualizations of the body, the subject, and ability, converging on the figure of the prodigy. Both are perceived as occupying alterity and liminality. Both are treated as racialized, feminized, exoticized, and Othered. Both are manifestations of something "magical." Both are defined by time. They are both nostalgic and utopian. We are advised to listen to both.

These connections are not additive or incidental. They are integral. As we know them, there's no such thing as childhood without music, and there's no such thing as music without childhood. The interrogation of discourses and keywords common to music studies and childhood studies is key to any proposition that we rethink both of these fields to be more expansive, equitable, inclusive, and viable.

Exposition: Histories of Childhood and Music

How are the histories of music and childhood, and music studies and childhood studies, already intertwined? Many founding practitioners of music studies have some association with childhood. Jean-Jacques Rousseau gave us not only his *Dictionnaire de musique theoirique et pratique* (1752), but also the influential parenting guide, *Emile*: *Treatise on Education* (1762), which did much to establish the Romantic concept of childhood. Rousseau was also an early advocate for the entanglement of children's music and folk music, in line with Herderian ideas of

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(Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 68; Anna Mae Duane, *Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim* (University of Georgia Press, 2011).

the uncorrupted national culture of the people. In turn, Kodaly's music education methods were based on observation of Hungarian children's songs and singing games, forming early links among ethnomusicology, music education, and nationalism. Charles Seeger stands as the patriarch not only of American ethnomusicology but also of a family that includes Pete Seeger, who recorded children's songs, and Ruth Crawford Seeger who collected folk songs for children.[13] John Blacking used his study of Vahvenda people to develop his ideas about the basic musicality of humans, partly as evidenced by the practices of children.[14] Music scholars have been doing things with childhood for a long time, sometimes intentionally, sometimes casually, and sometimes while hardly even noticing.

Modern childhood and the common practice period in Western music are roughly historically coterminous, at least according to the origin stories we tell about each. Historian Phillippe Ariès's famously flawed but influential *Centuries of Childhood* (1960) was a turning point in recognizing the historical situatedness of childhood, characterizing its modern form as an invention of early modern Europe, where children began to appear in works of art as a separate class of people with their own spaces and things.[15] Although the specifics of his claims have been largely refuted, the notion of childhood as historically, socially, and geographically determined, and of modern Western childhood as a particular manifestation, was important, and is all the more so in recognition of differing global practices of childhood.[16] With the emergence

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[13] Ruth Crawford Seeger, *American Folk Songs for Children in Home, School, and Nursery School: A Book for Children, Parents, and Teachers*, reprint (Oak Publications, 2002).
[14] John Blacking, *Venda Children's Songs: A Study in Ethnomusicological Analysis* (University of Chicago Press, 1967); and *How Musical Is Man?* (University of Washington Press, 1973).
[15] Phillippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (Pimlico, trans. 1962).
[16] For a response to Ariès, see Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

of modernity's child, as the narrative goes, there was a Puritanical childhood, which was inherently sinful; an Enlightenment childhood, influenced by John Locke, in which children were blank slates ready to be influenced by their environments; and a Romantic childhood associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau in which children start out naturally good, innocent, vulnerable, and uncorrupted by society. The nineteenth century also saw the rise of the charitable child-saving movement, followed by the child study movement of the early twentieth century, with its scientism and its theories of evolution, recapitulation, and racial hierarchy. Later, the mid-twentieth-century "commonsense" child-rearing movement exemplified by Benjamin Spock was followed by a view of childhood in crisis by the 1970s.[17] This is a simplified historical narrative, but it's a starting place for recognizing the cultural meanings and narratives of childhood in Western modernity.

Musicology is rooted in the same Enlightenment, Romantic, and modernist ideas that brought us modern concepts of childhood. Its emergence in the nineteenth century as the science of music presages the rise of the scientific child study movement. In both fields, an insistence on critical standards, objectivity, observation, and evaluation of sources demonstrates a commitment to Cartesian forms of knowledge. Music and childhood are mutually constituted through the hierarchies of age, race, colonialism, gender, and class. Likewise, ethnomusicology emerged from ethnology, anthropology, folklore studies, missionary work, and exploration.

The received history of Western music, like the received history of Western childhood rests on developmental and evolutionary paradigms. Music history, for example, has traditionally

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[17] For standard histories of childhood, see Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Harvard University Press, 2004); Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (Routledge, 2020).

been taught as the development of styles, forms, and genres. Kathryn Marsh has shown how evolutionary and developmental ideologies about childhood and music persist in music education and ethnomusicology. A key figure in her analysis is the child study maven G. Stanley Hall, who theorized that the development of the individual child paralleled the evolution of species and historical evolution of civilization from savage, "primitive" races.[18] Music education methods, including those of Orff Schulwerk and Kodaly assume the child as the "primitive" person implied by this influential recapitulation theory. In both approaches, progress is directed from the introduction of the "natural" children's calling interval of the minor third to pentatonic and finally diatonic melodies, corresponding to the child's "mentality."[19] For Marsh, these methods, which are still practiced uncritically, produce an "overly limited musical environment" that impoverishes children's music education. This "evolutionary/developmental paradigm" also reinforces the notion of music's evolution from the "'primitive' characteristics of Western medieval and non-Western musical traditions to the more 'sophisticated' characteristics of post-Renaissance European art music."[20]

This is one example of how colonizing discourses are built into the disciplines and methods of music studies and childhood studies. We might also consider the ultimate form of the Western canon, the sonata, which implicitly participates in discourses of colonialism and its paternalistic regimes, with one theme and key area dominating and subordinating a secondary, Other theme.[21] This form shares with childhood keywords like *development* and *recapitulation*

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[18] Kathryn Marsh, *The Musical Playground: Global Tradition and Change in Children's Songs and Games* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

[19] Marsh, Kindle location 192, quotation of Orff cited in G. Keetman, *Elementaria,* trans. M. Murray (Schott, 1974), 18.

[20] Marsh, Kindle loc. 180

[21] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002)., 13-16; 68-69.

as well as adolescent episodes of *Sturm und Drang*.[22] It's a form we must symbolically break in order to address the colonizing legacies of music studies and childhood studies.

Development: Disciplining Childhood Studies and Music Studies

Music studies and childhood studies have confronted their origins and assumptions, laying the groundwork for important work in the study of children's music. Childhood studies emerged as an interdisciplinary field in the late 1980s, motivated by critiques of earlier research, especially in developmental psychology, that either ignored children or treated them as "objects of socialization and biological development."[23] The founders of the field were critical of the mainstream practices and assumptions of education, psychology, and medicine that tended to objectify their child research subjects, treating them as uniformly and predictably vulnerable and incompetent. The new childhood studies challenged the treatment of adulthood as the normative, desirable human state and childhood as its deficient counterpart.[24] The expression, first articulated by Danish sociologist Jens Qvortrup, "Children are beings and not becomings." drew attention to research in kids' present, daily lives and to their contributions to society rather than treating them as undeveloped future adults. This approach came with a moral and political

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[22] G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (D. Appleton and Company, 1904).

[23] Rachel Rosen, "Childhood Studies," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood Studies* (SAGE, 2020); some foundational work in the new sociology of childhood includes Allison James and Alan Prout, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood* (Falmer Press: 1990); Allison James, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout, *Theorizing Childhood* (Polity, 1998); Alan Prout, *The Future of Childhood: Towards the Interdisciplinary Study of Children* (Routledge, 2005).

[24] Erica Burman has been a significant voice bringing these critiques within developmental psychology. Erica Burman, *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* (3rd ed.) (Routledge, 2017).

imperative to treat kids as experts on their own lives with agency and the need of a certain degree

of emancipation from adult hegemony in the present. The "New Paradigm" was articulated by

anthropologist Alison James and sociologist Alan Prout, asserting that childhood is a social

construct; that childhood is a category of social analysis comparable to and intersecting with

gender, race, and class; that children are worthy of study in their own right in the present; that

children are social actors with agency; that ethnography is a good method for gaining access to

children's perspectives or "voices,"; and that research with children, rather than simply reflecting

current realities, necessarily changes the social understanding of childhood and the status of

children.[25]

Subsequent work in childhood studies complicates these founding principles. Cook,

Rosen, and Spyrou argue that the figure of the agentic, knowing child is too often the

predetermined solution to the research question. They advocate a turn, one well begun before

their writing, from an individualistic idea of an agentic child to one embedded in webs of

relationality and interdependence.[26] Asserting that the new paradigm was based on micro-scales

of the everyday, they advocate perspectives that move across macro-scales of economics,

politics, policy, discourse, political economy, and capitalism. Further, we should pay attention to

what inclusions and exclusions arise from the choices we make. The idea of "centering the child"

is called into question by "decentering" childhood in a poststructuralist sense of decentering the

humanistic subject and treating childhood not as a stable identity but as something defined by its

performative and material practices. Agency is rethought as plural, varied, and dispersed. The

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[25] James and Prout, 7-9.

[26] Spyros Spyrou, Rachel Rosen, and Daniel Thomas Cook, "Introduction: Reimagining Childhood Studies: Connectivities… Relationalities… Linkages….," in *Reimagining Childhood Studies* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

dichotomy between the "real" child and the constructed "figure of the child" is false, as children participate in the social construction of childhood. Children are becomings after all, as all people are, never achieving full autonomy and completion.

Around the time the new childhood studies was emerging, we were also having a "new musicology." Since the 1980s or so, musicology has turned to postmodern and post-structural methods and concerns, in part by seeking out excluded histories and canons, such as music by women, to which we might now add children's music. In relative terms, there has been a shift of attention from composition and style history to questions of performance, audience, and concepts of music as process rather than product. These new emphases are advantageous for the inclusion of children's music. Making room for the roles of performer and listener makes more room for kids. Further, the theoretically anti-hierarchical posture of much of this work should encourage us to critique the hierarchies of age and paternalism, including those of the academy. New questions about what constitutes knowledge in music studies are akin to the constant interrogations of the meanings and status of childhood in childhood studies.

Music scholars dealing with childhood are already incorporating the core questions of childhood studies, and our methods have prepared us for this work. The major branches of music studies—ethnomusicology, historical musicology, music theory, music education—align with the methods of childhood studies in the ethnographic field, the historical archive, the text, and the classroom. Ethnomusicology goes especially well with childhood studies' advocacy of child ethnography, and much productive work in the study of children's music has been done by

ethnographers.[27] These researchers try to bring attention to kids' musical experiences as articulated by themselves and as observed in "natural" settings. Many are committed to getting beyond children's music as a primitive or deficient form of the dominant or adult musical culture and to avoiding universalizing assumptions about children's musicality.

Ethnographic work with children faces challenges in the tension between efforts to center the child's voice and the more powerful positionality and interpretive tasks of the researcher. Amanda Minks is critical of an enculturation model in which kids are seen in the process of socialization or development into adult musical and cultural practices. At the same time, she notes that studying children "in their own right" can essentialize them as too categorically different from adults. "Centering children" can minimize the relationality and interdependence of mixed-age subjects, ignoring children's circumscribed positions.[28] In addition, power structures determine which children get studied and then, often, represented as the universal standard. Child-centering may also tend to romanticize children's informal practices and their perceived freedom and unruliness. Despite sincere efforts to the contrary, research privileging children's "folk" practices on the playground retains vestiges of Romantic ideas about children and a

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[27] Much of this research can be seen in a tradition going back to Iona and Peter Opie in such works as *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (Oxford University Press, 1959) and includes Eve Harwood, "Miss Lucy Meets Dr. Pepper: Mass Media and Children's Traditional Playground Song and Chant," in *Musical Connections: Tradition and Change: Proceedings of the 21st World Conference of the International Society for Music Education* (ISME, 1994); Patricia Sheehan Campbell, *Songs in Their Heads: Music and Its Meaning in Children's Lives* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Kyra Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch to Hip-Hop* (New York University Press, 2006); Kathryn Marsh, *The Musical Playground*; Julia Bishop, "'That's How the Whole Hand-Clap Thin Passes On': Online/Offline Transmission and Multimodal Variation in a Children's Clapping Game," in *Children's Games in the New Media Age,* (Routledge, 2016), 67-98.
[28] Spyrou, Rosen, and Cook, introduction.

residual tendency to assume universalizing aspects of children's musicality.[29] As Julia Bishop notes, not all kids participate in any particular play culture.[30]

Relations and scaling help to mitigate these tensions—or at least keep them productively foregrounded. Kyra Gaunt's study of Black girls' musical practices importantly frames these activities as anti-essentialist etudes of "kinetic orality" for learning and performing Black music, so that attention to the body and its rehearsed virtuosity counter stereotypes about "natural" Black girl musicality.[31] Gaunt then shows how Black girls' musical cultures have shaped Black popular music. The challenging task is to show the interdependence and relationality of music for adults and children without ultimately valuing children's cultures in terms of how they benefit adults. Marsh's "cycles of appropriation" might help us, here, to see a symbiotic relationship between children's music and commercial music produced by adults. Bickford's work on tween pop demonstrates a reciprocal and relational dynamic as children's music has increasingly overlapped with mainstream pop in the twenty-first century, even as it forms a children's music counterpublic, speaking back to adult discourses of youth.[32]

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[29] The introduction and chapters in Patricia Sheehan Campbell and Trevor Wiggins's *Oxford Handbook of Children's Musical Cultures* (Oxford University Press, 2013) largely affirm established paradigms of childhood, development, socialization, and children's place in their communities; Campbell, in *Songs in Their Heads*, seeks to discover "who and what children are musically"; Marsh's distinction between playground play and "play-like" activities in the classroom suggests an opposition between guided and authentic play.

[30] Julia C. Bishop, "*The Musical Playground: Global Tradition and Change in Children's Songs and Games* by Kathryn Marsh," *British Journal of Music Education* 29, no. 1 (March 2012): 132–35.

[31] Gaunt, *The Games Black Girls Play*.

[32] Tyler Bickford, *Tween Pop: Children's Music and Public Culture* (Duke University Press, 2020).

Ethnographers confront questions about whether beneficial outcomes for kids should be pursued as an objective of research. Researchers who are also educators acknowledge their intention to produce positive outcomes for children as they attempt to discover kids' informal music making practices for insights, materials, and best practices for the classroom. Yet, the appropriation of children's practices for music education still takes place within a top-down dynamic, flattening out kids' experiences in the interest of developing broadly applicable pedagogical procedures. The question of benefits also applies when children are invited to be co-researchers at some level. Consciously taking up an emancipatory ideal of childhood studies, Andrea Emberly involves children in her research as co-authors and co-researchers with the intention that the research will yield benefits to her child collaborators and their communities.[33] Yet, with children, the very idea of benefits may be difficult to disentangle from developmentalism or discourses of adult provision for child welfare. Drawing on his work in a music program for autistic children, Michael Bakan notes that recuperative goals in ethnomusicology and music therapy are problematic in neuro-diverse musical communities, where music need not be seen as curing or changing autistic kids as evidenced by musical "improvement."[34]

Historical studies contend with the archive, its power structures, and its global implications, as musical texts, documents, and objects are enlisted in the effort to reconstruct musical childhoods of the past. Paleographic and bibliographic methods of musicology are of a kind with attempts to find the child in the archive through marginalia or evidence of different

[33] Emberly, Andrea. *Ethnomusicology Scholarship and Teaching* – "Ethnomusicology and Childhood: Studying Children's Music in the Field," *College Music Symposium* (2014).
[34] Michael Bakan, "Don't Go Changing to Try and Please Me: Combating Essentialism through Ethnography in the Ethnomusicology of Autism," *Ethnomusicology* 59, no. 1 (2015): 116-144.

kinds of handling and use of the materials by kids.[35] Susan Boynton and Isabelle Cochelin use

archival sources concerning the child oblates of Cluny to glean evidence of children's vocal

performances and embodied experiences, demonstrating the complexity of medieval childhood

in this context. [36] Their findings are necessarily based on adult accounts, but despite the apparent

absence of children's voices in the archive, these insights are valuable and no less authentic than

a direct account from children. In history as in ethnography, all perspectives and modes of

communication are limited. Childhood is always mediated, as Adeline Mueller shows in her

study of how Mozart and childhood have been co-constructed in historically specific ways

through print culture and performance.[37] Productive historical work on the cultural construction

of childhood from the archives of music education has been conducted by Anicia Timberlake on

the tensions between Brechtian and bourgeois influences in the German Democratic Republic

and by Alexandra Krawetz on safety songs for children using print cultures, radio, and evidence

of children's engagement with these materials.[38]

The ephemerality of children, childhood, and performance requires innovative

imaginings and mixing of methods in seeking children in the archive. Roe-Min Kok illuminates

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[35] On childhood and the archive see Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2005) and her "In the Archives of Childhood," in Anna Mae Duane, ed., *The Children's Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities* (University of Georgia Press, 2013).

[36] Susan Boynton and Isabelle Cochelin, "The Sociomusical Role of Child Oblates at the Abbey of Cluny in the Eleventh Century," in Susan Boynton and Roe-Min Kok, eds., *Musical Childhoods and the Cultures of Youth* (Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 3-24. Boynton and Cochelin offer an alternative to the two totalizing views of medieval childhood. See also the introduction to Susan Boynton and Eric Rice, eds., *Young Choristers, 650-1700*.

[37] Adeline Mueller, *Mozart and the Mediation of Childhood* (University of Chicago Press, 2021).

[38] Anicia Chung Timberlake, "Brecht for Children: Shaping the Ideal GDR Citizen Through Opera Education," *Representations* 132, no. 1 (2015): 30-60; Krawetz, Alexandra. "Sell a Song of Safety: Children, Radio, and the Safety Patrol." *Journal of the Society for American Music* 16, no. 3 (2022): 298-318.

the relationship between the performing child musician and the figure of the child as constructed through the adult composer and publishers through material culture and print. The embodied child is discernable in Schumann's *Album for the Young*, with its child-friendly hand positions and narrow ranges. These aspects of the musical text conform to Frederic Froebel's ideals of education through touch, experience, and object lessons. Thus, we can see a scaling of cultural values from the child's body to the expression of nationalism through the everyday musical cultures of childhood. Elsewhere, Kok draws on her memories of childhood learning Western classical music in Malaysia to trace histories of colonialism in childhood experiences of music.[39]

Popular music studies engaging with childhood are often interdisciplinary in their approaches and attentive to young people's everyday interactions on scales of political economy. In Tyler Bickford's research with kids in a Vermont school, music serves as social capital in the "expressive ecology" of kids in the joint institutions of school and media. Bickford combines ethnography with cultural studies and considerations of media and material cultures.[40] Sarah Baker's research with preteen girls shows how they negotiate innocence, knowledge, and age-appropriateness in the interactions with popular music by demonstrating their knowledge of forbidden sexual topics in the music and pushing the boundaries of childhood in their dancing and play to recorded songs in the everyday spaces of the school lunchroom and bedroom. Recent

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[39] Roe-Min Kok, "Of Kindergarten, Cultural Nationalism, and Schumann's 'Album for the Young'," *The World of Music* (2006): 111-132; Roe-Min Kok, "Music for a Postcolonial Child: Theorizing Malaysian Memories," in Boynton and Kook, eds.

[40] Tyler Bickford, *Schooling New Media: Music, Language, and Technology in Children's Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

work on childhood and musical theater employs textual analysis, ethnography, historiography, autobiography, and childhood studies in varying degrees and configurations.[41]

Recapitulation?: What Music Studies and Childhood Studies Can Do For Each Other

What can music and childhood studies do for each other? Here are just a few ideas.

As a metaphor for rights and agency, children's voices are highly debated in childhood studies. Habitual notions of children's voices treat them as something naturally possessed by children and ready to be accessed or "captured" by adults who "give" children a voice.[42] Current thinking in childhood studies recognizes voice and agency as process and negotiation. Instead of a binary idea of children as active or passive, autonomous or independent, the concept of voice can apply more relationally to children and adults in a challenge to liberal humanist notions of autonomous adults and dependent children. Children's voices are interdependent with other voices, other objects, and their environments.

Music studies might intervene in somewhat abstract and stalled-out debates in childhood studies by paying attention to the materiality of children's voices. Amanda Minks identifies an aesthetics of voice in Miskitu children's code-switching in speech and song. This aesthetics of voice is useful not necessarily for its semantic content but for its political and social functions, which are not arbitrary or universal but culturally specific. They are embedded in the

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[41] James Leve and Donelle Ruwe, eds., *Children, Childhood, and Musical Theater* (Routledge, 2020); Stacy Wolf, *Beyond Broadway: The Pleasure and Promise of Musical Theatre Across America* (Oxford University Press, 2020); Ryan Bunch, "Soaring into Song: Youth and Yearning in Animated Musicals of the Disney Renaissance," *American Music* 39, no. 2 (2021): 182-195.
[42] Allison James, "Giving Voice to Children's Voices: Practices and Problems, Pitfalls and Potentials," *American Anthropologist* 109.2 (2007): 261-272.

particularity of how kids reinvent local practices within transnational imaginaries and globally

contextualized power relations.[43] This is a good example of the "scaling" Cook, Rosen, and

Spyrou call for.[44] Similarly, Emberly confronts the problem of "giving" children a voice by

recognizing how Vhavenda children already use "their learned musical skills as a means to create

and voice cultural capital in a multicultural musical landscape" that includes both traditional and

global flows.[45] A number of scholars have addressed concerns of voice in the context of girls'

musical cultures. Jacqueline Warwick counters the essentializing belief that Black girls' vocal

abilities are natural rather than trained, connecting voice as practice and voice as metaphor.[46]

Diane Pecknold has shown how popular discourses denigrate girls' voices, especially when they

refuse to conform to conventionally vulnerable constructs of girl vocality. Sarah Dougher's study

of girls at rock camps reveal that they use sensory modes in the negotiations of gender politics in

popular music. In this context, girls use the concept of "loud" to identify feminine authenticity

within rock discourse.[47] Dana Gorzelany Mostak draws on popular media and fan discourses, as

well as young singer Jackie Evancho's own statements about her singing, to show the material,

semiotic and social functions of a child's voice.[48]

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[43] Amanda Minks, *Voices of Play: Miskitu Children's Speech and Song on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua* (University of Arizona Press, 2013).

[44] Spyrou, Rosen, and Cook, introduction.

[45] Andrea Emberly and Lusani Antoinette Davhula, "My Music, My Voice: Musicality, Culture, and Childhood in Vhavenda Communities," *Childhood* 23.3 (2016): 450.

[46] Warwick, *Girl Groups*.

[47] Diane Pecknold, "'These Stupid Little Sounds in Her Voice': Valuing and Vilifying the New Girl Voice," in *Voicing Girlhood in Popular Music* (Routledge, 2016), 77–98; Sarah Dougher, "When Loud Means Real: Tween Girls and the Voices of Rock Authenticity," in *Voicing Girlhood in Popular Music* (Routledge, 2016), 191–207.

[48] Dana Gorzelany Mostak, "The Curse of the 'O mio bambino caro': Jackie Evancho as Prodigy, Diva, and Ideal Girl," in *Voicing Girlhood in Popular Music: Performance, Authority, Authenticity*, edited by Jacqueline Warwick and Allison Adrian (Routledge, 2017).

Unsurprisingly, given musicology's history of borrowing from literary theory, children's literature is one of the disciplines music scholars have turned to for insights into the cultural construction of childhood and questions about how music can be by, for, with, or about children.[49] Children's literature, like musicology, has confronted its previously underexamined methods and assumptions since the publication of Jacqueline Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984). Rose's argument, while sophisticated in its details, rests on the commonsense observation that children's fiction is written by one group (adults) on behalf of another (children). Adult writers of children's fiction are not so much writing for children as using the figure of the child foe their own needs and desires. For Rose, "children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space in between."[50] What adults want of the child, according to Rose, is its innocence, its natural state preceding both language and sexuality. Through realist aesthetics, children's fiction denies its political situatedness and assures adults of their beliefs about childhood. Sexuality and ideology become unspeakable in childhood's perceived uncorrupted "primary state of language and/or culture."[51] The figure of the child is used in the attempt to regulate and master adult desires in Freudian psychotherapeutic fashion.

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[49] For just a few examples, see Bickford, *Schooling New Media* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Liam Maloy, *Spinning the Child: Musical Constructions of Childhood Through Records, Radio and Television* (Routledge, 2020); Matthew Roy, "The Sacred Looking Glass: Imaginative Children's Music as Syncretic Nexus," in Eftychia Papanikolauo and Markus Rathey, eds., *Sacred and Secular Intersections in Music of the Long Nineteenth Century: Church, Stage, and Concert Hall* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2022), 51-74; Adeline Mueller, *Mozart and the Mediation of Childhood* (University of Chicago Press, 2021).

[50] Rose, 2.

[51] Rose, 44-47.

The phrase "children's music," like children's literature, raises questions about whether or not such a thing is possible. There are at least two levels on which we can pose the question. We can ask who "children's music" is for, or we can ask who the *study* of children's music is for.[52] These questions are further complicated in music by the processes in which music is composed and performed. Current musicology poses interrogates notions of autonomous meaning, authorial intention, and musical authenticity. Tyler Bickford and Liam Maloy, in their separate ways, have confronted questions similar to those in children's literature about the relationships among children, adults, and music. For example, Bickford's study of the independent or "kindie" movement in children's music demonstrates how adult tastes have primacy in this genre.[53]

Since Rose's intervention, scholars of children's literature have sought to further complicate or mitigate the "impossibility" at the core of Rose's critique.[54] One approach has

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[52] It might be useful to note that Rose's attention is primarily on children's prose fiction, not poetry or song, whose "rhythm and play" have functions routinely defined "in "opposition to the canons of narrative fiction," 139-140. Rose's main point is that lyricism and nonsense have been subordinated to narrative fiction in the hierarchy of children's literature.

[53] Tyler Bickford, "The Kindie Movement: Independent Children's Music in the United States Since 2000," in *Music in Early Childhood: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives and Inter-Disciplinary Exchanges*, edited by Susan Young and Beatriz Ilari (Springer, 2019), 223-233; Liam Maloy, *Spinning the Child*.

[54] For some emphasizing performance and collaboration, see Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Marah Gubar, "On Not Defining Children's Literature," *Pmla* 126, no. 1 (2011): 209–16; Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (NYU Press, 2011); Robin Bernstein, "Children's Books, Dolls, and the Performance of Race; or, the Possibility of Children's Literature," *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (2011): 160–69; Marah Gubar, "Risky Business: Talking about Children in Children's Literature Criticism," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (November 19, 2013): 450–57; Robin Bernstein, "Toys Are Good for Us: Why We Should Embrace the Historical Integration of Children's Literature, Material Culture, and Play," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (2013): 458–63; Victoria Ford Smith, *Between Generations: Collaborative Authorship in the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2017).

been through performance. Performance shifts the emphasis from representation to doing, which makes the child participant more visible. Performance also mediates between the "real" and constructed child showing them to be co-constitutive rather than in simple binary opposition. As music scholars, we know the complications of this process. In the study of historical performance and rock ideology, the "authentic" performance is as evasive as the "authentic" child, but work to figure out what music, or what a child, *does* is still worth the effort. Rose's insistence that the adult comes first and the child second with no opportunity to meet in the space in between is less obviously true in music, which is complicated by its multiple levels of performance. Children's music, its repertoires, and its practices require an understanding music in terms of interactions rather than as fixed objects in which adult writers or performers necessarily come first. Media and material cultures of music play a role too. Ingeborg Vested shows how a recording can script kids' play, providing ways of "doing" music and shifting the definition away from categories of music by, for, or about children.[55]

Childhood is not just an additional lens or identity through which to view music. It brings its own particular challenges to our assumptions, methods, and institutions. It's not enough to simply include or "center" children in our work. We can go farther by identifying the adultist and paternalistic frames that the particular relations of childhood make visible. In this effort, one approach might be to follow a kind of strategic childism. As conceived by John Wall, childism centers or privileges childhood perspectives, realities and practices while recognizing their particularity in the social construction of childhood. In this way, childism is analogous to feminism and other critical movements but brings its own contributions to the challenging of

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[55] Ingeborg Lunde Vestad, "To Play a Soundtrack: How Children Use Recorded Music in Their Everyday Lives," *Music Education Research* 12, no. 3 (2010): 243–55.

social practices.[56] A childist approach is productive for all of society, critiquing entrenched adultism without essentializing children. It is age-inclusive while challenging routine social practices about childhood and adulthood and structural experiences of age. It looks to kids' experiences of difference as perspectives from which to reconceptualize society—for example, from one based on a notion of adult autonomy to one recognizing interdependence across age categories.

Attention to the practices of children's music highlights aspects of the musical process that might otherwise be overlooked. The doingness of children's music draws attention to the body, participation, materiality, and social relations in ways that are oriented to a child-specific perspective. Children's music crosses and destabilizes media and genre boundaries especially enthusiastically, destabilizing the ideas of canon and genre. These claims may sound like stereotyping or essentializing, but if approached with particularity and thick description, they can be recuperated as existing practices that come from the authority of children to represent and perform their own musical cultures and relations to the benefit of all.

Other work is already being done in music studies to challenge our habitual practices, and we can build on this work in the study of music and childhood. For example, William Cheng's reparative musicology of care addresses some institutional practices that could productively be put into conversation with childhood studies.[57] The contemplation of childhood highlights institutional and professional hierarchies that resemble those giving adults power over children. Our rigorous training in listening, as Cheng notes, should prepare us to listen to the needs of

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[56] John Wall, "From Childhood Studies to Childism: Reconstructing the Scholarly and Social Imaginations," *Children's Geographies* 20, no. 3 (2019): 257–70.

[57] William Cheng, *Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good* (University of Michigan Press, 2016).

others, including children. "Listening to children" need not be a naïve cliché. Doing so with

diligence and rigor is essential. Cheng's turning to the "wisdoms" of childhood can be insightful

and not merely romanticizing if we follow such a method with insights from childhood studies.

Suzanne Cusick's work on music, including children's music, as torture, can help us recognize

how music can be used to help or harm.[58] It nurtures, but it's also used to assimilate, extract, and

dispossess as, for example, in Native American and First Nations residential schools.[59]

The branches of music studies continue to have reckonings with who they are for, and

who they have historically not been for (or about). I still have questions. Does our research

transform and challenge constructions of childhood or just describe them? How about our

pedagogy? Are children more than something "good to think with?" What are the extra steps we

can take to make sure our work changes the world, the academy, and the status of childhood and

youth? Do we want our efforts to be transformative? Can we afford to make a distinction

between scholarship and activism? If our scholarship is a form of advocacy or activism, what

right have we to be those things on behalf of a group to which we no longer belong? Can we, in

Rose's conception, inhabit the "space in-between?" Failure, at least partial, is assured, but do we

have any choice but to attempt the impossible?

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[58] Suzanne G. Cusick, "'You Are in a Place That Is out of the World. . .': Music in the Detention Camps of the 'Global War on Terror,'" *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 1 (February 2008): 1–26; see also Jonathan Pieslak, *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War* (Indiana University Press, 2009), 172 and Cheng, *Just Vibrations*, 82.

[59] Jacqueline Warwick, "Sentimentality, Unwanted Children, and Music Curriculum: Music and Residential Schools," paper presented for the panel Valuing Musical Childhoods: Methods and Multiplicities at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, Boston, MA, 2019.