

Louie Louie: THE MUSICAL EDUCATION OF LOUIS THE 13TH

Phillipe Aries in Centuries of Childhood describes the matter-of-fact making of an ‘infant prodigy’:

“Louis XIII was born on September 27th, 1601. His doctor, Heroard, has left us a detailed record of all his activities. Heroard writes that at seventeen months he ‘plays the violin and sings at the same time.’ Before that, he had played with the usual toys given to very little children, a hobby-horse, a windmill and a shipping-top. But as early as seventeen months a violin was put into his hands. The violin had not yet won recognition as a noble instrument: it was still the fiddle played for dancing at village weddings and fetes. At the same age we find him playing mall [early form of golf]: ‘The Dauphin, playing mall, muffed his shot and injured M. de Longueville.’ This is just as if an English boy were to start playing cricket or golf at the age of seventeen months. At twenty two months we are told that he ‘continues to beat his tambourin with all sorts of rhythms’: every company had its own drum and its own drumbeat. He started to talk: ‘They are making him pronounce the syllables separately, before saying the words.’ The same month, August 1603, ‘the Queen, going in to dinner, had him brought along and placed at the end of her table.’ This little fellow is barely two years old, yet now we find him being ‘taken to the King’s apartments and dancing all sorts of dances to the music of a violin’. Again we see how early in life music and dancing were introduced into the education of the little men of this period: this explains the frequency, in the families of professionals, of what we should now call infant prodigies, such as the young Mozart; such cases would become rarer and at the same time seem more prodigious as familiarity with music, even in its elementary or bastard forms, grew less common or disappeared.” (1962:62-63).

Aries has condensed a lot of precious information in this paragraph and there are other paragraphs based upon Heroard's detailed diaries that are almost as full of information about the Prince's ability to perform on many instruments, dance many dances, play many adult games, sing many songs, recite much poetry, take part in both coarse and subtle banter, all by the age of three. By the age of 5 or 6 he was a veteran and accomplished performer in all these arts areas and literate, going to the theatre, becoming adept at many pursuits like chess, diplomacy, military skills and strategy.

There is, apparantly, no full English translation of Heroard’s diaries but we do have more excerpts from them in Lucy Crump’s *Nursery Life 300 Years Ago* (1929). Here’s a paragraph from Crump:

“But it is time to go back to the dauphin and his earliest lessons. Heroard’s naïve belief that a baby of a few months old was not too young to profit by a moral lesson is both funny and pathetic. In December 1601, he was already eager to train a child not yet three months old. He tells us that the dauphin “listened attentively while I told him that he must be good and just, and that God had brought him into the world with this intent, and to be a good king; and that if he were so God would love him. He smiled at these words.” If he could smile at ten weeks old at the little moral lesson we need not be surprised at the following entries in the journal a few weeks later. “Dec. 12th. He began to recognize people and to call them in his baby way. When the dresser asked who I was he babbled quite plainly ‘E’ou’ad.’ He loves to hear music. Dec. 21st. His nurse asked him ‘Are you papa’s darling?’ He said ‘*Oui*.’ Messieurs de Villeroy, Alincourt, du Laurens and others were present.” It is noticeable that the doctor likes to mention the witnesses of

these and similar surprising manifestations of intelligence. *Oui* is a sound a child could more easily be supposed to babble than our English yes; possibly he may have made some such sound on this occasion as on another when "M. de Ventelet told him God was his only master and he answered *oui* with a smile." Heroard is on surer ground when he tells us that in the following March the child began to reach out for things which were offered him. "It was the Psalms of David in M. de Bourges' version. I had given it to Mme de Montglat"; or when about the same date "he crowed and danced to the viol played by Boileau." In the previous December he had already shown a liking for music. It was a taste which grew with him and which he cultivated with success." (1929:145-46)

Enjoying music at 3 months, crowing and dancing to viol at 6 months. From the Aries paragraph we can add: playing the violin and singing at the same time at 17 months, also playing "mall," a form of golf; at 22 months beats his tambourin[e] to all sorts of rhythms and pronouncing syllables separately; 23rd month dancing all sorts of dances to the violin in the King's chambers. All this before the age of 2.

Given what has been translated from Heroard, let's add more incidents and scenes to the chronology:

2 years one month (not yet speaking according to Crump): "Oct. 26th 1603. taken to see the king and queen. At the king's table he beat on the dinner-service the French and the Swiss drum taps. Found his drum and began over again. The king was charmed."

2 and 3/4 "Waked at quarter to eight; he amused himself with softly beating the drum tap of the lansquenets on himself, using his chest for the drum and his fists for drumsticks. 'Come on, soldiers! March! On guard!' He asked for his corselet and was very impatient to have it. He let himself be dressed and had his hair combed without making a fuss in the expectation of getting a casque in front of him. He tried it on but it was too small. M. de Belmont put on his gorget and M. de Ventelet handed the corselet for M. de Belmont to put on. The dauphin buckled it himself as if he were quite accustomed to wearing a cuirass. He was very patient and, so soon as he was armed, asked for his pike. He marched about the room so gaily that one might have thought he had no weight on his shoulders. No one ever saw such a sight at such an age! He began to shoot and to bang his pike against Labarge and the balustrade, marching up and down, quite silent and beside himself with happiness. Some one brought a mirror. He caught sight of himself and immediately had all his armour taken off." (1929:87)

2 and 3/4 (a few days later): "Had his boots and spurs put on and his frock and petticoat tucked up high. He put on his sword and sword-belt which M. de Lorraine had given him and seized his trumpet." [Crump describes a list of toys at his disposal that ends with "a Turkish trumpeter a-horseback, besides trumpets and drums in great plenty."]

3 years "Coming out from Mass he made two little choir boys march in front of him, singing as they marched. He was so entranced with the music that he never took any notice of the fountain as he passed it although he generally takes the greatest pleasure in it." (p. 167)

3 years one month "M. de St. Geran told him about a spinet. He would not rest till one had been brought to his room for him to see. M. de Geran made his page play on it while Hauteville played the lute and Boileau the viol. He listened entranced." (p. 167)

3 years 9 months "The dauphin whistled on the ends of his fingers against his lips saying 'this is the bass,' then whistling a higher note, 'that is the *chanterelle*, and this one is the tenor.' He was quite right. He must have learnt the notes and their names from Boileau and Indret."

3 years 11 months "All dinnertime he was in a transport of joy with the music of king's viol players. There were fifteen of them. At the end of dinner he asked them to play '*la guerre*'. It was the first word he had spoken all through dinner. They did not know it."

3 years 11 months "Aug. 5th, 1605. Sat silent at dinner because he was so happy listening to a crippled flageolet player, who after playing a long time accompanied by two viols said in a gruff voice, 'Monsieur, drink to us.' The dauphin grew very red and said crossly, 'Send them away. I want them sent away.' I said, 'Monsieur, he is a poor man. You mustn't send poor people away.' 'Poor people mustn't come here.' 'Monsieur, not all poor people but those who play as he does may.' 'Let him go and play downstairs. Mamanga [nurse], he has all upset me. I only drink to Papa and Mamma.'"

age 4 "whilst standing at the window he amused himself with making the captain of the guard order all the drum taps beaten by the company's drummers, Spanish, English, Walloon, Italian, Piedmontese, Moorish, Scotch, Lombard, German, Turk and last of all the French. Then they beat a *chamade* [signal made for a parley] and an assault. At last he said, 'That will do. But beat the march to battle as you go.' "

age 4 "Got up in a bad temper; wouldn't have his frock put on. His nurse called out, 'Monsieur Tabouret, here! Monsieur Tabouret, come and put on your frock.' He burst out laughing and let it be put on. Went quite good to see the king. He wanted to go down to the wardrobe room to get his little drum which a toy woman beat by a spring; it was one of his greatest pleasures so he went against his will to the king. The king said, 'Take off your hat.' He fumbled over taking it off so the king took it off for him and this made him cross. The king took away his drum too which made him crosser than ever. 'My hat, my drum, my drumsticks!' To tease him the king put the hat on his own head. 'I want my hat!' The king hit him over the head with the hat and thereupon flew into a passion and the king with him. The king seized him by the wrists and held him up in the air with his little arms stretched out like a cross. '*He!* you hurt me. *He!* my drum! *He!* my hat.' The queen gave him back his hat and his drumsticks."

4 years 9 months "June 4th, 1606. The dauphin called Indret his lutist and Boileau the viol players and a soldier who played on a mandora [small lute] and then taking a lute himself said, 'Let's make music.' He placed them round the head of his bed."

4 years 10 months "he took a little *violon*, a kit that is, and played with Indret and made us sing *Hau! Guillaume, Guillaume* and *Maitre Amboise, ho!! ho! d'ou venezvous?* Then he danced the Frog ballet very prettily and in good time without ever having been taught."

Age or date of Heroard journal entry unknown, but reported by Crump next to the preceding event, "M. le dauphin took a big lute and made Indret put his fingers on the keys while he twanged the chords. They began with cadences and then played and sang *Ils sont a St John d'Anjou, les gens, les gens, les gensdarmes*. After that they played a *bergamasque, saraband* and the bells; when he had finished he rolled on the floor pretending it was the sea, and M. le Chevalier copied him."

Age 5 around Christmas time: "He made his usher [servant] sing carols which the man had himself written and above all the one where the words "crown of laurels" occurs. His usher gave it to him in writing and he was so impatient to read and learn it by heart that he left off eating his meal."

Early in his sixth year: "He danced his ballet in the the queen's room and did it very well. The king was delighted. The baby Duc d'Orleans' dresser came in with him in her arms and Madame Christienne's nurse carried her in too and everybody danced the branles. After two turns the dauphin said to Mme de Montglat 'Mamanga, what pleasure is there in this? dancing with children! Take them away.'"

At 6 years 6 months, February 1608: "Mlle de Vendome put on a cap such as a *bourgeoise* wears, and so did Madame and the little Frontenac girl and little de Vitry and her nurse's child, and little Marguerite who belonged to Mlle de Vendome. Little Louise, Nurse Dondon's child, was dressed as a bride. The dauphin took a kit [small violin] and placed himself between Boileau and Indret, his musicians, played with them and made all the little *bourgeoises* dance. He played cadences quite nicely and the tunes people play at weddings."

At 6 years, 9 months, May, 1608: "The ballet arrived and when it was over they all danced branle. The dauphin did not want to dance so he looked on. M. de Vendome led the branle. The dauphin took it into his head to dance and jumped in above M. de Vendome and seized Mme de Moret by the left hand. M. de Vendome said to the dauphin, 'Monsieur, take your proper place.' 'Oh! my proper place is everywhere.' He led Mme de Guise, followed by the whole ballet, to his feast amidst laughter and exclamations."

Not quite 7 years old: "The dauphin went to Mme De Montglat's room to dress for the ballet he was to dance. He did not want anyone to see him for fear of being recognized, and all the more because he, like all those dancing with him, was dressed as a girl and masked. The company consisted of Monseigneur the dauphin, Mlle de Vendome, Mme and Mlle de Vitry, M. le Chevalier and M. de Verneuil; Mme de Valon's niece, Marguerite, and Mlle de Verneuil, Nicole, the daughter of Madame's nurse, and Louise, Nurse Dondon's daughter. The ballet was called The Lanterns because each dancer carried a half-hoop twined with bay leaves, from which hung a tiny lantern with a lighted taper in it. They were to dance three figures, one an H, one an O, and one an L; then

they passed under the hoops and finished with a courante. They went to the king's room at eight o'clock where the ballet was danced before him. It was very well done although they had not previously rehearsed it in costume and masked. The king, who was talking to two jesuits, was so pleased that tears came into his eyes. The whole court admired them. They had only taken four days learning it. When the dauphin was in bed he saw the Piedmontese soldier who had arranged the ballet. He pointed to him saying, 'There's the man who made it up,' as if he wanted to give honour where it was due."

By the age of 6 we can infer from Heroard's diaries and other evidence that Louis XIII knew the military drumming traditions of over eleven cultures and could perform them as "hamboning" on his own body and on diverse drums and tamborines, could dance over a dozen common or folk dances, had performed in scores of ballets, could choreograph a ballet himself, knew how to play a variety of dance music on a kit or pocket violin, had some skills on lute, viola, flageolet, bagpipes, trumpet, and perhaps other instruments, could sing a great many songs and compose his own music, recited a lot of poetry, could act, direct, stage manage, costume, mask and create scenery, could participate at some level in almost all the adult games and sports of his times (some of which, admittedly, are only known as children's games today) could read and write and make intelligent conversation with adults on any subject dear to them.

Every child could be doing this and more in the 21st Century. And they could be happy and unstressed doing it, every step of the way. Every child could play 11 drumming traditions by age 3. Every child could play 3 or 4 more instruments by age 4. Great expectations from everyone is the key to a revolution in education. Great expectations. And no demands from adults. "Child centered" means the prince wants to hang out with the stone mason who plays bagpipes on his break. The prince wants to dress up in armor and march around in time to drum beats. The prince wants to strum the lute while his musician does the left hand fingering on the fret board. Every child could play being a 'prince' or 'princess,' ordering musicians and dancers and poets and skilled artisans to help them create pleasures for themselves.

I'll never forget one evening after dinner with our neighbors in Buffalo, little Naomi at about 2 years old was suddenly conducting some after dinner singing; when she stopped waving her arms around we stopped singing. . . . long pause . . . she would wave one arm and we all started singing again. . . and so forth for about 5 minutes of Naomi getting happier and happier with her control of our sounding. At our "Sounding Sanga for Sanity and Serenity and Species Survival on Sundays in Salisbury" little Rafael, age 3, loves to stop the vocal "om" and start the instrumental drone (or vice versa) by hitting the woodblock as a signal to switch. Any child can be the prince or princess who conducts.

There are many, many other important points or principles to be drawn from the life of the prince as drawn from the Heroard diaries. I find that almost every sentence contains some insight into what we have lost in the way of living traditions, organic cultures, enlivening education, multi-layered cultural identities, richness and complexity of arts integration, cross-class access, etc. But let's focus briefly on the last two points.

Music crosses class and ethnic lines freely. Soldiers choreograph ballets. Stone masons drop their mortar and trowels to play bagpipes for the prince. Townspeople and "gypsies" use the castle for wedding parties full of music and dances.

And here is a wonderful passage from Phillipe Aries on cross-class access and arts integration as the same process.

"It is impossible to separate dance and drama. Dancing in those days was more of a collective activity and less clearly distinguished from ballet than our modern ballroom dancing in couples. We have seen in Heroard's diary how much Louis XIII's contemporaries liked dancing, ballet dancing and play acting, genres which were still fairly closely linked; a man would play a part in a ballet as naturally as he would dance at a ball (the link between the two words is significant: the same word later split into two, the ball for amateurs, and the ballet for professionals). There were ballets in plays, even in the scholastic theatre of the Jesuit colleges. At Louis XIII's court, authors and actors were recruited on the spot from the nobles but also from the valets and soldiers; children both acted in the plays and attended the performances.

Was this true only at court? No, it was common practice.... Like music and dancing these plays united the whole community and brought together the various age groups in both actors and audience" (pg. 81)

Like musicking and dancing, plays could integrate the arts and unite whole primary schools, community centers, churches, and bring together the various age groups in both actors and audience.

Little Louie Louie proves that all children are born to groove and no child is born to govern. Before the Dauphin could come to maturity as a musician, composer, choreographer, playwright, his father was assassinated and he was put on the throne in a world filled with the intrigues of Cardinal Richelieu, the maneuvers of generals and armies, much murder and mayhem. No happy ending.

And knowing how things turned out for Louis 13^{XIII} makes us look back at the 11 styles of drumming he could pound on his chest at age 3 – all drums of war! When we first notice that a common soldier could choreograph a ballet in those days it seems wonderful, but 400 years later "drill" is still dominant over "dance" in human history (MacNeill). No progress toward peace. No happy ending in view.

Pat Campbell:

Still, doesn't it knock your socks off, to imagine that "Every child could play 11 drumming traditions by age 3"? In first grade, teachers may follow a beat-conscious curricular path that strives for an internalization of the beat by way of multiple beat-keeping exercises, rhythm band activities, and experiences in movement and dance. We could be doing more, and differently, to bring children in touch with drumming traditions sooner and deeper. In middle school drumming ensembles, I've seen teachers work hard to layer in three or four patterns on multi-colored Remo djembes. At times, these patterns gell into a layered organism of sound with a life all its own; it becomes the piece to play for assemblies, parents, even community events. That's great, but doing more, and differently, could the middle schoolers who know how to groove work with the kindergarten and first graders? How might 11 drumming traditions by age 6 seem less preposterous, possible, even probable? If we began early enough, children *could* learn multiple drumming traditions. They would have no trouble slipping in and out of such styles as merengue, cumbia, samba, and salsa, if only we would give them the chance. If we were singing, dancing, playing with them at home, in community centers, at church and temple, in preschools, they would know music the way they know language. With the

steady influence of someone who drums, they would drum along, because it's just the natural thing that children do.

Music is dance, and dance is music; they are integrated. John Blacking declared that "Many, if not all, of music's essential processes can be found in the constitution of the human body and in patterns of interaction of bodies in society." He continued, explaining how he came to know this: "When I lived with the Venda, I began to understand how music can become an intricate part of the development of mind, body, and harmonious social relationships". So by dancing, we could know music more deeply. In tertiary-level programs, dance students are required to study music—typically in appreciation courses, or in theory, hardly ever in practice. It is an even rarer exception, however, for music students at universities and conservatories to study dance. Music goes its separate way, even when we know better. Is it all just an administrative impossibility, with schedules, faculty loads, and lack of funds preventing combined study? If we can't experience the benefits of music-for-dancers, and dance-for-musicians in higher education could we at least stop interrupting the natural and happy music-dance-flow of children in lower education?

- Although the excerpts above might be enough for the moment, hold in reserve the possibility of reading the classic tome by Mr. Aries (Phillipe Aries, 1962. Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life (Robert Baldick, translator). New York: Knopf.
- If you are a musician, take a dance class. If you dance, pick up an instrument to learn. In your own personal journey, note how your longer experience in one expressive art is influenced by new experiences in a second expressive medium.
- For your information, many university music departments offer voice lessons for theatre and dance majors, and why not more "Music for Dancers" courses, such as those at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, and the University of Oregon, Eugene? Some programs offer dance courses for musicians (as in "Baroque Dance for Musicians" at Mannes College, New York), and there is even the balanced treatment of the two in the University of Arizona's "Seminar in Music and Dance Collaboration".