

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: YouTube

Proof of Dancers' Re-Incarnation! Babies Wow with Cool Moves!

by Lisa Kraus

When I look at the video of [this little guy](#), apparently in his PJ's (and a diaper), I imagine that hanging out with the older folks right before his bedtime, getting to dance as they clapped and cheered him on, was his kind of late-night treat. Yes, different families have different ways to cut loose and enjoy each other's company. But in this 20-month old's rendition of flamenco, I see more than just the sponge-like absorption little people have for what's happening in their elder's world. Take a look.

Might you, like me, imagine that the way this tiny person has come to not only embody but also give voice to his cultural heritage goes beyond pure imitation? That maybe there is such a thing as an "old soul"? That perhaps his understanding was passed to him from an earlier time of knowing this dance and music?

There is a Tibetan tradition that teachers, vowing to work over the course of multiple lifetimes for the benefit of sentient beings, reincarnate. There is documentation in the film [Unmistaken Child](#) of a little boy identifying, from several possible choices, the practice materials that belonged to the person thought to be his predecessor and passing other "tests" proving his reincarnation.

Whether this notion of rebirth applies to dancers or not, some tiny people understand in a deep way what is happening with a given dance form, or with music, and I love to watch them. Take [the little boy](#) whose parents clearly appreciate his connection to Beethoven. How many three-year olds have their own conductor's podium and baton and know the entire final movement of Beethoven's Fifth, note for note? It is worth watching him all the way to the end to see his gleeful reaction when he makes it through the whole thing.

How he feels the music, its cadences and power, and how it translates physically for him, are what I see and am so thrilled by. This [next little boy](#) understands his cultural tradition too. And unlike the earlier examples, where the eyes of viewers clearly played an important part, this child might be dancing in a room with no one there. This is his private pleasure. (This video is on Facebook and cannot be embedded, so to access click [here](#).)

When I invited friends to share their favorite videos of very small children dancing, some sent me clips of children who can execute amazing technical feats. Those are proliferating on YouTube, along with videos of the small people who lip sync to famous rock music or rap and have the routines down. But that's a different animal, a more exhibitionistic trick pony thing. The scent I'm following is the one that smells of a kind of deep connection and inner knowing.

Kids' responsiveness to catchy pop music or strong music video dance moves can be awesome. Babies have gone viral for being irrepressibly moved by Beyoncé (her music *is* catchy, right?). Maybe this response comes from their loving the strong contrast of black and white in the *Single Ladies* video, the pumping rhythms in sound and visual. Whatever the reasons, there are multiple versions of this same kind of clip to be seen on YouTube.

In [this one](#) the response to the video almost looks like scratching an itch--completely instinctual and reflexive.

And [this little girl](#) is egged on by a grown up voice saying "Shake your booty!" which she does in a wiggly way that's charming enough that 6.5 million people have watched her.

In the questionable category of sexualizing seven-year olds is [this *Single Ladies* rendition](#). This clip has garnered more views than any of the others mentioned. Seeing seven-year olds bump and grind is just not anything I feel happy about, but the numbers show that many in the culture do.

Below are a few more clips in the general terrain; they don't illustrate anything in particular, except how much fun little kids around the world have dancing, just as I did (to [Wake Up Little Susie](#) by the Everly Brothers in a 1950s suburban living room). The dancing doesn't have to be that of a prodigy or an exceptionally sensitive kid to be meaningful. Moving to music is just a natural impulse, and kids, free of adult ideas about good and bad dancing, let it rip.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgXPI3XM_NA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGEWrqDbtY&app=desktop>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQM32a6JqJo>

Thanks to Guy Dartnell, Dustin Hurt and Christina Zani for sharing favorite videos. Feel free to add yours in the comments!

By Lisa Kraus

April 6, 2015