

A 12-Year-Old Prodigy's 5 Tips for Raising a Happy and Creative Child

Earlier this week I came across a recent *60 Minutes* segment making the rounds on the internet. The segment introduces viewers to a British 12-year-old named Alma Deutscher.

Alma, you see, is quite unique. She is an accomplished pianist. She is an accomplished violinist. And she is also an accomplished composer. In fact, she is so accomplished in that last area that she has already composed and debuted her own piano concerto, violin concerto, and opera, feats akin to those accomplished at a similar age by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

One can't help but be in awe of – and fall in love with – little Miss Alma. Besides her remarkable talent, she also has a bubbly happiness that's rare to find in today's children. And as I hunted down more of Alma's interviews and showcases of her talent, I began to uncover several clues besides her prodigious talent which explain why she is so different from the modern child.

1. A Love for Reading – Undoubtedly inherited from her mother, a literature professor, Alma admits to [reading 100 books](#) a year. That's about [ten times more books](#) than the average American seventh grader manages annually. These stories likely fuel the ones that Alma creates herself... and then puts to music.

2. Limited Electronics – The reason Alma is able to spend so much time reading is because she doesn't devote her time to electronics. In [an interview](#) with *CBS News*, Alma admits that she doesn't have an iPhone, an iPad, or a computer (a fact

which makes her composing more remarkable, as she [writes her music by hand](#)). She laughingly explains that she doesn't even watch TV:

"No, I don't watch television at all! It's much more interesting to read a book and actually imagine how it would be."

3. Plenty of Unstructured Downtime – This lack of electronics also gives her opportunity to run outside and play with her younger sister. According to Alma, it is this downtime, combined with her faithful skipping rope, which allows her musical melodies to fill her mind.

4. No Institutionalized Schooling – This opportunity for downtime and free play is undoubtedly aided by the fact that Alma and her sister are homeschooled. It's easy to wonder what Alma would be like in the institutional setting of a traditional school. Would such a setting hinder the creative genius which currently flows from Alma's free spirit?

5. An Appreciation of the Past – The last thing that sets Alma apart from the modern child – the modern world, even – is her love and appreciation for the [beauty of the past](#):

"Some people have told me that I compose in the musical language of the past and that this is not allowed in the 21st century. In the past, it was possible to compose beautiful melodies and beautiful music, but today they say, 'I won't allow you to compose like this anymore, because I need to discover the complexity of the modern world, and that the point of music is to show the complexity of the world.'"

Well, let me tell you a huge secret! I already know that the world is complex and can be very ugly. But I think that these people have just got a little bit confused. If the world is so ugly, then what's the point of making it even uglier with ugly music?"

Let's face it. Alma Deutscher has a unique level of gifting that most others can never hope to receive in life.

But could many other children grow closer to achieving such feats and such overflowing happiness if they experienced some of the same practices as Alma? Are we hindering the creativity we're desperately wanting to develop in our children by placing them in constricting, mind-numbing environments which limit play and books?