

The Wonder Kid

UK / Austria : 1951 : dir. Karl Hartl : London (?) : 85 min
 prod: Alexander Korda : scr: : dir.ph.: Krasker
[Bobby Henrey](#)
 Robert Schackleton [*sic*]; Christa Winter; Oskar Werner; Muriel Aked; Sebastian Cabot;
 June Elvin; Elwyn Brook-Jones; Paul Hardtmuth

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	KBytes	Ω	□	€	Z	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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A little goldmine of talent

Source: *The Moving Picture Boy*

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"A young piano virtuoso is exploited by his manager, against which his governess rebels by having him kidnapped. When the kidnappers discover they've got their hands on a wonderkid they demand a high ransom, because of which the plan threatens to backfire. The lad manages to wind his kid-nappers around his little finger, however.

A screenplay devoid of excitement, and exclusively cute direction of the young Henrey make the film needlessly flat. Krasker's atmospheric photography of Austria is wasted.
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Film Illustrated Monthly - vol.4/11 -
 production note:

"Well, it was bound to happen sooner or later - Rank and Korda to hit on the same subject simultaneously. For some time now Bobby Henrey has been in the Austrian Tyrol making

a film for Korda (based on a short story by Aldous Huxley) called **"THE WONDER KID"**. It is all about a child prodigy (piano) whose life is made a misery by an impresario who wants to make as much as possible out of him. Imagine, then, the woe in the Rank camp, with a film called **"PRELUDE TO FAME"** going on the floor at Pinewood any time now. It is all about a boy prodigy (conductor) whose life is made a misery by a woman impresario who wants to make as much as possible out of him. Well, Korda started first - but you can bet that Rank will throw everything in the book, independent frame and all, at his prodigy to get him on the screen first."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Henrey:

"Bobby, son of the novelist Mrs Robert Henrey, was spotted by an acute studio scout in a photo on the dust-jacket of one of his mother's books. They were looking for a posh but innocent child to play the French diplomat's son in Graham Greene's story **"THE FALLEN IDOL"**, and this lordly hamster of a boy proved, on interview, to be ideal.

With a bleary but obstinate air, civil manners and a trace of French accent, little Henrey was great in Carol Reed's near-perfect comedy thriller - whether communing with his grass snake McGregor or (after the latter's regret-table demise) ganging up against its executioner, Mrs Baines. He forms a reward-ing alliance with her forgivably adulterous husband (Ralph Richardson, wonderfully and uncharacteristically subdued), and his increasingly frantic, counter-productive attempts to shield Baines, suspected by the police of killing his wife, are magnificent.

The pompous little voice calling "Baines! Baines!" in the marbled caverns of the embassy is one of the cinema's most memorable child sounds. And no one could have delivered with more exquisite boredom the line (on seeing Michele Morgan, as Richardson's girl friend): "Oh look, there's your niece again."

That it was, however, a one-off performance was cruelly demonstrated two or three years later when Bobby was cast as a musical prodigy in *Mittel-Europa*. Plumper than before, burdened with Tyrolean-style dress, an atrocious hair-do, and script and direction as far beneath Greene and Reed as could be imagined, the poor little chap looked terrible and acted likewise."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Source: *Film Illustrated Monthly* 4/11 – in which the



caption read "Git along, little prodigy"

No further information currently available. Essentially this is a rehash of the Freddie Bartholomew vehicle "**PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER**" (35), in which he played a young European king who befriends his kidnapper, and the same idea was recycled again with Gary Coleman (14) as a genius kidnapped by bungling oafs in "**JIMMY THE KID**" (83). In Disney's "**NO DEPOSIT, NO RETURN**" (76), unwanted rich kids Brad Savage and Kim Richards fake their own kidnapping to extort funds from grandpa David Niven, who's more than happy to be rid of them. Jeremy Spenser was the boy prodigy in the rival Rank title, "**PRELUDE TO FAME**", but it's puzzling why this one should be absent from all the conventional film guides. You will find older and equally feeble titles listed in most of them.

In 1950 it may have been a novelty to see two concurrent films with the same essential plot. Today, of course, we're rather more accustomed to "Robin Hood"s, "Colombus"s and "Gunfights at the OK Corral" coming at us in bunches, like buses. 1983 even saw two competing Bond films in circulation: "**OCTOPUSSY**" and "**NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN**".

French-born Bobby Henrey is 11 here, two years after his debut in "**THE FALLEN IDOL**". This was also his last film, so Holmstrom is not alone in reckoning it a disaster. Korda, who produced both films, died five years later. He is generally accounted to have rescued the moribund British film industry virtually single-handed.

See "**PRELUDE TO FAME**", and subject index under **PRODIGIES, KIDNAPPING, MUSIC / YOUNG MUSICIANS** and **NANNIES / GOVERNESSES**. For a biopic of an authentic child musical prodigy, see "**MOZART – AUFZEICHNUNGEN EINER JUGEND**" (76)