

The Scottish Chamber Orchestra has just finished a series of concerts called Big Ears, Little Ears. It is a programme of short popular classics aimed at babies and their carers. The idea is to provide live classical music for adults that otherwise might miss out and, presumably, to introduce a whole new audience to the magic of live orchestra. Sadly, only families in the central belt have been able to enjoy this pleasure so far, but if they are deemed a success the series may well come to a village hall near you in the future.

I love the whole idea of this. I understand that the music is carefully chosen to suit the audience, although the orchestra insist on full pieces; no dumbing down for the kiddies. However, they do avoid very quiet music that might not be heard over chatter and crying and that overture where canons get fired. It must be a relief for parents to be able to enjoy a grown-up sort of event without worrying unduly about disturbing everyone else.

A number of years ago we were guests at a wedding and were kindly informed that children were not welcome at the ceremony. This was a great shame for the children who love a good party and for us who had to make arrangements for them for that weekend that was at least as enjoyable for them. I always think children are part of what makes a good wedding. The random comments in church and the wee boys sliding around the dance floor are an essential part of the whole experience. I would not have been without them at our own wedding although I could have done without the photos that my nephews took on a random camera that was left on their table.

The funny thing is that the couple who banned children at their wedding now have the most precious couple of daughters who appear at every event, however inappropriate, and command the attention of everyone.

I recall after my sister had had her first two children. She also used to be one of those people with no tolerance for the little ones in the world. We spent a lovely afternoon drinking a bottle of wine over lunch in one of those family pubs with a ball play-area for toddlers. Once we had fed the wee rascals, they ran off to make as much noise as they could, only occasionally returning red-faced for a drink and a breather. We pondered the fact that a few years before we would never

have been seen dead in such a place, but at that moment in our lives the venue was perfect. After their lunchtime rush, the staff seemed quite happy for us to sit there all afternoon, the boys were in their element and we had a chance to sit and gossip just like single girls might do.

Children change your life and so they should. If you have children but do not choose to enjoy their company or to spend any time with them, then why did you bother having them in the first place? Babies are sweet, toddlers are hilarious, school-age children are good value and teenagers are great company. Every age brings its own pleasures and I feel sorry for those people who find their children a pain, seeking to farm them out at every opportunity.

I pass a lady most week-days who walks her son to school. The two of them chat away (or rather he chats and his mum listens) and both of them smile and laugh as they walk up the road together. What a contrast to the mum marching her kids up the road at a pace far too fast for their little legs, berating them for not keeping up and projecting all her grumpiness on the poor wee things. I wonder if either of those mums will take their sons to the SCO when they come here.