

Back to School



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Children across the globe are heading back to school this month. But spare a thought, says Christopher Gillett, not for these little darlings but their singer-parents — the globe-trotting performers for whom taking the kids to school is a rare treat rather than a daily duty.

I guess that time has come, when the Facebook generation has not only had kids but they've grown up a little bit too, for last week my timeline was absolutely stuffed with photos of children going off to school for the very first time. And very sweet they were too.

It's a big day in a child's life, obviously, and in a parent's too. For the travelling singer-parent (most of my Facebook friends are singers and musicians) a child's first day at school is something they may not witness in the flesh — I know I didn't, twice — but even if they do, it's a day that marks a significant change in their family life. Now the kids are at school they are anchored to something. They're on a timetable. When they were babies or toddlers they could join you for lengthy visits abroad, the only downside being they would invariably bring along with them every cold virus known to man. Your other half could probably come too. You could live like a family.

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Once school starts, that all goes out of the window. The majority of the family is stuck at home and the singer-parent spends a lot of time alone in foreign cities, on Skype or dashing home for the occasional weekend. On the plus side (about the only plus side) the singer-parent can return to his/her natural routine, which means spending half the day either in bed or watching lots of bad television. This — the dashing, the sleeping, the bad television — continues for the next thirteen years or so and there's precious little you can do about it.

Some certainly try. I've met singer-parents who home-school their sprogs, but for this to work there has to be another parent who will travel the globe being the teacher-parent. The singer-parent certainly won't have time, what with all the rehearsing and the performing (but no sleeping or bad television). It's not exactly ideal for the child, with no-one to play with but a couple of grown-ups, one of whom has a really weird job, bawling loudly in the evenings, and by their teens it really doesn't work at all.

One American tenor enrolled his kids in the Lycée, which meant they could travel around the world and keep exactly in step with the curriculum in pretty-well any major city, such is the French education system. Now he's divorced I'm not sure what the plan is.

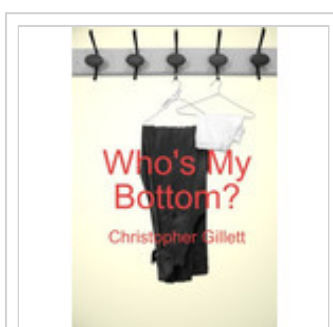
When in the early 90s (long before Skype) I was booked for nearly a whole season at the Netherlands Opera, I looked into putting my children into the British School in Amsterdam, but it seemed unfair and unwise to uproot them from their happy primary school in England, so I didn't. Coincidentally, my first marriage didn't survive either.

So, when I see the beaming but nervous children on Facebook, decked out in their new uniforms, I hope their singer-parents do better than we did. I wish them all the luck there is. One thing I can predict: by the end of thirteen years they'll have watched a lot of bad television.

Read more of [Christopher Gillett on Sinfini Music \(/uk/features/blogs/christopher-gillett/singers-on-the-road-with-dogs\)](http://www.sinfini.com/uk/features/blogs/christopher-gillett/singers-on-the-road-with-dogs).

The tenor's own blog is [christophergillett.co.uk. \(http://christophergillett.co.uk/\)](http://christophergillett.co.uk)

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