

# Why Do We Have Recitals?



Occasionally, people who have never been involved in the music-making world ask me, What's the purpose of a recital? Hopefully, after they've been to a few recitals, the answers will unfold to them. But I'll give you my answer as a former young music student, young professional, teacher and the mom of a piano guy.

First of all, when you know that you are going to play a piece of music on a certain date for an audience, there's a natural wish to make sure you do it well. You want to be solid technically and with your memory (unless you use the music). You want it to have lots of softs and louds to make it really "touch the listener's heart".

Usually when we first start a new "big" piece, we really love it! Then while you acquire the skills needed to play it, you might lose a little of your first-found joy. This is work! But now that you know it well enough to play it for others, you start listening to yourself more intently....Is this soft enough, or can I get it softer? Do I have a good climax to this section? You start to hear it the way someone else would hear it, and you realize more of what you want to do with it. You fall in love all over again!

This "Polishing and Listening" phase really pulls us up to a new level of playing and musicianship. Now, if there is no particular goal except to be able to play the piece, we would never get it as beautiful as we're really capable of producing.

Having taken one piece to this level, the next time we want to polish a piece this well, it will come a little easier – it's "familiar ground" to go back through a piece and re-think it to get all the details.

The recital date became a kind of goal or deadline for reaching our maximum ability.

Another reason for playing in recitals, is so that others may hear music they would never have a chance to hear, otherwise. You are sharing your gift, your purpose in practicing. Some people never get to hear a grand piano sound! Or a violin, played live. Or a young singer who has learned many things about how to project and communicate a song.

My next observation is that students benefit from hearing other students play. You're not there to play a video game, but to hear music, to see what others your age have accomplished, to get inspired to get better at your instrument. You may hear a particular song or piece that makes you think, I wanna play or sing that!

Watching and hearing others play helps the student learn how to bow, walk with dignity and joy, and give themselves to a performance. This is EQUALLY as important as all the preparation the

student did for his own piece. Even when students are amateurish and not that poised, the student realizes what comes across well and what does not.

Students who often play for an audience do gradually become more used to making a presentation for a group of people. The confidence, body language and preparation we do in music also help us in other sorts of presentations. Many professional people have to speak in front of groups, explain a project to prospective clients, or “sell” their work.

Family members who do not often get to hear a student play, are often delighted to have the opportunity to see their special one perform. We all love to be proud of our children! Then comes all the congratulations and affection....

Another benefit of playing or singing in recitals is the opportunity to read a program. There are many terms that are used in music which may be unfamiliar to many people. Words like sonatina, rondo, and variations tell the listener what to expect from a piece on the program. Tempo words are often used to indicate the general mood and speed of movements. Seeing the names of multiple composers will familiarize the audience with those names and a little idea about the style of the composer’s musical language. If there are words on the program that you do not know, you may ask your teacher to explain them to you. This is another way that concert attendance and participation can expand a student’s musical horizons. Many times, a student hears a work that he loves or the music of a particular composer, and it becomes a personal goal to be able to play that piece!

Concert attendance and performing for audiences are of primary importance to any student who considers music as a possible career. Frequent attendance helps a young performer to visualize reaching his own dreams and goals, and he or she will become much more comfortable with etiquette and making any sort of presentation to a group.

So, playing in a recital means that you have set a goal, pushed for a deadline, heard music that you’ve never heard before, perhaps heard music that you already knew and loved; you have observed how to handle yourself in front of an audience, and striven for a higher level of playing than ever before.

Now you have some reasons to be in a recital!