

Recital Time!

—Michelle Baylor, April 2010

The end of the year means time for a recital here at the Baylor Music Studio. What exactly does that involve?

What is a recital?

Perhaps an obvious question, but still a helpful one to answer especially for young students that haven't had much performing experience. A recital is a special evening when students come together and play pieces they have learned for an audience of their families, friends, and peers. In my studio, each student chooses and works on two pieces to share with the group. On the night of the recital, family and friends come to listen to each student play. (And would it really be a recital without cookies and punch at the end?!!)

Why do I have a recital?

I feel that recitals are an important part of learning to play and appreciate music.

- Recitals give students a goal to work towards in learning and perfecting their repertoire.
- Recitals provide motivation for students to review their songs, going beyond just hitting correct notes into playing with emotion, expression, and skill.
- Recitals reinforce the idea that musical talent is developed to be shared, not just kept in private.
- Recitals allow students to hear others and learn from them.
- Recitals help students appreciate the progress they've made, especially when they hear a younger student playing a piece they already know or when they realize what they played last year and how far they've come!
- Recitals allow other important people in the student's life (dads, siblings, grandparents, etc.) to appreciate the student's progress and encourage their efforts.
- Recitals help develop the confidence that comes from meeting and overcoming a challenge.
- Recitals give everyone a chance to learn and practice good listening techniques and polite performance skills.

How are recital songs chosen?

The songs each student plays are not necessarily the most advanced pieces of music they know. I encourage students to choose their own recital pieces, within limits of course, so they are able to perform something they like and feel confident playing. At least one recital song should be a memorized piece from the Suzuki literature, but the other may be a popular song, a favorite reading piece, another Suzuki song, a duet, or some other piece of music the child has learned. Recital songs are ones the child is good at playing, ones that might appeal to an audience, and ones that can be worked on for a longer period of time.

Who should come to the recital?

Although my living room gets a little cozy, I encourage you to invite grandparents or other relatives if you wish! Siblings are welcome and encouraged to come, both to provide support and to enjoy exposure to other children playing music. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend—your presence speaks volumes to children about the value you place on the time and effort they have spent preparing their music.

How can I help my student prepare for the recital?

The best preparation is confidence that comes from knowing the recital pieces very well. Help your student practice them every day, several times if possible, especially in the week before the performance. Having the student practice on a different piano, in a different environment, or with unusual distractions can add to his/her feelings of confidence. On the day of the recital, the student should play through the pieces once or twice but don't try to make any major changes or practice too intensely. Talk with your student about what the evening will be like and what is expected of them. Dress nicely, try not to be in too much of a rush to get to the recital on time, and enjoy the results of all that hard work!