

## March 2006: Recital Preparation

Many students at this time of year are preparing for their school recitals. This is a fearsome prospect for some, and the amount of work can seem overwhelming, especially when two full halves of music are expected. The tendency is to work a lot on one piece at a time, expecting to “finish” it and then move on to the next piece. This will then cause anxiety about the work remaining to be done and consequently rush the preparation of a piece.

When your major recital is looming, it is time to take a more organized approach to your practice time. What I propose here may seem scary, but it works and will give you peace of mind about your progress.

Decide the playing order of your concert and split into two parts. If you are doing a full concert (i.e. two halves) then this division will be apparent. If the recital is shorter, then divide it roughly in half by time, making sure that a major work is in each half. Then, assign each half to a separate practice day. So, for, instance, Monday will be a “first half” day, Tuesday is a “second half” day, Wednesday will be “first half”, and so on. This will guarantee that everything will be touched upon in two days, and the intervals between practicing certain works will not be so far apart that progress will be forgotten.

Any given practice day, just focus on the task (the “half”) at hand. I assume that a practice day will be 3-5 hours in length. Divide your practice into 1-hour portions (which should be about 50-55 minutes with a break). The first portion, do your warm-up and technical practice. Each hour afterwards, assign yourself SET amounts of time to work on specific pieces. I tend to do this in half-hour tasks unless the work is a longer one, which would take an entire hour. Focus on what you DON’T know in these sessions. Work the harder parts and develop your transitions between sections. Most students, when practicing harder sections of the music, forget to practice continuity in the piece. This is a big mistake.

Every few days, practice performing the half in its entirety at some point in the practice day. Try not to do this everyday, as spontaneity can be lost if the program is over-practiced. Remember that practicing performance is not the same as practicing a piece. You are to strive for continuity in your concentration and exercising musical flow.

Anxiety in practice is the sure-fire way to learn things improperly. This method will give you the confidence that you are touching on everything and that your time is being used efficiently.

Have a great recital...let me know how it goes!!

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