

PERFORMANCE PREPARATION

We would all like our children to have a positive performance experience at concerts. Many people think that this means a performance that is mistake free, but there is more to good preparation than simply making sure your child can play their piece with no mistakes. Here are some suggestions for helping your child's concert experiences to be great!

First:

Listen to your CD every day!

Listen to your child's piece actively and carefully during practice. Notice any spots where there are mistakes, hesitations or stumbles and help your child to secure the sections by slow, accurate repetition.

Have your child give "home concerts" every day. Ask your teacher how many times would be appropriate for your child. A home concert might mean playing for the whole family or anyone who is around, bowing before and after the piece, and playing the piece from start to finish without stopping even if there are mistakes. Note: If you stop your child and have them start again if they make a mistake during practice this is exactly what they will do in a concert. It is much better to let them continue to the end and then go back and work on the section afterwards.

Keeping Going:

Your teacher has probably told your child that if they make a mistake in a concert they should "just keep going". However performers need to be able to pick their performance up from a nearby point when things do go wrong. Some ideas are:

- Divide your piece into 4 or 8 bar sections and make sure your child can start from any of these spots.
- Game: "Share" playing the piece – you play (or sing!) a small section and then your child needs to play the next bit, and so on. You can start with large sections, stopping in easy pick-up spots and increase the difficulty and frequency of your stopping.
- Game: Skipping forward to a pick-up spot – ask your child to play their piece but to jump forward in the piece when you clap. (In a concert it is better to jump forward to continue rather than going back, which would mean the child has to play the bit where they got stuck again)
- Older children who have some understanding of the theory or harmony structure of a piece can use that understanding as a memory aid (eg, "this next bit is the recapitulation, and it's in G major", etc)
- Ask your teacher for other ideas!

Your approach to performance as a parent:

Most children are happy to perform in concerts but are very quick to pick up on adults' attitudes when it comes to performance. You can help if you:

- always speak positively about the performance ("I'm really looking forward to your concert!- let's practice and make this bit extra beautiful!")
- remember that "nervous" is an adult's interpretation of a child's excitement or anticipation. The word "nervous" is best left out of your conversations with your child and replaced by more positive words!
- stay calm on the day of the performance and restrict practice to one or two play-throughs only!
- leave home in plenty of time to avoid arriving hurried, stressed, or anxious.
- regardless of how your child's performance goes make sure your comments to your child reflect positively on how you appreciated their effort – not the result!
- always make *positive* comments to your child about other children's performances, and never judge *anyone's* performance on the basis of how many mistakes it had.

Good luck, and enjoy your practice as you prepare with your child for this special event!