



## Fostering the Concerto-Performance Skills of the Pianist

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### Abstract

The paper describes the stage preparation of a performer for a concert performance and its peculiarities. The authors describe the main methods and techniques of overcoming stage fright.

**Keywords:** craftsmanship, performance, piano, excitement, musical performance, concert performance, stage excitement.

**Introduction:** Musical performance is a very delicate and complex process, aimed at the development of the student's personality. An important part of this process is preparing the student for public speaking. Every concert performance, be it an exam, a test, a concert, a competition, is preceded by a long preparatory work. What is the point of this painstaking and hard work? Children with varying levels of musical ability are most likely to attend traditional music schools, which mean that the level of "publicity" will be different in each case. Even in the early years of schooling, a child should be instilled with a sense of responsibility for the quality of their performance on stage, and with it a love of playing for an audience.

**Main part:** Purpose - to reveal the essence of the stage of the performer's preparation for a concert performance, its peculiarities, the characteristics of the main methods and techniques of overcoming stage fright.

Objectives:

1. To foster a sense of responsibility, an interest in and love of music-making and to develop the pupil's creative abilities;
2. To foster artistic ability and self-control in the moment of performance.
3. Develop the learner's emotionality through their attitude towards the music they are playing;
4. Developing a level of skill on stage;
5. Broadening your horizons in the field of music;

Expected results:

- 1) overcoming fear of public speaking;
- 2) Psychological adaptation in public (to feel more free, relaxed and confident on stage).

Each pupil has his or her own musical ability and the rate at which his or her creativity accumulates. All stages of the work should be carefully followed, from thoughtful parsing and working through the work piece by piece to combining these parts into a whole work of art. The artistic intention of the author should not be clear to the pupil at the end of the work, but as soon as he or she becomes acquainted with it. The pupil should know the gar-monic plan of the work, understand it and draw logical conclusions. The style and form of the work, motifs, phrases,



sentences - everything must be clear, understandable and meaningful to him. He should be able to start playing from any measure. Concentrate before starting to perform and find the right tempo.

The selection of repertoire is of great importance for a successful performance on stage. It is important that the programme is varied in style and genre, but also that it is accessible to the student, well thought out, bringing out their best side, not only technically, but also in terms of volume and content. The aim and purpose of this collection is to enthuse children with popular, accessible musical material and to instil an interest in ensemble-playing. All the plays are programme pieces. The collection includes works by contemporary composers. The music is fresh, with vivid imagery, lush harmonies, expressive and spiritual melodies. The pieces are chosen to enhance young musicians' skills, musical taste and broaden their horizons. A methodological introduction and commentary will further assist in these tasks.

A concert performance is the sum total of a number of components: the student's musical ability, their physical and mental abilities, their methods of teaching the music, the training of the will to perform and their mental state before the performance. Each of the listed skills is important for feeling confident on stage and certainly memory is one of the most important factors. More often than not, the performer on stage is let down by memory. Psychology distinguishes between the following types of memory: visual, musical-aural, motor, tactile and muscular, muscular or motor, aural-motor - that is a specific, playful memory.

Memory is a property of the nervous system to retain reactions to perceptions received by the body. Even with a good natural musical memory, it is important to teach the student a conscious and logical approach to learning a piece of music, which will undoubtedly help him or her learn and memorise the lyrics as quickly as possible. A special role in learning a piece of music should be given to fingering, which is the basis of motor 'fingering' memory. Often those who are careless with their fingering will have rhythmic stops in a concert due to motor memory loss.

Memory is highly dependent on individual characteristics: the development of hearing, rhythm, technique and the capacity for emotion. If the memorisation process has been properly structured, and auditory, visual, motor and logical memory components have been involved, the moment of forgetting will not be a disaster.

There are several ways to learn plays by heart, which can be used to achieve a stronger and more meaningful memorisation. Start as early as possible by learning individual pieces, analyzing them beforehand, identifying the more awkward technical and harmonic episodes. It is common to learn a piece by heart on an instrument with or without sheet music. It is also useful to learn from sheet music without an instrument. It is helpful to break down the melodic and harmonic structure of the piece, to memorise not only the sound, but also the text itself, the author's instructions and the melodic-harmonic structure, as well as the muscular sensations. It is very important when memorising a play to remember - not to forget the artistic side. It is very useful to play at a slow tempo, not only when the piece is still being studied, but also when it has already been learned and even performed on stage. Playing at a slow tempo helps to build a strong 'mental foundation', to absorb the passage being learned and to listen to the intonation.

Stage fright, intense excitement before a performance is very common. As a rule, most younger students know nothing about or experience stage fright. Why? Many of them have not yet mastered the evaluation scale of successful and unsuccessful performances. For younger pupils, performing in a concert is associated with festive anticipation. More often than not, younger pupils enjoy performing. They are attracted to a concert performance with its festive atmosphere and the attributes associated with it - the stage, the announcement of the programme by the host, the audience, the positive emotions of public attention, applause, congratulations, etc.



Mostly, the symptoms of stage fright occur during adolescence. At this age, the struggle to achieve recognition, often an unconscious desire to prove one's artistic abilities, is added to the vague reason for the excitement. It is interesting to note that the performer cares whether the audience is "his" or "other people's" audience.

So how do you get in the right rhythm before a performance and bring the best out of your audience? The solution is undoubtedly in the preparatory phase. One way to build confidence before a performance is to prepare well. If the pupil is confident in what he or she knows - fluent in the text - then there is less anxiety.

The main difficulty in a concert performance is that the performer is stressed by stage excitement. There is an opinion that excitement cannot be overcome, but can be distracted, switched to the creative parts of the performance. Let's look at types of excitement and methods of dealing with it.

#### Types of excitement

1. Excitement - apathy - the child feels reluctant to go to the audience, unwilling to play.
2. Excitement - panic - the child's performance lacks creativity, memory fails the performer.
3. Excitement - upsurge - the young performer is able to translate the excitement of the stage into creative inspiration.

#### Methods of working to reduce concert excitement:

1. Systematic homework on the pieces.
2. An important element at the beginning of the daily lessons is acting out. This is necessary not only for warming up the muscles involved in playing, but also for the mental apparatus of the musician as a whole.
3. Learn the programme at least one month before the date of the concert or examination. Pupils should not be allowed on stage with "raw" works.
4. playing the programme at different venues: homerooms, music lounges.
5. Playing out the piece mentally, performing in front of an imaginary audience.
6. Playing with disturbances or distractions.
7. A good technique is to play silently over the keys or on the lid of the instrument. It concentrates, educates the inner ear and stimulates the memory.

The ability to "assemble" is one of the important qualities of a performer, which can only be acquired through frequent concert practice. During the concert, there may be surprises of some kind: a phone call, a cough, a rustle, a noise in the hall. It is important to teach your child not to make a big deal out of this, and not to let fleeting distracting noises interrupt your thoughts.

Start and finish with great effect, walk to the piano with a light and energetic gait, bow calmly and with dignity. When you go on stage, you should take a few deep breaths and exhales to calm your heartbeat and bring calmness to the scene.

Students must develop the ability to move slowly and freely on the stage, and pay attention to the positioning of the chair and the seating position behind the instrument. It is important to sit still for a few moments before starting the performance, at the end of the performance as a conductor to be in the music until the last sounds. The pupil should be taught to thank the audience with a bow when they enter the stage and when they have finished their performance.

Between pieces, put your hands on your lap, pause, take a couple of slow, deep, inconspicuous breaths, play two to four bars mentally, set the tempo and then start playing the next piece.



In my practice, even at the initial stage of a child's learning, when he or she is ready to perform the simplest pieces, we temporarily turn our classroom into a concert hall. We invite teachers, parents or pupils from the class as spectators. All of this is done on a very serious level and is much enjoyed by the speakers and the audience. This is done in a playful way, which subsequently helps prepare the pupil for public speaking on stage.

When the programme is learnt, every performer, wants to hedge against mistakes. Musicians test this by playing the pieces they have learned in front of their friends and acquaintances, changing the surroundings and the instruments they have to play. To detect possible mistakes, we suggest some techniques.

1. Blindfold. Play the piece at a slow or medium tempo with the intention of playing it without fear. Make sure there are no muscle clamps anywhere and that breathing remains even.
2. Playing with interference and distractions. Turn the radio on to a medium volume and try to play a programme. This kind of exercise requires a lot of nervous tension. Many musicians may feel tired after doing them. It can be explained by a lack of mastery of the programme. If a pupil is able to perform the programme with ease, their concentration is enviable and they are unlikely to have any unpleasant surprises on stage.
3. At the moment of performing the programme in a difficult place, the teacher says the psychologically traumatic word "Mistake", but the performer must not make a mistake, continue playing.
4. Make a few turns around his axis, until a slight dizziness, then, gathering attention, begin to play at full force with maximum lift.
5. Do some jumping or squatting to a rapid heart rate and start playing a programme. A somewhat similar condition can occur before you go on stage. This exercise may help you overcome it.
6. Play the programme with the lid closed.

Identified errors should be corrected by carefully playing the programme at a slow pace.

The most important parts of a concert performance: the dress rehearsal and the conduct on the day of the performance. The final rehearsal takes place in the room where the performance will take place, in order to familiarise yourself with the venue and its acoustics.

On the day of the concert, most performers have 'pre-concert excitement'. The intensity of the excitement is not directly related to the quality of the performance: even with a lot of excitement it is possible to perform well, and with no excitement it is possible to relax and perform poorly. It is known that on the day of the concert, it is useful not so much to play as to think about the piece with the sheet music in your hands. It is not advisable to have meaningless conversations before going on stage. It is also not necessary to walk silently around the room. It is better to sit quietly in a comfortable position, with relaxed muscles (the teacher should teach this beforehand). You can play scales, etudes, or concert pieces at a slower tempo if you need to 'play with your hands'. But it is most useful to go through the various pieces of a programme without an instrument.

When preparing for a concert performance, do not direct your attention to negative emotions. The main remedy for "excitement-panic" is to be passionate about what you are doing. As Stanislavski says: "The secret, it turns out, is quite simple: in order to distract from the audience, you must be passionate about what is on stage.

The unhealthy impulse sometimes comes from the teacher himself. The teacher's questions and remarks: "Aren't you worried? Aren't you afraid?", or "Don't worry, it's nothing to worry about" - often instead of encouragement, they lead to painful excitement in some students. If a teacher is



anxious, he or she has a duty to hide his or her excitement skillfully, so as not to infect the pupil with it. It is useful to talk about excitement as a necessary companion to a good performance. Many artists say that if a performer was not excited before a concert, it turned out to be a failure afterwards. With this kind of talk, worry takes on a different character: it replaces blind fear with an awareness of worry as a normal, natural feeling in a given situation and even useful in some ways.

The importance of concert activities in the development of young musicians is hard to overestimate. In preparation for this, it is important for the musician-performer to identify ways to address performance and emotional readiness for creative public activities, to form meaningful psychological qualities, and to develop techniques for onstage behaviour.

In educational activities, the teacher tackles the problem of helping the child to live the excitement as a creative inspiration, to develop an algorithm for improving the musician's well-being in preparation for and during the performance itself.

Preparation for the concert performance of students in an institution of additional education includes various techniques and methods aimed at helping the child to improve the level of performance skills, effectiveness in learning, in the formation of a positive attitude towards their own emotional response in the context of concert activities.

The great Robert Schumann wrote 'Life rules for musicians'. We have prepared guidelines especially for you, which we are sure will help you when preparing not only for concerts at music school, but also for any other performance.

Advice for the young musician.

On the day of the concert:

1. In the morning play the programme only once, without dividing the music into pieces and repeating them separately.
2. Before you leave the house, you should dress slowly and allow plenty of time for travel, so as not to create additional situations of anxiety.
3. If you feel you have to exercise, limit yourself to an exercise or play a piece of music that is not on the program. After all, if the programme isn't ready, it's too late to learn it.
4. Don't have meaningless conversations backstage. They only dissipate your attention, your creativity. Silent, nervous walking down the corridor is no better. Before you go on stage, make yourself sit quietly in a comfortable position - with your muscles somewhat relaxed - to train your willful stamina, which is essential for the performance.
5. Do not play at a fast tempo just before you go on stage, as this leads to increased anxiety and an unnecessary waste of nervous energy. It is more useful to play scales and exercises or to play small pieces of music slowly.
6. Remember: the audience came to the concert hall for the music you will perform, not to find faults in your performance. Thank the audience for coming to your concert.
7. Don't be afraid of the audience: they are your friend and helper.

**Conclusion:** There is, of course, a great deal of advice from many famous teachers and performers on how to prepare for a stage performance. The main thing that should understand the young performer: stage performance - it's not just a test of the nervous system on the strength, but also the joy of communicating with the audience; creative inspiration and professional growth. The more you go on stage, the more confidence you develop, because the stage is the best cure for anxiety.





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