



For some of us, nothing sparks as much trepidation as the thought of performing in front of other people. Whether it is playing an instrument, public speaking, or simply introducing ourselves to a roomful of people, this experience can feel quite traumatic. There are a lucky few out there who bound happily into a room of strangers saying, "Hello, World! Here I am!", but for most of us, it takes life experience to know those strangers won't eat you upon arrival.

In the classical musical world, recitals are a part of the culture. It's a forum to share our musical gifts in an intimate setting with others. Unlike a rock concert, it is quiet and focused and that can feel intimidating when the focus is on YOU! Like anything, though, through practice and experience, we can take ownership of these kinds of situations, and actually have some fun! **But why do we have to play in recitals?** Can't we just take lessons and play for ourselves? The focus and preparation it takes to bring a piece to performance is the most effective way to improve our ability. If we don't have that built-in motivator, we probably won't attain our goal. And we also have a responsibility to share our gifts with those around us.

I have found that the Suzuki tradition of group classes and book recitals prepares students so much better than the once-a-year recitals I used to have growing up in my piano studio. (In fact, I actually quit piano for a year in high school after a failed attempt at playing in a recital. I couldn't even remember how to *begin* my piece. It felt horrifying!) This is the main reason the students have a chance to play their pieces once per month for each other, in a relaxed setting. The more positive experiences they have before getting up in front of an entire auditorium of people they might not know, the better. Playing pieces they have reviewed and played for many, many months also contributes to a higher level of playing and success. The group classes and recitals also give them a timed goal, and the incentive to be prepared.

The other type of recital that is an important part of the Suzuki method is the Book Recital. Our focus on review helps the child to build and improve on what they already know. The objective of playing a recital at the end of an entire book gives them the impetus to keep those pieces under their fingers. It may seem like a lot to manage, keeping 18-19 pieces going each week, but Suzuki kids are amazing and capable. At the end of Book 1, they have the foundation for the rest of their musical studies in place. But it doesn't stop there. Your child can continue to keep many pieces in their minds and fingers and give a book recital at the end of every book. In fact, there is nothing to stop them from continuing to review every book through Book 7 and give a huge performance of all the pieces at the end of their Suzuki studies!

How do book recitals work in our studio? As we make our way through **Book 1**, students keep reviewing everything they have learned from Twinkle, Twinkle on. When we get close to the end, we will choose 10 songs together from the book (which must include the last 5) and schedule the book recital for an upcoming group class. Each recital takes about 10 minutes, and is celebrated and supported by our Suzuki community. Book recitals can also be performed for your own family and friends at home, but I will always offer the chance to play in our group classes.

Book 2 is longer and denser, so to make it more manageable, we hold an informal half-recital that includes *Écossaise* through *Cradle Song* (performed in the lesson, with or without extra family and friends in attendance.) The second half of the book will be performed during a group class. From **Book 3** on, we will take into consideration the time and motivation the student has to perform the book in sections or in its entirety. In each case, the student will receive a certificate of achievement (to be framed for posterity) and chocolate (to be eaten immediately!)