Senior Recital

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Honors Thesis Reflection

The entirety of this process was incredibly rewarding to go through. There were times that it did not seem worth it but after looking back on everything, I am glad that I chose to perform a senior recital in the way that I did. Due to the nature of my major, music education, I have chosen to write this document in the form of a letter to another individual that is following in my footsteps.

Dear individual debating whether or not to perform a solo senior recital,

First of all, if you are even to the point of contemplating a solo recital, I want you to take a moment and look back at where you were a month ago as a musician. Then look back one year ago. How about five years? Did you ever think you would be able to do the things you have done at any of those points in time? I would be willing to bet that if you want back far enough then eventually you would find a version of yourself that would be astounded at the accomplishments you have made. Now I want you to take that moment of reflection and use it to encourage yourself whenever you experience self-doubt. Find a way to inspire yourself to become a better version of yourself. If you cannot do that for yourself then how can you do that for someone else in the future?

Now that we have addressed the self-doubt that inevitably comes up, let us look at the why. Why should you do this for yourself? First of all, “it looks good on a resume” is always a valid point. Your resume is you being your hype-man, so just do it. Second of all, this is a strong experience to have under your belt if for some reason you one day decide to get a master’s degree in performance on top of your bachelor’s in education. And if that is the case, then make sure you get a quality audio AND video recording. Music is not just about sound but also about how we visually represent the emotion that is hidden in the music. Third, the sense of accomplishment that you have after it is all said and done is huge. Musicians spend thousands of hours practicing in college and if all you have to show for it is a couple of yearly performances in a large ensemble then you are selling yourself short. Go perform something by yourself where
you are the center of attention and there is nothing to distract the audience from what you are trying to tell them. After all, you deserve it.

Now speaking from the perspective of someone who has done this, let me give you a few pointers. Number one, make sure you are on top of all of your deadlines. You are going to have plenty of other responsibilities while you are planning for this recital so do not let yourself get so busy that you miss a deadline. Number two, choose music that is meaningful to you. If there is a piece that you know is a “good piece to have in your repertoire” but you hate it then now is not the time to perform it. Record that one at a later date as an independent work because you do not want to dread practicing for this recital. Alongside that, program a recital that has meaning and is not just a bunch of pieces you threw together to impress people. Number three, ask a friend to handle the setup and recording of the recital. The last thing you want is to have your mind preoccupied with handling the recording when you should be focusing on your music before the performance. Trust me, I KNOW. Number four, if you are not going to write program notes then at least write something that you can say at the beginning of the recital. As soon as those bright lights hit your face you will not remember anything of what you wanted to say so take a little piece of paper up there that you can read from. Finally, number five, make the day something that is meaningful. Invite your teachers, your mentors, and anyone that influenced your life, especially those regarding music. Go out to eat with some of them afterward and celebrate that you did it! Not only will you love the company, but this will also keep you from sinking into a dark abyss of all the mistakes you made! Because in the grand scheme of things, you will always have room to improve.

Maybe after reading this you have a different outlook on the looming question of performing a senior recital. Maybe this just put more questions in your head that you had not even thought of. Whatever the case, I hope you can sort through all of those thoughts and put on a beautiful recital that showcases all of your wonderful abilities.