

The First Solo Piano Recital



The solo piano recital was first created unintentionally by Franz Liszt.

Get out your fancy shoes and your tux with tails, because you are putting on a recital today!

What is a recital? Why do we perform for others in a fancy setting? Why do we get all dressed up? Why are we only allowed to clap at certain times?

A recital is a certain type of concert. Before a concert is considered to be a recital, it has to meet certain criteria: The performance venue usually is small and the audience is few. There is usually a soloist alone or with piano. Sometimes that soloist is playing the piano. This situation qualifies the recital as a solo piano recital, even more specific.

The solo piano recital was first created unintentionally by Franz Liszt. Liszt, being a pianist decided he wanted to put on a performance on a stage at a venue. He attempted to convince other musicians to perform with him, vocalists, violinists, etc., but no one was available. With no one else able to perform with him, he decided to collect enough solo piano repertoire to fill an entire concert. Once doing this, he was able to put on the first solo piano recital.



Since the days of Franz Liszt, solo piano recitals happen quite often and just like any other concert setting, there is usually a stage and a performer dressed in formal attire. Classical music was originally part of the church and the nobility (kings, queens, etc.) and you can be sure those people were dressed to impress. Any performer for the court would also need to dress in high fashion to match the scene. Since then, the tradition has continued and it is assumed that one will be fancy to play some Mozart or Liszt.

The recitals of old were far more casual than the recitals of today. Liszt would play a tune and you were allowed to clap whenever you liked something that he did; you could even request something to be repeated! You were also allowed to converse with your neighbors during the performance. Liszt might even come down off the stage to talk with you about your current endeavors without first announcing a break or intermission. These types of performances were geared toward a social gathering rather than an intense focus on music appreciation and understanding.

Modern recitals are far more strict and have behavioral guidelines that one must follow or face ejection from the venue. Everyone must remain absolutely quiet; even a sneeze is unforgivable. Each must sit and intently view the performance from his or her seat, entirely separate from the performer on stage. Clapping is only allowed at the end of a piece when the performer stands and bows, and certainly never during a musical phrase or between movements of a piece unless you wished to be shamed by the rest of the audience forever more. Look how far we have come!

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