

FROM THE TRENCHES | BY MYRNA SISLEN

# The Halloween Recital

The best part of having music lessons in your store — aside from making a lot of money, integrating your business into the community and making your store a destination — is student recitals, which you should host on a regular basis.

Themed recitals are always fun, and our annual Halloween recital is the most fun of all, not to mention the most well-attended.

With a little planning and minimal financial outlay, you can have an event that will make parents and students happy.

As an added benefit, the press loves Halloween recitals. We always get our picture in the local newspaper, so don't forget to send press releases to all your contacts well in advance.

## RECITAL PREPARATION

This year will mark Middle C Music's seventh annual Halloween recital. The kids have been preparing their musical selections for the last month. That said, you're not too late if you start at the beginning of October.

Fortunately, there's an abundance of Halloween music that's very accessible and easy-to-play. There are numerous choices for children and adults, which, by the way, is yet another excellent reason to stock print music in your store.

It's best to schedule the recital on the weekend before the actual holiday. Don't schedule your Halloween recital on Halloween. No one will come. Trust me.

## THE SECRET INGREDIENT

One of the most important things you will need for a successful Halloween recital is pumpkins. Lots of small pumpkins.

When I thought about having my first Halloween recital, I was concerned about how to keep the kids occupied while they waited to play. And then it came to me: We would give each child a pumpkin and have the kids draw musically themed pictures on them. I do it every year.

It's best if you can find small pumpkins. I shop around, and because I buy 65 or more — we have at least 65 students par-

ticipating — I can usually find pumpkins for only \$1 or less apiece. I construct a small mountain of pumpkins in the store. (If you have them in your store for more than a week, make sure the bottom pumpkins don't rot.) Before the recital begins, I invite the children to get on the floor, pass out the pumpkins and hand out plenty of colored magic markers. I then ask the kids to make sure their drawings are music-related and, of course, tell them they can keep their pumpkins. It works like a charm every time. The kids are quiet, respectful and happy.

## ADDING VALUE

All of my teachers are anxious to participate, and that means we have a wide array of instruments playing scary tunes. This gives the audience a chance to hear instruments other than their own.

Some of my teachers also hand out small bags of candy, but I don't think this is necessary. The recital itself always runs easily and smoothly because the atmosphere is appropriately scary yet relaxed. As with all my recitals, I record the performances, and each family gets a free copy of the DVD.

You can't lose on this event. Enjoy. **MI**

Myrna Sislen owns and operates Middle C Music in Washington, D.C.



## How to host a themed music recital with scary-good results