

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

# Showcases Retain

Signing up students is important to growing your lesson program, but what about improving the retention rate of students you already have? A great method I've found is to develop a student showcase program.

Because you are doing more than “just giving lessons,” student showcases, or “super cool” gig versions of the Miss Pringles Piano Recital, increase student retention. They also provide a competitive advantage over your competitors, which means new signups.

## THE RATIONALE

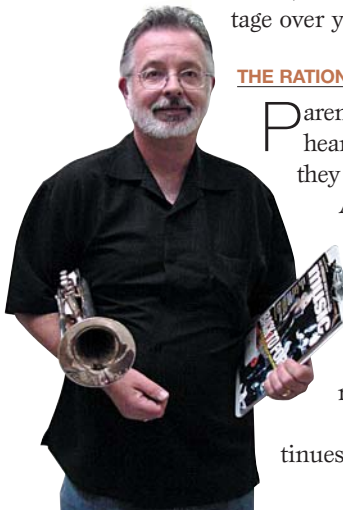
Parents drop off their children once a week for lessons and (hopefully) hear some music coming out of their rooms the other six days. Still, they may wonder what they're spending money on.

Adult students tell the family that Tuesday night is lesson night, and then they rarely play for anyone.

This is where the student showcase comes in.

Students have the opportunity to play—isn't that why we learn music?—and parents are impressed and feel that their money is well-spent. Family and friends are impressed, and may want to sign up for lessons themselves.

Most importantly, the student is pleased with playing and continues taking lessons.



**More than 'just giving lessons,' student showcases help retain students and provide a competitive advantage.**

family and friends make it out on a weekend day.

**Recruit teacher participation.** Sell the teachers on the retention benefits and the possibility of picking up new students through this event. I guarantee that most parents will view the teachers as the best there are, almost superheroes, and recommend others take lessons from them.

**Have ideas for teachers.** If they're in on it, instructors can prepare the student for this event during lessons, but you may need to put some interesting ideas in their heads.

Piano students can use a selection out of the book they're learning from, voice students can use a CD; and guitar, bass and drum students can play

“Wipe Out” or “Wild Thing” in a band together. Add a horn player for the melody, and that student is doing something way cooler than school band. Adult students can play in an acoustic guitar group. The idea is to get creative and get students involved in different ways.

**Set a goal of 20–25 students.** This will yield about 100 attendees. An impressive turnout for attendees makes the event all the more convincing and promotional.

**Have a variety.** A range of instruments, styles and skill levels gives the audience an idea of your entire lesson program. Also remember to mix the students up—you don't want 10 piano students in a row.

**Promote.** Have “student showcase” fliers all over the store. Let students and customers know this is what your lesson program is about, and encourage them to come out and bring people.

**Start now.** Start in October with a Halloween showcase. Performers can wear costumes—there's nothing better than a bunch of pirates or princesses playing on stage.

**Continue next year.** Plan out 4–6 events for 2006. We do 10 every year, so I can help on the learning curve if you e-mail me. And as always, have fun. **MI**

## A HOW-TO GUIDE

Here are some suggestions for organizing one of these events:

**Get a venue.** A women's club, park, recreation hall, coffee bar or even your store can be great options for a location. Set it up like a real gig.

**Hold it on a non-lesson day.** Hosting the event on a Sunday will create less store and lesson conflicts, and allow greater participation by teachers. Also, students can typically have more

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