

May 30th Recital: "Ready to Rock" by Jason Feirman.



With the sun shining high above Columbus Circle on a warm spring afternoon, children and their families packed into the Irene Diamond Education Center at Jazz at Lincoln Center for the first of three recitals. On May 30th, The Piano School of NYC held its annual performances in the halls of the renowned musical institution. Just minutes before the 4:00 show began, performers could be seen posing for pictures, practicing their pieces, and soaking up the scene. Isha Nagella, 4, the show's youngest performer sat quietly in the front row with her teacher Mirta Gomez. When asked if she was excited, Isha nodded and proceeded to practice a melody with Mirta. Once the doors closed, The Piano School of NYC Executive Director Vera Barskaya Anselmo gave a brief introduction to the 75 attendees. "Today we come together to celebrate the accomplishments of our students and congratulate each other," she said, before thanking the performers, their

families, the teachers, and the Jazz at Lincoln Center staff. Not only was Isha the youngest performer, but she also opened the show. After Ms. Anselmo finished her introduction, Isha slowly made her way up to the piano along with Mirta. From the first note of "One Two Three Four" there was a feeling in the room that this was going to be a very special evening. With her feet dangling from the stool, and Mirta guiding from over her left shoulder, Isha breezed through her next two numbers. As she walked back to her seat, she was inundated with cheers and applause from the crowd. As the show continued, the pieces became more and more intricate. As Melissa Kornfeld's pink sandals dangled in the air, she hit each note of "Jumping Frogs" with precision. Valtyr Kjartansson, dressed in a black blazer, used pedals while he played "Greensleaves." His instructor, Rui Shi, sat beside him and encouraged him throughout his performance. Sophie Geer, with no book or teacher in sight, played perfect versions of "Love Somebody" and "Thanksgiving Turkey." The pieces played by the performers ranged from classics like Beethoven's "Für Elise" (performed twice by Nicholas Ullman and Amanda Edelman) to modern hits like R Kelly's "I Believe I Can Fly" (performed by Mary Munshower). Allegra McSweeney, wearing a beautiful white dress, performed the most patriotic set of the day with "Ode To Joy" and "America The Beautiful," while Aidan Halloran performed "When The Saints Go Marching In." Just before 5:30, Harrison Siegel closed the show with "Rondo-Toccata." Certificates and medals were then handed out to the performers, and each of them received another round of applause as they made their way up front. After the show, as parents posed for pictures alongside their talented children, the room began to clear out for performance number two.



By 6:00 the room was packed once again. Ms. Anselmo presented another hearty welcome to the new crowd stressing how excited she was to be holding the performance at Jazz at Lincoln Center. "This is a huge step forward for us," she told the audience. "It was a lot of work to organize this event, so thank you for supporting us." Zachary Lederman, dressed in a white polo shirt, opened the show with "Bounces" and "Tap Dance" alongside his instructor, Sebastian Forster. Sebastian had many students in the show including 4 year old twins David and Estevan Hoyos, who each performed "Black Keys Improvisation" with their instructor. With many family members in attendance to cheer them on, the twins were a big hit in their matching blue and white suits.



Instructor Inga Kashakashvili also had a number of students in the second recital including Simeon



Bremer, who played “London Bridge” and “The Train Song.” Inga also helped Anwen Burns, who was wearing a beautiful flower dress, through two of her songs -- “Bingo” and “The Muffin Man.” While Vincent Marinello played Bach and Celina Ticoll played Beethoven, David Zask rocked out on the keys with a tune from Led Zeppelin. Other audience favorites included Levitt Yaffe’s “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.” As his father cheered him on in the front row, he breezed through the tune alongside his instructor, Simon Ferraresi. Julius Philp performed four songs alongside his instructor George Oakley, while Joseph Ruben had the honor of performing the song with the longest title – “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.” Before the recital was over, Joseph Lodin, dressed in black, gave a stunning performance of “Pour Le Piano: Prelude.” by Calude Debussy. As he intricately weaved his hands up and down the keyboard, the audiences looked on in amazement. Lodin gracefully hit each key without hesitation, and when the final note sounded, the crowd gave him a lengthy applause. Aaron Hoffman closed out the show, and Ms. Vera Anselmo once again presented the performers with awards and medals.

As the sun began to set over Columbus Circle, parents and children made their way up to the Irene Diamond Education Center for the third and final performance of the evening. As the performers waited for the show to begin, they restlessly ran in circles, rolled around on the hardwood floors, and popped their heads inside the opening of the baby grand piano. Once the doors closed, the crowd of 50 settled into their seats and Ms. Anselmo introduced Christina Kulick as the faculty member of several years, and also as the Brooklyn Branch Manager, -leading Group Classes programs in over a dozen Brooklyn public, charter & parochial schools. Over the past few months, Christina worked hard with each of her private students, preparing them for their solo debut at JALC. So, the show this evening was a culmination of many hours of practice and preparation. Jonathan Thomas, dressed in an orange shirt, opened the show with “Run, Mouse, Run.” Following him, Zoe Glazer and her sister Isabelle, each performed a series of pieces about butterflies including “The Caterpillar Crawl” and “Butterfly Song.” With each performance, Christina looked on with a smile plastered across her face. She could be overheard encouraging the performers as they began their pieces. “Ready to rock?” she asked one student. “You’re going to be great!” she told another. Nicolas Zarate, the show’s youngest performer, played “Two Black Keys” and Xavier DeVore, dressed in a colorful shirt, played a duet with his mother. Stella Solasz wore one of the biggest smiles of the day, as she breezed through “I’m A Little Teapot” and “Indian Dance.” Joshua Judd Porter played Green Day’s “Wake Me Up When September Ends” with Christina. Roman Fischer, wearing a green tie, even incorporated a violin into his performance. Mateo Lopez-Castillo closed the show with an original piece “The Wind-Up Toy,” a spectacular culmination to a great night of student performances. And if that wasn’t enough, Christina treated the audience to a couple of numbers from her new children’s musical “Zuly In The Last Place On Earth.” With many of the student performers curled up on the floor up front, Christina and her fellow musicians provided the audience with a sneak peak of some of the musical’s upbeat numbers. As the show came to a conclusion just a few minutes before 10:00 p.m., not only did the stars in the night sky shine high above Columbus Circle, but another group of stars piled out of Jazz at Lincoln Center and into the warm spring night.

