

Five Ways to Learn a Tune **With Julie Lyonn Lieberman (julielyonn.com)**

Is it taking too long to learn a tune? Are you having trouble remembering tunes you thought you'd learned so well? When you learn a new tune, does an older tune disappear from your memory? You may only be using a small percentage of your musical brain!

1. Muscle Memory...

If you play something enough times your fingers will do the walking for you while you do or think about something else. But keep in mind, muscle memory can be the first to disappear when you're tired, stressed or nervous. And if you play a bunch of other tunes for days on end and come back around, it's likely that your fingers will go "huh, what?" or you'll have to get a running start over and over again to remember the second half.

2. Listen Listen Listen...

If you can't hear the entire melody coupled with its rhythmic content, you don't know the tune. To test yourself, try whistling or singing the melody as you air-bow it. Then bow the rhythms on an open string as you audiate (hear internally) the melody.

3. Map the Notes, Map the Bowings...

Before you fall asleep or when you wake up in the morning, visualize playing the tune from start to finish and make a mental note of the phrases or sections that elude you. You should be able to picture every detail (fingerings and bowings) for the entire tune.

4. Analyze

It's useful to notate a tune you've learned by ear or look at a printed copy of it. Scan the tune for the following:

- Are there ideas that repeat? If so, where and when?
- Are there passages that are ascending or descending scale-like runs or arpeggios? Where and when?
- Where does the melody diverge from the key signature via accidentals or arpeggios on notes outside the key?

Note: Most players are able to play a tune in full once they get the opening rolling. While analyzing the tune, try to lock in the opening by mentally highlighting the relationship of the first phrase to the key or chord.

5. Whole-Brain Test

A good test is as follows: while practicing, drop in and out of playing the melody while you audiate, whistle, or hum each section you don't physically play. You should be able to drop in and out without losing where you are by using the above skills.