

How to Learn A Tune*

Tunes Without Lyrics:

1. Find the original version of the tune (a recording of the composer playing or being involved in the process is preferred).
2. Read about it, and learn about where it came from (e.g. musical, movie).
 - When researching a tune, a few things to take note of are the composer, the lyricist, and the name/personnel of the group that performs on the original recording (or the recording that you are listening to).
3. Actively listen to your found recording at least 5 times in a row, and absorb as much as possible.
 - When actively listening, the only thing that you should be doing is listening to the recording (i.e. not doing chores or focusing on something else). Aim to focus on specific aspects of the recording (e.g. a single instrument or an aspect of one of the musician's playing).
 - You should be constantly referring to the tune as you learn it. Don't only listen to it 5 times.
4. Learn the Form
 - It's imperative to know the form of a tune, especially if the goal is to use it as a vehicle for improvisation.
 - Common forms include AABA (Song Form), ABAB, and 12-bar Blues.
5. Learn the Exact Melody
 - Reference the original recording. It may also be helpful to listen to other recordings if some things are unclear in the original.
6. Learn the harmony (chords) of the song.
 - It's best to do this by ear. A good place to start is by using the bass to identify the roots of chords, the piano to determine quality, and the melodic voices to help determine the color/quality of chords.
 - Chords should be memorized.
7. Analyze the harmony (Key Centers, Type of harmonic motion).

- Look for patterns (II - Vs, Diatonic/Non-diatonic key centers, harmonic rate)
- 8. Transcribe a solo. Analyze and memorize it.
 - Look for patterns and devices that the player uses to construct their solo (enclosures, scale patterns, arpeggiation).
- 9. Repeat and continue this process over time.

Tunes With Lyrics:

1. Find the original version of the tune or a version where the singer isn't adding too much variation to the melody.
 - Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald are great to listen to for this type of study.
2. Read about it, and learn about where it came from (e.g. musical, movie).
3. Listen to your found recording at least 5 times in a row, and absorb as much as possible.
4. Learn and memorize the lyrics, and find a way to relate to the lyrics.
5. Recite the lyrics (without pitches) as a story.
6. Learn the form.
7. Learn the exact melody.
 - Learning this from Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald or the original recording would probably be easiest.
8. Learn the harmony (chords) of the song.
9. Analyze the harmony (Key Centers, Type of harmonic motion).
10. Transcribe a solo. Analyze and memorize it.
11. Repeat and continue this process over time.

For more advance exploration, try the following things:

- Sing it while playing the harmony on a chordal instrument (piano or guitar)
- Transpose song to all 12 keys
- Listen to modern versions
- Play tune at a gig