

7 Levels of Learning: From my Creative Practice Recipes

1. Study it & Listening to it - Study & Listen to the music. Become friends with the music. It takes time to know music. Just like friends, each one is unique and has it's own way of developing into a true friendship. Begin with looking at the whole- Macrocosm of the music - Style, composer, mvt., clues in words, tempi etc. Then in great detail everything you can notice, dynamics, tempi, Sections, phrases, each note in the phrase, harmony, rhythm..... Find recordings to listen to of your music. Your job is to get to know it, not judge it and to play it artistically to the best of your ability.
2. Say it - Sing it - Say and sing each phrase in great detail with full expression, OUT-LOUD! Experiment, be curious about the infinite ways you can express the music. Also move your body and use hand gestures, free yourself! Next step is to finger along on your instrument and do this.
3. Take it apart - Like a puzzle, take apart the pieces and then put them back together. First find the parts that are alike and practice those pieces together. Practice the whole piece in the parts that are alike. Get to know, become intimate with, each part of the puzzle before putting it back together. Unravel the beauty and mystery of the music. Notice your musical Instincts!
4. Open Circle of Listening and Observing - Practice and use a variety of practice techniques. As you do this keep expanding your ability to listen and observe more and more about, the music, and yourself. Select something to focus on each time and gradually keep adding another thing into your Circle of listening and observing. Each time you practice, and play your instrument aim to learn something new about the music and yourself.
5. Endurance - Exaggeration & Clarity and Concentration - Practice slowly with great Clarity, Exaggerating every detail. Play through specific passages and then the whole piece to build your Endurance and Concentration. Be an Artist. Know what you want to express and practice doing that in great detail and delight! Get into the Spirit of the music.
6. Metronome Motivation & Truth and Tuner Technique - Know your goal tempo and make a chart of metronome times. Know how much time you have to learn your piece. Map out how you are going to get to your goal tempo. Use your metronome as a Truth Teller. It will let you know where the places are that you are still not comfortable. Find some creative ways to practice those parts! Use your Tuner sounding the key you are playing in and also to check notes and see if you are in tune.
7. Record it & Perform it - Record yourself! Listen for something you like first and then in great detail for what you want to improve. Video recording is best so you can see yourself too. Record your lessons and rehearsals. You will learn so much doing this! Perform your music for friends, family, your band and orch. teachers, anyone and everyone. First make it people that you feel very comfortable with, then in more challenging situations for yourself. Do this at least once a week too!