

## Memorization Techniques - Elizabeth Volpe Bligh

1. Before starting to learn the piece, look through it and make note of repeated passages. If they are consecutive, mark them with pencil 1, 2, 3, etc. Avoid pen when you are marking music, in case you want to change something later.
2. Make note of dynamics, ritardandi, and other such indications, and circle any which are not easily visible.
3. Mark sections with letters. If there is a recapitulation of the same theme or a very similar one, use the same letter with a smaller case, such as Aa. Think of each section as having a colour attached to it and visualize this colour when you play it.
4. Learn the piece, using the music, until you have got it into playable condition, then memorize one section at a time. These sections can be as short as you like. They do not have to be in order.
5. Take the music away from the instrument and read through the piece while visualizing yourself playing it. This engages a different part of your brain and forces you to really be aware, without letting the muscles take over.
6. Memorize one hand at a time.
7. Analyze the harmonic structure of the piece. What key are you in? Where does it change key? What is the architecture of the piece? Where are the climaxes? Where should your biggest forte and your longest ritardando be?
8. Memorize lever flips or pedal changes separately. Do this while being aware of the harmonic progressions and logic behind them.
9. Memorize how the music looks on the page, how it looks on the strings, how it sounds, how it feels. Be able to lie in bed and look up at the ceiling and pretend to read the notes off the ceiling. Be able to say out loud what your notes and chords are. If you don't understand harmony, take a course or learn from internet sites. A knowledge of harmony is incredibly useful for memorization skills on the harp.
10. Sing your piece when you are away from the harp.
11. If you have a CD of the piece, listen to it whenever you're going about your daily routine, while you're driving, etc. Get it into your bloodstream.
12. Give yourself enough time to complete this process. Everyone has their own learning speed; you will have to find your own time requirements.
13. Have the piece completely memorized, with everything in your conscious mind, at least three weeks before your performance. A month is better. The earlier it is memorized, the earlier you can start working on artistic interpretation and polishing.
14. Muscle memory is unreliable. Put yourself in the driver's seat by being totally aware in your conscious mind of everything that happens in your pieces.
15. There are excellent articles all over the web on this process. Go exploring!