

What Works For Me
Learning (and Singing) a Standard (or any song) by Tahira Clayton

Learn background info on the tune

- Who is the composer?
- When was it written?
- For what was the tune written? (musical, big band, etc?)

Learn the melody and chord changes

- Start slowly!
- Identify the time signature and key
- Identify form of the tune
- Use a trustworthy source to learn written melody (real book, “trustworthy melody” singers, etc)
- Learn the melody at the piano
- Learn the chord changes by playing piano (can/should also use iRealbook, Aebersold tracks)
 - o Sing roots, 3rds, 7ths, and eventually move to extensions and chord arpeggios

Study the lyric/story

- Have a separate lyric sheet (move away from the leadsheet/melody line!)
- Read through lyrics
- **Speak** through the lyrics (try to keep the lyrics in a natural but poetic speech pattern)
- Establish a narrative for yourself that moves beyond the lyric page. What is your connection to the lyric? Can you relate to every line?

Consult favorite singer/instrumentalist on the tune

- Listen for: timbre/tone, vocal registers/range, vocal sighs, word bends, etc
- What are they doing that you like? Don't like?

Experiment with melody using your lyric interpretation

- Now is when you make the tune your very own
Find your phrasing:
- Sing the lyric exactly as you would speak it (poetically)
- What are the important/goal words? What is the high lyric point of the phrase?
- How does the melody fit in with your interpretation?
- Set the melody and lyric together

Color the Tune (and sing!):

- You have choices! Experiment with:
- Timbre/tone (for emphasis)
- Key (set a mood—use Meaning of the Blues examples)
- Tune style/groove/time signature
- Tempo
- Vocal expressions (sighs, vocal fry, glottal, throw-aways etc)
- Dynamics- (soft, loud, grow, stretch)

- The melody (improvise on words)

Extra notes:

- Really take the time to learn the melody and changes
- Step outside of the box—there are no wrong answers when it comes to your personal interpretation
- Trust your interpretation and lean into it. (MAKE CHOICES and stick with them!)
- A little can go a long way. Big and bold is not always the way to go.
- Be natural. Let your story speak thru your chosen musical devices
- Have **fun!** Jazz is the freedom to interpret a piece of music how YOU want. Enjoy getting to know yourself musically thru this process!