

Fiddle Shop Talk

I'm just back from a inspiring 10 days at the North Atlantic Fiddle Convention in St John's, NL. Fiddlers from Galacia, Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, the US and Canada presented workshops and concerts. More about this in later issues. Sunday Sessions still continuing at Brennan's pub. Check BUZZ for details. Here's some very useful information on the relationship between learning and brain and neurological function.

There is a lot of research showing that learning to play an instrument has significant advantages for your brain development, regardless of the age at when you start learning. At an older age the process of learning a new instrument or even continuing to learn new tunes, etc. reduces the impact of aging.

Also, a few new aspects related to learning will help you learn easier and the information will be remembered for a longer period. Getting a good night's sleep has been shown to be very important in learning new information. In fact getting a good sleep is as important as practicing. The practicing you do should include the actual task of playing the tune as well as imagining you are playing the tune. Imagining you are playing sends the same motor and neurological signals to the brain and to the muscles as actually playing and this has been shown to significantly improve the tasks that are being learned. Give this a try as you learn a new tune. Once you have figured out the melody and which fingers you are using along with your bow movements take some time to just sit quietly and imagine playing the tune. Do this for three or four times thru the tune and then get a good night's sleep. Learning to sing or hum the melody before playing the tune is also a better approach to learning a new tune and you will remember it better.

For more information on these studies check out the following link which gives more details on the fascinating and functional relationship between ours brains, sleep and the learning process.

<http://www.newenglandconservatory.edu/studentLife/documents/PracticingandCurrentBrainResearchbyGebrian.pdf>

Keep your bow rosined and the fiddle in tune.

Roy Johnstone