Hints for Playing the Dulcimer by Ear:

1. **BE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR INSTRUMENT**
   If you are not playing a lot you will not know your instrument and where the notes are found. The quiet Justin Marquez, "Familiarity breeds attempt."

2. **PLAY TUNES THAT ARE IN YOUR HEAD**
   Just try picking out a tune that you can sing (a hymn, a childhood favorite). It is important that you are able to sing or hum that tune.

3. **FOCUS ON CERTAIN NOTES OF THE SCALE**
   Certain notes on the scale have a sound that your ear can memorize. "Open", for instance, has the sound of home base, it is "do" in the scale. It is also easy to watch for when others are playing. "Six" has that wonderful mixolydian modal sound (Old Joe Clark 4-5-6-5-4-3-2). "Seven" is one octave higher than "open". The notes of the root chord are "open, two, four, & seven". Play around with these to prepare your ear.

4. **PRACTICE WITH TAPES AND CD'S, or online MIDI FILES**
   Try learning tunes from good dulcimer tapes or CD's that you have in your collection. Of course you have to determine which key they are in. So many of the tunes are in D. You can determine by strumming along your D tuning. You will notice right away that it either fits or it doesn't.

5. **LEARN HOW TO PLAY CHORDS**
   If you can play the three primary chords in the key, then you can at least play along with the group until you begin to zero in on the tune itself. The primary chords are built on the first, forth, and fifth notes of the given scale. For instance, the key of D, your primary chords are D, G, and A. (Just work your way through the musical alphabet: A B C D E F G)

6. **START**
   Playing by ear will not just happen. Don't just sit there. You must actively pursue a tune. Go into a JAM where there are tunes being played tha you do not know. Watch other players. Listen. Get your fingers on the fretboard and go after it like a bulldog.

7. **LEARN TO JOT DOWN TABLATURE**
   Learn to jot down the basic numbers of the tune so that you can remember it when you are no longer at the JAM. Go for the obvious first. Then add a little at a time to complete the tune.