

Masterclass: Jazz Piano Mastery - February 25, 2026

Title: Rubato Ballad Arrangement & Targeting Chord Tones – Exploring "Blame It on My Youth" in Eb Major

Focus: Mastering a rubato solo piano arrangement of the classic ballad "Blame It on My Youth" (Oscar Levant / Edward Heyman) in the key of Eb major, with expressive left-hand voicings, voice leading, and subtle rhythmic freedom. Then, shift to developing targeted solo lines over a slow-to-medium swing feel, using a full written-out chorus of bebop-inspired phrasing. Break down enclosures, turns, bebop scales, arpeggios, and chromatic approaches to chord tones for authentic jazz language. Apply these techniques to create their own improvised solos.

Lesson Plan Breakdown

Warm-Up and Review

Play the classic II-7 – V7 – IΔ7 progression in Eb major (Fm7 – Bb7 – EbΔ7) using bebop scales in the right hand; apply dominant and minor bebop variants for Bb7 and Fm7) with swinging eighth notes. Add left-hand comping on the & of 2 and the & of 4 (simple shell voicings or roots + 7ths). Suggested daily practice: 10 minutes

1. **Rubato Solo Piano Arrangement: Concept and Performance** Review the complete rubato arrangement of "Blame It on My Youth" in Eb major (provided sheet: head with melody in RH, supportive LH voicings with roots, 7ths, inner voices, and chromatic passing tones for smooth voice leading).
 - Learn section by section (AABA form), Suggestion: start with LH alone for bass motion and voicings.
 - Add RH melody and inner voices slowly, focusing on rubato freedom.
 - Play full arrangement at free ballad tempo, emphasizing expression and personal interpretation.

Suggested daily practice: 20–25 minutes

2. **Targeting Chord Tones & Bebop Phrasing: Slow-Swing Soloing**

Concept Introduction: Discuss the provided one-chorus written-out solo transcription over the changes (slow-to-medium swing feel).

Break down the phrasing in detail:

- Enclosures (chromatic approaches from above/below to target chord tones).

- Turns (ornamental figures around chord tones).
- Bebop scales (e.g., over II-V-I segments).
- Arpeggiated chords and extensions (7ths, 9ths, 13ths).
- Chromatic passing tones

Practice

- Play the written solo slowly with backing track or self-accompaniment, coordinating RH lines with LH comping.
- Isolate sections to internalize each bebop phrase.
- Gradually increase to medium swing tempo.
- Experiment: Create your own solo lines/phrases using the same techniques—focus on targeting chord tones (especially 3rds/7ths on downbeats) and smooth connections between chords.
- Purpose: Builds precise bebop language for improvisation, emphasizing targeted lines over the changes for stronger, more intentional solos.
Suggested daily practice: 20–25 minutes

3. Full Performance and Application

- Perform the rubato arrangement, with full expression and dynamics.
- Transition to swing feel: Play head in medium swing, then improvise one chorus using targeting techniques (or extend from the written solo).
- Optionally, combine: Rubato head into swinging improvised chorus.

Purpose: Integrates rubato ballad playing with swing improvisation for versatile performance skills. Suggested daily practice: 30 minutes

4. Wrap-Up and Homework

- Share one takeaway: What technique/"how-to" stood out for you in today's masterclass?.

Homework:

- Daily warm-up: Fm7 – Bb7 – Ebmaj7 with bebop scales and LH comping.
- Master the rubato solo piano arrangement of "Blame It on My Youth," focusing on expression and voice leading.
- Study the written one-chorus solo transcription and analyze bebop elements.
- Practice creating your own swing solo over the changes, emphasizing targeting chord tones, enclosures, turns, bebop scales, and arpeggios.
- Record a complete performance (rubato head + improvised swing chorus) for self-review or submission.

Why "Blame It on My Youth"?

Its tender, slowly unfolding harmony (persistent ii-V pull to Ebmaj7 with chromatic surprises) is perfect for rubato ballad work and expressive soloing. The changes support rich voicings and bebop targeting, building directly on prior harmonic and improvisational skills.

Tips for Success

Refer to the provided rubato arrangement sheet, one-chorus solo transcription, and masterclass recording for reference. Experiment beyond the written material—jazz thrives on individuality and personal expression!

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