

Masterclass: Jazz Piano Mastery - June 24, 2026

Exploring "Moanin'" in F Major - Written-Out Arrangement, Chord Voicings & Hard Bop Swing Soloining with Bass/Drums Backing Track

Focus: Learning the complete written-out piano arrangement of "Moanin'" (Bobby Timmons) in F major note-for-note and performing it with a bass/drums backing track, discovering and internalizing the chord changes and specific chord voicings, mastering an authentic hard-swinging feel on the head, and developing a strong, musical solo over the changes.

We'll study the full written piano arrangement in detail, break down the harmony and voicings section by section, lock in the correct hard bop swing feel and groove, then transition into targeted improvisation over one full chorus. Emphasis will be placed on accuracy to the written part, understanding the harmonic choices, rhythmic precision with the backing track, clear voice leading, and building a confident, swinging solo at approximately 120 BPM.

Overview

This masterclass uses "Moanin'" as the vehicle - a soulful hard bop classic with a memorable, gospel-tinged head and blues-based changes. The main goals are to learn the piano arrangement by playing along with the backing track, understanding the chord changes and voicings, play the head with a strong, driving hard bop swing feel, and then improvise effectively over the form using blues and bebop language.

Lesson Plan Breakdown

Warm-Up and Review:

Play 2 octaves of the F blues scale with LH comping.



Suggested daily practice: 5 to 10 minutes

1. The Written-Out Arrangement: Note-for-Note Mastery & Voicing Analysis

- Learn the complete written piano arrangement of "Moanin'" in F major note-for-note (right-hand melody and voicings together with the left-hand part).
- Work through the form section by section, identifying every chord change and analyzing the specific voicings used in the arrangement.
- Focus on accuracy, correct fingerings, and fully internalizing the exact notes, rhythms, and voice leading as written.
- Practice it with the full backing track including the head in/out and the solo section.

Suggested daily practice: 25–30 minutes

2. Tempo Work, Swing Feel & Solo Application

- Bring the written arrangement up to performance tempo (~120 BPM) while developing a strong, authentic swing feel and groove.
- Soloing over the changes: Perform one complete chorus of improvisation while keeping a solid swing feel. Use the written arrangement as a foundation and incorporate targeted phrasing techniques - chord-tone targeting (especially 3rds & 7ths), enclosures, chromatic approaches, blues scales, and smooth voice leading.

3. Recording goal:

Submit a musical recording of the complete written arrangement along with one chorus of solo and record it using the backing track. Aim for note-for-note accuracy on the head, a strong hard-swinging feel, and confident improvisation.

Suggested recording time: 20 - 30 minutes

Performance Objective: You should be able to perform the full written arrangement of "Moanin'" at 120 BPM with accuracy and a driving hard bop swing feel, then seamlessly transition into a musical one-chorus solo over the changes. This builds essential skills for playing hard bop standards with authenticity and personal expression.

Why "Moanin"?

"Moanin'" is an ideal vehicle for learning a complete written piano arrangement note-for-note while deeply exploring chord changes and voicings. Its catchy, soulful head, rhythmic breaks and blues-infused harmonies make it perfect for developing a strong hard-swinging feel on the written material before moving into improvisation. The changes provide excellent opportunities to apply blues scales and bebop phrasing in a classic hard bop context.

Tips for Success

Refer to the provided written arrangement, masterclass recording, recording performance (Paul Tobey), and the bass/drums backing track. Focus first on learning the head exactly as written and understanding the chord changes and voicings. Once the arrangement is solid, concentrate on developing a strong, driving hard bop swing feel.

Jazz rewards both accuracy to the material and personal expression.

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