

9. Solo piano components of specific tempo styles.

If you're reading this lesson text I would like to point out that most of the nuances and details of this lesson are best learned from watching the lesson videos. Although, reading the text as well will only help.

a. Step 1 - Medium Swing

The medium swing style is a fun tempo to play because it allows for many different strategies to be used. This tempo is one of the few where your options are open to all of the methods I've listed in the previous lessons to play solo piano.

Although we have many options at are fingertips, here are the options that will hold most prominent when you're first starting.

- i. Broken Bass with Chords
- ii. Tenths
- iii. RH Melody LH any sort of bass strategy
- iv. Little harmonization except on half notes and whole notes.

b. Step 2 - Slow Swing

The slow swing style is definitely an art due to the very slow tempo you are swinging. The most common feeling when playing this style

will be anxiety due to all the space. After practicing this tempo you'll grow to enjoy and embrace the space which will lead to great music and growth.

The most influential components of this tempo are seen below.

- i. Broken Stride
- ii. Comp off melody or with melody
- iii. Harmonization of melody and in between
- iv. Fills in space

c. Step 3 - Ballads

Ballads are a thing of beauty. The slowness and freedom they allow while playing solo piano is non comparable. With ballads you can truly take liberties with the time to express your inner emotions. Ballads especially, are tempos you can take liberties with. Feel free to move and displace the tempos however you like.

Here are the major components towards playing a solid solo piano ballad.

- i. Lots of harmonization
- ii. LH Tenths to Chords
- iii. Bass movement
- iv. Fills
- v. Keeping the rhythmic foundation.

d. Step 4 - Ballad Swing

The ballad swing will challenge you in ways you never expected. Sometimes you will want to switch between a straight time ballad and a slow swing ballad and that is exactly where this style fits. There are occasions when you want to play a ballad with a little more grit and dirtiness. This is exactly when you start to swing a ballad to give it some swag! There is no stopping you from moving back and forth from a straight ballad feel to a swing ballad feel. Or you can choose to play on all the way through with one style. That's the freedom of jazz piano. It's completely up to you! :)

- i. Very open
- ii. Stride
- iii. Harmonization of melody with triads.

e. Step 5 - Fast

Alright. This is the tempo everyone has been waiting for. In the right corner speeds at 200 and above. In the left corner...little ole us...

Fast tempos can be terrifying. How the heck do we account for all the components at once while the tempo is whizzing by. Well...what do you think we need to do? Simply things as much as possible.

At fast tempos like this we do not have much time for anything. And when we do, it's quick stabs of spice or flavor. Nothing can be continuously used except walking bass or bass notes of some sort.

At this tempo we really want to feel the time as subdivisions. Meaning, we do not want to let our body feel ALL of the quarter notes, rather feel the half notes to the time. This will give us a calmer and more open perspective on the tempo as it is.

See below for the foundation that will make up our fast tempos.

- i. Little to no harmonization
- ii. LH does all the work.
- iii. Broken stride
- iv. Any bass method
- v. RH melody only with no harmonization