



Dave Frank School of Jazz
In-person in NYC or Skype lessons worldwide

LENNIE TRISTANO NIGHT 6/10/11

Lennie Tristano (1919 -1978) was one of the great jazz genius/innovators of the 20th century. Among other things, Lennie was one of the pioneers of the “cool school “ of jazz of the 1940’s and 50’s, made the first the use of over-tracking in audio recordings, conducted the first experiments in free jazz group playing, and pioneered the walking bassline style of jazz solo piano playing. Blind from the age of 9, Lennie was also among the first jazz educators to establish a complete system of teaching improvisation on all instruments, and had a thriving teaching studio in the NYC area until his death in 1978. Lennie’s piano playing was the expression of a tremendous but relaxed spiritual power, daring harmonic and melodic elements, humor, and a shocking originality. His playing has influenced countless jazz pianists including Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett and Herbie Hancock. In this class we will focus on Lennie’s solo playing and on some of his innovations both solo and in a group setting.

Elements of solo piano style:

- 1) Walking $\frac{1}{4}$ note bass lines
- 2) Swing $\frac{1}{8}$ RH improv lines on chord changes
- 3) Use of turns in the RH line, often at the highest note
- 4) RH and 2-hand 4-6 note melodic chord clusters with top and bottom note brought out
- 5) RH triplet lines
- 6) RH $\frac{1}{16}^{\text{th}}$ note lines
- 7) Two-hand octave lines often used to connect two different stylistic sections
- 8) 2-hand chord spread chord voicings moved up and/or down in chromatic rhythmic groupings

BECOMING – 1961 (improv over changes of What is this thing called love)

Slow RH chord cluster melodies/swing $\frac{1}{8}^{\text{th}}$ lines vs. walking bassline

Swing $\frac{1}{8}$ improvised lines with turns and triplets

RH octave lines for emphasis

Imitated RH phrases

Melodic two-hand chord structures

Chromatic descending chord passage

Melodic chord clusters

Common-tone chord sequence

Two-hand octave lines
RH chord clusters vs. walking bassline
Faster RH improvising vs. walking bassline
Double-time lines
Triplet lines
Octave lines – into two-hand melodic chord clusters

DELIBERATION (improv over the changes of Indiana)

Swing 1/8 improv vs. walking basslines with turns and triplets
Triplet lines
Imitated ascending line
Double-time lines
Swing 1/8th lines
Melodic chord clusters
Swing 1/8th lines/ chord clusters
Double-time lines
Swing 1/8 lines w/turns
Triplet lines
b5 chord clusters –octave lines- to melodic chord resolution
Holding last chord for a long time, then dropping all notes but the lowest root

Descent into the Maelstrom (1953)

Serious atonal/polytonal overtracking of:
Rumbling bass patterns
Low smashing notes
Repeated ascending/descending phrases
2-level jumping chords
High atonal melodies
Glissandos
Tremolos
Repeated chords/clusters

Digression (1949)

Beautiful atonal intro by Lennie using melody/inner lines, switching RH/LH lead lines,
LH comping and two-hand chords
Basic pulse (@102 bpm) subdivided into quarter notes, straight eighth notes, triplets
Tapestry of atonal melodies:
Combining multiple steps then leap(s)
Lennie starts, sax plays a short melody, Lennie answers/imitates
Guitar/bass enters until complete sonic tapestry is reached
One melodic phrase is varied, dies away, another starts

To enjoy Dave's other 11 free online master classes, type in "Dave Frank" in
youtube and Ustream search engines, or visit www.davefrankjazz.com