



Dave Frank School of Jazz

In-person in NYC or Skype lessons worldwide

LIBERACE NIGHT AT HARI NYC 1/6/12

Liberace (Wladziu Valentino Liberace 1919 -1987) was one of the most popular and successful entertainers of the twentieth century. He built a huge brand, following and industry from his unique combination of virtuosic piano technique, incredible chutzpah, humor, warmth, outrageous style and glitz, and popular appeal. A pioneer of early television, Liberace's music was an amalgam of mainstream classical, boogie-woogie, Latin, and popular styles, always fiercely delivered with accuracy and passion. Combining classical sensibility, a carefully crafted scope of pianistic colors, pop styles and awesome schmaltz, Liberace managed to become an icon in the pantheon of show business.

Elements of Liberace's Piano Style

- 1) Everything in Liberace's style(s) was BIG, designed to dazzle and transport the audience through pianistic extremes. Both the music and visual presentation were carefully planned for maximum effect.
- 2) Characteristic piano sounds: brilliant single note high RH passages, RH octave 2-4 note clusters for melody, powerful lower register octave and double octave patterns, high RH slurs leading to melody note, mid to high range tremolos for dramas, two-level LH to accompany melody, beautiful balance of musical voices during classical playing and otherwise
- 3) Piano-length arpeggios, double-arpeggios and runs, often used as exclamation points following melodic statements.
- 4) Half and full-keyboard repeated patterns using octaves, double-octaves, repeated ascending or descending chord patterns, etc
- 5) Boogie-Woogie LH bass patterns
- 6) The melody was always strongly delivered through RH octave voicings, pianistic technique control methods, LH muzak piano style, lavish arrangements and orchestrations
- 7) Well-planned non-musical production values, including candelabras, twirling pianos, dancers, puppets, dry ice and fake seagulls. Huge smiling, winking and scaled-down Elvis-like body movement were played directly to the audience through the TV camera.
- 8) Finely controlled rubato/ritard passages for contrast
- 9) Hands over hands technique for visual impact and continuity
- 10) Regular conscious pedaling to create full- spectrum piano sound
- 11) Frequent starting with a BANG!, often with a strong LH pattern
- 12) Wildly exaggerated hand movements for visual effect
- 13) Sharp, often staccato or held endings played with precision
- 14) Alternating block and windshield wipers in RH melody delivery

Pianistic Techniques in Liberace Style

- 1) Singing Tone – created in part by blending the sound of one melody note into another
- 2) Bringing out the melody or other parts – done with differing rates of velocity in striking the keys, arm weight distribution, or pressing key in “deeper” into the keyboard
- 3) Pedaling control – basic concept: Hands Down Pedal Up

Liberace Basic Fashion Style

- 1) Black pants, socks, and shoes
- 2) Puffy shirt
- 3) Glitzy vest
- 4) Glam Jacket
- 5) Mucho rings and blings
- 6) Pompadour toupee
- 7) \$350,000 outer coat

To enjoy many other of Dave's free online master classes (including Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson, Grateful Dead; Lennie Tristano, walking bassline clinic, Charlie Parker, etc.), type in “Dave Frank” on Youtube or Ustream search engines, or visit www.davefrankjazz.com