

## Interview Transcript – Carlotta

**Interviewer: Christian Ferlaino**

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### English Translation

CF: The first question is quite simple. What kind of music do you listen to? What do you like to listen to?

CC: Mainly jazz, because that's what I study, and so my listening is mostly [oriented towards] jazz. I like fusion a lot lately and then... what I was telling you about last time... this kind of ambient, which almost comes close to traditional songs as well. I've been discovering songs from Sicilian culture, Sicilian tradition... realising how much the Arabic influence, for example... I mean, I really feel... I have this type of perception and it is beautiful. I just love it so much and it's the only music, maybe this one, that gives me the same vibes as jazz.

CF: Can you make some names of artists that you like?

CC: Fusion... Miles Davis...

CF: The electric period. Like Bitches Brew.

CC: Yeah, psychedelic. I like that a lot. Then traditional jazz, so we're even talking about the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, so right from swing all the way to Chet Baker, singers Billy Holiday, the Vaughan, Coltrane... the hard-hitting bebop.

CC: Do you think there's a common thread, something that links these different interests in your opinion? Like Coltrane and the Original Dixieland?

CC: Yes.

CF: Or this thing you said earlier as well, that is very interesting... the fact that traditional music give you more or less the same vibes as jazz? Can you explain that aspect a little bit?

CC: It's something that I currently cannot explain, in the sense that it's my perception. I was attracted to jazz by something definitely. Definitely, in my case, I like instrumental music, a lot. And I prefer, although I am a singer, I prefer to listen to instrumental jazz and not so much sung jazz. What could be the common thread in my opinion, though, is also improvisation. Between the two, between traditional culture and jazz. It is maybe a different improvisation, however I feel this need for expression and freedom that I like, it fascinates me.

CF: And in your opinion does it have characteristics that can be inferred from listening or the fact that you know there is this improvisational element?

CC: Definitely the fact of knowing that there is the improvisational element. Because if I have to go and analyse, there are, for example, my teachers who think and assume that so many improvisations in jazz, even in albums, are not actually improvisations but it was all written beforehand. And it could be, it could be. But generally the concept of jazz is... come on, there is improvisation. I can feel free to do something and if I have to do it again it's never going to

be the same as what I wanted to say before. So doing it through no words, through sounds, through...

CF: You were talking about vibes though, so something perceptual.

CC: Yes, yes, also.

CF: So there is something in the music.

CC: Absolutely there is.

CF: And can you pinpoint what it is?

CC: It is difficult, it is a difficult question. It's a difficult question because I feel... I don't hear too much stuff. In the sense, I listen and I can focus on all the instruments. I don't hear a jumble of things. I hear the emotion of the saxophone, I hear the emotion of the piano, I hear the emotion of the drums. And in traditional music, so much do the voices. Certainly because they are all very strong voices and very theatrical [dramatic] in my opinion, very passionate. So they convey that passion to me, but also rhythmically. It's a strong thing.

CF: So it's a matter of emotions you read in the music?

CC: Yes, yes. I don't feel... when I listen to these things....I also enjoy when I feel uncomfortable. In the sense, the first time I listened to a Sicilian traditional piece, I said "What's going on? Do such a things exist?" I felt uncomfortable for a moment, but it was really fun to listen to this. To feel myself.... it put me on edge! Listening to something like that challenged me, it challenged me.

CF: Would you say you enjoy being surprised by music?

CC: A lot, also in life. And definitely by music as well. Also because it's about feeling. Without romanticising music too much, though, come on, it's feelings.

CF: And when do you listen to music, more or less? In what situations and for what reasons? How do you use music?

CC: Every moment when I'm not doing something, I need to have something in my ears.

CF: Okay, so it's not something you do while you're doing other things? It's not a background?

CC: Also, also, it depends. If I have to be particularly committed to something, no, I don't use music. If I'm painting, I do.

CF: Are there differences in the various uses you make of music?

CC: Yes, I find that when I'm in the studio with members of my band, where I play, we do collective listening sessions of artists that we find and maybe share them, there's a really special focus, a focus that maybe I don't put at other times of the day. We do listening sessions because we enjoy it.

CF: Instead in everyday life, how do you choose a piece? Is there a particular reason that leads you to decide, "Now I want to listen to this instead of that?"

CC: So, I'm kind of influenced by what I'm studying, so maybe I'm preparing a piece and so I'm listening to it, listening to various versions, etc., etc. If, on the other hand, I feel like listening to

something in particular, I'm always driven by feelings, meaning right now I feel like listening to this thing.

CF: Is this urge to listen in your opinion related to how you feel at that moment?

CC: Sure, of course.

CF: And do you look for music that either fits the feeling of the moment or changes that feeling and takes you somewhere else?

CC: Both. There are times when I have a state of mind, I need something that totally violates me and makes me maybe change direction, then I listen to something totally distant. However, there are times when I want to listen to something that is close to me in that state of mind. But I can't, to answer your question from before, I can't listen to stuff while I'm doing something challenging because otherwise I only listen, I just listen to the music.

CF: When did you start playing music?

CC: I started with piano when I was seven years old, more or less. It was a choice imposed by my mother who went to the conservatory and I didn't like it at all. At all!

CF: You could tell by the "imposed." Why didn't you like it?

CC: Because I had to do Bach and it bored me. Because I was small. I listened but I didn't understand. Now I love Bach, however, as a child I simply did not. And so the fact that I had the teacher telling me: "You have to do this, this, this," I definitely didn't have.... I don't want to blame the teacher, however, he was maybe not.... He was not very good in making a seven-year-old girl understand what classical music is, who Bach is, etc., etc. I want to know who Bach is before I play it. What am I doing?

CF: Okay. And you as a seven years old, what did you expect from the teacher?

CC: I expected a description of what I was going to perform. That is, to humanize that score, simply.

CF: Would you say make sense of it?

CC: Yes, yes.

CF: What about the technical parts? Do you think you would have enjoyed doing all the technical exercises as well, humanizing them? Or do you think it would have...

CC: So, the technical part... I am very methodical. In the sense that if I want to do something, I have to do it well. So I make sense of the exercises, maybe, of technique. Despite... I mean, I humanise it by saying, they're useful to me, they're useful to my hands, they're useful to my brain in order to be able to get to do that thing. And I say: "This is useful, this is useful. It serves a purpose, I'm not wasting time."

CF: And in that teacher you could not see this capacity?

CC: No. I don't know if I was too small. I don't know if it was my fault or his fault. I don't know, however, I only know that then things evolved. And they evolved for the better. Because I became bigger, because I decided where to go.

CF: You didn't go on with piano, though?

CC: I didn't go on in the sense that I didn't go further with piano studies, I didn't continue classical studies.

CF: But you abandoned this teacher?

CC: Absolutely I did. A few years later, two years later. I immediately went to another school where a teacher heard me singing and said, "Why don't you also try singing?" From there I said: "Okay, the piano is no longer my enemy." I started accompanying myself. Okay. Singing and voice.

CF: And in this other school, what do you think was different about it compared to...? Not so much with respect to piano as with respect to teaching music.

CC: Wonderful, I have wonderful memories.

CF: What is the difference? That is, what was it about one that made you feel inadequate and another...?

CC: I felt comfortable in the other school because there was so much communication.

CF: In what sense?

CC: Between me and the teacher. So it wasn't the strict teacher who said: "Hello, good morning," not even how are you? "Sit down and play the piece." But there was much more humanity there. Even trivially to really ask how I am and then start. It's violent this way of doing it. I'm bringing one of the most intimate parts of me to class. Because anyway we're dealing with art, we're dealing with.... Even if it's a performance of stuff that's already written, not mine. However, there was more communication.

CF: And from a music teaching point of view, is there a difference? Do you think he was listening more to your needs?

CC: Yes, just that.

CF: So less "this is what you have to do."

CC: Exactly. There's also more to it. You who are more experienced than me, help me to grow my sensitivity during this journey. I don't want to come... To just come, in vain. I want you to educate me, you are a teacher, so educate me also to perceive things, to feel things that I don't see. That's interesting. And this I have to say has happened. It has happened. Even the fact that he noticed that I had a nice voice.

CF: So it's also a different sensibility.

CC: Yes.

CF: Can you remember the first time or even a really distant memory or events that had to do with music? The first time you realised that music existed or an event when you were a child in which music played a central role? The first musical memory. Can you focus on it?

CC: I think my mother's piano standing in the corner of the house. She used to play it. From the time I was born I always saw this piano on this wall. Every once in a while I would get close to it to play something. Playing means pressing keys. I could hear the music.

CF: We're talking about roughly what age?

CC: Four years old.

CF: Is this memory something positive? Is it a good memory?

CC: I don't know. I knew it wasn't an object of decoration, though. I don't know if it's a good memory or else. It is not bad. The bad memory was more this pressure from my mother in "do it do it do it." Maybe it would have happened spontaneously. It wasn't a pressure....It was a somewhat violent pressure. Because I didn't feel like it.

CF: Do you think your mother's pressure affected your relationship with the piano a some way?

CC: Initially, yes. Then the switch was to start singing. And I really felt there that I had an allied in the piano.

CF: Okay. And this memory of the piano.... Did you play it?

CC: As a very small child? Yes, I was looking for it. But then there was a friend in the house.... That is, a friend of my uncle's who was a film critic lived in my house, and I was always hearing the operas that he listened to. So I would always hear Aida etc. etc. from upstairs. Played at a blasting volume. And for me and also for my sister it had become absolutely normal. We would play outside and we would hear the Aida....I always had music in the house. Always.

CF: Are there any non-musical sounds that you think are particularly interesting or that you like?

CC: Non-musical.

CF: Non-musical sound doesn't mean much. Anyway, I mean there are sounds... objects, sounds of nature, things in the house, engines... Anything that you think ... that when you hear it you say: "Wow this is really good!" Or an object to whose sound you give a particular meaning?

CC: I've never thought about it, though.... Anything percussive, put together I really like.

CF: Put together in what sense?

CC: In the sense of having a bottle and a piece of iron and something. Touching it, banging on it with a stick, I like that. Anything that can make a rhythm I like. Also the sounds of nature, sure. Absolutely. Lately, while listening to records, I realise that it is beautiful... Making music in this way. I like it.

CF: And do you find yourself making sound with some object, with something in an unexpected way?

CC: Unexpected in what sense?

CF: You're lost in thought, you're doing something else and you find yourself doing things even involuntarily.

CC: Yes, it happens to me involuntarily. It happens to me, but not with something precise, with a precise sound. But I realise how much I now have this autism right inside my brain. I'm doing something and I have to tap my foot or I have to create a rhythm with my hands. Always, this happens always.

CF: And this thing with the objects you were saying, the bottle, pieces of iron?

CC: Because with a friend of mine this thing happened. I mean, we started creating things out of stuff that was in this studio, out of nothing, and it came out funny, beautiful. We felt connected. But there's not something, it's a particular sound, I'll tell you the truth.

CF: How do you feel about the lab, the way we're doing stuff a bit out of the ordinary compared to past experiences? What do you think about what goes on in the lab?

CC: So, I think it's certainly an interesting thing. In the sense that, let's start with saying that I wasn't pushed by my mother. [LAUGHS] I came spontaneously. It's funny. Although, I'm not always comfortable, maybe, with what we're doing. It goes back to what I said before, experimenting amuses me. Even the other time discussing your point of view, improvisation, and the many questions I was asking you, you unlocked things for me, in the sense, to base my point of view on something else. I like it because you value and make music, not with standard instruments, but something else. This other thing is also musical, actually. And still there are vibes. Even when we did the circle with the voices. That was beautiful, I had never done that. It was very beautiful.

CF: And is it very far from the things you've done so far musically?

CC: Absolutely, yes.

CF: In what terms?

CC: Let's say that I've always tended to do canonical things, in the sense of... I study in the conservatory, so you must follow theoretical rules and you have to stay there. Maybe for us singers it's a bit different, because we have that slightly theatrical aspect, a bit of giving space to our voice, to what we want to say... even for an instrument it could be like that. But it's different because we're not following scores, we're not following guides. There is no guide, there is no guide. You never tell us "you have to do that." And sometimes you are also unclear. Because I think, what do we actually have to do? But maybe it's better not to know, let's just jump in. And that's something that's nice, that I appreciate, that I'm appreciating. Don't give too many guides.

CF: How would you describe this approach? What is it about it that you find interesting?

CC: Probably making music this way is the truth. It's authentic, it's something real. It's my thing, you have my feedback. I have yours, I have Rossella's, I have other people's. But in a real way.

CF: So you put it on a relational, personal level any more or something else?

CC: Relational, personal. Maybe even personal. It's different from what I do, it's different. It's different, I like not to follow patterns. I mean when there is a need to follow patterns it's OK. But if I can do what I'm dedicating my life to anyway, finding another way is interesting. Also because I would like to say something too. That is, I feel like doing it. I'm driven by something if I go to the conservatory or if I do music.

CF: Do you think you have a greater chance of expressing your vision in this kind of approach?

CC: Absolutely, yes. It's enhanced that. Yes.