



Giada Valenti and CiaoDC.com Exclusive Interview

CiaoDC.com (CDC): Where were you born and raised?

Giada Valenti (GV): I was born and raised in a beautiful town outside Venice, called Portogruaro.

CDC: What was life like growing up in an Italian family?

GV: Well, God has blessed me by giving me an amazing family. My parents are the best parents I could wish for. Throughout my life, they have been, and continue to be, a great example. They taught me all I know about respect for other people, and love for life. They have given me unconditional

love and the freedom to become the woman I always wanted to be. I have an amazing big brother who has always been like a guardian angel protecting me, and great grandparents. In Italy, families are really close; we always had big family dinners for Christmas and for Easter. I still call my parents every day and the rest of the family at least once a week, or they call or e-mail me. In my family we are like a “big team” that loves and supports one another very much in all we do.

CDC: Who encouraged you the most to pursue music?

GV: Well I think it was my Grandma Maria. She was a great soprano. She was an amazing, beautiful woman and I was so charmed by her charisma. I listened to her enchanting voice all the time; I was mesmerized by that sound. And she’s definitely the one who made me fall in love with music - popular songs and operatic arias. My grandma always said that all kinds of music have the same dignity and deserve the same respect when they are expressed with passion and love.

CDC: When did you first realize that this is what you wanted to do?

GV: I think that music has chosen me. I didn’t really ever think about becoming a singer or a songwriter. It has always been something that was in me. I was singing and playing the piano all the time and so I became a singer. Perhaps I was born a singer. I was singing songs by the French singer Edith Piaf to the family when I was only 3 years old!! I would wear one of my father’s big, black shirts, put a belt around my waist so the t-shirt looked like a dress, and perform Edith Piaf songs. I was charmed by her voice and her personality. And I still am.

CDC: Where did you study music?

GV: I studied piano at the “Santa Cecilia” Institute in Venice. I received my degree from the “G. Tartini” Institute in Trieste, and I took voice lessons in Venice with Jazz singer Dawn Mitchell.

CDC: Congratulations on winning the “San Remo New Talents in the World” contest with your pop ballad "Solo con Te" (Only With You). What has winning this contest done for you and your career?

GV: Grazie! I won that contest in 2001. At the time I was living in Holland. I had just gotten married, and although I was very young, I was thinking of starting a family. After winning the contest, I signed a contract with BMG and began touring Europe to promote my CD. I haven't stopped since!

CDC: For the people who are not yet familiar with you and your songs, how would you describe/classify your music?

GV: I love romantic music where lyrics are important and can give you feelings of love. My music and style is often compared to Michael Buble, who has also brought back to younger generations songs from the past. I have been compared to Ornella Vanoni and Mina, two of the greatest Italian singers but also to Shirley Bassey, Edith Piaf and Peggy Lee. My music is a mix of jazz and pop and definitely romantic. I speak many languages and I like to sing also in all of them.

CDC: Tell us about your latest CD "And I Love You So".

GV: I'm a songwriter, but with this CD I wanted to pay tribute to songs written by other writers, songs that are close to my heart and have touched my heart. That's the magic of music. When you find a song that you didn't write but you feel like it was written for you, by you, because you have the same emotions and the same feeling, that's very special. And *I Love You So, It's Impossible, I have But One Heart, La Vie En Rose, You Don't Have To Say You Love Me, Grande Grande Grande* and all the other songs on the CD are magnificent and timeless songs. They are not mine, but they feel like they are.

CDC: You moved to New York in 2004. What do you like so far about the city and the people?

GV: I moved to New York City in May 2005. Well, I love New York. This place has a magical power. It goes into your heart and you can never leave it again. People who have never been here think that Manhattan is busy, only cars and cabs, and people walking fast with a Starbucks café in their hand. They think that Manhattan is Times Square. Well, what I love about New York is that the city is vibrant – there are so many things going on every day in the city. I love that the city has many small and big parks where children can play, where dogs can have their own place to play. I love the fact that the city is so different, depending on which neighborhood you are in. It's a song where you see so many different realities. A city that inspires you to be better...the city never sleeps, and you get the same energy and you want to do more and go farther with your life. I love it!! Not easy cause the competition is great, but I think this makes it so special. It makes you go for it and fight for it.

CDC: What do you miss most about Italy? Is there something that you used to do on a regular basis in Italy that you cannot do in New York or the United States?

GV: Well, I miss my family and my friends. For the rest you can do and find everything you want here. I have found my way so I'm really not missing anything. I know where to find good Italian food, real Italian café and the best Italian gelato. I

have met some friends, Italian-Americans, who are so close to me that I even have Italian family reunions, like in Italy, but with their family. I call them my new American family. Basically, I only miss my family and friends...but they come here to visit or I go there very often so it's not bad!!

CDC: Producer Sonny Grosso and musical director Phil Ramone selected you for a role in the upcoming Broadway musical based on the life of Mario Lanza. Did you ever imagine performing in a Broadway musical? Do you see yourself performing in future musicals?

GV: No. I would have never imagined that. I'm working with a group of really great actors and singers, and having Phil Ramone as musical director is something incredible. He is such a humble guy and is truly a genius. It is a great opportunity for a unique experience for me. To be chosen by Sonny Grosso is such an honor. Sonny is truly one of the sweetest people I've ever met. He knows so much about the industry and his wise advice is so important and helpful to me. I am blessed to know him and to have him as my co-manager. You ask me if I see myself in other musicals. Well, let me do this one and then I'll let you know! But I think I will. And now that I'm acting more and more, in the future I think I would like to have a role in a movie or a TV Series. I love to act. It was my second passion after singing. I would love to have a role in a comedy. I love to laugh and make people laugh!! Or a romantic comedy.

CDC: Is there any singer you try to model yourself after?

GV: No, not to model after, but there are certainly a few that I really admire a lot. I love Madonna for her genius way of reinventing herself each and every time. I love Celine Dion for her incredible voice and the sweetness that she shows to her audiences in her interviews. I adore Frank Sinatra: the voice of voices, and Barbra Streisand, the female artist of the century. As an artist they often say that I'm a female Michael Buble. Well, that's a great compliment. I love him as a great singer and like me, he enjoys entertaining his audience, with nice conversations in between the songs and some fun here and there.

CDC: Are there any projects that you are currently working on? When can our ciaodc.com subscribers see you perform?

GV: I'm preparing to film a PBS Special presenting my show "Tribute To Love"; I'm planning my first USA tour. The program will debut on WETA in Fall 2010. I'll be on PBS/WETA (Ch 26) in the Fall of 2010. Be sure to tune in. And I'm already making decisions for my next CD. It's a very exciting time for me. So many great things are coming my way and I feel blessed and happy. In the interim, I hope to plan a holiday concert with ciaodc.com in the future.

CDC: For all of our ciaodc.com subscribers, have you visited the Washington, D.C. metro area and what do you think of our Nation's Capital?

GV: I was in Washington, DC for the first time last May to perform at the Sons of Italy Foundation's National Education Leadership Awards Gala. It was such a wonderful feeling to be in the Capital of the U.S., to see the Lincoln Memorial, to walk around the Washington Monument, places that I only knew from movies and the TV. I am aware there must be a lot of security, but still the city of Washington

gave me a feeling that was very relaxed, friendly and welcoming. Of course to meet Vice President Joe Biden at the Gala really made my first visit to the Capital memorable!! I can't wait to come back and see much more of this very beautiful city!

CDC: If you could do a duet with any singer in the world who would it be?

GV: Choosing one is almost impossible! I would love to sing with Tony Bennett. He is a living legend. I recorded my CD "And I Love You So" with Dae Bennett, award winning sound engineer and son of Tony Bennett. I recorded at The Bennett Studios where Tony also records his CDs. It was a magical experience. But I would also love to duet with Rod Stewart...another living legend. Or Michael Buble, of course.

CDC: What words of advice do you have for aspiring singers and songwriters?

GV: From my own experience I can only tell them to believe in themselves. Even if you are different, like me, don't try to follow the trend. Be yourself. I would also tell them to find a great manager, a great agent and some great people that believe in you. Don't ever change them! This business is tough, and there are many out there who will tell you that you are great even when you are not. You need to create a team around you that you can trust. And don't change them for some big-shot name managers. You don't need name managers, you need a manager that loves what you do and that you can trust. Be honest with people. Don't ever forget that you are an artist because you are blessed with a gift given to you by God. And if you become a successful artist, it is not because of you, but because your audience loves you. It may sound strange, but I've met many artists who became arrogant and selfish once they became famous.

Keep learning and improving. My first singing teacher once told me, when I didn't want to learn something because I thought I was already good at it: "if you think you've arrived, you're history!!!" Don't try to become an artist because of the fame and the money. If you are not moved by true passion for music, you will fail and quit before you can achieve it. But if you have the passion, do as Winston Churchill said once to people who were asking him the secret of his success: "*Never never never never never never give up!!!!*"