

# Interview with Chiara Civello

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This past Saturday, October 25, world renowned vocalist Chiara Chivello put on a stellar performance at the Porter Center. The Italian born singer has performed in a variety of genres successfully, proving her ability to shift between the world of pop and jazz music. A graduate of the Berklee school of music, Civello is a recipient of the Boston Jazz Society Award as well as a Cleo Laine Award for Jazz Vocals. I was fortunate enough to sit down with Civello Saturday before the concert and find out more about her journey and ambitions as a musician.

*Jason DeCristefaro: Spending a significant part of your life in a city as culturally rich as Rome must have had an impact on you as a musician...growing up there, what are some things you gained that you feel have inspired you?*

Chiara Civello: It's hard to describe when you are part of it. I was exposed to music, I was exposed to beautiful things that are part of an old civilization. My parents were always into music. My mother was into classical music my dad was more into jazz...he had a jazz encyclopedia and that's how I got acquainted with jazz in general – but jazz slowly became something else for me. My parents had nothing to do with music professionally, but they were both music lovers, so that it is how I got music into my system.

*JD: Would you say that growing up in Europe, you had better exposure to music and the arts?*

CC: No, I really don't think so, because the music I like and the music I grew up listening to was music from the U.S. What Italy gave me was maybe a more dramatic sense, a more melodic sense...which is you know, culturally Italy comes from a tradition of opera...so I would say that I feel very much influenced by that in the melodic content of my songs...I would say that comes from the Italian heritage.

*JD: Musically, you are very eclectic. I*



*would say your music would be classified as pop, but that's too broad of a term, since there are elements of Brazilian music, jazz, Italian influence. What genre of music has influenced you the most, and do you have a favorite?*

CC: I don't know, you know? I feel like stealing an expression that Duke Ellington had...I can't recall what it was.

*JD: I believe he said that, "there are two kinds of music, good and bad."*

CC: (Laughing) yes, and I'm really into good music. Good music is music that gets to you, that moves you and carries across a message or an emotion – that has a compelling quality to it. Music that comes from a personal place, that's what I like.

*JD: One thing I found interesting is that you are from Rome, but you write many of your lyrics in English...why is this?*

CC: I grew up in Rome, but I spent a significant time in the States, and English is a language that is understood everywhere in the world. English and Italian are my two main languages at this point. I would say that it is doesn't really make any difference for me to express myself in English or Italian. I feel that maybe for the audience that when I sing in Italian it is something more exotic, or a bit more interesting...more sophisticated...more sophisticated, yes, more unusual, let's put it this way...I love that...what really makes you an artist, after you've learned all you can about music, is learning what makes you unique. It's really learning to define what defines you...beyond the mechanics of music...yes (laughing), always beyond

the mechanics. So I knew how to do certain things, I realized I can speak Italian, which is an extra tool that I can use...based on what the melody suggests. English is an important language to me, since I use it everyday.

*JD: It's interesting that you mentioned that the melody influences the language.*

CC: Absolutely, always...when there is a certain melody that evokes a little more like, a longer melody, I use Italian, where there are, I suppose you could say more vowels, which creates a greater dramatic impact. If it's more conversational, I use English at this point, because it is more conversational and direct.

*JD: You just released your second album this Fall, "The Space Between." What does the title mean, and what were some of your artistic goals when you were making the album?*

CC: I made a first album that was a live album...took a long time to make. I wanted an album where each song could come across as naked as it could be. The second album includes like more intimate and immediate writing...it is an album that definitely made me a better singer. It is an album that I did rather quickly this time, after waiting so long with the release of the first album, it was really exhausting. I wanted the second record to get made as quickly as possible. I made it with the help of some great people, some great friends, I chose specifically certain musicians that could give me certain sounds. I wanted this album to be very direct and personal, like a close-up of the soul.

*JD: What is your advice to aspiring vocalists, especially students of jazz?*

CC: (long pause) Don't think "sing jazz," just sing.

*JD: What are some of your future projects that we can look forward to?*

CC: I am going to Italy to write some more material – this happens next week I am going to be collaborating with some Brazilian artists, I am working with different people across the globe. I hope to put together a live or third recording. And there is going to be some more touring coming up.