

PAOLO FRESU



INTERVIEW LAURA TACCARI
PHOTO FRANCESCO BRIGIDA

What we talk about when we talk about love.

With Paolo Fresu, Italian talent on the international jazz scene, it's all about curiosity; the unknown, passion, harmony:

Often notes, sound, instinct. Vibration, lips, voices in the air. Voices of the soul.

We talk about being human.

Ballads, instruments, unexpected encounters, concerts. Sometimes history; sometimes stories.

It's about a small village on an island, a melody; a stone falling in a lake.

That very same stone that breaks the water making it dance, perhaps forever, to a motion of discoveries.

The importance of discovery:

We talk about finish lines that do not forget beginnings. Circles that do not forget the stone.

Unpredictability; improvisation. It's about freedom, culture, evolution.

We talk about sharing, always.

And without fail, necessarily, jazz. And the emotions and the words that play everyday; and therefore dream, Paolo Fresu, in a sublime, effective, unique way; knows how to write to us.

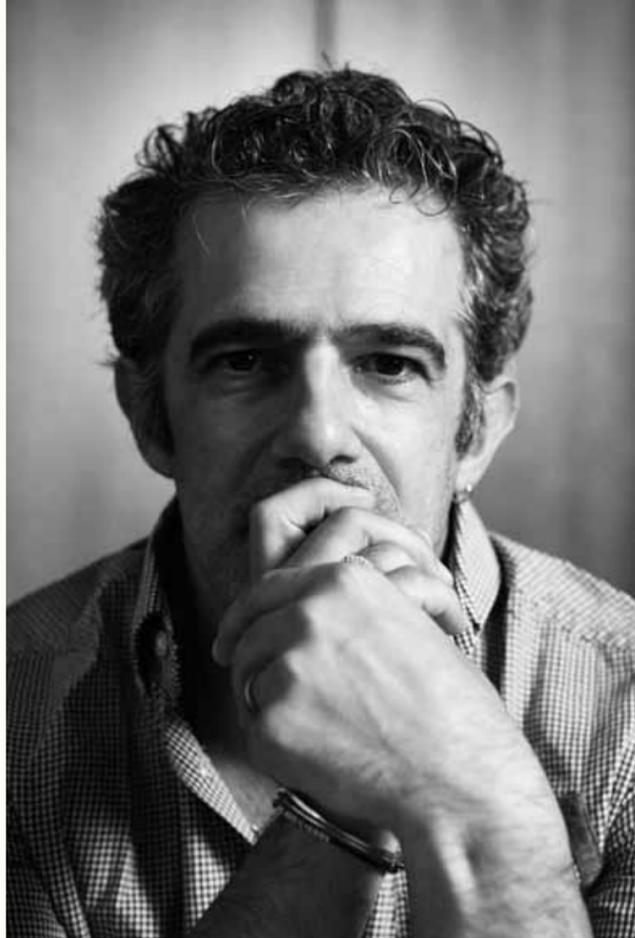
How would you describe jazz to a child?

I would describe it as something you can fall in love with. I think children must be involved with sentiment. The first step to get into a world totally unknown is passion, that is the instinctive curiosity towards the unknown. I would make that child touch the instruments, physically, as we do in the "Nidi di Notte" (Night nests) workshops, conceived with my wife, to bring music to the Italian nursery schools. Before perceiving harmony and notes, children sense a sound. Then the touch of the instrument producing that sound and everything that has something to do with is instinct. Instinct and passion coincide and they are the instruments of discovery.

What's the relationship between you and your musical instrument?

The trumpet is cold to the touch, it's a piece of metal. It's a military instrument, used to incite battle, pointed up, but for me, as for many others, it's an instrument of love, to be played pointed down, in an intimate way, in a very physical way. Every instrument has something that vibrates and with





the trumpet that is the lips. It's you who makes that sound. It's you that vibrates the air with the world. The voice of the trumpet always has something human about it. Those of Miles Davis and Chet Baker, in my opinion, had a feminine voice. And so does mine. It's a thin, delicate, whispered, melancholy sound. The human voice and the trumpet are very similar, the vocal cords vibrate in the first one and the lips in the latter. Both have something to do with the soul, with its vibration. It's about bringing outside something that belongs to you, something that's hidden.

Jazz and words. How would you describe the relationship between them?

The trumpet is an instrument that tells love well, it's perfect to "sing" a ballad. Words are not explicit but indeed express through notes. I'm thinking about a scene from the movie "Round Midnight" by Bertrand Tavernier, when a boy asks the musician, here the protagonist, what does it takes to perform a ballad in the best way. The musician answered that you have to know the lyrics very well. It also comes to my mind a page of "Moving to Higher Ground: How Jazz Can Change Your Life", a book by Wynton Marsalis, in which a musician playing a ballad suddenly stops and when asked what happened, he simply answers that he's forgotten the lyrics. The connection between story and sound, instrument and thought, vibration and soul is what makes the mystery of music so huge. There's a never-ending and daily falling in love.

What's your point of view on romanticism?

Romanticism is a serious matter. It's a delicate topic because it's hard not to fall in the commonplace and repetitiveness. I love romantic music, deeply, and I think that romanticism is

a very strong part of mine. I'm not talking about a romantic theme centered music, more about a music that has the formal structure of a melody. It is very hard to play in a romantic way and also in a new, credible and original way. The everyday challenge is to play romantic melodies without necessarily and immediately touching the same strings and the same emotions.

A song of which you dearly love the lyrics?

Writing a song is like telling a story, creating a work of art. Being a composer is a complex craft. Every song is a chapter, at times even an entire book. Through a song generations live. One of my favorite, that I've been playing a lot recently, is "E se domani" (And if tomorrow) by Carlo Alberto Rossi. A song that I dearly love both for the music and the lyrics.

Some memorable moments of your career so far?

Every moment can be "the one", and for completely different reasons. The meaning of what you do lies in the everyday process of making things: the unexpected encounters, a person gifting you with a unique compliment, and totally flooring you, an e-mail from someone who's life that particular morning has been improved because he listened to one of your pieces, a deeply heart-felt concert. What counts the most with moments is the connection with the outside, with others, through sharing.

When did you first know that you've realized your dream?

When the people of my little village started asking, whenever I came back from my trips, how did it go and most of all when would I leave again. That's when I realized I've become a



musician.

A recurring thought of yours?

The awareness of how lucky and happy I am to do what I do.

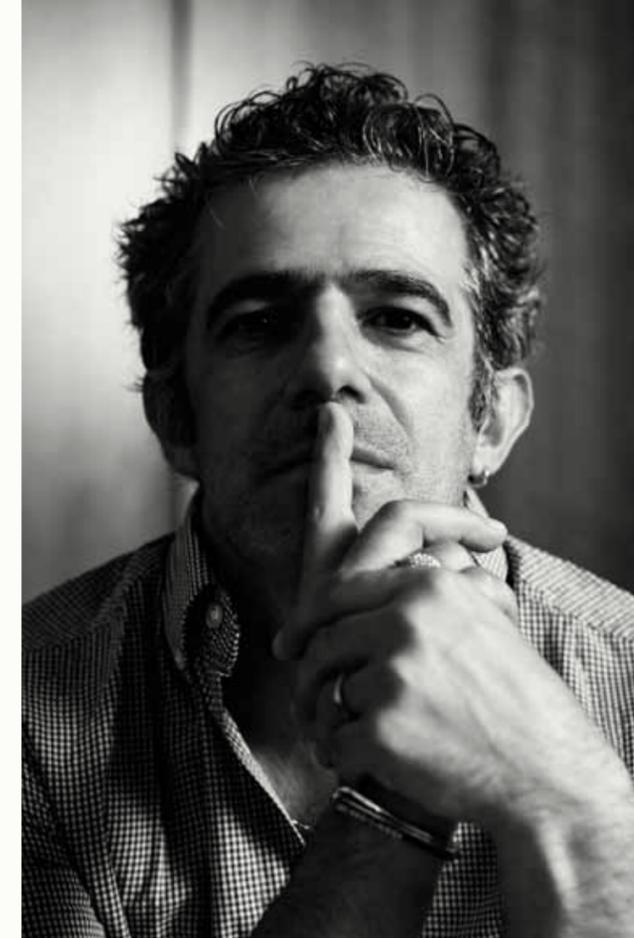
What does your music give?

Emotionally everybody seizes what they can seize in that moment. Music can reach the mind, the guts or the heart, depending on the openness of those who listen. A lot can be said through the music, like your idea of the world, your idea of society; you can suggest, you can report; you can use the music to grow and make others grow, you can make it the fly-wheel of discoveries. Today, this is what I care about the most, to give a contemporary sense to music, which is not only about emotions, but also evolution and sharing. Through a melody I can give others my point of view on things, my message, in addition to my emotions and my sensitivity.

What would you like to be remembered for?

I would like to be remembered for what I've tried to give, which is not only the music as a melody, but everything that the melody carries within. Music stands for the beginning, from which unfolds a world that gives sense to every thing, but of course music remains the focal point. The further you go, the more what's in the center becomes important. When you throw a stone in a lake, the circles move outwards, but the moment of the scene remains when the stone hit the water because without that "shock" there wouldn't be anything else.

What becomes of love when it's over?



It depends on how it has been lived, sometimes it can become a friendship, mutual admiration. The sentiment transforms itself, there is an awareness of the other having left that's usually deep, so the intimacy changes but the bond stays. A bond that's essentially impossible to break.

Your idea of dreams?

To me, realizing a dream means making something from scratch everyday. To have an empty house to furnish, a white wall to cover with a painting, a blank staff to fill with a piece. The dream is the idea of nothing becoming a sound, which turns into architecture and then into a group of people to work with. If the fear represents the boredom, the static, the dream stands for the never ending desire to create. Of course, for me the dream is to make music and to always make it better.

What's the magic of love?

The unpredictability. You don't know when it will end, you can't plan it, it's something that goes beyond our rational thinking. In many ways, it's a lot like music. Nowadays, you don't have certainties, you don't know what's gonna happen tomorrow, whether it will or it will not be a good concert and in the end, every day we play for this very same reason. Sentiments and music of all kind are unpredictable, but love and jazz in particular, above all the others. Jazz music is improvisation, it's extreme freedom, it takes you and leads you to places where you would've never even imagined you could go. Like a big love does.

What do we talk about when we talk about a great talent, if not a big Love.