

Love With, For & According To Gianmaria Testa

Gianluca de Nicola & Marina Melchionda (March 24, 2010)



From Italy to the United States, passing through France. Here is our love story accompanied by the notes of Gianmaria Testa, who is performing at Joe's Pub, NYC, on April 1.

[Read the Italian Version](#) [2]

Gianluca: I discovered Gianmaria Testa by chance, a few years ago. That night he was starring as a guest on a TV Show, something he does very rarely. I don't remember which program it was, but I do recall that it was late at night and I was watching it before going to bed, not giving it my fullest attention.

All of a sudden, I saw a guy that looked like he was there by accident: an ordinary person, with



ruffled curls, a thick mustache, and small round eyeglasses, the kind wore by "intellectuals". He was sitting behind a microphone, holding a guitar and looking like he wanted to sing. I stopped and turned the volume up just to see what he was going to do, as I was waiting for the usual, boring, politically committed song. But...

It was a love song about a sailing plane and a pilot with glasses, a paper transatlantic and a canary to tame. He sang with a sweet voice, his eyes closed, his lips barely moving behind his mustache. He was standing there alone, with his voice and guitar: no tricks.

The song lasted three minutes. When he finished playing, I realized that not only did I not think about anything else but the pilot and the plane for the entire time of the song, but also that his warm voice had conquered a place in my heart. "Stay tuned. Gianmaria Testa will come back after the commercials", said the host. Good, I thought to myself, I'll wait.

I was right. When the commercials were over, a few minutes later, I was all set: I found a place to sit, and stopped moving around the apartment. I was all for him. Gianmaria Testa, without even knowing it, surprised me with a beautiful present. I felt it right away, from the first arpeggio. I was completely ravished, in a trance, as I grabbed a piece of paper and wrote down what I thought was the title of the song. Un mattino qualunque (An ordinary morning). And then, La tasca del mattino (The pocket of the morning).

The day after I went looking for the CD. I found it right away, in the Italian singers-songwriters aisle. On the cover of the album there were a gigantic hot-air balloon and a small transatlantic with a blue background. Montgolfières was the title. I looked at the back to read the titles of the songs, and I found both of them: Un aeroplano a vela (A Sailing Plane), the song of the pilot, and Dentro la tasca di un qualunque mattino (In the pocket of an ordinary morning), my song, the present he gave me at that time and that I never left behind. Both of them were there. I bought the cd and went back home.

Gianmaria Testa has traveled on a long path since then.

And, secretly, I slipped into his pocket and followed him.

Marina: I was in Paris when I first heard of Gianmaria Testa. It was the summer 2006 and I was living the dream of my life. Jacques, my French professor, started talking about him while we were having coffee, taking it for granted that, being an Italian, I knew of him. I didn't, and I was almost ashamed to admit it! At that time he was already very famous in France while, in Italy - for as much as I knew - only a very small, niche public followed him. Jacques promised to introduce me to some of his favorite songs by Gianmaria, but you preceded him, when you came to visit me during that dreamy moment.

It was the first morning that we were walking together in Paris... I remember that it was raining a lot that day. We left Montparnasse, where I had rented a room at the Cité Universitaire, the University Campus of the city, to go to Place Saint Michel, in search of second-hand books, and shopwindows overcrowded with the most improbable works of photography. Under that wet sky, you whispered in my ear dentro la tasca di un qualunque mattino, dentro la tasca ti porterei, e con la mano che non veda nessuno, con la mano ti accarezzerei... (I would carry you around in the pocket of an ordinary morning, and I would sweetly caress you when nobody sees me). I could never forget that moment, it was then that it started between you and I.

After a few days we returned to Italy and you got me one of his albums; a card accompanied it. To me, the things you wrote were always more important than the gift itself. This is especially true for that occasion, because in that card you wrote to me some of the lyrics of the first song you dedicated me, Come l'America (Like America). Di tutti i quadri che ho, di tutti i quadri sei tu la più enigmatica, nudo di donna sì ma...nudo di donna però, molto romantica, impressionistica un pò il rosso il giallo ed il blu che fanno d'Africa e vorrei averti dipinta io ma non così, a mano libera; (...) e vorrei averti scoperta io sì, però non così, come l'America (You are the most enigmating painting among all of those that I have: a woman nude, yes, but very romantic. You're somehow impressionistic, with your reds, yellows, and blues that feel like Africa... I would have loved to have painted you myself, but not this way, just free-hand; and I would have wanted to discover you



myself. But not this way, just like an America) Gianmaria Testa sang these words accompanied by a violin and its acute rhythm, that penetrate the song between a strophe and another, transforming the words in notes.

We became very passionate about his music; it was all that we listened to. You selected the pieces and took me through a musical journey that included songs such as *Con la tua voce* (With your voice) and *Come le onde del mare* (Like the waves of the sea), *Gli amanti di Roma* (The Lovers of Rome) and *Biancaluna* (White moon). The songs were all "light" and were not committed to any political or social battle; they were to be enjoyed just for what they were, as you fairly said before. We found in Gianmaria's stories traces of our own; he accompanied the most significant moments of our path together with his words and tales.

Among those moments, there is certainly his concert in Naples. Do you remember what a joy we felt when we came to know about it?

Yes, of course I do, just as I recall those rainy mornings in Paris, the ones that Gianmaria must know so well given that, as a matter of fact, he became famous in France much before than in Italy.

I also recall that day when, between a shelter and the other, we ended up in a megastore on the Champs Elysées, where we found out that he had just released a new album, *Extra-muros*. The cover was marvellous, with the open sea kissed by the sunrise, or the sunset, it doesn't matter. When we sat down on the steps to look at the titles on the back, I found *Come l'America* right away; it caught my eyes in a second, like it was calling me. And it didn't happen by chance. *Di tutti i sogni che ho, dei miei miraggi sei tu, la più improbabile, isola persa nel blu, e riscoperta però, irraggiungibile...* (Among all the dreams that I have, among all the mirages that stare before me, you are the most improbable. You are like an island lost in the blue that I re-discovered, but you are unreachable...)

You can find so many departures, and so many returns in Gianmaria's songs. There are countless love stories, some waited-for, some consumed, others interrupted halfway. Just like it happens in *Gli Amanti di Roma* that you can't count for they are so many...

We went back to Italy and there he was, with his mustache and his coat drinking a glass of beer all alone in a bar just before the theatre where we were waiting for him to play for us.

I remember that we told him something that I can't recall now, and that he was sweet and nice in his way of talking to us, just as we thought he would be.

And then, his performance...

It was the *Da questa parte del mare* (From this side of the sea) tour, a journey loaded with hope and sorrow. The pain expressed in some of the songs, however, diluted in the harmony of his guitar, was tamed by his voice.

That same voice that, at a certain moment, introduced a song with a preamble in which remembrances and dreams mixed together. I didn't know that song, as I whispered, and we both pricked up our ears. Everything is already here, it said. *L'adesso e l'indomani, i torti e le ragioni...ma oggi, che era un giorno come tanti, hai preso le mie mani e poi le hai messe sui tuoi fianchi, ed io, che ballare non l'ho fatto proprio mai, mi sono perduto in un valzer che gira per noi...* (Today and tomorrow, the faults and the rights... But today, a perfectly ordinary day, you took my hands and put them on your hips. And I, that I had never danced before, got lost in a Valzer played just for us). The song was *Valzer di un giorno*. (Valzer of a day)

It lasted much longer.

I reproached you when he finished playing *Valzer di un Giorno*. How could you dare not introducing me to such a beautiful song?, I asked you with a fake angry voice. That soon became our first dance, and that evening was the first occasion in which I met your friends. Another step forward with Gianmaria...



We had kept track of him for several months, in France, Germany, Austria, and then finally he announced his Italian tour that reached Naples, too. How many people could there have been that theatre? Maybe 50? We were all sitting around the stage, occupied just by him and his guitar. I remember the smile he shared with us outside the bar too. It made me see him as a friend throughout his two-hour performance.

After that night, we found out that he had won the Tenco Prize 2007 for "best album of the year". It was an immense joy for both of us, we felt as if it were our own personal victory.

It was then that we started imagining another trip to Paris, just to go see one of his performances there, in our city. Instead we met again a few years later in New York, at Joe's Pub. We will be attending this performance together, although on two different sides of the ocean.

Yes, the Tenco Prize was well deserved and a fair preamble to his American journey. Who knows what Gianmaria will find in today's America; and who knows if he will find what he is looking for on the other side of the sea.

He might be getting there with a paper transatlantic or maybe with a sailing plane. Who knows? I see him in both.

I can already imagine his big indolent Piedmontese face illuminated by Joe's Pub's soft lights (too much light does not suit poetry) a moment before starting; I can hear that magical silence that grows just a moment before his breath becomes a song; it will be a wonderful experience, for both us and him.

At its end, even if we left our walk together half-way, we will ask ourselves, just as he does in one of his songs *con gli occhi controvento al cielo* (with our eyes turned against the wind, staring at the sky), in the clouds of the afternoon, in the afternoon of the cities, how everything started.

Who knows...

[G \[3\]](#)[ianmaria Testa \[3\]](#) is an Italian singer from Piedmont famous all throughout Europe.

To this day, he has already published seven albums: *Montgolfières* (1995), *Extra-Muros* (1996), *Lampo* (1999), *Il valzer di un giorno* (2000), *Altre Latitudini* (2003), *Da questa parte del mare* (2006) and *SOLO-dal vivo* (2009), and has given more than 1500 concerts in France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Canada and United States

He has collaborated with several Italian jazz and folk musicians, among whom

Gabriele Mirabassi, Enzo Pietropaoli, Paolo Fresu, Rita Marcotulli, Riccardo Tesi, Enrico Rava, and Battista Lena

Gianmaria will present his new album "SOLO-dal vivo", released by Fuorivia in 2009, on April 1 2010 (8 pm) at Joe's Pub (425 Lafayette St.).

[Joe's Pub \[4\]](#)

425 Lafayette Street

New York, NY 10012

(212) 539-8778

Tickets: 25\$

Doors open at 7 pm

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