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ART PHILLIPS – memories from “CHITARRE ACUSTICHE D’ITALIA”

Each of the songs included in “**Chitarre Acustiche d’Italia**” have been an important element for the music career of the two-time Emmy and APRA awarded artist composer Art Phillips (Arturo Di Filippo). The Italian heritage of his father and grandfather and their love for music, drove Art into the music scene and inspired him to create, after more than 30 years of global success, a tribute album like this. This album is the story of Italian family memories and traditions. Below, Art Phillips explains the feelings and memories related to each track contained on the album.

1. Tra Veglia e Sonno (Between Wakefulness and Sleep)

A piece I learnt from my father and grandfather in my very early years. They would play this every time they got together in my grandfathers kitchen with their guitar and mandolin, where live music would be an important part in our family life. Grandpa lived just around the corner from my home where our backyards connected, in fact he was also a carpenter and brick mason and built our home as well as all the other homes located around our block. Most of his children lived next door or just around the corner with connecting back yards. We would visit my grandpa and grandma each and every day, and there would not be many days in passing that my guitar wouldn’t join into the family’s musical moments. This all began at around 7 years of age and continued for a least a decade to follow; and thereafter every time I would visit my home-town of Erie, Pennsylvania after I moved to Los Angeles at age 19.

Musically, this arrangement uses a solo acoustic guitar introduction that moves into a standard Italian traditional song flavour, in 3/4 moderate tempo waltz, with rhythm guitar on right along with mandolin effects and a tantalizing and playful melody on left, from a Gibson Dove acoustic. Additional acoustic layers intertwine in octaves and harmonies providing a colourful and textural soundscape.

2. Non Dimenticar (Do Not Forget)

A piece I remember well from an instrumental recording by the late great guitarist, Tony Mottola – my guitar hero and idol in my musical life. This piece has a lovely compositional sensitivity and was made famous by the late Nat King Cole (reaching #45 on the Billboard magazine charts). The song was written for the 1951 movie, *Anna*; but other recordings have been made, including one by Jerry Vale in 1955. Vale's version peaked at #75 on the pop charts. Dean Martin also recorded the song in 1962 on his *Dino: Italian Love Songs* album.

The arrangement begins with a expressive solo acoustic guitar introduction played rubato style, then moving into a bossa nova tempo with rhythm acoustics. The melody then follows played on my father's 1941 Gibson L-12. The L-12 has such beautiful tonal characteristics, a sound that is attributed to my father's musical ability and how he played this instrument. My father had such a special touch on the guitar and in particular was a respected rhythm guitar player, well known in the Great Lakes region of the USA. On this recording, the rhythm guitar is complimented by a clean sounding Gibson Country & Western model guitar playing choral outlines. I also use my grandfather's A-50 mandolin (circa 1951) in the featured solo section of the arrangement, as is also featured towards the end of the arrangement.

3. Arrivederci Roma (Goodbye Rome)

My father would play this song with his duo, The Strolling Venetians, in the Great Lakes region of the USA. The duo would play at many Italian restaurants strolling from table to table entertaining and romancing the patrons whilst enjoying their cuisine. I would occasionally fill in for my father's partners when they were unable to make an engagement, which began when I was 14 years of age. This was a challenge for me and taught me musical endurance and performance techniques. I also vividly remember Tony Mottola's recording of this song, which was very inspiring to me. It was my mother, Lucy's, favourite. The song was published in 1955 as part of the soundtrack of the Italian-American musical film of the same title, released as '*Seven Hills of Rome*' in English. In the movie, the song is interpreted by the leading character, played by the American actor and singer Mario Lanza. The song was also a hit by the great vocal artist Perry Como and soon thereafter by Dean Martin.

The extended introduction of this recording features a solo acoustic steel string guitar, and at 1:50 a Gibson L-12 f-hole enters with a solid bass and chord rhythmic groove along with tremolo Italian mandolins that help set the traditional journey.

4. Anema e Core (With All My Heart and Soul)

A Neapolitan song originally sung by the tenor Tito Schipa. The best known recording of this song in the USA was recorded by Dinah Shore, and the biggest hit version was recorded by Eddie Fisher. It has also been recorded by Dean Martin, Perry Como, Connie Francis, and Roberto Murolo - the wonderful Italian vocal artist.

This song is responsible for how and why I ended up as a professional guitarist and following a career in music. When I was 10 years old, only 3 years after I started playing guitar, I heard a recording of this song by the great American guitarist Tony Mottola. My father had a large collection of works by Mottola, and I remember how impressed I was when I heard Mottola's arrangement of this selection, and the beauty of his solo introduction. I decided to write Tony a letter to ask for the arrangement, which was not possible he informed due to copyright reasons. Mottola and I stayed in contact for over 30 years thereafter. We met in New York City whilst I was working as guitarist for Barry Manilow in the mid-80s.

This arrangement utilizes a solo acoustic guitar, a 1963 Gibson steel string round hole, played in rubato free style throughout the entire recording. It is a tribute to Mr Mottola.

5. Grandpa's Kitchen (written by Art Phillips)

This was written in memory of my late Uncle Raymond Phillips, my father's brother. Ray was an inspiration in my life and a strong supporter of my musical interests. He provided an enthusiasm to what I was sharing musically with my father and grandfather. Ray would be there in grandpa's kitchen each and every night, listening to the sounds of our music. My grandfather's kitchen was filled with music, food, a lot of love and such wonderful laughter. Uncle Ray was responsible for my positive approach to musical passion, and was there every inch of the way all through my life. I kept closely in touch with him until his passing in 2005. He is sadly missed. Raymond was a wonderful man and a great human being.

I honour him with this composition and performance.

6. Summertime In Venice

A song from the 1955 film 'Summertime' starring Katharine Hepburn. Made famous by the great vocal artists Jerry Vale and also Connie Francis. It was also an instrumental hit by the great Montovani and his Orchestra. It was also recorded by guitarist Tony Mottola.

This song was one of my mother's favourites. My father also enjoyed this song, and wrote a lovely arrangement for himself on guitar and his partner on accordion, later, the arrangement was adapted to guitar and mandolin when he revised his duo.

This recording begins with a solo acoustic guitar played in free tempo, followed by a happy flowing melody back in tempo on 6 string acoustic and four unison mandolins, Gibson A-50's and a round belly made in Italy.

7. Santa Lucia

A traditional Neapolitan song, which was transcribed by Teodoro Cottrau (1827–1879) and published by the Cottrau firm, as a "barcarolla", at Naples in 1849. The song has appeared as film music and was performed by Elvis Presley in *Viva Las Vegas*, and in the Marx Brothers film *A Night at the Opera*. It was a hit by Mario Lanza. The Neapolitan lyrics of "Santa Lucia" (not heard on this instrumental recording) celebrate the picturesque waterfront district, Borgo Santa Lucia, in the Bay of Naples, in the invitation of a boatman to take a turn in his boat, to better enjoy the cool of the evening.

I remember this song well, as my grandfather, my mother's father, Dominic, who also played the guitar very well, would listen to it on his Zenith 'mono' record player at his home in Lorain, Ohio (USA). I remember hearing this song every time we visited. My mother also loved this song, and asked me to learn it at a very early age. I borrowed my grandfather's 1927 Gibson guitar for the first 4 years of my learning experience which was an oval shaped holed acoustic guitar strung with nylon strings.

My arrangement features a solo acoustic played in the key of A using open string chord voicing's allowing for a simple and honest 'country style' approach. It then moves into tempo with unison nylon guitars and ukuleles, played in mandolin style, and a 3/4 waltz acoustic rhythm guitar. This song is full of life and is all about Italian culture.

8. Love Theme From The Godfather (Speak Softly Love)

A song written for *The Godfather* (1972), the first film in the Godfather trilogy. While its instrumental version is simply known as "The Godfather theme", "Speak Softly Love" is the vocal version. The words are by Larry Kusik but the music itself is by Nino Rota. The signature musical theme that opens the piece closely models a theme that appears early in the Overture to "La Forza del Destino" by Giuseppe Verdi.

The song was originally recorded by Andy Williams, and other artists such as Al Martino and Bobby Vinton have also recorded the song.

This was a favourite of the Phillips (Di Filippo) family. My aunts and uncles could not wait for my Dad and I to play it for them every time we had our little concert in grandpa's kitchen or in

grandpa's backyard (i.e. the front cover shot of this album - pictured far left, my father, and right, myself / circa 1982). This song is a favourite of my sister, Charlotte. In fact, a year ago she asked if I would record a version for her one-day. I recently did and have included it on this album. This recording is a tribute to her. I love her dearly.

The treatment of this arrangement uses a modern drum groove & electric bass along with orchestral textures featuring many mandolins and guitars playing the melody. This selection has been suggested as the first single off the album, from numerous press reviews, as it uses a contemporary approach with a modern beat but with a traditional melodic feel.

9. O Sole Mio

A globally known Neapolitan song written in 1898. The lyrics were written by Giovanni Capurro, and the melody was composed by Eduardo di Capua. It has been performed and covered by many artists, including such stalwarts of opera as Enrico Caruso, Beniamino Gigli, Mario Lanza, The Canadian Tenors, and The Three Tenors. It has also been performed by rock/pop artists such as Bryan Adams, Me First and the Gimme Gimmes, Vitas (who sings it in a high countertenor range), Al Bano, and Elvis Presley ("It's Now or Never"). Luciano Pavarotti won the 1980 Grammy Award for Best Classical Vocal Performance for his rendition of "O sole mio". Though there are versions in other languages, "O sole mio" is usually sung in the original Neapolitan language. *O sole mio* is the Neapolitan equivalent of Standard Italian *Il sole mio* and translates literally as "my sun"

Both my grandfathers played this selection. It was a favourite in our family and I remember it was one of the very first pieces I had to learn in grandpa Di Filippos kitchen, he insisted on this. My father worked hard to teach this to me, and I remember my grandfather would enforce very strong words when I played it, as I was not giving it enough expression and made too many mistakes. I soon learned his tradition: "If you are going to do something in life, you must do it with all your heart or don't bother doing it at all". Antonio was a perfectionist and loved life and his family.

This arrangement utilizes a solo acoustic guitar introduction that leads into a clean single line melody with a rhythm acoustic guitar groove. Later, a mandolin style ukulele joins in unison with the melody. The ukulele is used to give a softer textural colour instead of the steel string mandolin in this instance.

10. Come Back To Sorrento

“Torna a Surriento” is a Neapolitan song said to have been composed in 1902 by Ernesto De Curtis to words by his brother, Giambattista. The song was copyrighted officially in 1905; it has since become wildly popular, and has been sung by performers as diverse as Beniamino Gigli, Elvis Presley, Dean Martin, José Carreras, Plácido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, Meat Loaf, Mario Lanza, Franco Corelli, Robertino Loretti, Giuseppe Di Stefano, Muslim Magomayev, Francesco Albanese and Anna Calvi. Claude Aveling wrote the English lyrics, which are titled “Come Back to Sorrento.” Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman re-arranged it and wrote a new set of lyrics for Elvis Presley (“Surrender”).

The song was supposedly written at the request of a friend of Giambattista's, Guglielmo Tramontano, who was mayor of Sorrento in 1902 when the prime minister of Italy, Giuseppe Zanardelli, stayed at his hotel in that town; it was claimed that the piece was meant to celebrate Zanardelli's stay. More recent research indicates that the song may merely have been reworked for the occasion; family papers indicate that the brothers deposited a copy with the Italian Society of Authors and Editors in 1894, eight years before they claimed to have written it.

This piece was a strong part of my musical heritage. I recorded this piece as a solo tribute to my father. Played in free time fashion on a lovely 1961 Gibson L-50, where three steel string mandolins join in as a textural colour for the last 4 bars of the recording.

11. Never On Sunday

A 1960 Greek black-and-white film which tells the story of Ilya, a prostitute who lives in the port of Piraeus in Greece, and Homer, an American tourist from Middletown, Connecticut. A hit by many artists, including Connie Francis, The Chordettes, Petula Clark and Melina Mercouri.

This was a part of my father's repertoire and musical diversity, including many other Latin American and Mediterranean songs. These selections formed a strong backbone to the musical traditions in our family and this arrangement is treated with Italian expressionism using playful melodic lines on acoustics with a rumba style rhythm guitar played on a Gibson L-12 (this one built in 1937, having smaller f-holes from the 1941 L-12 model – see pictured on front album cover, far right, the guitar I am playing.) A quartet of mandolins join in on the second verse, and in the final 8 bars a Spanish / Mexican influence embarks in a strong final statement.

12. Neapolitan Tarantella

The term tarantella groups a number of different Italian folk dances characterized by a fast upbeat tempo, usually in 6/8 time (sometimes 18/8 or 4/4). It is among the most recognized of traditional Italian music. The specific dance name varies with every region, for instance tammuriata in Campania, pizzica in the Salento region.

In the city of Taranto, Italy, the bite of a locally common type of wolf spider, named "tarantula" after the region, was popularly believed to be highly poisonous and to lead to a hysterical condition known as tarantism. The stated belief in the 16th and 17th centuries was that victims needed to engage in frenzied dancing to prevent death from tarantism using a very rhythmic and fast music. The particular type of dance and the music played became known as Tarantella. The oldest documents mentioning the relationship between musical exorcism and the tarantula are dated around 1100.

This piece was always requested by the family for my father and I to perform. I can't remember when we omitted it in a performance. It was always a difficult and challenging piece due to the nature of the melodic lines and the structure of the phrases. In fact, some of the best exercises on the guitar are these type of traditional Italian pieces. I was fortunate to have been brought up learning these traditional works. It certainly kept the fingers nimble.

13. Vaya Con Dios (Go With God)

Vaya Con Dios was a popular song written in 1953, written by Larry Russell, Inez James, and Buddy Pepper. The first and most popular recording of the song, by guitarist Les Paul and vocalist Mary Ford, was number one on the Billboard charts for nine weeks in 1953. Later, in the mid-70s there was a remake hit by popular vocal artist Freddie Fender.

A Spanish/Mexican flavoured song in a simplistic country style vein. I learnt this from the great Les Paul and Mary Ford recordings, and my father loved its honesty and the way it sat on the guitar fingerboard. I use a few acoustics on this as well as my grandfather's mandolin for some of the musical fills. My mother loved this piece.

14. Funiculì Funiculà

A famous Neapolitan song written by Italian journalist Peppino Turco and set to music by Italian composer Luigi Denza in 1880. It was composed to commemorate the opening of the first funicular cable car on Mount Vesuvius. The 1880 cable car was later destroyed by the

eruption of Vesuvius in 1944. The song was sung for the first time in the Quisisana Hotel in Castellammare di Stabia and met with huge success. It was presented by Turco and Denza at the Piedigrotta festival during the same year. Edward Oxenford, an English songwriter and translator of libretti, published a version which became somewhat traditional in English-speaking countries.

Six years after "Funiculì, Funiculà" was composed, German composer Richard Strauss heard the song while on a tour of Italy. Thinking that it was a traditional Italian folk song, he later incorporated it into his *Aus Italien* tone poem. Denza filed a lawsuit against Strauss and eventually won. Strauss was forced to pay him a royalty fee every time the *Aus Italien* was performed in public. The song was a hit by Mario Lanza and later by Luciano Pavarotti, Andrea Bocelli, amongst many others.

A traditional song that my Dad played with his father for many years, and I recorded this as a tribute to my great grandfather, Nunzio Cacchione – as I remember it was his favourite song. Nunzio smoked great cigars and would have a brandy every night. He lived to be 101, so he did something right. This is a fun filled song that explores both happiness and emotional challenge. It is certainly about tradition and culture from the 1880s.

I hope you enjoy the musical journey from this album.

Grazie,

***Arturo Di Filippo
(Art Phillips)***