



INTERVIEW TO
CARLO LEVI MINZI
CONCERT PIANIST, FORMER PROFESSOR AT
GIUSEPPE VERDI CONSERVATORY
MILAN, ITALY

Interview by Tiziana Hurd - December 2024

D: Good Morning Professor Levi Minzi. I would start by telling you that I am very honored to be able to interview you considering that classical music has always been my soul, even though my work made me love other musical genres.

From your biography I learned that you were a Professor at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan for 43 years; a life!

I would start from here. Tell us about your work at the Conservatory, I'm sure you met many students and all different from each other.

A. I left my teaching position some years ago, since I was disgusted by the low music standard compared to the institutions where I gave masterclasses as well by the increasing corruption I had to face throughout my long tenure. I stayed that long, since, in spite of the uneasy environment I succeeded in doing something good. I met many students, some good, many bad. The ones who followed me were mainly people with great talent, both disgusted by standard and corruption and, most likely for those reasons, rejected by more “powerful” colleagues. With them I had to work to fill their numerous gaps in technique, score reading and music comprehension.

Some of them teach in various Italian Conservatories throughout Italy, some left, either going back to their countries, or emigrating (to my knowledge one found his way in China). I could have stayed longer, since I started teaching at a very young age, but in the end, I literally slammed the door in front of the Director promising that I would have never put my foot inside the Conservatory again and I kept my word going there just for playing or listening to somebody else's concert.

D. Music has changed a lot over the years, new genres and others have almost been forgotten, especially by young people. Sometimes when I listen to certain songs, I confess that I turn off the sound and think "The great authors of classical music are turning in their graves". But has music become a job that everyone can really do? Do all students admire making music their job?

A. I agree with you. Music is no longer as it used to be. Nowadays bad music is taught in Conservatories and many students attend at those courses, feeling that they could find better working chances. The ones who keep studying serious music are forced either to compromise or to find different working possibility.

- D. I see you just returned from a concert tour. I'm sure it was a success. Do young people still go to classical concerts? Do young people who have not been able to study at the conservatory understand music in general, especially classical music? I ask you these questions because when I sang in a classical music choir, 95% of the singers came from upper/middle class families.
- A. I have recently been in Russia, where the music standard is very high. If you look at my YouTube channel you will notice that very young kids attend at concerts there. Many of them are not music students. Same applies to China, where I have played and taught a couple of years ago. It used to be like this in German speaking countries, but now even there the public is becoming older and older.
- D. My management is always discovering new talents. Could you explain what the Music Biz means by ****New Talents****? But will the music of today and the future still be able to generate New Talents?

- A. There are many talents around, but you cannot find them in competitions or talent show, which tend to select people able to give strong and superficial emotions. Young good musicians who dare to take part in competitions are almost always rigged by famous teachers and agents.
- D. Over the years, have you ever gone to concert of one of your students? And is there anyone among these who has become famous? What do you feel when you see one of your students fulfilling his dream?
- A. Yes, various times with great pleasure, unfortunately not quite frequently. Many students of mine are still very good, in spite of the environment. None of them has become “famous” for the above-mentioned reasons and I have never been in a position to make them win a competition. Nevertheless, some of them are better than big names. My usual advice to good students is to run away.
- D. Italians have invented many things and thanks to them life has evolved; and even in music we have to thank an Italian, Guido D’Arezzo, musician and creator of modern notation. He lived between 990 and 1050.

Do you think that all these young people who enjoy “writing music on the scores” (assuming they know how to write music), they know about Guido D’Arezzo?

- A. When I was teaching Guido D’Arezzo was studied in the history of music course. Nevertheless, I think the students in composition tend to forget history of music immediately after the exam.
- D. As I said previously, your biography is very interesting, not to mention your long discography which is fantastic. I love talking to people who know what they’re doing and who know history, in this case we’re talking about the history of music. A musician never stops dreaming, right? Do you still have dreams in your drawer that you want to realize in the near future?
- A. I still have many dreams to realize. It’s time for me to record more to leave a legacy with a bigger repertoire, since I have studied so many scores throughout years. Also, I would like to play more concerts with my favorite repertoire (German and Russian mainly), since even now I often receive requests for side repertoire.

- D If I find myself in Milan during one of your concerts, I won't miss the event.
Thank you for allowing me this interview, it was a pleasure.
To finish, I'll leave you the space to say something to those young people who want to pursue a career in music.
- A. First, never compromise, second find teachers who are honest and competent (study with more than one, of course not together), third run away from Italy and find your place in countries where is a market which can accept you the way you are.

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