

Interview to **Andrea Giuffredi**

By **Erik Veldkamp**

- What's your age, how long are you playing prof. trumpet now?

I'm 41, I play professional since 1982

- Can you tell something about how and why you started trumpet playing as a 9 year old. Did you start of in a wind band / brass band or any other orchestra as a youngster?

I began to play trumpet because in the environment I grew up into, the music was in the air, my parents aren't musicians, but when I was a child they managed an eating house and my brother Corrado (today an excellent clarinetist) and I were very often among the customers, some of which came with the squeeze-box to cheer up their wine drinking with singings and folk music. Well, I think the push comes from then, afterwards I entered the music school of the village where a children orchestra would play James Last's arrangements. I choosed the trumpet because my father has a cd by Perez Prado and I loved very much the trumpet's sound, besides, because all of my mates choosed the sax but as I saw all those buttons I felt frightened and thought that trumpet, with just three pistons, would have been easier!!

- When did it become clear to you wanted to be a professional trumpet player?

A musician friend of mine, listening to me playing, suggested my father to have me joining the conservatory because he recognized in me a good talent, and I, who was nonetheless very interested to the music, agreed with them. In the outset I would study violin and trumpet, but I fed up very soon with the violin, that I saw as a "wimpy" instrument, and forsake it to dedicate myself only to the trumpet.

- Which teacher(s) do you remember and what did they learn you, did they encourage you to be as versatile as possible (like you are now) are was it more a classical training?

The beginning at the conservatory of Parma has been traumatic to me because for two years I failed the admission examination, they didn't admit me saying that I had too thick lips and never would have worked out to play the trumpet!

Afterwards, the second teacher I had, still at the Parma's conservatory, has totally changed the natural position I've been having till then. He made so just for dullness and ignorance, because I was already able to play naturally, but he considered my position not academical enough, scanty normal; the result was that I was no longer able to play, I was on the verge of quitting, then decided to return to my first teacher, Ennio Guidetti, who allowed me to played as I preferred and in my position.

Ennio Guidetti, Maurizio Mineo and Franco Titani have been good **teachers** at conservatoire in Italy.

I had just a couple of lessons with Vincent Cicowitz in America and a couple with Pierre Tibaud in France, then, once learned the general concepts, I've been working and researching about them and I'm still seeking a way to play with the minimum effort possible.

As regards the matter of the versatility, no, no teacher has encouraged me, in Italy there isn't this way of conceiving the music 360 degrees, unfortunately one still reasons by separate sectors, the teaching I received at the conservatory is purely classic, a watertight compartment! Then, of course, at home I played the music I liked.

- Did you study with a particular method (Stamp/Caruso, etc), can you tell me something about how you think we should learn to play the trumpet?

I made a lot of practice with the Stamp and a little with the Caruso. I tried the Caruso, but I must say that if on the one hand it gives you strength, on the other it hardens you, depriving of the thin lip-vibration. I'm speaking personally, I don't draw a general rule. as an alternative to the Caruso I prefer, for strenght and resistance, the method Luis Maggio, on me it's more effective. then, I know that many good trumpeters use the Caruso with success...swell!! I've been using and still use the Clarke technical studies, then, I've practiced a lot of long notes, armonical sounds and many cantabile.

- It seems you developed you pedal register very well, is there a special reason for it (part of method) or is it just one of the tools to express yourself. Do you play the pedals on flugelhorn more easily?

I began doing pedal notes on my own, already at the conservatory's times, I liked to do them and so developed more and more, but they were and still are useful for practice, to soften the lips. Yes, with the flugelhorn they sound better, I use a four-valves one and really looks like e trombone!

- Did you practiced a lot, was trumpet playing easy for you, did you have chops problems or are you more of a natural (it seems like it...)?

- When I attended the conservatory and right after the diploma, I would hear about people studying 6-8 hours per day, my brother himself would study 6 hours every day. I also tried to do so, but could resist just for two weeks...I've all the extimation and respect for all those who had to do such a sacrifice, but I must say that spent my yuonetime without sacrificing too much to the instrument. Of course, I also spent long periods studying 3-4 hours per day, but also spent longer periods studying a little or nearly nothing. Trying to do an everage, aproximately in 31 years I've been playing trumpet, I'd say one hour and a half per day of practice. Yes, I think I am "natural", let's say that after some years I had all the technical wherewithalls of the profession, afterwards, of course, my study was aimed at refining all these skills. I began to study with some regularity, one or two hours per day, after I was thirty.
- Do you still have to practice a lot to keep up with the difficult music you're playing?

Now I study for about 1-2 hours every day, sometimes more , sometimes less, it depends on what I must do. Let's say that with one hour per day I maintain quite well all the aspects of my trumpeting.

- What do you hope your students will learn from you?

First of all passion for the instrument and for ALL the music, naturality, spontaneity, the game, the enjoyment for playing, never taking themselves too seriously and never seeing the music as a "job" but keeping always the fire inside on, even though it's not always easy.

- **7. Did you also study composition/arranging? Can you tell something**

- I didn't study composition and arrangement, I'd like to do it one day. my pieces in the cd are actual compositions, but indeed they are improvvisations and instinctive pieces
- Did it take long before you played as a principal after the Conservatory?
- I began to play professionally as principal before completing the conservatory. I was 17 when first played trumpet at the Italian Radio Television of Milan, the music was the prelude from Parsifal, I was playing the third trumpet, coducted by the great croatian conductor Lovro von Maticac, one of those old-style maestros, of the genre of Karajan. I remember that in the end had a very exposed solo, the first time I played it I was frightened but everything went right and it was a good beginning for me.
- Can you tell something about your playing as a principal?

I drew from the symphony orchestra great and impayable satisfactions as well, the fairest memories date to the fifth of Mahler or the third with the post horn's solo at the RAI of Turin, and many others I don't remember now...Certainly it's a very distressing profession, you always have to play into the general context, don't have to be "a voice out of the choir" save for some cases, all in all no great artistic skills are required, rather technical precision and the fact of not mistaking or mistaking so less as possibile, always have to relate with the conductor who's not always polite and musically prepared, have to sacrifice your personality and individuality a lot in aid of the group, of the whole. But this may also be very beautiful and for a musician is of a great formation listening to the others, playing and dialoguing with them makes you grow a lot as a musician. The risk however, is in losing spontaneity and phantasy, joy for playing and freedom. I see many orchestral musicians under stress... I believe that in the unconcioussness of of every musician lays the desire of having his own voice heard, then there's who feels this desire more and who less.

- I don't know principal players who can play lead in a pop or big band section, so how did this develop?
- Thanks for your observation, let's say that since I was a young boy I played as lead in occasional big bands here in italy and this because I've always loved jazz. As regards the job, I've been playing much more classics even because here in Italy there's more culture for Opera. Yes, it's true, the major classicals are seldom idiomatic, as required in jazz, I possibly due this skill of mine to listening to Dizzy, Miles, Parker, Coltrane..., since I was a child.
- When and why did you started performing as a soloist, did you already performed as a soloist in the symphony orchestras or was it something you did beside that in other ensembles?

I gave most of the concerts as a soloist with "I Solisti Veneti", with whom I had the luck of playing in the fairest and most important halls of the world, I've been with them for 7 years. With them I often played the concert for two trumopets by Vivaldi and the cocert of Tartini, then have been playing as a soloist with some other ensemble, but occasionally, the classic trumpet as a soloist instrument is not very required in Italy. Afterwards I gave some recitals for trumpet and piano playing the classical repertoire, I played as a solist with wind bands also and still like doing it when it happens.

- What is your main thing now, do you still play in symphonies or are you only doing you own stuff now along with your teaching?
- At present I'm continuing my teaching in Milan and try to do the things I'm most interested in: playing in orchestra every now and then as a free- lance, but much less then before for I'm more interested in developing my musical discourse, giving many masterclasses and have also began to give concerts as a soloists with my friend and unbelievable trombonist Joseph Alessi (principal trombone of the NY philharmonic). We've just given two in Italy, with great success, furthermore, I'm beginning to play with my quartett (keybord,bass,drums and trumpet).
- How did you develop yourself into playing almost anything in every style?
- By dedicating plenty of time to listening to many and various music, but chiefly by practicing many different styles. There's been a period of my career in which I really played anything, from the principal in orchestra, to the lead in big band, to the baroque as a soloist, to the band in the talk shows, to the folk-dance music, to the dancing or merenge night's music. I also attended for a long period recording

studios, wherein recorded lots of jingles and TV stuff. But I made all this because really wanted to do this 360 degrees musical experience, not for money or employment's needs, I could have well done just with the symphonic orchestra, therefore it was curiosity that made me do so, the desire of knowing styles and ways of life of the various musical environments, without any sort of prejudice. For me there's no A or B series music, exists only the MUSIC you can hear inside, the style you practice has no big importance in the end.

- Can you combine playing classical/jazz/pop or are you doing these styles in different periods? It seems to me it's hard to combine lead playing with classical playing. The tone and chops you've got to have must be totally different. Can you tell me something about how you cope with that?
- When I practice at home, there's no problem, I like to play some classical and jazz, I can well alternate the two things. From jazz I draw out a lot of benefit to apply to the classical afterwards, it's fantastic discovering the swing there is inside classic music, and playing a soft jazz the sound gets much softer, and this is good both for classical and jazz.
- I think that practicing both styles is an enrichment; the most frequent thing I notice in who plays only classical is the quite rigid approach to the instrument and the music, but with a good technician on the instrument, who plays only jazz is maybe less technically prepared but has a more looser approach. I speak in general, then, of course, there's who plays very well both genres, like Wynton Marsalis.
- Much harder is alternating lead trumpet with principal, because first of all I, to play lead or pop music, change the mouthpiece, I use one with a much higher cup, whereas for classical I use a normal one, quite big. Besides, if you want to specialize yourself in the top notes you have to study and maintain for that, and this is quite incompatible with softness and precision required to a principal or in classical music. Every now and then I can do it, but I always prefer dividing in different times these activities. In the past, for a period, I happened to play, for instance, lead in big band in the evening or in band in TV shows and the morning after go to play baroque music with the piccolo trumpet with "I Solisti Veneti" or rehearsal with a symphonic orchestra. One can do it, but it always depends on what piece one has to play. For instance, if you have to play Mahler's the fifth or the third, obviously the evening before you don't go to play lead trumpet, but if you have something simpler you can do it well, why not?...
- You play mainly Bb trumpet as a soloist, is it easier to be versatile on a Bb or do you like the fatter and warmer sound of the Bb more (as to the C trumpet)?

I prefer the sound of the B flat trumpet to the C's one, it's much warmer and ductile and contains more colors, in the last ten years I've been playing anything with the B flat trumpet (excepting very few things for which I take the C or the piccolo trumpet. The sound melts better with the trombones and "pierces" less than the C. But in the past when I used to play full time in a symphonic orchestra I used the C.

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- You also play valve trombone on the CD. When did you start playing the trombone and is it hard to combine with the trumpet?
- I don't play trombone regular, but I used it just for few notes on the CD
- Did you also study composition/arranging? Can you tell something about your compositions and how you develop a composition?
- I didn't study composition and arrangement, I'd like to do it one day. My pieces in the CD are actual compositions, but indeed they are improvisations and instinctive pieces
- What are your influences, what music do you like, which trumpet players are important to you?
- I listen many things here and there, a lot of jazz but I also like **latin** music, pop, funk, I listen a little classics because I've been playing it for 25 years! The trumpeters who influenced my way of playing are Wynton Marsalis, Doc Severinsen, Harry James, Maurice André'
- What I liked about your playing (amongst other things) is that you are capable of really playing beautiful melodies with a great sound, like in the Morricone music but also in your own music I listened to. Do you think being an Italian helps playing beautiful melodies with a beautiful tone (more passion...), I mean is it a cultural thing like you hear Pavarotti sing beautiful melodies to?

Thank you for your appreciation; yes, we Italians in general have this sense for the Bel Canto, this comes from the Opera, but the tracks and the influences of this tradition are also in the Italian pop music or jazz as well.

- Can you tell something about working with Morricone?

I love Morricone's music very much, I've been playing for him years ago for a series of concerts of his music and he conducted, now we are to make the same concerts with the orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala and I'll be the principal trumpet

- It seems Italy has many fine trumpet players who are also getting more famous around the world. Is there a good scene in Italy for classical and jazz music? Is the government subsidizing music or do the musicians have to earn their own living with doing more commercial stuff. Is it hard to be a serious musician in Italy, even when you're a very good trumpet player?

The trumpeters in Italy are first rate, both in classics and in jazz. In Italy, in order to have a worthy occupation in the ambit of music, you must be in an operatic-symphonic orchestra and this allows you to have a good salary. But in the classic's ambit here there's no real context of opportunities of performing classical concerts as a trumpet soloist, save rare occasional episodes.

In the ambit of jazz there are some (few) personages who work and earn a lot, the others, even though of high level, draw a very precarious life and have to do commercial things to forge ahead. For instance, in Italy there's no operating band, they are all put together for few occasions, maybe even of good level, but there's no real formation in grade of providing job to the musicians. I know good big bands in Italy but in the average the number of concerts is 6-7 per year, and the state for sure doesn't help this kind of formations, in Italy it supports chiefly opera houses, even if in the last years the situation of jazz here in Italy has improved a lot, is enough to see the continuous flourishing of jazz festivals with always increasing public following.

It's difficult in Italy to be acknowledged for merits, here quite rules the law of friendship, you do if you are a friend of...here one mind his own businesses, and also in the musical environment there's a provincial way of thinking and a particularly gifted person in Italy often finds many difficulties to express himself and to find the right appreciation and consideration, the same not only in the field of music but in all its professional sectors, it regrets me to say it, but this is the mark.

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C trumpet :
Mpc C
Eb trumpet:
Piccolo :
Flugelhorn :
Mpc :
Trombone :

- Your Courtois Evolution I isn't a trumpet you see a lot of trumpet players playing on. Why did you choose this model?

The courtois evolution I is an instrument very similar to the Monette, I like very much Monette's conception and his instruments, I had the occasion, years ago, of trying this courtois and keep using it with satisfaction, it's very in-tune and has a great sound!

- Do you change your mouthpieces on your Bb when you're playing lead, classical or other styles or do you play everything on the same mouthpiece and why?

Classics and Jazz with the same mouthpiece (medium/large), for the lead I put one with shallow cup because otherwise I'm not able to reach the top notes with the power required for pop or big band, besides, the kind of sound this tazza alta mouthpiece gives me is the right one for this genre, it's inconceivable to me doing it with a symphonic orchestra's mouthpiece. During my soloist's concerts I alternate these two kinds of mouthpieces, depending on what I must do and retain most fitting the music.

About the new CD :

- Did you have a plan for this cd or is just a collection of pieces you like?
- I had in mind a project for this cd but not on the paper, the work took shape on the road, piece after piece, following a path made of unceasing tries and experiments, the same for the choice of the pieces. I've made several experiments on every piece, using colors, mutes, different instruments, choosing in the end the version I preferred
- How long did you work on this cd?

It took about two years, but I made this during free time and so with all the necessary calm. however, it's been a very hard job because beyond recording all the trumpets, I also made the mixing and the editing of the whole job!

- It seems your 1st CD Forme d'Arte is more expressing your classical background and this new cd is more jazzy, also with some computer programming on it etc. Is this a new style you want to develop or is it just for this cd that you're doing a more jazzy/poppy feel?

Sicuramente il discorso jazz/pop mi appassiona sempre di piu', ultimamente sto' dedicando una parte importante del mio studio giornaliero al jazz

- Are all pieces written for you or did you also rewrite pieces like the transcriptions from Di Gregorio

The Di Gregorio's pieces in the beginning have been written for other instruments, not the trumpet, I made the transcription. On the contrary, the pieces by Nicola Ferro and Frank Campo have been custom written for me.

- How did you get in contact with Randy and why did you want to feature him on this cd?
- I shipped my first cd "forme d'arte" to Randy, who I didn't know, he liked it very much and wrote me a letter of compliments. So I decided to ask him to play in my new cd, even because in a piece like "omaggio a giancarlo betti" a solo from him would have been fantastic, his way of playing is particularly artful and compelling. he immediately agreed and was interested in the project, so I shipped to him the two pieces already recorded by me in my studio, and he overdubbed them with his trumpet in a NY studio. I'm particularly honoured by this participation of his, he's a piece of the history of music. Then, I recently spent a very pleasant evening in his apartment in Manhattan, and beyond being a great he's also a fantastic person.
- Can you tell something about L'anacoreta, what does it mean and what did you want to express in this piece?

The anacoreta is a hermit, a solitary person. I tried to represent a hermit, a man alone in his interiority in relationship with the external world. The sound, the music one hears in the piece is instinctive, tribal, spiritual, I tried to imagine myself in the solitude of this personage.

- What was the most difficult piece to play/record and why?
- Illussions and Omaggio a Giancarlo Betti, 'cause I had to overdub 13 trumpets!
- How did you come in contact with F. Campo? Does he write specially for you, so he knows your strengths (and weaknesses) or does he just write a piece for trumpet and let you cope with it?

- Years ago I recorded Times, a piece of him, he listened to it and remained enthusiastic, so I said him I'd have loved a piece all for me, so explained to him my characteristics, as the pedal notes for instance, and he wrote "Aftertoughs" accorded to my qualities, also taking into account the versatility between classical and jazz.

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- Are you playing some of these pieces live?

I played some of these pieces live at the ITG conference 2004 (USA), afterwards in Spain and Greece. I drew from this cd and from "forme d'arte" a 15 minutes background and put it in the cd, then, live, I had the cd playing and played over it. I played Frank Campo 's piece in world premiere at the ITG conference 2004

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- Often trumpet or brass cds get bored after a few numbers, because every number is so different it stays fresh till the end. Did you thought of that to keep it as versatile and interesting as possible?

Yes, you're right, often the brass-cds get bored because are too monochromatic, as for instance the brass quintetts, well, I feel quite far from those kind of things...Yes, what I've sought is keep as high as possible the interest of the cd's listener, it's not easy but hope I've worked it out. I've just tried to think myself as to a listener...

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- Future projects you want to do?

This is a very beautiful period of my musical life in which I feel full of energy to develop my projects and ideas; in the immediate future I want to develop the discourse of the concerts with Joe Alessi, which is already a fact, then I'm thinking to a new cd, want to carry on and develop the discourse of my quartett, I'd like very much to play for a period in the United States...who knows, we'll see, the enthusiasm is high!