

Carmen and Elettra Stop in Chicago

Natalia Nebel (June 18, 2010)



Italian singer and songwriter Carmen Consoli stopped by the Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago on Tuesday, June 15 to greet fans and play a sampling of her new songs from her seventh album, ELETTRA. The theme of ELETTRA is love in its many manifestations: filial, platonic, romantic; and love in its varying emotional tones: conflicted love, egotistical love that destroys rather than nurtures, and love that has the power to heal

As can be imagined, a large, extremely enthusiastic mix of Italians and Americans gathered to listen to [Carmen Consoli](#) [2] for a special concert at the [Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago](#) [3] on June 15. As Director Tina Cervone mentioned in her introduction, it certainly isn't every day that Consoli fans have the opportunity to experience the music one of Italy's favorite stars in an intimate setting, and also to exchange a few words with her. Consoli talked with individual audience members at length while signing CDs after her performance at the Institute, and graciously posed for photographs with all who asked.



Microphone, acoustic guitar, powerful voice and impeccable beat were the only elements required for Consoli to fill the Institute's gallery with the sound of a full scale concert. Adding depth to her performance were the stories she shared of how Sicily to this day provides her with inspiration and a rich musical heritage made of many cultural threads to draw from.

"I began studying Sicilian musical tradition and immediately felt something open up inside of me. You could say it completed me." Consoli sang two songs in Sicilian, expressing herself with a clarity and passion that made the fact that many audience members didn't speak Sicilian completely unimportant.

Continuing with her description of Sicily, Consoli spoke of its multi-cultural past: "Diversity once meant richness," Consoli said. "There was a time that many different nationalities and religions coexisted peacefully in Sicily. It was possible once, why can't it be possible again?"

Consoli also pointed out that Sicily is in many respects an extension of Greece. "My bedtime stories were not of 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' or 'Cinderella,' but of the great Greek myths. Ulysses the wanderer was one of my heroes. I'm a scholar," Consoli joked, before continuing: "I'm not necessarily as interested in the physical journey as in the mental journey."

Given the importance of Greek mythology to Consoli, it isn't surprising that the iconic Elektra is the inspiration for the title of her latest album. ELETTRA explores the theme of love in all its guises - from platonic to erotic to filial to obsessive to cruel - and is dedicated to her father who died last year.

Consoli spoke at some length about her father's death and also the strength of his character: "His sense of humor never failed, even in the most painful situations. When he was told by his doctors that he was dying he replied sarcastically, in a powerful Sicilian accent, 'Good fellows, so what do you want me to do, send you a postcard?'" The song she wrote, inspired by his quip, is titled appropriately "Send me a postcard," and is ELETTRA's first piece. "South East" and "The Window" are two of the other featured songs on this platinum album that she introduced while at the Institute.

Needless to say, the audience was extremely grateful for the time that Carmen Consoli spent with them. Consoli made the appreciation feel reciprocal when she closed her event by saying: "The time I've spent with all of you has been very precious to me."

That evening, Consoli played to a sold out crowd at Martyr's, one of Chicago's most famous clubs, where she sang her latest songs as well as some of her most well known ones, "Parole di burro" and "The Last Kiss" among them. This is the third time that Carmen Consoli has visited Chicago. Hopefully she will return again soon.

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