



CELEBRATING
OLIVE YOU
WITH CROONER
& CONNOISSEUR

Michéal Castaldo

*“Life is not a cup to be drained,
but a measure to be filled.”*

This is Michéal Castaldo’s approach to his music, his work, his passions, and his life in general. The Calabrian-born, Canadian-raised, and now New York City resident is a celebrated international Classical-Crossover artist. He is also an olive oil aficionado and expert, and a dedicated *unofficial* ambassador—as he puts it—for the region of Calabria, Italy where he was born. Everything Michéal CASTALDO loves includes sharing the very best Italian music, the freshest olive oil from his family’s groves, and a stay at his family’s enchanting villa, *Villetta Mimma Vittoria*, named for Michéal’s mother. To spend time with Michéal is to drink in all the things that go with “La Dolce Vita,” the sweetest life imaginable. La Dolce Vita

should definitely include a copy of Michéal’s recently released album, aptly titled *Olive You*, which features classic Italian songs to feed the heart and soul.

How did Michéal develop his expertise in music? Like all good stories, his began with inspiration, the support of a strong family, and mentors whom he credits for teaching him the many facets of developing his talents and running his music business. “People have layers, like an onion. Talent isn’t about high notes and low notes, but instead how deeply you get into the lyrics,” says Michéal. His story’s layers are a rich palimpsest. Michéal’s grandfather moved to the US in 1896. Back then Michéal says they were all leaving Italy, historians refer to them as *birds of passage*—migratory labourers—to save money, with plans to return to Italy. His great grandfather did just that, working as a labourer building the New York City subway system, and then returned to Calabria and purchased the family’s olive grove estate. Michéal was born in

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Calabria—the tip of the boot in Italy—but his family moved in the 1960s as part of a large wave of immigrants to Canada. They settled in the St. Clair & Dufferin area of Little Italy in downtown Toronto.

His Italian roots were and are a major influence. Compared to other Italian communities in the world, his Italian roots weren't lost in assimilation. CHIN, the local multicultural radio station was playing all the time in his family home. He listened to the best Italian compositions, stating that the heyday of Italian music was the 1960s and 70s. Canadian multiculturalism encourages immigrants to maintain their heritage while also being Canadian. This kept Michéal close and connected to his heritage, the language and the music he loved so deeply at an early age. He began singing in church, and as a large personality and extrovert from a family of equally big personalities, Michéal was encouraged by his parish priest, and his immediate family to stand out. They highlighted his talents, and he was taught to speak up, to speak his mind, and to avoid blending in. Michéal says he enjoyed the attention and then as he grew up, he soon realized music was a great way to get girls! He went to Italy in 1971 with his mother and sang for relatives. On this trip, his uncle took him aside and told him to study

if he was serious, and talked about learning the language of music. This lesson stuck with Michéal and he knew then that he wanted to make a living at music, to express himself through music, to feel empowered and to learn.

He began studying voice with Maestro Pisapia a protégé of the great Italian operatic tenor, Enrico Caruso. Maestro Pisapia was stern, had a great attitude, and taught Michéal breathing exercises, Neapolitan songs, and the art of Bel Canto. Michéal's passion for dynamic Neapolitan songs that require breath support and a broad range prompted him to learn to play guitar, piano, even some trumpet. He attended the Berklee school of Music for four years studying everything from arrangement, composition, music production to management, and he developed lifelong friendships and relationships from his days at Berklee.

His mentor, Ann Ruckert advised Michéal to go to New York City. On July 4 weekend 1986 Michéal's departure from Boston and his arrival in New York City were both heralded with fireworks thanks to the 100th birthday of the statue of liberty. Michéal jokes that he thought it was all for him! Through a friend who was dog sitting, he stayed at the penthouse apartment of the great Leonard Bernstein in the famous Dakota building. Later that year Michéal was one of two tenors chosen to play at Carnegie Hall for a show headlined by Mel Tormé. Michéal developed the confidence to make a living at music, often doing commercials, pitching his reels and working as a session singer. He graciously comments that the ups and downs all added to his story. "All those struggles make you who you are, and motivate you to continue on doing what you're doing." Michéal lives his life passionately, with a strong emphasis on knowledge and experience. He has very intentionally become an expert regarding all his passions—his music, his family's Olive Oil estate, and his Calabrian heritage.

Michéal Castaldo's latest release, *Olive You*, is available for purchase at Amazon, or iTunes and is carried in select stores in the Toronto area. Michéal will be performing June 8 at Renaissance Parque in Vaughan for details go to www.lazialionline.org. To learn more about Michéal and to find a list of his upcoming shows, please visit his website at www.michealcastaldo.com.

