

# Muorica

Michael Occhipinti & The Sicilian Project



1.	<b>AMUNINNI RAZZIETTA</b>	5:51
2.	<b>MUORICA</b>	7:30
3.	<b>‘A STACIUNI</b>	6:29
4.	<b>LINGUA E DIALETTU (PART 1 - POESIA)</b>	3:56
5.	<b>LINGUA E DIALETTU (PART 2 - U CANTU)</b>	7:24
6.	<b>PIRATI A PALERMO</b>	4:59
7.	<b>FAVI AMARI</b>	5:12
8.	<b>SPUNTA LU SOLE</b>	1:35
9.	<b>SACCIU CHI PARLA A LA LUNA</b>	9:04
10.	<b>THE SOLDIER AND THE SIREN</b>	7:59
11.	<b>CANTU A TIMUNI</b>	3:41
12.	<b>CIALOMI</b>	:51
13.	<b>MARZEMEMI</b>	7:18

**Michael Occhipinti** - All guitars and ambient effects

**Dominic Mancuso** - vocals

**Roberto Occhipinti** - bass

**Louis Simao** - accordion & pandeiro

**Mark Kelso** - drums

**Kevin Turcotte** - trumpet

**Ernie Tollar** - saxophone and flute

Special Guests:

**Don Byron** - clarinet on tracks 2, 4, 5 & 10

**Pilar** - vocals on tracks 1, 2, 4, 5 & 10

**Maryem Tollar** - vocals on track 8

**Francesco Pellegrino** - vocals on track 11

**Yvette Tollar** - backup vocals on track 1

**The Cecilia String Quartet** - on tracks 2, 4, 5 & 10

**Min-Jeong Koh, Sarah Nematallah** - violins

**Caitlin Boyle** - viola

**Rachel Desoer** - cello

Produced by Michael Occhipinti and Roberto Occhipinti

All Music Arranged by Michael Occhipinti

Recorded, Mixed, and Edited by John Bailey at the Drive Shed, Toronto

Assisted by Taylor Kernohan

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## INTRODUCTION

From March to June 2010, I lived in the Sicilian port city of Pozzallo, a short drive from the bigger city of Modica where my parents were from, and where my extended family still lives. I'd received a Chalmers Arts Fellowship from the Ontario Arts Council to immerse myself in Sicilian culture and music, meet musicians, and gather songs, stories, and ideas for the album you have in your possession.

Interestingly, the first *The Sicilian Jazz Project* album was inspired by a 2004 trip I made to Sicily when my first daughter Beatrice was born. Now we traveled as a family of five, with youngest daughter Liliana aged 5 months, and my son Gianluca just over 3. We chose to rent an apartment that was right across from the beach, so that my family could easily take advantage of the playground or the nearby shops. Modica, a short drive away, is where I would usually head to see my cousins or to jam with the members of the local jazz club who get together once a week, or to check out concerts in the beautiful Teatro Garibaldi where my father used to enter amateur singing contests, and where his younger brother Raffaele once collected tickets.

Modica is a Unesco Heritage site, along with several other cities nearby, including Ragusa, Noto, and Scicli. All of these cities were destroyed in the devastating earthquake of 1693, and all were rebuilt at exactly the same time in an ornate Baroque style that is the hallmark of south eastern Sicily.

Modica is built up the sides of a deep gorge, and its' main street Corso Umberto covers what used to be a river lined with bridges, paved over after a deadly flood in 1902. Many of the houses, like the one my dad grew up in, are built right into the cliff walls, and look like regular houses from the front, but are essentially well-finished former caves. The town, like all of Sicily, has fallen under the domain of a variety of empires and kingdoms, including those of the Phoenicians, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, and Spaniards, and those various influences are found everywhere. Lemons, oranges, and pistachios are staples of the Sicilian diet, and were introduced by the Arabs. The prickly pears that grow everywhere, tomatoes, and (particularly in Modica) chocolate are

all a result of the Spanish empire and its conquest of the Americas. It should be noted that both the Arabs, and the Normans who defeated them, recognized Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew as official languages, although when Sicily later fell under Spanish rule and the Inquisition started in 1492, all Jews were tragically either expelled or forced to convert. Given the legacy of so many invaders and distant rulers, it is hardly shocking that many contemporary Sicilians can display a cynicism towards their government in Rome, even as they are incredibly trusting and generous to those they interact with face to face.

My parents left Modica for Toronto in the early 1950s, hoping to find more work and opportunity than was available to them in post-war Sicily. But Modica never left them, and they passed on to their children their unique language and traditions, and I learned to pronounce the city as they did, Muorica. I'm never confused about the fact that I am a Canadian, but there is a part of my brain that only switches on when I'm in Sicily, and I'm grateful for being able to feel completely at home in another country. This album is dedicated to all the wonderful experiences I've had in Sicily, and above all to the family and friends who embraced me and who have helped me on the path to this music.



**AMUNINNI RAZZIETTA (lu Weekend)**  
(Michael Occhipinti)

I teach an adult amateur jazz ensemble at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto. One day I ran into one of my students in the parking lot of the downtown Long & McQuade music store, and he gave me an old banjo he no longer wanted (thanks Brian Smegal).

I'm not really a banjo player, but new instruments often do inspire ideas, and one day I came up with a pattern I liked while I was goofing around with my kids. I got them to record it with our iPad so I wouldn't forget it, and that became the basis for this tune. So much of the music I like (including the banjo) has roots in Africa, and the tune is very much inspired by the guitar driven music of Mali, and the African funk of Nigeria's Tony Allen, who I was lucky enough to do a recording session with for my brother Roberto's recording *A Bend In The River*.

Lyricaly, the song is a conversation I heard my parents have many times. My father had his own small construction company in Toronto, and worked very hard all week. Although he was generally a very social person, on the weekend he sometimes would tell my mother that he was tired and didn't want to go out anywhere. My mother stayed at home for most of my childhood, so she of course spent the week preparing meals and taking care of our house. She would not hesitate to let my father know quite forcefully that she needed to get out and have some fun and see people (we lived on a crescent in the suburbs, and sometimes I'm sure it felt like there was no one around to see). My father would try to argue, but my mom could be incredibly persistent, and in the end he'd say, "Ok get dressed, we're going out." In the case of this song, they're going dancing.

"Amuninni" (*andiamo in Italian*) is one of my favourite Sicilian words, meaning "let's go" and it's usually how my father would declare that he was going out the door, whether anyone else was ready or not. "Razzietta" is the affectionate name everyone used with my mother instead of her given name "Graziella."

**AMUNINNI RAZZIETTA (Translation):**

Saturday evening  
My father was exhausted  
I've worked the whole day and I don't want to do anything.

My mother was cooking dinner  
My mother lost her temper  
All week long I'm stuck in this house, I want to go out

(pre-chorus)  
You get to see people  
I get to see this house  
You can do what you want  
But I want to go dancing

(chorus)  
Let's go, Razzietta, dancing  
We're going, dancing, Razzietta

My mother was happier  
In the middle of a crowd  
All week long, stuck in this house, waiting for the weekend

(pre-chorus)  
The streets aren't made of money  
Our expenses are many  
The kids need something to eat  
But then I want to go dancing!

(alternate chorus)  
Everyone has to go dancing  
Singing, dancing, doing  
Give life a kiss  
to make love  
Everyone has to go dancing  
Singing, dancing, doing

(chorus)  
Let's go, Razzietta, dancing  
We're going, dancing, Razzietta

## MUORICA

(Music by Michael Occhipinti, Words by Franca Cavallo)

Modica, Mourica, Moak, Mohak, Motuca, Muòrica - the city has been given a variety of names, with the Greek and Arabic variations both meaning “castle” or “fortress” in reference to the city’s defensive advantage because it is built up the face of the cliff walls on either side of a very deep river valley. In Sicilian, it’s Muòrica.

A few weeks after I arrived in Sicily, some folk musicians I’d met invited me to go to a book launch that a poet named Fabio Messina was having at a fantastic restaurant/country house. There were a number of other poets, and after Fabio showed slides of the illustrations from his book, and read a few poems, we had a great meal, and then a variety of poets were all invited to recite their own work. I’d been told that if I brought a guitar, I wouldn’t have to pay for my meal, so I happily obliged, and a singer named Cecilia Pitino and I did a few songs together in between the readings. It’s a night that has really stuck with me. Like Fabio Messina, who I subsequently got to hang out with in his Unesco heritage city Palazzolo Acreide, the poets I heard that night were writing in Sicilian instead of Italian, and they were all incredibly passionate about celebrating their language and culture. One of those poets was Franca Cavallo, whose poem Muorica I later came across in a book. The poem celebrates the city of Modica, and talks about how it’s a city where one is always ascending (it is a cliff city full of staircases afterall). I’m so pleased she likes the music I put behind her words.

## MOURICA (*Translation*):

This is  
a town, where  
always you must ascend

Look at it, by night, by night this town  
it looks like a Nativity scene created by artists  
who gave all of their heart and spirit  
to make it with this vista

The streets and the stairs that climb  
look like silk under the lamp lights  
they run like so many children  
while the enchanted moon looks on

Everywhere you turn, you see stone walls  
where capers and prickly pears are growing.  
When the summer comes, and the sun ripens them,  
it is a paradise full of stars



## ‘A STACIUNI

‘A Staciuni is an old song from Modica, about the change of seasons and the arrival of warm, sunny weather. One day, my folk singing friend Turi Dipasquale from the group TALÈH arranged for my family and I to go to Ragusa and meet up with an accordion player named Gino Carbonaro. Gino had played on the recording of ‘A Staciuni by La Contea di Modica that my cousins had given me a few years earlier. Now retired from his career as a school Headmaster, Gino invited my family and I to his house overlooking the beautiful countryside near Ragusa, and we spent the day playing music and discussing the history and meaning of different songs. Gino loves to tell stories and is a warm and generous soul, and he gave me great insight into some of the Sicilian songs I’ve arranged.

At a certain point he asked me if I had any photographs of my parents before they left Modica for Toronto, and I pulled out my laptop to show him what I had. There were a few formal portraits of my parents from when they were engaged and later when they were getting ready to go to Canada. As soon as Gino looked at them he exclaimed “yup, my father took those!” His father had the best known photo studio, and most people went to him when they needed portraits. Gino recognized both the backgrounds that his dad used and pointed to the “Photolux Carbonaro” stamp that his father had on his work. In a further shrinking of our worlds, I showed him a picture of my father as young man, posed with an amateur music group. Gino pointed to the accordion player and said, “He was my teacher.”

## ‘A STACIUNI (*Translation*):

Ah, the change of season came  
Oh how hot it was  
And I looked for shade  
To find a place to rest my body

But from far away I saw the sea  
A beautiful spot with a cool breeze  
She created a beautiful shade  
I walked to get closer

Oh beautiful fresh breeze  
Can you do me a favour?  
If you’ll please give me a leaf  
I can dry my sweat away

She responds and says  
Don’t compromise my honour  
If I give you my leaf  
It comes from this heart





## LINGUA E DIALETTU

(Music by Michael Occhipinti, Words by Ignazio Buttitta)

Sergio Bonanzinga is a musicologist at the University of Palermo, I had looked him up because he had written some of the liner notes for the collection of Alan Lomax recordings (done in Sicily in 1954) that were the basis of my The Sicilian Jazz Project album. Professor Bonanzinga took great interest in the idea that a Canadian was arranging old Sicilian songs, and he directed me to Palermo's Museo delle Marionette, dedicated to preserving Sicily's tradition of using ornate wooden puppets to tell epic tales (these aren't kids puppet shows!). At the museum, the staff had been told that I was researching Sicilian music. I was shown into a private room and given a pile of recordings, including "Buttita reads Buttita" featuring poet Ignazio Buttitta reading his own poetry.

Ignazio Buttitta (1899-1997) was a formidable writer and personality, and I was completely struck by the poem *Lingua e Dialett*. The poem basically says, "Take away someone's passport, the table where they eat, the bed they sleep in, and throw them in jail, and they are still free. But take away their language and they become enslaved." The poet compares a forgotten language to having money you can't spend, or a song in a cage with its wings cut off.

The poem is a lament for the loss of Sicilian dialect, and those who would reject their linguistic inheritance and elevate mainland Italian above it. The idea of disappearing language resonates with me because my generation of Italian-Canadians is unique. My parents were part of a huge wave of post-World War II immigration that reduced the pressure to give up their native language, ultimately helping to prod Canada into embracing multiculturalism. Even as that wave of Italians learned to function in English (or French in Quebec), they spoke their dialect at home to their Canadian born children. The result is a generation of people like me, speaking a dialect that is now considered "archaic" in Sicily, but with a North American accent.

Sicilians do of course still have their own language, but language is fluid and evolves, as is shown in all the variants of English and

French worldwide. Thus, whenever I opened my mouth and chose to speak my parent's *Muoricano* instead of Italian, I usually got an expression of surprise and delight and puzzlement too. They'd wonder how it is that I speak "archaic" Sicilian so well, but while they may like the fact that their dialect has survived overseas, it's something that probably stops with people like me. My children might learn Italian or contemporary Sicilian, but sadly it's unreasonable to think they'd learn the dialect my parents spoke.

*Lingua e Dialett* was written for a concert at the 2014 Ottawa Chamberfest. Over the years, I've had the good fortune to write and arrange music for festival director Roman Borys and his group The Gryphon Trio, and he invited me to bring Pilar over from Italy and to involve Don Byron and The Cecilia String Quartet as well. The music was inspired by Sicilian church bells. Easter in Sicily is a very magical time, and every town has its own parades and processions and rituals. I heard so many interesting church bells and I used a recording of a bell pattern that I liked as the jumping off point for the opening of *Lingua e Dialett*.



## PIRATI A PALERMO

(Music by Rosa Balistreri, Words by Ignazio Buttitta)

Rosa Balistreri (1927-1990) is probably the best known Sicilian folk singer. She had a dramatic life, wonderfully examined in the film *La Voce Di Rosa* (2011), by Nello Correale. I had the good fortune to be asked by my friends at Madre Films in Toronto to perform for the film's debut in Toronto, and Dominic Mancuso, and my brother Roberto and I learned a few of Rosa's songs for the evening. As soon as I heard Dominic sing Pirati, I knew we'd have to record it.

Pirati a Palermo has powerful lyrics, telling the tale of invading pirates (and Sicily did historically face a variety of invaders) who take away everything, and brutalize the people. The chorus says "They stole the sun, and left us with darkness. Sicily is crying." It is worth noting that both Rosa Balistreri and Ignazio Buttitta were outspoken on social issues, the mafia, and the treatment of women, and the song is a metaphor for Sicily as they experienced it.



## FAVI AMARI

(Nono Salamone, Arranged by Michael Occhipinti)

Meaning "bitter beans," Favi Amari tells the story of a man with seven children who comes home from work and gets his hand slapped by his wife because all he brings home are a few beans for dinner. It sounds comical, but it is reflective of the poverty that some Sicilians faced after World War II.

My father was a stone mason, and there is a beautiful little church in the Sicilian countryside that he worked on in 1948, including carving the cross, the main rosette window, and the decorative elements. Standing in that church is a powerful experience. We decided to have two of our kids baptized there, with our friend Sheri flying in from Canada, Don Byron coming down from Rome (and the acoustics were perfect for the clarinet music he graced us with), and our close cousins Maria and Ignazio acting as Godparents. The church was carved out of stone that the men cut right out of the land around it. Because it was a good day's walk or bike ride away from Mourica, the men would camp there. There's an old carob tree right in front of it, and when I'm there I like to stand under that tree because I have a strong feeling my father ate lunch in its shade. The men would typically camp at the construction site for a few weeks at a time, and at the end of that time, they'd be paid in large canisters of beans.





## SPUNTA LU SOLE

(Traditional)

Spunta lu Sole means the sun suddenly appears or pops out, and comes from another field recording I received at the Museo delle Marionette in Palermo. The recording is of two women singing, but in this case one of the women is represented by Ernie Tollar's saxophone, alongside his wife Maryem Tollar's voice. The style of harmonizing and singing is very much performed in the traditional style.

The lyrics say that the arrival of the woman's love is like the sun appearing. He melts the snow, and if he is true to his woman, she'll be true to him.

## SACCIU CHI PARLA A LA LUNA

(L. Mancuso & O.Mancuso, Arranged by Michael Occhipinti)

My brother Roberto and his wife Nancy flew over to Sicily to spend the Easter of 2010 with us and all of our cousins. Our friend Salvatore Dipasquale asked us if we'd like to do a little gig with him at the tiny Caffè Hemingway in Modica, and one of the songs we learned was this one. It is written by Fratelli Mancuso, who are not directly related to our singer Dominic Mancuso, but they do come from the same region of Sicily as his family.

The song is about a woman who speaks to the moon every night, telling the story of how her love was taken in chains and forced onto ships along with the other men of her village. The invaders sailed off with the men as cargo, but the ships sank and her love perished. The woman is left with nothing except the pain she expresses to the moon.

## THE SOLDIER AND THE SIREN

(Words and Music by Michael Occhipinti and Ilaria Patassini)

Sicily has a history of carrettiere songs, melodies carried by the men who delivered goods on donkey carts throughout Sicily. We used to perform one that had a very haunting melody, but when I looked at the words, they were oddly quite romantic. They told the tale of a woman who sees a man from her balcony and wishes she could throw down her hair and have him climb up and take her away. Since we'd pretty much abandoned the melody of that tune, I thought I would create my own version of the story set in World War II, because I had found a book on Canada's involvement in the Allied invasion of Sicily. I was surprised to see a photograph of Canadian soldiers marching into Modica, and to learn that it was Canadian soldiers who accepted the peaceful surrender of the town by the mayor.

My father was stationed on a hospital ship as part of the Italian navy that was at war with Canada and the Allies. Like many Sicilians who wanted no part of Mussolini's military alliance with Germany, he quickly took off his uniform as soon as he learned of the invasion and snuck back to Modica. Meanwhile, the Italian campaign started well enough for the Canadians, but ultimately they faced some brutal battles and conditions once they got to the Italian mainland, and the battle of Ortona is particularly remembered for its heavy casualties and destruction. In my story, the woman sees the future, and wants to change a soldier's fate.

Mother, from my balcony I see them  
Canadian soldiers marching into Modica  
Some of them look like children themselves.

See how that soldier looks up, and I know we will be together  
But then I have a vision  
I see him struggling through our land  
His friends falling in Agira  
I see him going to Italy, his army in the mud by the Mora river  
I seem him dying on Christmas day in the streets of Ortona

So I will sing to him like a siren  
And I will make him come to me  
He will live and be my love  
I will put a spell on him and change his fate

## CANTU A TIMUNI

(Traditional, Arranged by Michael Occhipinti)

When I was gathering music for this album, I wrote to Sergio Bonanzinga at the University of Palermo and asked him what his favourite traditional melody was and he sent me the melody to this song. By coincidence, Francesco Pellegrino, whose group the Vesuvius Ensemble was sharing a double-bill with mine at Toronto's Koerner Hall, also mentioned it as a Sicilian song he wanted to sing with us. Although it's an old song, it had famously been recorded in the 1940s by opera singer Giuseppe di Stefano.

*(Translation):*

The title means “a song at the ships’ wheel” and it tells of the various ports the fishermen might visit, with “carlino” “piccioli” and “grano” referring to old coins.

In Sciacca they make pots and pitchers.  
In Mazara del Vallo they salt the nice sardines.  
And in Marsala they breed foxes and donkeys.  
Trapani gets the red corals.  
And in Erice the beautiful girls live.  
In Trapani ten grano cost one carlino\*,  
In Trapani ten grano cost one carlino.  
In Erice six piccioli\* cost one grano\*.



## CIALOMI

(Traditional)

Cialomi is a call and response tuna fishing chant from Sciacca that Alan Lomax recorded in 1954. Historically, Sicilian fishermen would've used these songs to coordinate rowing or some other work. The lyrics can be improvised to say anything, and make reference to the various individuals in the fishing crew (“so and so has their coat on” or “look how handsome so and so is”). We often use this chant to walk on or off stage.

## MARZEMEMI

(Michael Occhipinti)

Inspired by Cialomi, I created my own call and response theme over a 16 bar form. It is dedicated to two beautiful areas at the south-eastern corner of Sicily. Marzememi is an old tuna processing village that now houses some beautiful cafes and hosts an annual film festival. The town still produces some traditional seafood products, but there is no longer a tuna fishery there. Sicily managed to sustain its tuna for many centuries, but sadly it only took a few decades of over-fishing with giant ships to decimate the population of large tuna.

Porto Palo, like Marzememi, used to be home to one of the most productive tuna fisheries in Europe, but its beautiful stone buildings stand abandoned, waiting for an investor to turn them into something else (I suggested they should have cafes and art, but also a fishing museum, because the way that Sicilians caught tuna for centuries, using a network of boats and nets that created pens where the fish were caught by hand, is remarkable).





## BLOOD ORANGE AND FENNEL SALAD

A few days after we arrived in Sicily from Toronto, I went to the store to get some grapes for my son. Even though fruits and vegetables are displayed very much as they are in North American supermarkets, there's always an employee working in the department who asks you what you want. If you say "apples" they ask how many and pick them out of the display for you.

The produce supervisor at the supermarket saw me looking around, and she asked what I wanted and when I said grapes, she looked at me strangely and said "it's only March, it's much too early for grapes!" Unlike in Canada, where stores bring grapes in all year round from a rotation of countries, Sicilians still eat according to what is in season. So - no grapes in the spring! But it's a fair trade off, as they have the most wonderful blood oranges in the spring (and only in the spring).

My favourite springtime Sicilian salad is blood orange and fennel with olives. Options include red onion, mint, or chilli peppers, with olive oil or a little balsamic vinegar. It's simple, but if the ingredients are fresh, it's full of flavour and looks good too (I confess, I've made it in the winter in Toronto with imported blood oranges of course- not as good as in Sicily but still delicious!)





## RAVIOLI

My mother was a very good cook. I still remember the day in 1976 when my principal scared me by walking into my grade 3 class, asking the teacher to point me out. He then smiled and held up a copy of the Toronto Star with a photograph of my parents and my brother Roberto and I seated at our dinner table with the headline “Secrets of a Superb Pasta Maker.”

When I was a child, in the days before stores were allowed to open on Sundays in Toronto, my family almost always got together on Sundays for a big afternoon meal, just as my cousins in Sicily still do. As the youngest of five children, it was a chance for me to see my siblings who didn’t live at home anymore. Typically lunch was followed by my dad napping while the rest of us went out or watched television or played records or 8-track tapes. In the late afternoon, espresso and dessert would come out, cousins or family might drop by, and as the day concluded we’d end up watching Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom, which my dad loved.

Ravioli, cannelloni, and lasagna were my mom’s specialties, all dishes that her home town of Modica is held in high regard for (basically Modica is great place to eat anything that involves ricotta cheese made from cow milk (northern Sicily uses sheep’s milk) including cannoli for dessert of course.

Typically my mother would make ravioli stuffed with ricotta cheese. The ricotta was mixed with 1 egg, and marjoram or a little nutmeg or cinnamon, and a little salt and pepper. In nearby cities such as Ragusa, sugar often gets added to make *ravioli dolce* (which to me is just plain wrong, but that’s the nature of regional food rivalries!). The idea is that the filling is relatively understated so that the tomato sauce (usually made with chunks of pork or sausage with fennel) is a big part of the overall taste, as is the fresh pasta itself.

My famiy and I came across a wonderful ravioli variation at a little place across from the Duomo di San Pietro in Modica (it’s now closed unfortunately). Instead of tomato sauce, they used a reduction of squash, with grated cheese, pistacchio, shaved almonds, and spicy chocolate from Modica. It was delicious!



## FOOD YOU NEED TO TRY

**Cannoli** - Yes, you can get ok cannoli elsewhere (pastry tubes stuffed with sweet ricotta cheese), but the ricotta in Sicily is unmatched, and unlike too many places in North America, the cheese is always freshly squeezed into the shell in front of you. Variations include pieces of chocolate or pistachio.

**Scaccia**- I actually get upset when I hear it called focaccia now (to me, that's a bread with salt and rosemary rubbed on it), because my mother made wonderful scaccia. In Modica you can walk into bakeries that specialize in it as a take out food. It is pizza dough spread very thin, covered with a variety of fillings (ricotta and sausage, tomato and onion, broccoli) and then rolled into a kind of turnover and baked. It is something that is very regional, but there are other variations, like so much Sicilian cuisine.

**Chocolate** - My friend Pierpaolo Ruta's family has run Antica Dolceria Bounauto in Modica for generations, and they make a chocolate that is unique. It is grainy, made in a process where the sugar does not entirely dissolve, and is close to chocolate from Mexico. The most common flavours traditionally are vanilla and cinnamon, but there are others such as orange or marjoram. They also make pastries, including a meat and chocolate pastry (yes really, meat and chocolate) called '*mpanatigghi*' that is also very much associated with Modica.

**Granita** - An ice dessert similar to a sorbet, but coarser and usually the ice is shaved. Limone(lemon) is the most common flavour, but others include almond, coffee, and strawberry. While we're at it, Sicilian gelato is fantastic and my favourite place, Gelato di Vini in the city of Ragusa, has some wine flavours in addition to the classics of cinnamon and pistachio.





## PLACES TO SEE

A few years ago in Toronto, I saw Stevie Wonder perform. He played great song after great song, and I was struck by the realization that his repertoire is so deep and successful that the next night he could easily play a concert of entirely different song choices. Italy has that same kind of repertoire of sights, and so does Sicily. Although I have traveled around the entire island, my last trip pretty much focussed on the eastern half and I still missed out on many places. Here are a few that I think everyone should visit.

**Gola dell' Alcantara** is a canyon formed when molten lava hit an icy river. It is a stunning canyon with otherworldly walls, rushing blue water, and gorgeous flowers throughout. It's a protected park and truly one of the most stunning natural wonders I've ever visited.

**Taormina** is a place on most tourist agendas with good reason. It's a small town right above the sea, with a well preserved Greek/Roman theatre whose backdrop includes both Mount Etna and the coast. It's a very special place, but it's also full of tourists. For a quieter look at Greek/Roman ruins, **Tindari** or Tyndarus overlooks beautiful Capo D'Orlando, and is home to both a stunning church (Santuaria della Madonna) and spectacular Roman and Greek ruins, including an amphitheatre that is still used for live theatre productions. The ruins are surrounded by fields full of flowers and buzzing insects, and as in Taormina, the backdrop of the amphitheatre is a stunning view of the sea.

I visited so many beautiful **beaches**, from the one across from my apartment in Pozzallo (with a really nice boardwalk to stroll along with kids safely away from cars) to Marina di Modica, to (at the opposite end of Sicily) the beaches near Palermo. I think my favourite beach is the one at Punta Secca, but except in a few places on the east coast where the current is stronger, it's tough to go wrong!





We drove up **Mount Etna** from the north side. In the winter months people go skiing (it is an active volcano. A few years before we were there they'd had to rebuild the ski resort because a lava flow had destroyed it and parts of the road). The area around the volcano is beautiful, and in the area around Castiglione di Sicilia there are beautiful wineries too. Indeed, we found ourselves in the piazza of Castiglione di Sicilia debating getting a room for the night, when I saw one of the guided tour cars that take people around Etna or to Gola dell'Alcantara. I asked the driver if he could recommend a hotel for my family and I, and he said "Follow me, I know a place you'll like better." So we followed him 15 minutes out of the town into the country, and ended up at the Tenuta Antica Cavalleria winery that also has a guest house, and beautiful property with a pool. It was a great departure point for that area of Sicily, including a day trip north to the coast to see Tindari.

Sicilian wine could be the basis of an entire trip, and many of the **wineries** have tourist houses attached to them. In 2009 when my brother Roberto and I went to Ragusa to receive our Ragusani Nel Mondo Award, we paid a visit to Arianna Occhipinti's winery (no relation. There are actually A LOT of people named Occhipinti around Ragusa). Roberto had seen her wine somewhere and thought it would be fun to meet her, so we drove down with Dominic and my sister-in-law Nancy. Arianna is an ambitious woman, running a winery at a young age and producing unique organic wines. She made us a wonderful lunch, and I gave her a CD. A few years later, a film called *Senza Trucco* was made on Arianna and three other women who are making organic wine, and at Arianna's suggestion my music was used in the film. <http://www.agricolaocchipinti.it>

**Villa Romana del Casale** is another Unesco Heritage site. It is a Roman lodge that was buried in a mud slide in the 12th century and has some of the best preserved mosaic tile floors anywhere. I first saw it in 1992, and two decades later I was surprised how much bigger the site is, as they continue to work on it. A series of catwalks allow people to see the mosaic floors without walking on them.



## THANKS

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Thanks to Don Byron, not just for his usual great playing, but also for jumping at the chance to come down to Sicily from Rome and be part of my family’s story there.

A couple of years ago my friend Linda Bull let me hear Pilar’s album, and I was immediately hooked on the songs and on her voice. I decided to contact her, and much to my delight she enjoyed my music too. It is always great to gain a new colleague and friend as remarkable as Ilaria Patassini is.

Thanks to Roman Borys for inviting Pilar to Canada. Thanks Cecilia String Quartet for bringing the notes on the page to life. Thanks John Bailey and Taylor Kernohan for your enthusiasm and attention over many hours in the studio, and Peter Letros for adding the finish. Thanks Sheri Sabourin for being the friend that flies to Sicily to visit, and for taking photos. Grazie Commune di Modica! Thanks Alessandro Ruggero and Martin Stiglio and everyone at the Italian Cultural Institute, to the many Italian Canadian individuals, festivals, and organizations who support what I do, and to Toronto’s musicians and music boosters, especially Jazz FM, Roberto Martella at Grano, and Mervon Mehta at Koerner Hall. Thanks to the Ontario Arts Council for supporting this recording and the Canada Council For The Arts for supporting our touring. Thanks Sarah Kim Turnbull.

I’m blessed to have a large and generous family in Sicily and Toronto. There are too many individuals to list, but much love to all the Occhipinti, Iabichella, Sarta, and Terranova out there. Similarly, so many people helped me out in Sicily, I can’t list them all, but Salvatorre Dipasquale, Saro Tribastone, Salvatorre Ferro,

Fabio Messina, Sebastiano D’Angelo, Gino Carbonaro, Sergio Bonanzinga, Cecilia Pitino, Itria Schemberi, Pierpaulo Ruta, and Rino Cirinna are just a few. Thanks to all of the musicians who asked me to jam or sit in!

Thanks to my ever supportive siblings and nephews. Thanks Joanne, Silvia, and Valentino, for the lyric input on Amuninni - glad it made you hear the voices of our parents too! Thanks to my sister-in-law Nancy for letting my record take up many hours in her house as well as in mine. Thanks to my big brother Roberto for always throwing himself into my projects to make them better, and for just being the caring and insightful brother everyone should be so lucky to have. I’d have to write an essay to detail all the ways my wife Cidalia, and our children Beatrice, Gianluca, and Liliana are a part of this recording, but suffice it to say that without their love and support for my endeavors, this music would simply not be made, and I love them beyond anything. Finally, thanks to my late parents George (Giorgio) and Grace (Razzietta) because they are never far from any of the music I make.







# Muorica

Electric Guitar

words by Franca Cavallo, music by Michael Occhipinti

**A**  $\text{♩} = 114$

$p$  *cresc.*

$mf$  *cresc.*  $f$  3 3

**B** guitar chords

**C** drums LOOSE STRAIGHT 8TH JAZZ

**D** 20 Bb/D vocals Bbm<sup>11</sup>

24 Am<sup>11</sup> Ebmaj7 A7(b13)

**E** 28 Bb/D Bbm<sup>11</sup>

32 Am<sup>11</sup> F#m7 Ebm<sup>11</sup>

Acoustic Guitar  
Largo  
FREELY

# 'a Staciuni

Trad. Arranged by Michael Occhipinti



backgrounds enter



solos from letter B



OPEN for ending



1.	<b>AMUNINNI RAZZIETTA</b>	5:51
2.	<b>MUORICA</b>	7:30
3.	<b>‘A STACIUNI</b>	6:29
4.	<b>LINGUA E DIALETTU (PART 1 - POESIA)</b>	3:56
5.	<b>LINGUA E DIALETTU (PART 2 - U CANTU)</b>	7:24
6.	<b>PIRATI A PALERMO</b>	4:59
7.	<b>FAVI AMARI</b>	5:12
8.	<b>SPUNTA LU SOLE</b>	1:35
9.	<b>SACCIU CHI PARLA A LA LUNA</b>	9:04
10.	<b>THE SOLDIER AND THE SIREN</b>	7:59
11.	<b>CANTU A TIMUNI</b>	3:41
12.	<b>CIALOMI</b>	:51
13.	<b>MARZEMEMI</b>	7:18

**Michael Occhipinti** - All guitars and ambient effects

**Dominic Mancuso** - vocals

**Roberto Occhipinti** - bass

**Louis Simao** - accordion & pandeiro

**Mark Kelso** - drums

**Kevin Turcotte** - trumpet

**Ernie Tollar** - saxophone and flute

Special Guests:

**Don Byron** - clarinet

**Pilar** - vocals

**Maryem Tollar** - vocals

**Francesco Pellegrino** - vocals

**Yvette Tollar** - backup vocals on track 1

**The Cecilia String Quartet**

Produced by Michael Occhipinti and Roberto Occhipinti

All Music Arranged by Michael Occhipinti