

# POLO DE'MARCO

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WORLD EXCLUSIVE

a conversation with

CHARLIE SIEM

International Violinist/Model







# Charlie Siem

RENOWNED CLASSICAL VIOLINIST

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
BY: MIKE ANGANGAN



**Q1. At what age did you first pick up the violin? And, what was your inclination of this sound?**

CS: The sound I heard on the radio transported me and inspired me to start playing. I was only 3 years old when I picked up the instrument.

**Q2. Classical music is used to increase brain enhancement where it involves 'dopamine secretion' the feel good hormone and 'transport synaptic function' which increases the learning and memory of the brain. In your personal and professional opinion do believe this to be true? And, what was the first music that you listened to as a child that you felt was good?**

CS: Well, I certainly feel that music has an affect on your mood and emotions which is why I started playing. For me personally, it was the Beethoven concerto which had that affect on me and opened up that feeling and instinct response to music which began my journey.

**Q3. Classical music is used to increase brain-power and is often called 'the Mozart effect', in particular, when it comes to preparing for an exam. Did you practice this at Eton College and Cambridge University?**

CS: I didn't do that specifically, as such. I've heard about the 'Mozart Effect', so it certainly doesn't do any harm to listen to Mozart or Bach. There is something that is orderly, balanced, and calming about that kind of music which puts the brain into a good place to focus and concentrate. So, I don't know



about the science behind it, but it does make sense to me.

**Q4. You're mentors are Itzhak Rashkovsky and Shlomo Mintz. What do they mean to you? And, how did they inspire you to become the man that you are today?**

CS: Well, in a way when I was a teenager it was Itzhak Rashkovsky who became a good friend of mine and in many ways he was like a parent character when I was growing up. I went to boarding school and he was always buying presents for me beyond playing the violin or music. He was a special man. Shlomo Mintz had a big impact on my playing



since I admired him as a musician myself. I felt him and spent so much time with him, listening to him sharing his wisdom which changed and boosted my playing when I was 18. His approach to playing, which is bow-pressure, has a muscular, thick sound that he was able to create from his techniques. I wanted these techniques for myself. I feel that certain elements of his musical and technical approaches were very helpful to me, and that he made a big difference to my playing.

**Q5. Talking about education, your a visiting Professor at the Leeds College of Music and Accademia di Musica in Florence to name a few. What is on the agenda if I came to your class? And, are you a strict teacher or are you bit more relaxed?**

CS: I don't do that often! I usually do a MasterClass the following day for local students in order to share my processes, and my way of approaching music to an audience and to the students. It doesn't come naturally to me being a teacher. I grew up serving these MasterClasses and found that they

were about the master more than the student. It's like showing how much the teacher knew. You do learn a lot by trying to teach by thinking through your process, and about every decision you made in terms of musical and technical decisions. You barely understand it yourself, and then you have to explain it to somebody else.

**Q6. Your album 'Under the Stars' - you composed a song called 'canapé'. What processes did you go through to create a magnificent piece from tunes on a music board through to having a full orchestra? And, what was it like to hear it for the first time?**

CS: Well, it was amazing experience. I'm not really a composer traditionally, but I did this partly because I was commissioned to do it by Jeremy Murphy; my publicist who worked with CBS. Jeremy had a project for CBS that required a composition that was written, so he asked me to do it. I had an idea in my mind and a simple theme that was a fiscardo theme which the piece begins with - I worked it on the piano and expanded upon it. I then drew up a score









and orchestrated it. It was thrilling to be in front of an orchestra that is playing your own music. Having spent my life playing great composers myself in front of an orchestra and actually figuring out my own piece was surreal and rewarding.

It was amazing to hear it in a way. It wasn't like I imagined it to be necessarily, but some bits underwhelmed me a little bit. I had a better concept in my head I think. It was a great experience!

**Q7. You are a multifaceted individual as a classical violinist, a model, and an educator. Being a model, were you ever underestimated, in particular, as being a talented classical violinist?**

CS: I never chose to be a model specifically. But, I had the opportunity to represent certain brands, I suppose, as a violinist. Yet, those decisions made it more challenging to establish a classical music career. People have brief inceptions about people spending time in the fashion world which is fair enough. It has taken a few years to iron that out, but I wouldn't have done it any differently.



**Q8. As a philanthropist, you support many charities. Which charities do you support? And why is it important to you?**

CS: Over the years, I think you do many things to assist, and there are so many benefit concerts you end up getting involved in, so it's part and parcel to being a live performer. The Prince's Trust is great for me because it's based in the UK and helping UK businesses and young entrepreneurs in the UK. They do great events.

I did an event at Albert Hall and I worked with cool artists. This got me involved with the Olympics in London. I did a few events with that as well! Plus, I've been involved with charities in Italy - 'Children for Peace' is based on helping children in Africa. Charity finds you if you're a performer and it sounds so noble when people mention that you do all this charity work. It's important to always give back!

**Q9. Classical music tends to be traditional; however, it is never considered as mainstream. You are a well-known artist. Would you ever consider to make it mainstream where it will attract the youth?**

CS: I think it's important to engage the youth, but







it requires a certain element of patience and engagement from the listener for it to go into the mainstream. There's a lot of dumbing down to appeal to the widespread nature of the population, and that's what I am not interested in. I want to retain the highest level and the deepest meaning at what I'm doing if it's to speak to young people and presented to get young people to get inspired. I don't want to try to go mainstream. It's just not like playing pop songs on the violin.

**Q10. You helped raise funds for children's cancer in Brazil. Do you believe it is important to raise awareness? Have you ever gone back to the 'favela' where you could possibly give back to the community and teach them the violin as part of a grass roots development program for music?**

CS: Well that's something I would love to do. I actually would love to go there myself and do something hands-on. I have done things like that, but not in Brazil. I have done that in Israel and New York in the rough areas - I was there for one day. I gained a lot from these experiences. Raising awareness is important for these kind of issues and this Brazilian charity. There are a lot of wealthy Brazilians in London that we are trying to target.

**Q11. Your violin was made in 1735 by Guarneri del Gesu aka d'Egville. What is it like to own an instrument piece that is centuries old? And, to have the prior owner be Yehudi Menuhin, a well known American violinist and conductor?**

CS: He played on it for a number of years in the 60's and he had a great privilege to play on a piece of history like that. This violin is very special.

**Q12. You're related to Ole Bull, a well-known Norwegian born violinist and music composer. What would Ole think of your current work?**

CS: He was born in 1810, so his career was obviously at a different time than mine. But, he would use the violin to be a real entertainer, in the same way Paganini did. He used weird, new techniques that really made people applaud him. The audience would go wild! I don't really know if he would be called a violinist. He would play the violin in a way which was shockingly new. It was something revolutionary, and the audience went berserk. Today, he would be a tech start-up/entrepreneur and building an incredible apps or something. He would probably think I'm old-fashioned!

