Filippo Stoppele



like a child
with eyes of light

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To Jean Paul CARA
To Jean Pierre BELLINI

« I was in the right place at the right time… and misfortune turned out to be my greatest fortune… »
Jean Paul Cara

PROLOGUE

There are stories that never truly begin on a specific date. They are born instead from an emotion, a lingering memory, a melody heard one day that refuses to fade away. This book belongs to that family of stories.

I wrote it the way one reopens an old music box: carefully, yet with an undiminished sense of wonder. Every page is a journey back in time; every chapter an attempt to rediscover that strange moment when music did not merely accompany life – it guided it.

Everything begins in an era when songs seemed greater than the people who sang them. A time when voices crossed borders effortlessly, when choruses settled into homes, streets, and hearts as though they had always belonged there. We did not yet speak of nostalgia; we simply lived to the rhythm of records, radio broadcasts, and the first idols.

In this previously unpublished book, I will tell you the story of a song that left its mark on the world in 1977, while also revealing secrets that have never before been disclosed. Truths that are sometimes unexpected, sometimes unsettling, shedding new light on what many believed they already knew.

This account does not seek to embellish or alter the facts. On the contrary, it strives to present them as they were experienced, with their shadows, their flashes of light, and their silences.

Some passages may surprise. Others may even shock.

Yet everything written here is firmly rooted in a very specific reality: that of an era, a journey, and a work that profoundly shaped its time.

The contests, the stages, the unexpected victories. In 1975, the first sparks of Eurovision were already sketching a new European musical language. But it was in 1977 that something truly changed. France entered the history of the contest, carried by an unexpected voice – fragile and immense at the same time.

That evening, Marie Myriam stepped forward. Silence came first. Then,

without accompaniment, without artifice, she sang a cappella:

"Like a child with eyes of light..."

There are moments that cannot be explained. This was one of them. Everything seemed to pause, as though music itself were holding its breath along with the audience. It was no longer a performance. It was a presence. A naked truth.

Through these pages, I did not simply want to recount successes or dates. I wanted to rediscover what these songs did to people. What they awakened. What they left behind long after the final chord had faded away.

For, at its heart, this book is about that: music, of course, but above all the invisible bond between those who sing and those who listen. Those rare moments when a song becomes more than a song – a shared memory, a collective emotion, a mark that never disappears.

Some encounters travel through time without ever losing their brilliance. The one I experienced with Jean-Paul Cara belongs to that rare category of true friendships, built over years, shared projects, doubts as well, and above all, music.

I remember our beginnings, those hours spent searching for the right sound, the exact nuance, the fragile balance between a melody and an emotion. At the time, I was a musical arranger – my first profession – and already I understood that what we were building together extended far beyond the boundaries of a simple job. There was in Jean-Paul a particular flame, an artistic sincerity that never deceived.

Over the decades, that bond never weakened. If anything, it grew stronger, nourished by experiences, stages, occasional silences, and that mutual trust which cannot be explained but simply exists.

Even today, I look back on his journey with undiminished emotion. Jean-Paul Cara fully deserves this recognition, this spotlight, this place at the top of the bill that he pursued with courage, patience, and an unshakable faith in his music.

There are artists who pass through time.

And there are those who remain.

Jean-Paul belongs among those who remain – in memories, in songs, and in the hearts of those fortunate enough to have walked beside him for part of the journey.

And for that, I simply want to say: respect, admiration, and sincere friendship.

If you open this book, I hope you will hear something familiar between the lines. Perhaps a voice. Perhaps a refrain. Perhaps simply the memory of a moment when music touched you too, more deeply than words ever could.

Beyond the successes, the studios, the tours, and the songs that withstand the test of time, there remains what life offers that is most precious: friendship. This book is also the story of three enthusiasts brought together by the same certainty, the same universal language: music. Jean-Pierre Bellini, Jean-Paul Cara, and I shared far more than melodies. We shared moments of life, dreams, laughter, confidences, and that rare companionship that only the passing years can build.

How could I forget those evenings that seemed as though they would never end ? When the city fell asleep and midnight struck, Jean-Pierre would take his place behind his organ. Then, as if by magic, the first notes would drift into the night. His hands moved across the keyboard with astonishing ease. He improvised, invented, searched, discovered. Within moments, a melody was born. Then another. And another still. We sat there, fascinated, privileged witnesses to an immense talent that seemed to flow naturally. Jean-Pierre was a builder of songs, a craftsman of emotion, a man capable of transforming silence into music.

The hours passed without our noticing. Often, the night was already far advanced when we realized that we had just lived one of those moments that can never truly be recreated, yet remain forever in the heart.

As time went by, the songs followed their own paths. Some met with success; others remained within the intimacy of our memories. But what endures today, even more strongly than records and applause, is the sincere friendship that united us. A friendship built on respect, admiration, and a shared passion that never left us.

When I think back to those nights of creation, I do not hear only musical notes. I hear bursts of laughter, endless conversations, shared dreams. I see Jean-Pierre once again seated behind his organ.

The years pass. Memories become even more precious. But some melodies never fade away. Neither do some friendships.

And yet, only a few hours later, another reality awaited him.

At six o'clock in the morning, while we were trying as best we could to recover from our sleepless night, Jean-Pierre would leave his home in Aulnay-sous-Bois and head to work in Neuilly-sur-Seine, where he was employed by SACEM. Looking back on it today, it almost seems unreal.

The most amusing part of the story is that Jean-Pierre hated public transportation. Delays, connections, overcrowded trains during rush hour – everything about it deeply irritated him. Yet every morning, after spending part of the night playing music, he would courageously make his way to work. We often wondered where he found his energy. Perhaps in music. Perhaps in his passion. Or perhaps simply in that extraordinary determination that defined him.

With hindsight, I believe those moments perfectly summarize the man Jean-Pierre was: an absolute enthusiast, incapable of living life halfway. He gave everything to his work, everything to music, and everything to his friends. And perhaps that is why the memories he left us continue, even today, to resonate like the most beautiful melodies.