

# STRIKING THE RIGHT NOTE

BY JOANN CHIA



Named the fourth tenor, Andrea Bocelli has one of the most angelic and beautiful contemporary opera voices of the century.

If music has the power to heal souls, then Andrea Bocelli must be one of the eminent physicians behind it. Sharing the spotlight with opera greats like Luciano Pavarotti, Plácido Domingo and José Carreras, this living legend is well-endearred for a voice that's versatile, tender yet full of power – and he has over 65 million record sales to prove it.

upon graduating from law school at the University of Pisa and played the piano in local bars in order to pay for singing lessons with famed tenor Franco Corelli.

Bocelli shared, "I loved music and singing ever since I was a baby in a cradle. I loved the great voices which I learnt to recognise and distinguish very early on, but undoubtedly, the voice of



## **Singing to greatness**

Born and raised in Lajatico, a rural village in Tuscany, Bocelli was diagnosed with congenital glaucoma and suffered from poor eyesight throughout his childhood, but it was an accident during a soccer match when he was 12 that blinded him completely.

As a kid, Bocelli showed great interest in music and took up piano lessons at the age of six. He later extended his musical abilities to the flute and saxophone. "Without a doubt, the instrument I love most is the piano which I have studied with great passion ever since I was a child. I love all musical instruments in general, but it is necessary to know something very well to be sure that you really love it."

However, his greatest musical strength – which catapulted him into international stardom – turned out to be his voice. Bocelli worked as a lawyer

Franco Corelli was the one who struck me most and influenced me more than any other. I am almost sure that without Corelli, there would never have been Bocelli."

## **All the world's a stage**

His first break came in 1992 when Italian rock singer Zucchero Fornaciari held auditions to make a demo version of *Miserere*. Bocelli's voice impressed the late Luciano Pavarotti so much that he earned the coveted spot to record the duet with the opera legend.

"My real passion is for opera that I have listened to and sung since I was a child. I first began to sing in the open air, in my own beautiful countryside, the way my heart told me, without microphones or amplifiers, just the way one sings in opera houses all over the world. Singing the way Mother Nature intended – for me, this is the best and simplest way to sing."



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When asked about what wealth and success means to him, Bocelli said, “I sincerely believe that all our imperfections and inadequacies are cured with the palliative of material things. It is the thorny problem of being, or having: having is deceptive because it leads us to believe that we are, when in reality we are not. So our need for material things is basically a weakness which each of us has to accept because we can count, on one hand, the examples of people who have such strength as to be satisfied with who they are and, at the same time, who can also be of help to others.”

He continued, “Common mortals like me have to be satisfied to be what they are and accept with good grace the fact that in times of tiredness, discomfort, and difficulties, the fact of having certain material things does provide a restorative comfort.”

#### From Opera to Pop

Opera, evidently, is only one facet of Bocelli’s musical persona. He is a consummate performer with a wide repertoire of music, from adult contemporary to operatic pop, Latin to pop. As a successful pop ballad artiste, Bocelli has recorded duets with Celine Dion, Mary J Blige, and Sarah Brightman, with whom he sang the record-breaking hit *Time To Say Goodbye*.

To date, Bocelli has recorded six complete operas and sold more than

65 million copies of classical and pop albums worldwide. He is the winner of multiple international awards including the *World Music Award* and *Classical Brit Award*, and has taken over good friend and mentor Luciano Pavarotti as the world’s greatest selling tenor.

Issued in 2008, his 20<sup>th</sup> album *Incanto* is a collection of romantic cover songs and that was followed by a holiday album, *My Christmas*, which became the fifth top selling album in the world in 2009. Bocelli was also one of the few Italians to be honoured at Hollywood’s Walk of Fame in March 2010.

“My artistic career is something of a fairy tale. In just a few years, I have had the most exciting and incredible experiences that an artist could possibly imagine or hope for. I can’t forget that I have sung before two Popes, and in the most extraordinary places such as the pyramids in Egypt, the twin towers before the terrible 9/11, in the splendid square of the Hermitage in St Petersburg... And I have had the privilege of hearing the most important voices in the world close up. For one who is as passionate about voices as I am, this has been one of the best gifts life has brought me.”

#### Celebrating and giving thanks

On 8 May this year, Singaporeans were treated to a free performance by

the world-renowned Italian tenor at the YTL Concert of Celebration 2010. The outdoor concert was held at the Singapore Botanic Gardens as part of the YTL series of Concerts of Celebration and featured a line-up of special guests, including Slovenian soprano Sabina Cvilak, world-renowned flutist Andrea Griminelli and popular Australian singer Delta Goodrem.

“Opera has the ability to unite audiences of all ages and cultures, because of the beauty of the music and passion behind it. As with our love for opera, Tan Sri Francis Yeoh and I share a passionate desire to let the world be moved by the beauty of opera and I’m thrilled by the prospect of captivating a new audience,” he said.

Bocelli, who turns 52 this September, has two sons with his first wife Enrica. He has been in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for having simultaneously held the top three positions on the US classical albums chart, and was named one of People’s Magazine’s *50 Most Beautiful People* in 1998.

Having accomplished so much in life, he appears to be contented. “My life has exceeded every dream. This is not a time to dream. It is instead, a time to carry out many more projects and above all, to leave a good memory to posterity of myself as a man – even more than as an artist.”