

Interview: RITA

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Transcriber: Myla Corvidae

Attendance:

Lucia Ruggerone – LR

Charlie Hackett – CH

RITA

Emily (surname unknown) – Emily

Emotions have been added into the transcript as i.e. [*sadness*] and interviewers have been placed in bold and italicised.

LR: So we are here, we have just done small talk so far Emily. So I guess maybe no we should start? Is that ok?

R: You decide Lucia, I am just here to do what you ask me to do. [*Laughter*]

LR: Yeah, no that's fine. It's more like what Charlie said in his email. It's more like a chat than a structured interview. It's actually if you want the technical jargon it's going to be an unstructured interview. And the starting point is the piece of art that you just sent us. So it's this piece of music. Charlie suggested and I think it would be a good idea to just briefly listen to it for a few minutes.

CH: Yeah, I can share it.

LR: Can you Charlie.

CH: Yeah just bear with me ok.

LR: Yeah we're not in a rush. Just take your time. It's a warm day here in Aberdeen Charlie you're wearing your jumper.

CH: It's because it's gotten sunny now but it was overcast this morning.

R: Quite hot here actually, I was out in the garden it was boiling. [*surprise*]

LR: See it is hot actually. I very rarely manage to wear a t-shirt in Aberdeen but today is one of those days.

CH: Ok I'm going to share now. Two seconds.

LR: Okay, just a couple of minutes.

[*Music begins to play*]

LR: We can't really hear it though?

CH: You will in a second.

R: No I can't hear it.

Emily: I can hear it.

LR: Yes now I can.

CH: Ok two secs. Shall we try doing it again? Can you hear me?

LR: I can't hear now. No.

CH: Will I put it on again?

LR: Listen why don't I play it from my phone, shall we try?

CH: Could you not see my screen?

R: I could before.

CH: Ok hold on.

[Music starts to play again]

CH: Can you hear that?

R/LR: Yep.

[everyone listens to the music for a few minutes]

LR: Ok Charlie I think that's enough.

CH: Ok ok.

LR: Sorry.

CH: That was amazing!

R: Yeah, did you enjoy it?

CH: Oh! Listen, I thought for me. I used to go to Orchestras when I was younger and it really made me want to go and see an Orchestra desperately.

R: [laughing - realisation] oh I see!

CH: I thought it was fantastic. It really caught you somewhere.

R: Yeah!

LR: Exactly. So I think we should start from there. So I'll start by asking Rita why she came up with this piece of music to reflect her mood because I think the brief was something that reflects the mood during lockdown, any of the lockdowns. So I'll ask Rita to explain why she.

R: OK, well I will say first of all I sort of knew this piece before the pandemic hit and I really really loved it and I really loved this composer stroke conductor who now unfortunately has died, aged, well he died last year. Aged forty seven he was, he got very sick etc. Anyway so I used to know it before but I don't know I just think the sound of it, the gist of it, the core of it, I think it sounds a little bit apocalyptic. I think first of all when he starts, there is like this crescendo, the instruments, then he goes duuuuh duh, like something is hitting [animated/excited]. I think throughout you can you know, feel the fear, the drama, a little bit of desperation as well, but it's not completely dark. I think

there are some moments where you, it's a little bit lighter, the music and you can feel a little bit of hope sort of coming though. I think when the pandemic started I think I got quite shocked and quite traumatised by it [*sounding more serious*] because being Italian we could see online all these videoclips of all the rows and rows of hospital beds you know. With all this obviously sick people all these deaths, and every day there were all these statistics you know. I remember at one stage it was over a thousand deaths [*shocked*], and it just somehow hit so badly all of a sudden [*emotional – voice is breaking up*] and I don't know. I think a title for this piece could be descent into hell you know [*nervous laugh*]. It's just always make me think of that, I don't know why. Also the instruments at one stage are quite chaotic. They express this kind of chaos, especially towards the end and I think you can really feel, it really makes you feel the fear and the desperation. I think it expresses it really well and I think it expresses how I felt when the pandemic started. Because I really felt as if like, it was so catastrophic. So I think it expresses it really well. That's the best way that I had to sort of express how I felt.

LR: Really interesting, I was just going to say following up from what you were just saying, did your perception or your relationship with this piece of music since you said you knew it before. Did your perception change when the pandemic hit or did it kind of take on a different meaning or?

R: I think actually when I first listened to it, I sort of came across it by chance completely. I was completely fascinated by it, I just thought oh my god you know I just really love this. That's very strange but I don't know how to explain it but when I first heard it I thought oh my goodness, I hope this is not how I'm going to feel in the near future because it's just pretty bad. It almost felt, not prophetic, it almost felt as if like I was listening to it because something was coming. I don't know how to explain, it's very strange but what it is as well, when I first heard it. Without knowing what it was supposed to mean. When I first heard it I thought oh my goodness I can just imagine a boat at sea and sort of leaving and going sort of amongst the waves and sort of navigating and etcetera. It made me think of a boat and then I don't know whether you've read the caption at the end that comes up. Well basically it says, this piece is dedicated to all those people that make the perilous journey across the Mediterranean in search for a better life. I thought oh my god [*shock/awe*]. I just thought it conveyed that so well because I mean in the Mediterranean, especially in Italy we now have this thing of unfortunately, all this, how can you say immigrants that go onto this very sort of rickety boats and they try to cross the Mediterranean, from India to for example Lampedusa because they want to come to Europe. And of course so many of them have drowned already and sort of that stretch of the Mediterranean has become a sort of grave for all these people. So I think also, of course it's not in the same way but in a way these people I can understand them. Because it's like they're so desperate to leave you know what they have in their country of origin: bit poverty, bit war, bit you know lack of opportunities and they're ready to just sort of do anything for a better life. Since I'm an immigrant as well, I mean I can understand you know how they feel, although you know obviously it's not the same because I came to Britain in a plane not in a rickety boat that sunk. So it's just a piece that really really spoke to me but I think yeah. I think when I first heard it, of course there was the pandemic so I didn't link it to anything like that but now when you ask me you can either do a piece of art or you can choose a bit of music. I don't know it just came to me almost immediately, because it just expresses I think a lot of fear, anxiety and a bit of hope here and there. I think it's a very emotive piece of music and I think we've been through so much you know, this past one and a half years that I think it's quite fitting. At least for me.

LR: Anyone else? Emily or Charlie because I don't want to keep...

CH: No no keep going everybody.

R: You want me to let you know, but I don't know if you guys ever heard of the composer.

CH: No but I read, like you said that I saw that he had died. I think he'd been conducting from his wheelchair in the last while which was really sad. I think he looks amazing in that piece, big beard big sideburns and.

R: Yeah, he was an extraordinary person, he really was and I don't know he was really special. I think one of those people that are born, you know, one of them in a century or something. He really was very very special person and he expressed a lot through his music and also not through the music but interviews and things like that. He was very very special and this is just, this piece is just amazing. I mean of course he's done other pieces and I think he's done some films scores as well but I'm not that familiar with the other pieces but I thought this one was incredible.

LR: Now I really really love the piece as well and I listened to it last night and I totally, you know, sensed the same you know. I could totally feel how it does relate but of course it's not about me. I think I want to maybe talk a little bit more about something you mentioned but I would like you to maybe explain to us a bit more. You mentioned that this piece is dedicated to people who embark on this perilous journey across the Mediterranean and you use this piece to reflect your feelings during the pandemic. So when you had this brief you immediately thought about this piece. So I was wondering if this theme of the journey is applied by you to what happened to us during the pandemic. How is this theme of a journey, is it important to describe the pandemic for you?

R: Well, how can I say. [*sigh – pfft*] The thing is because when the pandemic hit and you couldn't travel anymore. I mean, us because we've got families in our country of origin, I don't know just felt a bit stranded, I think. Because you know I have an elderly father, well he's not very old, sort of seventy nine this year, but there are a lot of things happening with him you know. He still works, he's got his little business but he's making a lot of mistakes with it and losing a lot of money and he recently had a stroke and I was there for three months. So there was a lot going on there, and we were supposed to go last year sort of the whole of July to try and sort out so many of his problems but of course then we couldn't so I think what it is, because you're not in your country of origin and travelling became so difficult therefore it sort of made you feel very stranded. I felt stranded so to speak and I thought well if anything happens to my dad if he catches Covid. Because when it started I mean I'm sure everyone remembered that Italy was so badly hit. I mean it was horrendous [*shock*] and I really really feel for my country I have to be honest, I felt so bad. So I was here, couldn't go there, I couldn't have gone there, there was just no hope because when it first started you couldn't travel, everything was closed and as I said my dad was there. You're just completely sort of, I think stranded is the best way to explain and you are divided between you and your family, your relatives, there's this huge abyss [*laughing – sad/anxious*] that you cannot go across and also you know I kept thinking you know if anything happens what are we going to do?

LR: I think stranded is a really powerful word and I think it describes very well something that I. I mean I can relate to it very well because I felt if it's.

R: It's going all funny, why is that?

CH: Yeah, I don't know. Don't worry, we can hear you fine.

R: No, no I'm going out of this me, let me just...

LR: No we can hear you very well.

CH: We can hear you, it's fine.

LR: Oh, she froze.

CH: Yeah.

LR: Oh Sh.**

CH: Don't worry.

LR: She might have to reconnect.

[pause -waiting to see if R reconnects]

LR: Let's see if I can do anything now. Yeah she froze. Yeah.

CH: She'll come back.

CH: It's an amazing piece of music isn't it?

LR: It is, I really like it I must say, and I can see why she picked that piece of music for this. This is sometimes the problem with digital interviews.

CH: I know. It can't be helped.

LR: I know.

[LR receives phone call from R and chats to her in Italian/English.]

CH: Ah there she is, cool.

R: Bad time, every now and then it does this, sorry guys.

CH: Don't worry!

LR: Don't worry. This can't be helped.

R: Yeah you were talking Lucia.

LR: No I was just saying stranded is a very powerful word and I think it's what you really want to say I mean. I think it's probably the best word that can be found for this. So yeah this impossibility to travel. At the same time I was going to ask you, you mentioned the journey of the immigrants towards Lampedusa. So do you think that it makes sense to compare the pandemic and what we went through as a journey as well?

R: Yeah, it could be yeah. It does absolutely. Do you mean the pandemic itself, a journey?

LR: It's a static journey but in a way it could be I don't know? Because you mentioned something.

R: It's actually something that starts and you go through it and there are different phases and different stages of this journey. Yeah definitely I would say so.

CH: I see the piece of music you chose is called landfall as well.

LR: We unfold right?

CH: We unfold but it's called landfall as well.

LR: Ok.

R: The way I understand it anyway, these people on these boats, hopefully at the end of the journey they find landfall. In fact at the end of the music you can hear all the music becoming a bit disconnected, a bit chaotic because there is all that fear of getting landfall. Some people disembarking, some people probably falling into the sea. It's something I think we see on the news almost every day in Italy. There's so much of this going on, and it's been going on for ages and I can really feel it. Like in the Pandemic, all that fear, all that desperation, all that at times, unfortunately, catastrophe because people die you know. So all that, and I can definitely make a parallel there.

CH: So we're interested in 2016 and Brexit.

R: [groans to show frustration about Brexit and then laughs]

CH: and that all was for you maybe.

R: Oh, just don't get me started!

CH: But we do want to get you started!

R: Oh, what can I say? I found the whole thing extremely sad and extremely unsettling [sounding very sad]. Obviously I'm Italian, I mean Lucia knows originally I had a very difficult and traumatic childhood. So when I was in my 20's I wanted to study languages and travel in tourism etcetera. So I was very anxious 20 year old because I really didn't know what was going to be come of my life to be honest. So I came to Britain and then was an au pair with this wonderful family and then then slowly, I won't go into the details but I studied in London, I met my husband I had my son etcetera etcetera. Now I feel in this country I have learnt so much, you know I have [stressing words] really really learnt a lot. I've always really admired the British you know, because they are what we are not. I mean Italy is the most beautiful country in the world [laughing] Lucia you can contradict me if you want.

LR: No I wont! I actually quite agree.

R: It's a beautiful country but it has a lot of problems, and we are not great when it comes to organising ourselves, administrating ourselves, governing ourselves and I think in this country they can really teach you how to do that. So I've always admired them and I worked very hard in this country, I mean I did all the menial jobs. I was a waitress, I was a shop assistant you know, I was this I was that and I put myself through university. So I've worked very hard and you know when you're sort of love a place, you're in love with it. The first few years I was in Britain I was in love with it, I was in Oxford by the way when I first came. I had the most wonderful time in my life, I was in my 20's, I was with students from all over the world. I always really admired you know, the sort of, that the British is quite global. That they have so many links with different countries all over the world and I always thought you know gosh they are so tolerant. So with this Brexit, basically I felt like a big slap in the face. [laughing] I almost felt like, when you have a best friend and you admire them so much, and you just truly admire them and they give you so much and they teach you so much and then all of a sudden they turn their back on you and I don't quite understand why and I just felt like that. I just I don't know, it's quite emotive for me, because it was a big big disappointment you know, the way people were talking about Europe and Europeans. I've always seen it as a very successful union you know, Britain and the rest of Europe because you know the British gave the rest of Europe so much. This idea of fair play, this idea of being correct, this idea of being tolerant and quite open, but then the rest of us gave so much to the British, you know the cuisine, the art, nice weather you know, beautiful countries. I just thought it really worked, this exchange and also this dream of Europe. I grew up with the dream of I thought it was amazing, when I was in my 20's! I lived in Paris as well when I was 20. I wanted to study languages and we had this amazing Europe.

You could go, you could live in England, you could live in Paris, you could live in Spain, which I have done by the way. All this, Spain, France Britain, I have done and you could study, live, work, learn a different language, learn a different culture. I mean Europe is just fabulous. Then all of a sudden you know there's just like this huge. Maybe I sound too emotional, but that's what I am and I'm sorry about that but you know that's the way it is. It felt like a big [French word] to use the French words, that's how I felt and also I thought they would be better than that to be honest with you. When they actually came out, because there was all these delays delays delays and they came out January 2020? I can't remember, it was all so confusing. There was this event in Trafalgar square and they were there with their British flag and you know big party and I felt really sad, [laughing sadly] you know really sad and I think that's just life you know. In life you have disappointments, in life you think certain people or certain situations are in a certain way and they turn out everything but. That really disappointed me, big massive time and I think it's the beginning of the end of Britain as we know it. I think they've always be a very influential country, a very successful country and I think they're just going to decline.

CH: What were the moods the day they announced they won the yes vote, the vote to leave the EU? What was your mood? How did you feel?

R: Well to be honest I wasn't surprised. I was not surprised because I could, I think in the weeks before I could feel the vibe.

CH: Is there an Italian word that you could say that would sum up an emotion or how you feel?

R: Yeah, let me think. Sad. Sad. Sad. [getting quieter and more introspective with each repetition of sad]

Emily: Rita, you mentioned a couple of times this feeling of it being all of a sudden or there being like a (voltage?) Do you remember when you felt that turn?

R: Just throughout, especially the months before I thought oh again? Oh god [sounding very sad and frustrated]. I think it's actually before, when there was all this campaigning going on you know, and you had Nigel Farage you know coming on television. I mean it was horrible you know, and you know the thing that really really struck me throughout the campaign was the fact that Brexit, ok Brexit. All they talked about is the Economy [shocked], you know is it going to be good for our Economy, is it going to be bad for our Economy? And what it meant for us European citizens, live in Britain, and what it was going to mean for us. It didn't even cross their mind! [shocked] It's like all of a sudden you felt like you were a non-entity [shocked]. You were only here, just to serve the coffee, serve the lasagne and the pizza [frustrated laugh]. What of you are a part of that, apart from that who gives a S H I T, only once, I remember I was watching question time, there was a question panel. I think there was Nigel Farage, I can't remember who, all this lovely right wing, we won't go into the politics. Anyway they were all discussing and then this lady from the audience stood up, and she said, but there is human cost to all this and I thought finally, somebody realises. I thought the rest of Europe always looked up to the British because I mean they're quite formidable I'll give them that. I think now, everyone thinks, what is going on?! [laughing]

LR: Has this changed the way in which you feel like you know, being a member of this society. Does that change your way, or your feeling about being a member of British society? Because we all are.

R: I would say yes. Before you're hoping you're accepted, you're part of this society and so on. To be honest now I'm not so sure [laughing]. I'm not so sure [sad]. I'm not so sure [going quieter] and it's a big disappointment and it's very weird and it's very difficult for us because I've lived here, now lived

here what 32 years? In Britain? And you just think well, I'm certainly not British, but then when I go to Italy I'm a fish out of water as well. So I always felt though that I, although this country was great for professional life, making a bit of money, saving and so on but I always thought that you were never quite part of it. To be honest I always felt that.

LR: Even before Brexit?

R: Yes.

LR: Before they started talking about it?

R: Yes, absolutely. I always thought well this is wonderful but it's not a place that accepts you completely. I always always felt it because I don't know why. They're very, I find them they're very very strict in you know how you must be in life. You must be in a certain way, you must talk in a certain way you know otherwise you're out. I might be wrong, it might just be my feeling you know, doesn't mean it's true and plus I'm not sure whether you can sort of apply to all of them. Doesn't mean they're all like that. I always feel like you know if you don't quite have the face that fits you never will fit.

LR: Oh kay, [introspective] ok. Charlie or Emily?

CH: Emily do you want to go?

Emily: I was just going to ask Rita do you think you know you've said you've always felt like that. I guess I'm wondering if you've noticed any change in that since 2016 or since the referendum results?

R: Do you know that they're more inclusive or I don't understand the question sorry.

Emily: I mean like, so you said that there's this feeling of maybe not fitting in or you know. So I suppose I'm wondering if that's maybe been exacerbated or not.

R: Yeah, maybe. I would say maybe. Although I always felt it, I would say that this has exacerbated it definitely 100% because I don't know like once for example, one day I was watching TV and they were showing this journalist in the street interviewing people in the street. They sort of stopped this lady and he said oh well what do you think about European citizens living here and should they go home after Brexit and then she was like oh yes they should, let them go home all these Europeans and I just thought what have I done to you? [*shocked*] You know I guess I took it too personally, I guess I'm the kind of person that's asking, that does take things very personal. I'm very vulnerable I would say from that point of view because of my past and because of a difficult life. So I guess I feel it more. Some people say it's not about you guys, we like you guys we like Europe we just don't like being part of this bureaucratic. Which I can understand up to an extend but I think it's very difficult to detach oneself from the feeling. [*chuckles sadly*]

CH: How did you feel when you came to fill out your settlement scheme.

R: To be honest quite outraged, quite angry, upset. Let me think, I would say angry upset, in a way quite shocked [*surprised*]. I mean to think that after 30 years I had to do that, after 30 years in a country you were asked this, you were asked that, you were asked to prove this and prove that and then you have to wait for them to decide. I just thought it was outrage, I just thought it was disgusting. Sorry I mean they're strong words but I've always seen that in Britain as well. I've always felt there is this very hard edge. For example before I came to Aberdeen I used to work for Eurostar. In those times it was in Waterloo station. So basically I was working in the terminal and I was selling

tickets or inside the waiting lounge that I take passengers and so on, and there was quite a few of us, about 150 staff and we were divided into teams and each team had a team leader which was. I was very well paid, it was really very good. I remember at one stage [*shocked -voice raised pitch*] I can't remember for what reason, whether they were going through restructuring or something like that. It was, the team leaders they had to re-apply for the jobs and I thought [*laughing*] and I remember they were all frightened, panicked that if they re-apply they don't get it. And I thought well some of these people have been here 5 years, 6 years, 7 years. Why do they have to do that? [*shocked*] I just thought it was incredibly cruel. [*nervous laugh*] And another time I saw a programme about drama school, I think it was about, is it Rada? The famous one?

CH: Yeah Rada.

R: Yeah yeah and I can't remember how many years it is the course to qualify as an actor. I think it's four years or five years or something like that. So anyway it's hard to get in, really really hard to get in and then of course it's very hard the course, you've got to get through it and so on and then I think if not the last year, the year before last, they put them through some exams and some tests and some of them, they just kick them out [*shocked laugh*] and they don't qualify. You just think, you've had somebody, kind of committing for all these years, and I'm sure you know it's not cheap and so on and in the end you kick them out some of them and I just think [*what! As shocked noise and shocked laugh*]. What troubles me, I don't understand them, they're very ruthless when it comes to their interest they don't look at anyone in the face so to speak.

CH: Do you think this whole idea of landfall comes back into it? In relation to the UK and it being an Island or?

R: Yeah that's quite [*chuckling*]. Yeah they are quite set apart aren't they from everybody else. I guess sometimes I understand because so much immigration in Britain that's true and I guess some of them get scared because ohhh the British lifestyle. Not British lifestyle how would you say, the British way of life is being eroded, too many foreigners. Maybe we should also try see it from their point of view but to us it's quite difficult you know. You also end up feeling used.

LR: So because of all you are feeling about Brexit and a lot of things you said I totally share although for me it's slightly different because I haven't been here a lifetime. So a good part of my life was in Italy anyway so I've always felt more of an outsider than you did because you've been here so long. Seeing what your mood was after Brexit.

R: No, you've frozen again. (*Speaking Italian.*)

LR: Okay, thinking about this mood you described after Brexit and how it made you feel and all this reflections you had about your life. In the context of Brexit and the slap in the face and the disappointment how did the arrival of the pandemic impact on it all? What happened? You were already feeling in this mood and then the pandemic arrived and do you think this? How did this make you feel? Do you see any kind of summing up of the two effects or?

R: Um, I don't know. I think it makes me feel like we've been living through some kind of historical moment or period where there has been a lot of (inaudible). It's just one thing with the pandemic that followed on from Brexit. I also thought it was going to be like the perfect storm, especially for Britain because they were going to come out of Europe about the same time they had to deal with the pandemic so I just. It made it worse, that's what I can say. It made it worse because I thought Britain's going to come out and then they have to deal with Brexit as well or the other way around

what have you and just the two things put together is going to be such a disaster. It felt awful again. That's the best I can explain to be honest. I thought it was like the perfect storm.

LR: And do you think that it was? After 18 months or whatever maybe it's not so quite 18 months but a year and some time. Do you feel like it was a perfect storm? Do you see how?

R: I think by the end of it [pfft], well we're not still the end to be honest but after all these months, no I don't think it has been what I feared. I think we are still here and they're still sort of coping ok I think here. Certainly things are changing in the world I would say. The world as a whole is changing. I think this pandemic has changed it a lot and also Britain will have a different place in the world. For example now they're saying oh they're having a deal with Australia [frustrated sigh]. You just think Australia? Australia, they do their business with China and whatever you want to import or export I mean you've got this huge powerhouse which is China and you certainly cannot compete with them. So I just feel the world order is changing because of this pandemic and the place of Britain within that world is changing too I think.

LR: Did you think that when the Pandemic arrived, did it make it worse for you the fact that Brexit happened or would it have been the same?

R: [sigh] I don't know. You see I see them as two different things.

LR: Ok.

R: I don't know, can you formulate the question in a different way?

Emily: I'm sort of wondering how it felt maybe then as in the beginning of the pandemic and now. To be away from Italy. Like obviously you've been living here for a long time but you have family ties to Italy. So has that changed for you over the period? Since the pandemic began?

R: Yeah, it's like. I don't know. In my head it's made things much more difficult because of Brexit. Now for example my dad is elderly, before he could have come and live here no problem and now I start to think what are we going to do, where are we going to be? Yeah it has made everything more unstable I would say and that's the best I can come up with anyway. I would it's added to the instability and the pandemic you know, you wonder about the economy, the jobs. To be honest I try to not think too much because I mean you have to protect yourself I mean. Otherwise you go bananas really. [laughing]

Emily: I mean personally you know you mentioned worrying maybe about the economy. Have you personally felt like a worry about I don't know job insecurity or....

R: I'll be honest with you, us as a family we haven't because my husband is an academic so he carried on working and it was fine. Okay I worry b'n'b didn't have bookings so we lost money there but it's not such a huge deal. What I've realised that I've been thinking of my son. I've been thinking of him. I've been thinking of us you know. We have what we have and we worked for it and we are kind of stable but I'm just kind of thinking he's got to go out in the world, find jobs, decide on a career. What sort of world are we going towards you know? Is it going to have the same opportunities that I've had because I think my generation and I've been very lucky in a way. We could do so much but I just think of him and I don't think of myself I think of him. I really do. I just think you know, is he going to be able to have a career, what sort of jobs are going to be out there for him. Then there's this thing with the environment. I mean he's quite lucky because he's got Italian citizenship so if he wants to live in Europe, in France, in Italy he can. It's not a problem so that doesn't affect him. It's just, I don't know I don't think this pandemic is going to leave, it has changed

the world a lot and I think we're going to feel the effects for quite a long time coming and him as well, his generation. He's the one who has to deal with all this.

CH: Do you think the pandemic has made, maybe places more like separate, more like islands?

R: Yeah because that's something that made me think as well is the fact that yeah. I remember thinking that this has been a threat for the whole of mankind, for the whole of humanity and it's been a huge threat but we have not been able to get all together and decide on a way to defeat all this virus all together as mankind you know. Do you see what I mean? Because one country was doing one thing and another country was another [laughing] another country was doing something else and in the end I guess there was some sort of vaccine that was manufactured. Another thing of course the difference between countries which are well of and so called developing countries what have you because in poor countries they have no vaccines, no vaccination nothing. So you know it does highlight the difference between the western world however you want to call it. The well off world and the world that doesn't have much you know because you can really see the difference. We haven't come all together to try and solve these problems all together. I don't feel it has been like that.

LR: Well how do you think Britain has deal with Covid compared with other European countries? Compared to example to our own original country Italy? I want to say here because it's something concerns me as well, but the way I would really like to formulate the question is how did you feel when things were so bad for Italy and you were here, and vice versa when things were so bad here and so much better in Italy. How did feel more British or more Italian or both you know?

R: That's a really difficult question.

LR: I know because I said to myself when things were going really badly here in January when we had like sixty thousand cases, new cases a day and Italy had something like I don't know six seven thousand I thought oh, this is really and I quote a colleague of mine here, plague island and I wish I was on this bloody island and I can't get out of this island when I want to and I can't go and see my family in Italy when I want to because of this. Cause when I was coming back from Italy actually in December the same day I took a plane from Milan to Amsterdam and then I was supposed to, I did fly from Amsterdam to Aberdeen. So when I left Milan I didn't know anything and then when I was in Amsterdam my sister in law phoned me and said Lucia are you able to go back to Aberdeen and I said why what's happening and she said oh because Italy has just closed the border to the UK because in the UK there's this new kind of variant and they're not allowing any more flights going backward and forward from the UK. I thought oh my god I'm here in Amsterdam am I going to be able to get on that plane to the UK or not. So I felt like you know in the middle and I thought oh gosh this plague island you know, I wish I hadn't even started my flight from Milan, I wish I was still there. So I was wondering if you ever felt when the two countries were doing that and then on the other hand when it was the beginning of the pandemic and Italy was doing so badly and a colleague of mine I met him in the corridor and we were still on campus and he said well it looks like you are in the right country now isn't it. [laughing]

R: Blimey [laughing]

LR: So it's almost like you're in the right country now. So how did that make you feel about the way in which the countries were dealing with the pandemic?

R: Well to be honest with you at the start when it was all starting in Italy it was such a huge shock I mean [sad] a real shock. Despite the fact that I've lived here for 30 years but still I mean I'm Italian

and you know you don't forget your roots I guess. So I was feeling very sad for what was happening and in terms of at the start how they were dealing with it here. I felt it was just dithering so much you know. I just felt you can see what's happening in Italy, you can see what's going on but they were so undecisive you know, do we close, do we not close and then there was this thing of herd immunity. Oh for goodness sake [*frustrated laugh*]. I thought oh god herd immunity, what do you mean herd immunity. I mean the thing is herd immunity but then you've got to have a few people dying you know to do that [*laughing*].

LR: Quite a few yes. [*laughing*]

R: Yes, just [*laughing*] and I just thought that was outrageous I mean. I can understand they were not easy decisions to make but the thing is they had the benefit of hindsight, they already had seen and they were seeing what was happening to us and it was not a joke so what are they waiting for you know? I just felt sometimes they are a bit too, I don't know how to pronounce this word c-cerebral? Serebra?

CH: Cerebral.

R: Yeah, which means when they think about something, rather than thinking in the most obvious way they go and analyse, super analyse in the background and then the foreground and this and that. They always have to be different and I just go, with this herd immunity I just thought. When it came out and Boris Johnson said you just have to resign yourself to lose a few members of your family I just thought well you start then you know.

LR/R: Laughing.

R: So be honest at the start of it I think they made a hash of it to be honest I mean and then of course they were hit big time as well but I think that as we went on they probably sort of. They got a bit better with coping with it, with dealing with it and then they done this thing called the vaccination programme is been quite a success and so on but it has highlighted the difference between Scotland and England big time as well. It has again you know, rather than coming together they are making sure that they are doing different things so that's how I felt. I felt that sad, very sad because I thought well I'm not sure we were among the first countries to be hit, but probably one of the countries to be hit so badly. So I mean now I'm thinking back you know. This sort of comes back and I just think Europe in the start. I mean the whole of Europe was looking at Italy and saying my goodness what is going on you know. All this thousands and thousands. I mean I remember Lucia when we were (*Italian word*) exchanging all these video clips and that one with all the army lorries with all the coffins I mean come on.

LR: It was really apocalyptic, that's another word that you used at the beginning when you described your piece of music, apocalyptic. So is it what the Covid also has been apocalyptic.

R: Yeah I mean you know.

LR: A sort of kind of apocalyptic ...

R: Yeah, well when was that thing of (*bergamon?*) you know, do you remember in (*bergamon?*) that's where it really hit. I think because in Italy so many people are quite old you know. It's quite an old population so I think that's right you know they were dying in their drives and that thing of the army lorries I will never forget I don't think.

LR: So when you were seeing those scenes and I suppose you talked to your dad in those days. What were you telling him?

R: *[blows out breath – long sigh]* What was I saying to him. I mean I don't know. What was I saying? I was telling him. Well at the time he still had his main stop open and he insisted on keeping on going to the shop and serving customers and I just said to him, just don't. I think there was a lot of fear, a lot of fear. At the time also we didn't know how the virus could be transmitted. I mean I remember walking in the street and once I bumped into a friend, I was on the railway line and then she said to me oh oh say away stay away. *[laughing]* It was an Italian friend by the way Erica. She was saying oooh no no stay away stay away and then she was saying oh but I don't know people here they don't really respect and I mean we were really all quite paranoid I think at the start. You know him, being elderly being in his shop and you know the thought of him serving people he could have got it very easily. It was very scary and another time I have to tell you *[chuckles]* we went out with Tahar at the start of the pandemic, we went for a walk and then again we bumped into these neighbours of ours. She's American, he's Italian, so we stopped talking, of course we were far away yeah and I said to him Mateo how are you doing and how are your parents and so on. He said Oh! Some of the friends have died so now we're waiting to see who in our family is going to, you know *[laughing – nervous/sad]*.

LR: Oh my god.

R: And I remember I was shocked. Really shocked. It was awful I think, it was really bad.

CH: Have you got any brothers and sisters?

R: No.

CH: No ok.

R: No, so the poor guy's a bit alone you know. He's got friends and he's got a carer and so on but there is this big feeling you know. He's there I'm here and what if something happens and it hasn't been easy.

CH: Were you speaking to him on Zoom?

R: No no, just on the phone. I mean how was he at the start? He was quite defiant my dad, at the start of the whole thing he was telling me no no no I'm still going to the shop and you know and then every now and then he would tell me I have been to the supermarket and would just *[fake scream to show how she is feeling]*. You know that kind of thing and it was awful basically.

CH: No, terrible.

R: It is.

CH: Can I ask you another question?

R: Sure, yeah go ahead.

CH: Lucia mentioned your sons name, is it ... or ...?

R: Yes ...e.

CH: Can I ask you does he speak Italian?

R: No. A little bit, not much though. My husband is not Italian, he's north African.

CH: Okay.

R: He's from Algeria so that's why he's not picked it up because at home we don't speak Italian, we speak English so.

CH: *Okay, was that important to you like the language he spoke or whatever? Was your kind of Italian culture important in terms of when he was younger?*

R: Because my situation in Italy was never very conducive to me going there on holiday, staying there on holiday and this and that. That's why I never went with him when he was small because I think he could have picked it up that way you know. I could have gone for holidays and you know stayed there for a month, a month and a half but my situation there with my dad was not conducive. He lives in a very old flat, very difficult situation so it was never quite easy for me. I mean I tried when he was about I think two or three to start speaking to him in Italian but then he didn't want to. The problem was he kept saying speak English speak English and it was just too exhausting.

Emily: *How do you feel about that now?*

R: Yeah, not good. It's a shame, it's a big shame because I mean my husband speaks Arabic and French, he's bi-lingual and of course I speak Italian and our son doesn't speak any of these languages. *[nervous laugh]* I think in a way we failed him a little bit. We could have tried harder but we are hoping for him to go to France next year. My husband has got a lot of family in France so we are hoping that he'll be able to pick up French because he does have a knack for languages so we hope that.

Emily: *You mentioned that he's an Italian citizen, so I guess I'm wondering what the process is for applying for a passport.*

R: Oh I think *[blows out breath]* I can't remember but I think because Lucia what is it if the mother is Italian? What is it?

LR: *I don't know I think it's changed slightly now but I don't know about the kids. I think if one of your parents, well I can tell you how it was for my son to take British citizenship because when we first moved here he didn't have a British citizenship but because his dad is British he could get British citizenship although he wasn't born here. My son was born in Milan but when we came here he could take British citizenship because my husband is British. So I think it's the same for Italy.*

R: Now Lucia, you reminded me because my husband is Algerian but he also has Italian nationality. So it actually both of us are Italian so I think it follows that because the parents are both Italian then we just applied for it. I think within the first year and then he got it straight away no problem.

LR: *So I don't know what the rule is now for the sons and daughters of Italian citizens. I think they can automatically get Italian citizenship but for example for partners it's changed because I was looking into my husband getting Italian citizenship and because your question Emily was also about language so you're saying basically does someone who has an Italian citizenship need to speak the language and the answer now for partners is yes. So for example if my husband wanted to get Italian citizenship he would have to sit an exam, quite an advanced exam, for Italian language so he would have to prove he's not only married to me but also that he can speak and understand Italian at a decent level. But I think that if James had been born here I think he would still be able to get Italian citizenship although he didn't speak the language. So I think it depends on whether you're asking for a partner or you're asking for a son or daughter.*

R: But yeah, basically what I was trying to say, both of us are Italian, my husband and me because of nationality. So when Tahari got the nationality around '98 I think, because at the time you had to be married to an Italian citizen for three and then you could apply. So that's what we did with him, because obviously he didn't have to speak Italian because he doesn't. So yeah.

LR: Now it's changed. When I look for Duncan he will have to sit an exam in Italian, which I think he should by the way.

R: Yeah, he speaks excellent anyway so he will be fine.

LR: Yeah he's ok, I think he would pass. Maybe not the first time, maybe he can pass the second time but I think it would be important for him to have a European passport.

R: Definitely. Yeah if he can why not?

Emily: That's sort of why I was asking Rita, because obviously it's one thing to sort of decide that now is quite a good idea to have an Italian passport. But even when your son was very young that obviously was something that you decided to do at that point. So I suppose I was wondering you know what the thought process was about having Italian citizenship.

R: Yeah because I mean [sigh], it's a difficult one again because I don't know. I think that's, especially when you're an immigrant you start seeing passports as a possible advantage. [laughing]

LR: [chuckling] Yes. Totally.

R: But that's to say you know it's an advantage because, to be honest with you since I came to Britain, because I met my husband in Oxford and we used to have all friends from all over the world. Sometimes not having the right passport can really [laughs] create a lot of problems for you. I mean we've had friends who go all over the place. We've had a friend who was sent back to Malaysia because she made a mistake, I mean I won't go into details it's too boring but anyway she had studied in London and then she was working for Monsoon after a degree and then when she came back they asked her oh do you work? Then she said oh yeah yeah I work full time and then they said well you've got two weeks to pack up and leave because she wasn't allowed to do that.

LR: Yeah. Sorry I just want to interpose a joke here. I was reading a jokey article yesterday on the Guardian about the work out of a different Minister. So they were looking at the workout of Rishi Sunak and Boris Johnson and whatever and [laughing] you know what they said the workout for Priti Patel, she chases immigrants and kicks them out the country, that's the way she works out. [laughing] Oh so funny.

CH: She was complaining today about how the EU are treating British citizens in the EU.

LR: Who was complaining?

CH: Priti Patel.

LR: She should just shut up. Honestly that's what I think.

R: I just hope, I hope they stop soon with this rubbish because it really is you know too much. [nervous/upset laugh]

LR: Yeah, yeah absolutely. Anyway that was so funny that article. It was one of those humouristic articles that you sometimes find and I read to pick my spirits up sometimes.

R: Yeah I know but it's a big thing you know, about what passport you hold determines your life.

LR: Yeah and the next question, we are coming to a conclusion, we don't want to use so much of your time.

R: It's fine that's fine no worries.

LR: But you know talking about passports I think we need to ask you, are you contemplating getting British citizenship?

R: [long laugh] The plane answer is, I don't know. [laughing]

LR: How do you feel about it?

R: I just feel that I wish I had done it when I was living in London in the 90's because it was very easy to have then and then there wouldn't have all these problems you know wondering about. You going to be able to this and going to be able to do that and I just wish. At the time I remember wondering about it and thinking oh should I just get it, should I get it because I had a lot of affection for this country as well. A lot of lot of affection. So I thought probably should do it, but then I thought oh well but you know I've got the same British. Little did she know. [laughing] So I don't know, I just really don't know. I mean first of all it's really quite complicated now you have to produce so much paperwork and do this and do that and living in the UK and probably I was never meant to have it. That's now the way I see it. I was never meant to have it.

LR: Hmm. Interesting.

R: Yeah because sometimes I feel like that. I feel probably I was meant not to belong to this country. I was meant to belong somewhere else, I don't know. It's very strange but it's a lot now to do it. It takes a lot.

CH: Where do you see home being? Do you see home being Italy or here?

R: [sighs oh god] I don't know [laughing]. Certainly not Italy no but not even Britain. [surprised] You know it's like sometimes I've thought about it and I thought oh dear I don't belong anywhere. [laugh] I'm certainly one of those people that tourism might call the citizens of nowhere. [laughing].

LR: That's interesting, yeah.

R: But I have to say. Say with my friends because I've got hmm a few friends here in Aberdeen and most of them are foreign and most of them have lived in other countries and they're quite open minded. I feel at home with them. That's what I feel, I feel at home within that circle. So you know there is the phrase citizen of the world, which is quite cheesy but I guess that's the best way. Sometimes I think why people get so hung up on ohhh you're born north of this border, south of this border. We're all human beings at the end of the day. We all want the same things, we all want to be happy, we all want to do well, we all want to [sigh]. Who cares whether you're you know. That's the way I feel, but not everybody feels the same way. No I would say that I would say I am yeah, at ease with people who are a bit like me. I mean I've lived in six, five or six different countries so in every country I've learnt something. Every country has something to offer that other countries don't have. So we all contribute that's how I feel and this nationalism and this stupid oh we're British we're this, we're that. You should, if you look at the British, the so admire aristocracy. You go to the aristocratic country houses, all that is in there is Caletto, they're all in the Palladian style. I mean we're all a product of so many different things so that's the way I see it anyway. So the answer is I don't know where home is. Probably neither of the two.

LR: Yeah that's interesting, it's almost like for you home is not a place. More like a social context.

R: yeah I would say yeah. It's the sort of mindset that other people have you know. There is this expression in Britain when you say "likeminded people."

LR: Kindred spirits, things like that.

R: Yeah but no because I was with some friends and their daughter was going to be off to university somewhere and her mother said to her oh yes you're going to be with likeminded people and then I thought yeah that's it. That's sort of when you're really happy, when you're with like minded people because you understand them, they understand you. You know you appreciate the same things but it doesn't matter the nationality, doesn't matter the race, doesn't matter the social status you know. It's what sort of mindset you've got I guess.

LR: You've got any other questions Charlie and Emily?

Emily: I do have one and it is linked to conversations we've had although it may seem slightly off topic. Rita you were talking about you know nationalism and you know at the end of the day we're all human and it's not helpful to think of it in those terms. I suppose I'm wondering, do you see a difference between the kind of British nationalism that came about or was revealed through Brexit and Scottish nationalism?

R: *[blows out breath]* Oh god this is difficult. *[laughing]*

Emily: I don't mean to put you on the spot.

R: No of course not, no. Eh *[sigh]* well, the thing is Britain in the past. I never saw it as particularly nationalist. I remember I came here in '89 and I could never feel this thing. The British, especially the English are very self-deprecating so they would never say ohh we're British, we're the best. They might think it but they *[laughing]* they never. I think I ever saw this nationalism here in Britain. I mean I've been here since '89 so there might have been before but I've always quite admired that because I've lived in France as well and in France ooft urgh Frances you know. They've got this idea that they're the best and this and that and I always thought in Britain they never had. So I would say this nationalism has surprised me, this one before Brexit that's really surprised me because I never knew they could be like that. Cause I never knew them to be like that. Whereas with Scotland though *[surprised]* it doesn't surprise me. I think Scotland has got very strong sense of identity and very strong traditions and I think this thing of independence has been in the offing for a long time. So I would say the British nationalism has surprised me and it has echos of sort of right wing, sort of... I don't want to say Natzi which is too much but you see that kind of the vibe. Whereas Scottish I would say because they're a relatively small nation it just this idea they have of sort of asserting themselves.

Emily: It's like the kind of punching up and punching down *[laughing]* kind of thing.

R: Yeah, I would say in Scotland because they're a very small country but they're very proud. So they want to assert themselves and not to suffer from the sort of domination of Westminster and England which is the most powerful of the you know, them the two of them. So they resent that, and they resent having the conservative government they never voted them, they resent coming out of Europe, they never voted for Brexit so... Whereas the nationalism of Britain before Brexit, it's a bit more uncomfortable, it's got right wing sort of connotations and to me it smacks of desperation to be honest. I think as a country they have realised, especially in England, they realised they don't have the same influence, they don't have the same power, their reputation is not the same in the world and it's like they want to somehow salvage that. That's my idea.

CH: Cool. Can I just ask one more question is that alright?

R: Sure! *[laughing]*

CH: So there's a last thing. Going back to the piece of music you chose yeah, you know you spoke about the last bit coming to land and it kind of being off key. Do you feel that relates really well or do you feel there's a relationship between that and what you feel now at the moment?

R: Ehhh hmmm. Yes and no. I think that piece it expresses the fear and desperation of these people you know coming to land and having to land and so on but I don't think I'm into that yet, into that situation yet.

CH: Ok, cool.

R: But then you never know in life at the moment. *[laughing]*

CH: And another thing I was just wondering if you could possibly take a picture of the orchestra when it's playing of the piece. A still of a bit that you like for reference for us. Just an image for what we're doing.

R: What me?

CH: Yeah just take a picture, like a still of the orchestra from a bit in the video of what you like.

R: Yeah.

CH: Yeah? Just a still. Just a picture and just send it to Lucia.

R: Ah you want me to do that?

CH: Sometime yeah.

R: OK, fine yeah. I thought you were asking if I could in my head picture one moment it would be.

CH: No no.

R: Yeah I'll do that ok.

CH: Cool.

LR: I just wanted to ask, because I didn't notice that in the music. So what was it that term that you talked about, landfall. About the piece of music.

R: Yeah what about it Lucia?

LR: What does that mean exactly? I didn't notice it.

R: Landfall I think, it means when you're on a boat and you reach land and you disembark, is that what it is?

LR: ok ok.

R: Is that what it is? Am I right or not is it?

CH: It can be that, it can be whatever you want. *[chuckles]*

LR: Can it be something different as well, landfall. Like land that falls.

R: That's how I understood it. Is that what it means? I mean I don't know.

CH: Yeah and the piece of music is called we unfold as well.

LR/R: Yeah.

LR: I noticed that one we unfold and I wanted to go and look it up in the dictionary but I forgot to do it before the interview because I thin the first way in which I interpreted that wasn't right because I think when I read we unfold I almost felt it meant we unravel because that's what the music suggested to me. Like this kind of like you said Rita before, chaotic and all this upsurge of something anxious, all these anxieties and fears and then there is another part of that music where it all seems to be a bit calmer and then it picks it up again so. Actually what does that mean? Unfold. It doesn't mean unravel.

R: Well the way I interpreted it, even if it's right or wrong here I don't know. The way I thought was you know a journey unfolds like going back on the journey and the journey unfolds and the way I felt was these people get on this journey and then they unfold because you know. Their life unfolds, their destiny unfolds, their fate unfolds and the journey unfolds until the end, until they make landfall which is you know, they get to that particular place that they are hoping to get to. That's the way I interpreted it but I don't know whether that's what is. I don't think there's a right or wrong here you know.

LR: Interesting, interesting from every point of view not only the linguistic one.

R: Yeah, there's a lot going on there because as I say in Italy it's a big thing.

LR: Yeah, I mean again now is a good season and every night they've got people coming, loads of people and they're all piled up in the little island of Lampedusa and it's just...

R: It's a ... this you could do a project just by itself.

LR: Oh yeah, actually I was watching a documentary, not long a go, a few months ago by this Italian director. I don't know if you've seen it, it's really good. It's not only. It's somewhere between a documentary and a film and it's called Fuocoammare, Fire at Sea by (name – directors name?) I think is the director. He really shows you about, how these people get to Lampedusa and what happens to them and it's really interesting and I thought this music that you proposed here would be such the perfect soundtrack.

R/LR talking over one another slightly.

R: Absolutely 100% because they must go through so much you know. One day they leave their country and then all the journey and then when they're at sea and urghooh god yeah it's.

LR: And it's crazy in this documentary because it shows you the scenes of the immigrants showing up on the shore and being put in this kind of I don't know it's like a refuge camp or something like that. And then part of the documentary is about the people that live in the island that are desperate to try and keep their life as it was and is almost trying to ignore what is happening on the beach and it's just yeah... it's just really really touching.

R: It's very very difficult situation.

Emily: Can I just ask one last question Rita? I mean my last question, not speaking for other people and googling and seeing I'm right from the name of the composer he's Italian. I was wondering was it a conscious decision, to go with something that was Italian or?

R: To be honest I don't think so no. Well the thing is being Italian sometimes I watch I don't know youtube or Italian shows and things like that because actually this guy was I mean fairly unknown before. He then sort of became known when he went to this singing contest that takes place every year in Italy. It's called Sanremo. It's a bit cheesy, but anyway he was invited and then he went and he played the piano and then he talked and I thought oh wow and then everybody sort of came to know him and then I sort of became interested in him just to see what he was doing and so on. An amazing person really, so I guess I know him because I'm Italian but no I don't think I chose him because he was Italian no.

LR: *Ok. Ok Charlie have you got any other burning questions?*

CH: *No, it's cool. Thank you so much.*

LR: *I think it's been great, really and interesting very interesting.*

R: Yeah I mean because I mean I don't know it's weird. Sometimes when you talk to other people then you realise what you've been thinking, what you've been feeling but if it doesn't come out, maybe you don't realise it you know.

LR: *That's right yeah. It happens often with this kind of unstructured interviews.*

R: Yeah.

LR: *Are you thinking about things you never thought about before or you see things in a different light yeah. It's been really good for me, it's been really interesting.*

R: Oh excellent. Well for me as well actually. For me as well because it makes you realise you know, we've been through an awful lot but...

LR: *Yeah reflecting back on what's happened and how you position yourself in this context of interweaving events because I mean so much has happened.*

R: That's true.

LR: *Covid and Brexit are two historical moments and we're actually living through them.*

R: Absolutely, they're two massive things you know.

LR: *Yeah two massive things, so near to each other because in historical times they're you know separated by years is nothing.*

R: And I think to be honest as European citizens we've been in the eye of the storm really when you look at it.

LR: *And I think we'll still be for a while. I don't want to know what's going to happen you know, when travel resumes like it was before and there'll be all of us coming back to Britain with out a piece of paper saying we've got this settled status, how they're going to make sure that we do have this settled status and I don't know. It's all to be seen.*

R: Yeah it's very unstable, makes you feel very insecure but..

LR: *And now we've got this thing that is in the pipeline of Scottish Independence Referendum you know, again very much in the pipeline so who knows.*

R: Yeah I mean I think it's incredible because if they're going to sort of break up the union I mean I don't know really.

LR: Well that would be Brexit fault I'm sure.

R: *[laughing]* Exactly. *[laughing]*

LR: Right, anyway. Thanks very much everyone and especially Rita.

R: Oh you're very welcome, you're more than welcome. It's actually really good to have the opportunity to voice all of this because we felt completely ignored.

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