

CHRISTIAN VIT

Earliest childhood memories...

THE THRIVING METROPOLIS OF VENICE IS BUILT UPON A LAGOON, COMPRISING OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED ISLANDS. NUMEROUS BRIDGES AND CANALS INTERCONNECT THE CITY.

I have vivid memories from childhood, seeing the many boats sailing by. The canals emitted a distinct and peculiar swamp odour which intensified in the humidity. There was a very unique scent, that permeated the air during rainy or foggy days; a metal and mineral-like fragrance. August was particularly bad, it was very sticky with the heat, attracting the many mosquitoes. It was luckily milder on the outskirts, the "mainland" where I lived. The only motorised sound was the humming of the engines of vaporetto.

My parents were very hardworking and I spent a lot of time with my grandmother from my mother's side who was like a second mum to me. She had strikingly strong cheekbones and I have her curly black hair. She would always defend me, even when I was in the wrong. I was a cheeky monkey and troublemaker! Totally unaware of cholesterol, she'd lovingly serve me very rich Italian food. There was always a dollop of noble fat – expensive fat, in the form of fresh butter on the plate, with the pasta served on top. The simple, yet delicious dish she'd prepare, my favourite, would be fresh butter, pasta with a tomato sauce finished with cheese. The flavour of the butter was to soften the dish.

It's traditional on the lunchtime of 24th December for our family to eat Baccalà alla Vicentina – a Norwegian stockfish which is typical for Venetians. It was a recipe cooked and mastered in Vicenza. This is another fond and comforting food, that reminds me of childhood. The fish comes from Norway and the nocturnal breeze dries it and this is what makes the fish a big delicacy. Growing up, it was only a dish eaten during the winter but now you have it all year round. The fish is re-hydrated in water and it can be cooked in different styles. You could make a warming casserole, where the chunks of fish have first been fried and then cooked in milk and onions for 2 hours. Another method is to whip it - Baccalà mantecato; one of the most iconic dishes of Venetian cuisine. This involves boiling the fish in water and milk, then straining and whipping, adding oil, air and a sort of cream. Both dishes can be served with bread or polenta.

Christian speaks warmly of the UK and has permanently resided in London since Valentines Day 2014. Thankfully, his first trips here at 5 & 11 years didn't dissuade him from coming back!

My first attempt at speaking English was at 5 years old. I tried to order a glass of water in a London restaurant but the waiter ignored me! My cousin based in London took care of us. I remember going to my first Indian restaurant and I was around people who smoked and drank which was all a new experience for me.

I travelled solo to the UK, (without parents) for the first time when I was 11 years old. It was for an adventure holiday and studying English in Cornwall. I first met with a group of young people, guys and girls, where we got a train to Milan Malpensa airport. It was a group of 20 however they were 13 and 14 years and when you're 11 years old, that age gap plays a massive difference. With our tour leader and teacher Rossana, we first toured London for 3 days and then had a 6-hour journey to reach Bude, Cornwall. There were a lot of activities; canoeing, swimming and snorkelling – cold but fun. We were tree climbing and I broke my foot! I was told it was “nothing” and that it was just swollen due to inflammation. It was very painful and I could barely walk for the last part of the trip. The group were making fun of me, saying it wasn't real and that I was putting weight on the wrong side. By the time I got home, the bone had already started to fix itself and it was too late to put a cast on.

I value teamwork

As mentioned, my parents were hardworking. My father used to work for the National Rail Company. Mum used to work for Robe di Kappa in fashion, behind the scenes doing admin. During my parents' honeymoon, they saw a couple making things to stop leakage problems. With this fluke encounter, they set up their own business dealing with terraces and decks affected by leakage and infiltrations and also refurbishing buildings. My parents provide a benchmark when it comes to teamwork, something I hugely admire. I've learnt from them that you need to look for people in your surroundings that support you and you support them – this builds a loyal community and teamwork can happen on a larger scale. I love that both my parents are hardworking, they never complain, they always find a solution to make things work and never quit. Nowadays, at the first difficulty, when things go wrong, people can get stuck in that place of disempowerment but what's important is coming together. I have a sister named Sharon and I feel we work as a sibling team. We speak several times a day, we are there for one another. When she needs to make some decisions, she likes to ask my advice and I'm flattered.



Christian's favourite phrase...

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars" ~ Norman Vincent Peal. I love the phrase – it's very ambitious and encourages you to aim for the best things.

Coincidentally that's exactly what Christian has done...

At 5 years, I played in my first school show and a few recitals thereafter. However, acting was not considered part of the curriculum nor was the art embraced culturally. Despite this, I got my first taste of acting and really enjoyed it. My parents however were so down to earth – no one had an "artistic attitude" so acting wasn't considered a career option. My Grandpa, from very humble roots, didn't have a chance to be a musician but so wanted me to pursue classical music however, it was not my calling.

When I was 6 years, I bumped into a movie set, nearby the city of Vicenza. The actors were filming a broadsword fighting scene. It was a period drama. My legs started shaking and I had a very strong feeling of excitement, mixed with joy and curiosity. That feeling stayed with me for days. Since then, that "flame" ignited inside, has been growing and helped me to sense and understand what I've needed to do to follow my path. After then, I started acting classes in Milan. Soon after, I secured my first commercials, modelling agency work and landed my first experience in a movie, while studying at Uni for my Master's in PR, Consumerism and Publicity.

THE ITALIAN JOB...

After my Master's, I landed an internship at the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Vancouver. However, I was being called even stronger now, onto my path because right outside the office, there were films being shot every day! I hated the 9-5 rat race but couldn't audition in the US, as I needed a Green Card. I flew back to Milan and did another internship at L'Oréal in Turin and then got approached to do marketing for a large company. I knew this wasn't what I was meant to be doing. I was so frustrated that I'd spent most of my life, doing something that wasn't for me. I got the courage to speak to my parents and it seemed as if they were going to end their lives, when I told them I wanted to pursue acting. My parents are of a generation and culture that believes you have a permanent job and you keep it for the rest of your life. You don't stay a day without being employed. My parents wanted to test my actions so accepted the burden of the fact, that I'd chosen this path. I found however, that I was not acting for myself but for my parents so they'd understand I'd made the right decision and to this day, I still feel as if I'm trying to prove myself. With acting, it doesn't matter the size of the job because it's not a regular income, unless you secure a series. When I left Holby City, my mum was so worried when the regular payslips stopped. There's so much pressure as an actor to fulfil this but work is not consistent, yet the bills keep coming. My parents have helped me financially but I don't feel happy about this. After Holby City, I had to re-group.

Rich roles...

Every time I'm on set, the more I feel this was meant for me. I love being challenged in the roles and the quality and quantity of jobs has been tremendously rising which is exciting. As the roles get richer which require more vulnerability and physical work – which is what acting is all about – the more happy and satisfied I am. I wholeheartedly immerse myself in every role, follow directions and deliver.

NEVER SAY CAT UNTIL YOU HAVE IT IN YOUR BAG...

What I've learnt is that when you think you've reached something, like a big job – a milestone – and you feel as if you've achieved something, understand it won't last forever. I keep calm and quiet and I'm just thankful and grateful for what job is secured. Maybe I'll do a great job and I'll acknowledge that and give myself a pat on the back. The thing with acting is, it's like yesterday's newspaper – people forget very quickly so I do my work and search for the next job. In Italy the saying goes "never say cat until you have it in your bag". This means that even when you have it in your bag, it can always escape suddenly. In other words, watch out before you are sure to have achieved something or have something in your hands. Keep humble, keep down to earth and real. The dreams happen and miracles happen but be grateful and keep going with peace. If you are not in peace, you're not well.

DO NOT TREAT TEACHERS AS GURUS

The school in Rome is where I learned a lot of things about my emotional colours and made me aware of what I was capable of offering, in front of the camera, with my acting instrument. It's so important to not treat teachers as Gurus. I crafted my own acting style from different experiences and teachers. I studied various methods and became acquainted to different techniques. Sometimes you're not in the "condition" when taking on a role but you have to be ready, go with the flow and trust the professional you're working with – you improvise and just go with it. The more you let yourself go with the process, the better – you don't resist. I really do know how to create my fourth wall so I'm not distracted by anything going on whilst I'm in the zone.

Actors that are like fine wines...

I really admire Jeff Bridges career. It's as if every decade, he's a brand-new actor. Like a fine wine, the more mature, the better he gets. I also really respect Danial Day Lewis.

TIME...

The investigation in order to study a character, I'm sure has a different outcome, if you're given a year to develop a character or a month. The pure way and what I'd ideally love, would be to immerse myself in developing a character for a year and try to do a masterpiece. However, the reality is, you may be given a few weeks; you have to adapt to what the market is and put yourself in the hands of a good director and build strong teamwork.

Advice for budding actors...

You have to really look at how you live the up and down moments in life. It's important to create a safe zone within yourself firstly and safety with a circle of people. If a year passes by and the phone isn't ringing, you might suddenly wonder if you've become a bad actor. You need to address yourself and really look at what may have contributed to this. It's crucial to keep going. I have many ex-colleagues who gave up. They didn't like this lifestyle. The word you'll keep facing day-to-day is "rejection"; I face it almost every day. I may bump into a project where I didn't get the role and it feels terrible but I understand that sometimes, these roles were not meant "to reach me". If you don't have perseverance and consistency, people will doubt you. Always trust your gut instinct. Any job offer should go directly through your agent; this is a good filter to understand what is legitimate. Sometimes it's harder to go from 0-1 than 1-100. You can become paralysed in life. It's all about taking one action at a time, however small. It's hard to get the first bite, the first job, it's tough and takes great effort. If you're dynamic, receptive and prepared to change, you'll have a good chance in the industry. I'm a very sensitive man so getting to this point hasn't been easy. It's good to learn detachment, create your own security and safe wall, never doubt yourself and understand that you do have value and have something to offer. Despite rejection, no one can take your value and gift away.

WHAT HEIGHTENS YOUR CRAFT...

I believe the craft is heightened when you deliver a sort of truth, that comes from memories of emotional experiences you have lived. We can't experience everything in life but you can create something that is believable, with the additional guidance from the director. For example, if you lost your dog when you were 6 years, if the emotion of loss is specific to the scene you are doing and you feel and portray true emotion, that's right for the scene, people will believe you.

MOST DEMANDING ROLE...

The longest experience I had with a character was in *Holby City* and it was one of the most demanding in terms of the character showing a vulnerable side – it was emotional and technical. On top of this was that the scene would have to stop due to lunch! So I'd be melting in tears and then have to resume after an hour break – that's challenging and isn't taken into consideration. You can't eat too much as you have to stay focused but at the same time to be careful not to drain yourself either. I was in a low energy and I felt pushed. I really had to test myself to understand how to portray the emotions and vulnerability of the character.

SHOOT FOR THE MOON. EVEN IF YOU MISS,
YOU'LL LAND AMONG THE STARS ~ NORMAN
VINCENT

I feel much more grounded in the UK...

In the UK, acting is an acknowledged and respected profession. This does not apply in Italy. It's not like in the 50's when La Dolce Vita hit the silver screen. There's a very small circle of Italian actors and you're either in or out. The quality of work in the UK is outstanding. When I made the decision to leave Italy, I was told that Italians don't make it in the UK – so I said “watch me”. I've had some lucky shots but I've been through a lot before. I had some of the best jobs in the UK, prior to gaining my citizenship. I am truly proud to be part of the diversity in the UK. There are such vast ethnicities and cultures – everyone has unique value. I believe that if we truly embrace who we are and be ourselves, then the authenticity is soon appreciated.

I AM FILLED WITH GRATITUDE...

I have my own “niche”, I'm always told my look is very Mediterranean, “exotic” sometimes, therefore I often happen to be cast as Spanish, Greek, Middle Eastern and South American.

I'd love to one day film in Antarctica and South Africa. I really do enjoy period dramas and biblical stories.

Since being in the UK, I have been cast for some wonderful roles. For example, Gabriel's Rapture which has recently aired. It's based on the New York Times Bestseller novel by Sylvain Reynard. During lockdown, the first episode was filmed in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence which was a breathtaking experience. It's by Passionflix; Tosca Musk is director and owner of the streaming platform. To be cast in projects like Game of Thrones, FBI and FBI International is really great and I'm very thankful to have had those experiences.

I've lived many lives...

You get more attracted to the points of reference that we create ourselves. In life you can look back and see clear phases of cycles, where you've shifted energetically as a person and therefore, what is reflected in your external world, is very different. I have the sensation that I've lived many lives since I was born, not past lives, within this lifetime now, as if I keep being re-born. I was brought up as Catholic however, I have my own interpretation which is more “spiritual”. I believe religion is something that puts us together, unifying us, not keeping us apart. I don't believe religion should be utilised as a tool and means to divide.

EMBRACE DISCOMFORT...

Rome really narrowed my horizons. I made the decision to move to the UK and when you're not in your comfort zone and stepping into the unknown, it scares you. However, once I put one foot in front of the other, I felt completely differently, the energy shifted and I made a choice. I had to trust myself that I was growing as an artist and actor.

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What does acting give to you?

It gives me the chance to live different lives and stories. You never get bored. Each set is like a new family environment, with different people and dynamics. At the core, I'm a lone wolf so I do need my moments of solitude. Due to my personality type, "the lone wolf", I'm better as a set actor, rather than stage actor because acting like a close family for a year, is not my thing. I like short-term projects.

How do you express your creative side outside of acting?

I have a passion for cooking. I have an eclectic taste in music and enjoy concerts and shows. I often visit exhibitions of paintings, sculptures and installations.

Are there any other passions and anything you'd like to explore?

I do a lot of voiceover for audiobooks and have been told that my voice is deep and interesting to listen to. To simply use the voice and the intention behind the voice, to deliver the story is challenging. This is a side of acting I don't talk about however, I really do enjoy it. In the future, I may explore directing; creating scenes and the lighting intrigues me.

TRUTHFUL REWARD

One of the first projects in 2007 that I took part in, when I started my career, was a movie about the life of Father Umberto Terenzi, the founder of the "Divine Love" Sanctuary located near Rome. It was an independent production and the shooting went on for almost 18 months, amongst a lot of difficulties. I had to make numerous journeys on my scooter, on one of the most dangerous and trafficked roads, to reach very remote places. The project has never been aired on TV nor distributed. It became a DVD, sold to the pilgrims in the Sanctuary's bookstore. Despite all the odds, the movie managed to have a premiere in a local movie theatre. At the end of the screening, a petite elderly lady, with reddish curly hair who I had never met before, came to me in tears. She held my hand and started thanking me and explained she met Father Umberto Terenzi when alive and that my performance was very compelling and that I very much reminded her of him. In that moment something clicked in my mind and heart. That was the best, the most emotional and truthful reward I'd ever had. That experience put a really solid ground stone within me as an actor and made me understand why I wanted to do this job and how I wanted to feel with my work.

What have you learnt about your inner-self?

I've learnt that I still have to learn a lot!

What do you do for your mental health?

I take very long walks in nature. I listen to tunes that touch my emotional chords and visualise what my heart wishes. After that I feel amazing, soothed, inspired, focused, relaxed and ready to move forward stronger than ever.

Once a day, keep the love in place...

I believe in living your life with kindness towards others. I like to help people and make people smile. I like to keep the heart smiling! A little action of love helps you to live better and contribute to a better world.



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YOU'LL LAND AMONG THE STARS - NORMAN
VINCENT

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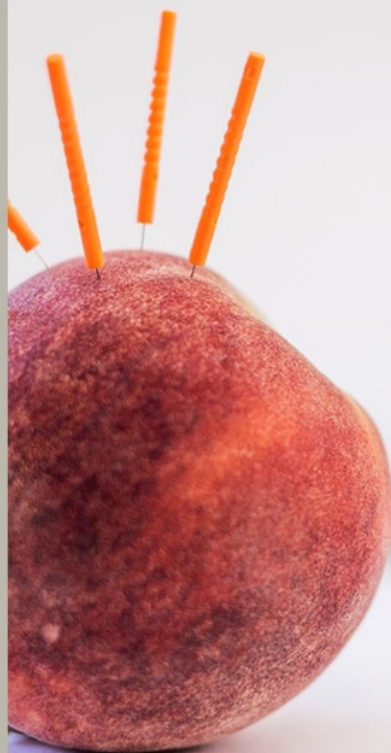
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