

Marlow Connects

With Pepe and Carissa Romero

Conversation from April 2020

Danielle

So it is so wonderful to see you both. So tell me, where are you?

Pepe

We are in our home in Granada, Spain, in Andalucia.

Danielle

Beautiful. And how long have you been there?

Pepe

We have been a month and a half without leaving the house. Because I don't know if you know, but in Spain, around the 10th or the 11th of March, they called - the government called - a state of alarm. And that meant everybody has to stay home. And for the first day, it was very funny because they allowed people to go to the supermarket, to the pharmacy and to the hair salon.

Soon, like two days later, they took away the hair salon. Oh! and the tobacco shop. You could go to the tobacco shop, to the "*estanco*". We have shops here that are exclusive for newspapers, magazines, and tobacco. And very quickly, it was only pharmacies and supermarkets and very, very severely enforced. So that actually nobody has been on the streets other than for that purpose. And I personally have not been out of the house except a few times to go down the steps. We have a lot of steps down to the street level, and I've gone to help Carissa with some groceries.

Danielle

My goodness. How do you feel about that? Are you ready to go for a walk or are you happy there?

Pepe

Yes, we are ready to go for a walk! And apparently on the 2nd of May, they will allow us to go for a walk - one kilometer maximum away from your own house and one hour a day.

Carissa

And with a mask, with gloves.

Pepe

With a mask, with gloves.

Danielle

I wonder if the masks are going to be all of our realities for a while. That is just the kind of thing...

Pepe

I think it will. I think it will. And but, you know, this is giving us an opportunity to realize how deeply and how much our friends mean to us, how much just contact with another human being that you may just cross on the street, and normally you think nothing of it -- We are all an integral part of each other. And this is letting us know it in a very clear and precise way.

Danielle

Very true. And your family is all in California.

Pepe

Yes, we were on our way to play in Germany. And the Germans kept telling us, no, no, no, the concerts will go on, everything is much better here. And our flight was connecting through Spain. Because since we have a home here, we like to come spend, decompress and then go in Europe, play and come back here, stay a few days and go back to California. So once we arrived here, then they closed everything, and actually we cannot go back to California yet. There are no flights.

Danielle

And what did they tell you about that? Do they have an idea when?

Pepe

Some time in May, but it depends. It depends how things are. They're getting much better in Spain. They had been very bad. But now, now it's better with everybody inside. I'm having fun. I have my two favorite women: I have Carissa, and I have my guitar.

Danielle

And what are you working on now? Are you practicing for new repertoire? What is your inspiration?

Pepe

I'm doing a lot of Bach because I think that Bach is such spiritual music, such profound - it is almost like praying without words, just the music comes from the soul, from his soul into ours, and when we play it, I

find myself playing it slowly and enjoying every vibration, how they are put together - it is such a magnificent music. And I've been doing a lot of a lot of Bach, but also a lot of Spanish music, like I always do.

Carissa

And.. Manolo.

Pepe

Oh, yes, I am! She is saying "And you are learning a new piece." And I say, "I am?" I am learning a new piece, by Manolo Sanlucar. It's not new. It's not a new piece, but it is new to me, because it is from a ballet that he did on the story of Medea and is a wonderful, wonderful piece of music. It's for guitar and orchestra. And I was scheduled to record it, to perform it and record it live, in May, wasn't it?

Carissa

Next October. In Long Beach.

Pepe

Next October. But of course, that has been postponed for a year. So I'm having fun just playing.

Danielle

Manolo Sanlucar is a very famous flamenco performer and writer

Pepe

And he is a dear, dear friend of mine since we were both very young.

Danielle

I saw him perform months in Cordoba. I'll never forget it. Amazing.

Pepe

He's wonderful. He's retired. He's retired. He's not playing publicly anymore. And he continues to write

Danielle

That's a very exciting collaboration. We can't wait for it.

Pepe

But I did lie when I said everything has been canceled this year ... Everything but the guitar festival in Granada. That is going to take place. And it's going to take place with all open-air concerts, and it will be, I believe, everything is free to the public. The entire festival will be a gift to the city.

Danielle

Perfect.

Pepe

And I don't know if you know this, the theatre, the "Carlos V" in the Alhambra – it's in the middle of the Alhambra - that Charles I of Spain (Charles V Germany) built, and they never covered it up. It was meant to be covered and he never covered it. So it has amazing acoustics. And I'll be playing a recital from there, that will be broadcast.

Danielle

Fantastic. We'll find out more about that.

Pepe

Yes - we'll let you know.

Danielle

Oh, please.

Pepe

I have a question for you. How are my friends? Regis and Tim?

Danielle

They are very well. Everybody is fine, fortunately. So we had two concerts ready to go, that we had to postpone, because our venue didn't want to take the risk, and neither did we with our audience. So fortunately, we were all able to stay home and stay safe, and everybody is still doing their thing. But we all miss each other and we miss our performers. And so this is sort of the next best thing. We get to call where our favorite people are and talk to them.

Pepe

Well, if you send us your "WhatsApp" number (you have a WhatsApp number?) we will send you some videos I've been doing here during the quarantine, and you can share them with all my friends there.

Danielle

That would be perfect. So perfect. So what was I going to ask? So, yes. Are you recording? Do you have a recording studio there?

Pepe

Oh, no no... Samsung cell phone!

Danielle

OK, perfect. Honest.

Pepe

It started out that I would be practicing and all of a sudden I look around and there she is, recording me, and made some videos like that. So they're completely homemade, on a Samsung phone, but they're fun. And I think all my friends there will like to see them and to listen to them.

Danielle

Absolutely. That would be so perfect. I think we all need beautiful music more than ever.