

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Debbie Allen at TCM

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, May 5th, 2021

As I was reviewing the program of exciting events at this year's virtual [TCM Classic Film Festival](#), taking place from May 6 to 9, I noticed an interview with Debbie Allen to introduce the movie *Fame* (1980), which screens at 8.45pm on Sunday May 9. Watch [A Conversation with Debbie Allen](#).



Debbie Allen (c) Elisa Leonelli 1982

She played the dance teacher in that musical and her small role became central in the [television adaptation](#), which ran from 1982 to 1987, and became popular all over the world. I remember interviewing her and photographing her in 1982. I then interviewed and photographed the young actors in the TV series: Lee Curreri, Erica Gimpel, Lori Singer, Carlo Imperato, Valerie Landsburg.

Here's what they said and how they looked back then. Click on their names to see what they have done with their life and career.



DEBBIE ALLEN (c) Elisa Leonelli 1982

Debbie Allen: “I always wanted to dance, even when I was five years old. My mother paid a lot of attention to what her children seemed able to do naturally and encouraged us to develop that talent. I always believed that I could do what I am doing now, that I should be on Broadway. I never felt any limitations as a child, and that’s the one thing I love about being in *Fame*, that it encourages young people to jump on their ambitions at an early age and follow their instincts like I did.”



LEE CURRERI (c) Elisa Leonelli 1982

Lee Curreri: “My mother is from Bari. Her parents moved to New York and opened a grocery store. They quickly had to become Americanized. So my mother speaks English without an accent. She learned her Italian in college. But she is a great cook. I am a vegetarian, but I eat my mother’s meatballs. My father’s family is from Sicily, a little fishing town called Sciacca, near Agrigento.”



ERICA GIMPEL (c) Elisa Leonelli 1983

Erica Gimpele: “I was born in Manhattan, and brought up with my family, my mother and father

and my dog; I don't have any brothers and sisters. The neighborhood where I grew up was so close, all the adults looked out for the kids, everyone knew each other. I went to the school of Performing Arts, the high school the show *Fame* is about. I did a lot of acting, I started concentrating on dancing when I got the show. My mother is a singer and my father is a writer actor, so I was born into the performing arts world."



LORI SINGER (c) Elisa Leonelli 1983

Lori Singer: "I was born in Texas, cowboy country, and I lived there for about four years. My father was an orchestra conductor. Then we moved to Oregon, in the North-West woods. When I was about 11, we began to commute to New York a lot, we moved there when I was 14. I really

grew up in New York. I had a background, a knowledge of the other parts of the country, which helped me a great deal in understanding people.”



CARLO IMPERATO (c) Elisa Leonelli 1984

Carlo Imperato: “I’m from the Bronx, New York. I have Italian blood in me, my father is from Naples, my mother is half Italian and half Jewish. But I didn’t turn out Jewish, that’s just a religion, and you can change it, I am Catholic. I don’t go to Mass much any more, but I still pray and think about religion.”



VALERIE LANDBSURG (c) Elisa Leonelli 1982

[Valerie Landsburg](#): “The year I turned 16 my parents divorced, which was the great bottom out of my life. I was completely bored with school, I wasn’t enormously popular, I was very outspoken, with a razor edge wit, I wasn’t tall and blonde and I never had a boyfriend the entire time I was in high school. So now to go back and be 16 as Doris in *Fame* enables me to play her with an empathy for that pain.”

Watch Valerie in this sweet [singing duet](#) with Lee Curreri from *Fame*. You will understand why these kids won the hearts of their fans, when they traveled on a concert tour through Europe. My photo layouts were published in Holland, Spain, Greece, France, Italy.

I uploaded more photos to [a special website](#) for your enjoyment.

È nata una stella
sul «set» di
«Saranno famosi»




Una promessa chiamata Lori

La sua vera passione è il violoncello, ma la ventinienne Lori Singer ha per ora trovato il successo come attrice: il suo nome infatti è nel cast di una fortunata serie di telefilm che è piaciuta molto anche al nostro pubblico.

Sarà famosa? La domanda di cinema sembra retorica. Lori Singer, infatti, è richiesta per arricchire le sue scene e non soltanto per la bellezza e non lo manca il talento. Bionda, alta e disinvolta, recita attenti e senza smagliare, senza il violoncello dei grandi solisti, sa ballare e recitare con la stessa naturalezza per il cinema, la televisione e il teatro.

Nata ventisei anni fa nel Texas, la ragazza non si trasferì a New York seguendo gli spunti segreti del padre, un affermato direttore d'orchestra, e del fratello che si stava rivelando come attore. «Il 4 giugno a New York che sono arrivata, racconta oggi Lori. «L'emozione della scoperta mi ha dato una carica nuova, un'energia voglia

di fare che da bambina, quando la mia famiglia viveva nella campagna del Texas, proprio non immaginavo di poter mai sentire. Spinta anche da una padre ha cominciato a dedicarsi allo studio del violoncello con tutta una serietà.

Così a quindici anni, mentre tutti le sue coetanee vivevano le avventure e i sogni più tipici del «tempo delle medie», Lori si svegliava tutti i giorni alle sei di mattina per praticare sempre e fare esercizi prima di andare a scuola. «Loro pensa per il mio violoncello e per la musica classica. Non mi interessava altro. La mia compagna di scuola che magari mi parlava dei film, che sbacchiavano di tanto a tanto le giacche delle scienze perdigiorno. Come potevano vivere senza il violoncello? Io dovevo non arrendermi», ricorda Lori. «Pensavo in una compagnia d'orchestra da dici anni al giorno. Quando sentivo di essermi ormai un po' disamorata o un po' caparbia spesso mi sentivo a nessuno anche in sogno. Una vera emozione, ma bellissima, irrefrenabile».

Un ruolo che sembrava fatto apposta per lei

«Ci vennero proposti quattro che raffiguravano una parte la sua passione musicologica anche in una predilezione di teatro. E l'occasione giunse prima a Lori quando il fratello le suggerì che ella interpretasse insieme con qualche amico e giovane ucraino per una serie di telefilm ispirati alla famosa pellicola Saranno famosi. «C'era una giovane attrice, bionda e muscolosa, ragazza e ragazza di cui sentivo arrivare e sperare notizie frequentando una "school of performing art", una scuola di recitazione e di attività teatrale a New York». Nel cast c'era un ruolo che sembrava fatto apposta per Lori, quello di Julia Miller, una timida ragazza del Mid-

Foto di Ellen Eisenst

58

Foto di Ellen Eisenst

59

GRAZIA, Italy 1983

This entry was posted on Wednesday, May 5th, 2021 at 1:24 pm and is filed under [Film, TV](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.