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A CONVERSATION WITH Lexye Aversa

HOW DID YOU SEGUE FROM CHILDHOOD ACTRESS INTO GLOBAL TRAVEL GURU?

After graduating Brandeis in theatre, my years acting were apt preparation for an exhilarating globe-trotting career, translating a passion for the dramatic into reality for my clients. After a few years handling large corporate and charter groups all over the world for major companies and tour operators, I founded Professional Touch International (PTI) in 1981, customizing international travel and events for individuals, sophisticated groups, charities and corporations with meetings and incentive marketing. So, "The World is My Stage" in creating extravaganzas and life-tasting journeys for my clients.

WHAT SETS YOU APART FROM OTHER TRAVEL AND EVENT PLANNERS?

I love bringing the pages of history to life staging extravaganzas in palaces where kings and queens held court, castles and venues from past centuries that defined generations. It's my privilege to share these insights — whether for a travel escapade or immersed in the pageantry of a bygone era with full production, complete with flag-throwers, horsemen, music and menu from that time. "Our Services Surpass Our Promises" is our relentless mantra; our corporate accounts become personal clients and friends, with relationships lasting years into the "next generations."

WHY DO YOU HAVE A SPECIAL CONNECTION TO ITALY?

I met my husband Gianni when I brought 250 corporate executives to the hotel he managed in Rome, and have learned every nuance of Italy through his eyes. After our whirlwind courtship that crossed three continents, we dedicated one division of PTI as an Italy Hotel & Travel Reservations Center, with insider panache in planning sightseeing, shore excursions, destination weddings and beyond. Even other travel agents book through us.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE MOVIES?

Red Violin, Pappillon, The Great Escape, anything with Peter Sellers and all *Godfather* films — which have special meaning, as I held an event in that historic Sicilian villa used in so many scenes.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE PERFORMER?

Several years ago, on my radio show *Living in Palm Beach County*, I was promoting a concert for Franco Corso, "the Voice of Romance" and have been representing him since hearing him perform. International recording artist from Italy, Franco is one of the world's great talents with a voice that instills passion exuding incredible range and showmanship. In October, I am planning his fifth concert tour to Italy, where fans join us to share my insights on Italy and experience his private concerts in historic settings.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE MOST SATISFYING EXPERIENCES IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

Orchestrating the *Sister City Program* in Madrid with Mayor Koch, a Royal Banquet in Vienna's Hofburg Palace, corporate games in the Barcelona Olympic Stadium and a 9/11 tribute to our armed forces on the *USS Midway* with Navy Seals skydivers. Also implementing the *World Strategic Forum* with Prime Ministers, Ambassadors, Titans of Global Industry, many of whom I interviewed for their video production, including Governor Rick Scott.

The *Signet Award* recognized my firm's success impacting clients' sales and their corporate culture — bestowed in the Gold Room of Stockholm's Town Hall the evening following the presentation of the *Nobel Peace Prize* to Nelson Mandela, with a reenactment of the ceremonial protocol.

WHAT IS THE MOST POIGNANT MOMENT IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE?

Spending a milestone birthday in an 11th century Saracen castle on the island from Mythology where Ulysses bade his seamen to tie him to the mast (I heard the *Song of the Sirens* while there). My husband's childhood friend purchased the island (near Positano) from Nureyev's estate and Gianni surprised me — just us, the seagulls, mermaids and ancient deities.

HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED CURRENTLY IN MEDIA AND THEATRE?

I was proud to be designated as *Best Global Event Planner* on the FOX TV series *Best of South Florida!* My radio show *LEX Travel* featured "LEXtraordinary Destinations" and interviews with "International Travel LEXperts" and is in production as a TV pilot filmed in Rome with a "LEX Give Back" segment dedicated to philanthropy on a global platform. I am also filming a documentary of the history of the Jews in Italy.

I enjoy emceeding events and presenting "Italy on Your Doorstep," as well as voice overs for commercials and corporate videos. I am privileged to be consulting with the writers of *Wallenberg Musical Drama*, to bring this vital production to fruition on Broadway.

WHY DID YOU SETTLE IN PALM BEACH?

Snowbird since birth, finally relocated in 2002. Gianni hails from Sorrento and the Amalfi Coast, so insisted on year-round sunshine, ocean, palms and bougainvillea. I shared our heartfelt sentiments about living in paradise in *Palm Beach Faces and Places*, the 2011 publication commemorating Palm Beach's Centennial (I also appeared in the *Follies at Flagler Museum*).

WHY ARE YOU DUBBED A "COSMIC CONNECTOR" AND HOW DO YOU JUGGLE ALL THE PROJECTS AND PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITIES ON YOUR PLATE?

Thanks to my boardroom relationships with *Fortune 500* clients and a vibrant arena of connections, ventures and opportunities appear on my path! My PR platform encompasses writing, publicity and "visibility matrix" for immersion into the community. It is fulfilling to lecture at local universities and serve on several Palm Beach Boards including the Round Table, Business Group, Women's Chamber Foundation, Hotel Association and Il Circolo among others. Philanthropy is close to my heart, especially as Executive Vice President of Israel Cancer Association USA and chair of many fundraising galas. In Palm Beach, all these dots connect and "all the stars align."

WHO HAD THE MOST INFLUENCE IN YOUR EDUCATION?

My French teacher spoke the language like a canary singing, and I then picked up Spanish and Italian (and an Italian husband) in my travels.

WHAT WAS A "LIFE-CHANGING" MOMENT FOR YOU?

At age 19, I broke my neck in a horrific car accident. After three weeks flat on my back in traction, I was liberated with miraculous 9-hour surgery fusing a hip bone into my neck. This altered my vision of life into a "Carpe Diem" mindset, and I have focused on giving back to help others not so fortunate.

WHAT IS THE NEXT CHAPTER?

To continue ascending every mountain in my path with perseverance and purpose. There is still so much more to learn — every person, moment, experience leads to another which is enriching and unexpected.

Lexye Aversa is President of her travel & event planning firm, Professional Touch International and media host of "LEX Travel". She is Promoter and Strategic Advisor to Franco Corso, the Voice of Romance, and handles his annual concert tour to Italy. For more information call 561.776.1173 or visit Lex@LexTravelWorld.com.