

# Carlo AONZO PLAYS CALACE

The Timeless Voice of the Mandolin

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Carlo Aonzo plays the 1994 Gabriele Pandini  
Mandolin No. 129 with Dogal "Calace" strings

Produced by David Grisman and Carlo Aonzo

Recorded September, 2001 at Dawg Studios by David Dennison and David Grisman  
Executive Producer - Craig Miller  
Design Layout - Dave "FM" Moretti

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## ABOUT THIS PROJECT -

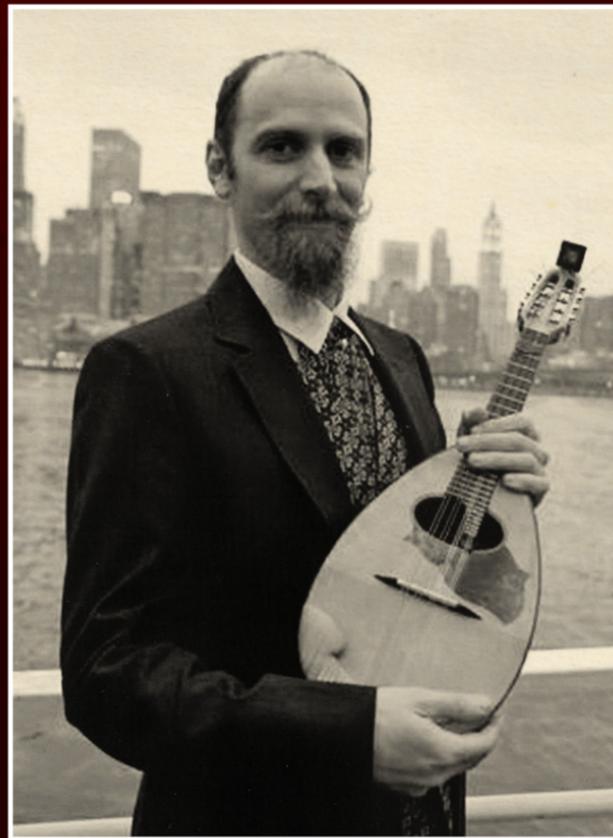
Why Calace with Grisman? After producing the album *Traversata* in 2000, Dawg suggested I make a solo mandolin recording and I immediately knew I wanted to dedicate it to the repertoire of the immortal Raffaele Calace. The works presented here follow a journey through his creative life, from his youthful compositions to the very last piece in his vast catalog, ranging from lyrical and accessible works to Preludes of transcendent virtuosity.

This album has had a long and troubled journey. The first session took place right after the attack on the Twin Towers. David's studio was in Marin County, California and I was arriving from the Winfield Festival in Kansas. My flight was the very first available once air travel resumed, with only five or six passengers on board and the pilot came to shake hands with each of us. Imagine my state of mind when I arrived at the studio! But the legendary "Dawg" himself picked me up at the airport in his big Mercury Grand Marquis and welcomed me as if I were a close relative. With his proverbial humor, he immediately helped me put aside the heavy emotions of those days and introduced me to the magical world of his music production. At that time, David was still recording on tape and our first edits were done with a razor blade. Once I returned to Italy, it wasn't easy to continue working on the project from afar; we could only move forward on the rare occasions when I visited him between concerts in the United States.

Now, after 24 years, the music world has completely transformed — nearly a quarter of a century has passed, though it feels more like an entire one! This collection of pieces for solo mandolin is at last ready to reach its audience.

— Carlo Aonzo, 2025

*This album is dedicated to my father, Pino Aonzo*





When I think of my grandfather, the great Raffaele Calace, countless words come to mind to describe him — a complete artist, an eclectic man, a creative and brilliant spirit, almost restless in his constant pursuit of artistic and musical fulfillment. Above all, he was deeply in love with plucked instruments. This lifelong passion earned him the undisputed title, “father of the modern mandolin” for the ingenious innovations he introduced to the art of instrument making. As a composer, he was extraordinarily prolific, leaving us more than 180 works devoted to his beloved instruments. His music reveals a man who believed wholeheartedly in his dream, his very reason for living, and who managed to share with listeners emotions of unparalleled intensity.

He was without question the genius of our family, able to inspire generations to fall in love with the mandolin, many of whom had never realized its immense expressive potential. Today, more than a century after his passing, I am certain he would feel proud of the legacy he left, as his music continues to be embraced and celebrated by mandolinists worldwide. In this spirit, Maestro Carlo Aonzo, one of today’s foremost mandolin virtuosos, brings to life the extraordinary creativity of Raffaele Calace. This recording features a thoughtful selection of pieces ranging from the youthful works, light and graceful, to the more mature and technically demanding compositions, such as the Gran Preludio. Throughout, Maestro Aonzo demonstrates a profound connection with the music, drawing the listener into an emotional journey that speaks directly to the heart. — *Raffaele Calace, Jr., 2025*

#### NOTES FROM THE ORIGINAL PRINTING OF “CORALE” (TRACK 07)

This composition for solo mandolin imitates the four voices of the classical Gregorian Chant style (Canto Gregoriano). The tremolo must be extremely tight; it needs to be practiced every day to achieve a perfect fusion of the notes and the overall sound of the parts. Calace performed it in Japan in 1924-1925, to “delirious” success. A mandolin with a perfect fretboard and a light touch is required, and the performer must not, with the plectrum, touch the second A string stronger than the other strings.