Ciao, come stai? Hello, how are you? A phrase I became really familiar with on my journey to Recanati, Italy. The proposal I constructed before my trip described, how as an opera singer, I am always instructed to sing like an Italian, gesture like an Italian, basically be Italian. Thankfully, in the month of June I really got to experience how to truly be an Italian. Upon my arrival to the Ancona airport in Italy, my driver Massimo picked me up, and I must admit I was a little nervous. I had no idea if he was an ax murderer or truly just my transportation but as we began our thirty minute drive to Recanati, I saw the most beautiful greens, browns, houses and buildings; what an Italian would called *campagna*; countryside I had ever seen. I arrived to a beautifully structured and renovated 14th century convent, and in it was the surprise of emptiness. The usual 10-15 students were reduced to a 52 year old Australian Anthony Fioravanti who became my close friend. Class happened everyday for three hours, my *l'insegnante*-teacher was Camilla from Jesi, Italy who spoke English but informed us that after the first day we were not allowed to speak English. Scary Right? Not speaking English was definitely the most difficult task to conquer the first week but as the next week started and forced to be fully immersed in everything Italian, It was not as difficult. *Come si dice?* how do I say and *ho una domanda!* I have a question, became two additional phrases asked or stated more frequently than not.

After class, on Monday-Friday, we watched a cultural film in Italian with english subtitles or had a cultural lesson such as pasta made from scratch or visited small towns that were not to far from Recanati, for example Macerata, Loreto, Porto Recenati, Grotte di Frassi which was a Cave discovered in 1971. Upon arrival back from a trip, caused a very special experience as we walked upon Italian's who spoke English. My new amici were students who took English courses very close to Recanati and were so happy to meet Americans as we were to meet Italians. Marta and Stefano, became closer to me than any of my new comrades. Stefano invited Anthony and I to go to a place called Montecassiano, Italy to an art exhibit and it was so amazing. There were music, lights, food, games, presentations, shops, students, parents, single people of all ages who spoke Italian 100 mph, I learned that Italians have such a fluid motion to their speech, it seems to never end. Fortunately, by the end of my journey, I became fairly familiar with this type of speech and could understand a bit.

On Saturday’s we had a free day, which usually meant Anthony and I practiced, or tooko ur weekly walk down the hill to the supermercato-supermarket. Marta, Stefano, Elvira, my french roommate who spoke zero English but good Italian and I went to the beach. I also learned that Europeans love the beach, they will be there for hours. Sunday’s, the instructor would take the students on an all day trip like Ascoli Piceno, Castelluccio, Urbino. Many of the places we went to we visited the Cathedrals, as Cathedrals are a huge landmark for Italians as many claim the Catholic faith. The Cathedrals were so detailed, exquisite as well as old, which fascinated me the most because of how well maintained, it shows how diligently
architectures, builders, constructors worked during the ancient times, we also would eat at the restaurants and walk the town.

The Italian culture is quite interesting I learned that they are very relaxed, many of the Italians walked really slow, they never seemed to be in a rush. I appreciate how they took their time to enjoy life. Though, they talk really fast. Italians also eat a very hearty meal, it is customary to order an antipasti-appetizer, a primo-first dish like soups, salads, pasta and then a second dish-protein, meat, eggs and possibly a dessert after! Wow! They all claimed the Catholic faith and started believing at an early age. Italians are big on train transportation that is quite nice, respecting elders and family. They learn gestures that have different or significant meaning that only they can understand and they learn it at a very young age. Now, on the topic of young age, I got the opportunity to gain some research, now the research had to altered, I had to be creative with what was available to me. I was honored to have a lesson with Riccardo Serenelli who gave me feedback on my voice and introduced me to his opera students. I took research on musicians and natives, all of the research had the same results, many spoke 2-5 languages and they started in school and it was mandatory to take them. I asked the question quando una persona dovrebbe inizione a impare alter lingue? What age should a person start learning another language? I received da piccolissimi, due or tre anni- very small, two or three years old and that answer was consistant. I asked about how learning another language has enhanced their career and all the answers were that it was beneficial to communicate with other customers at work who are foreign and the singers stated how it is crucial for networking. Languages and learning other cultures are crucial in this life and should be learned. Hopefully, this issue in the U.S. will be better implemented soon and made mandatory at an early age.

I truly had an amazing time in Italy such an eye-opening experience, I learned so much, I can now say that I have a few words when it comes to my Italian amici, I can talk to them about their culture, their outfits, their life, ask for directions and most importantly understand their life and why they live the life they do. This trip has helped me to improve so much in my diction, how to stress the language, how to try to be an like Italian and I loved every minute of it. I will never forget the breathtaking view, the friends I met and the wonderful experiences I had in Italy. I finally have a few words. I cannot not wait to have them all.