PRESIDENTE
Cristina Ravaglia
Email presidenza@uwcad.it
RETTORE
William Turner
Email rettore@uwcad.it

Closing Ceremony 2021

Address by Michele Vitaloni (Graduating Class of 2021)

As you enter the toilet on the bottom floor of the school building, and you look at your reflection in the mirror, you will notice behind your back a poem, hanging on the wall, next to the window that says: "I'm drunk of this city."

Likewise, as you make your way to Carso and you pass through the tunnel under the highway, that shady and - at times - scary place, you will read on your right: "are you satisfied?"

Pala, in the outdoor lowered room below the dayroom, on your left: "DJ Steve forever in our hearts."

Duino is quite a talker. This place speaks its own truth, this is what I understood over these two years. This village is a living time capsule of past generations.

At times, Duino sings gently and it talks with a comforting and reassuring voice, spelling out loud: "This is home". At other times, Duino shouts in your ears, you try to cover them, but the voice is just too loud and you start wondering that maybe that voice is not coming from outside, but it's growing, like a flower, and is speaking right from your stomach. Duino grows and expands right from your stomach.

And this leads me to us, the majestic choir of this ongoing concert, the heart of the community and, most importantly, the lifeblood of Duino.

We are travellers who sailed on their journey.

We heard about this movement from a friend, a relative, a friend of a relative. We gave it a try, wore our finest shirt as a lucky charm. We tried to describe this school to our grandmas, to our group of friends and we didn't quite manage because this was a dream, and like all

dreams, it didn't make much sense. Then, the College became reality, we first met Duino during the summer. We were surprised when we entered mensa in August and encountered this lady who already called us by our first names, and knew our favourite food. We discovered the magic that made the dream real: the people. I learnt that the couches in library B were way more comfortable than the mattress in my room, I can now confess to you I would take a nap there every day last year, after classes. We found out that intercultural understanding and cooperation meant eating at an Asiatic taster session and preparing food without an oven, a stove or a fridge. I won't lie, it was hard for me to trust people who took Mathematics HL. List of equipment: open-mindedness, initiative, and light-heartedness. We got excited the day we went for the first time to Trieste, got lost in the maze of the ghetto and ended up cluelessly in a protest. You got addicted to coffee, I got addicted to tea. We understood the inclusivity of the community the time a secondo asked us out for a walk. We lost our compass, we found it again in the words of a letter left under our pillow.

The conversations started. They never stopped since. They were small at first, little talks with a guitar at the open mic. They grew. We fed our friendships with selflessness, sentiment and a tremendous amount of laughter. I got bold, and the day I shaved my hair, at least a dozen of new people approached me, the evidence of weirdness being encouraged.

Then we started to feel them, feel the caressing waves. We got tied to this Eden garden before we could realize it. The time stopped during an eclipse and we found ourselves surrounded by people we thought we had known for ages. Duino became our stronghold, our safe place. We learned to trust Duino, to follow its lead, gently floundering in its sea. It was the weekend in Cavazzo, the endless and exhausting walk, the naps along the way, the dives in that gelid lake, the fire at night, that lit up our quiet revolution. And then the thunderstorm. The distance, the online classes (sorry Michael Smulders), the time zones, the days passed between the bed and the kitchen. It was in this period that we understood the value of our life at the college.

We came back to fill our sense of incompleteness, of emptiness, of bewilderment. We found out that Duino had changed. The new faces were somehow familiar, they reminded us of what we had gone through. We met them. We fell in love with them and tried to take care of

the new generation according to our ideals of friendship, passion and community. We tried and, in this constant effort to put out the best of us, we discovered parts of ourselves we didn't know about. By meeting others, we explored our own identities.

We accepted the new challenges. We kept on learning. I want to thank the staff, the faculty, and the donors for that, for reinventing themselves and showing us the path under these unexpected circumstances.

We ran through the year, we rushed, chasing adventures and cutlery, speeding up, accelerating and then…

It's April, it's the end.

Duino was a theatre stage. We walked in shily, actors ready to improvise. We performed the most stunning play. Now the curtain closes, the lights turn off, the audience applauds, it's a standing ovation. We bow, our hands shaking. We leave the stage for the next ones. We walk away, we peek at the next performance from a crack in the door. Then we'll leave the theatre as well, we'll sit at a cafe, sip a coffee, inhale the taste of accomplishment.

Duino, thank you for having welcomed us in your womb. To friends, thank you for your empathy, for your steady hand holding mine along the way, for the hysteria, for the walks, for the talks, for being the engine to this quest, for the pizzas on Wednesdays, for the shouting sessions in Carso, for triggering emotions I don't know the name of, for the singing under the rain. Thank you for being there when I, when we needed it the most, for helping me find my compass. I apologize if I ever tried to sink you during a polo match in Porto.

To the person I always wanted to talk to but never actually did, you're my biggest regret, but you're also the reason why I want the clock to stop ticking towards tomorrow.

Duino taught me that you don't have to look for things to find them. The ones who seek will never find, for finding means to accept everything that the Bora brings.

But now, traveller, Odysseus, the time has come to leave Ogygia, our enchanted island. Smell the scent of the Adriatic Sea one last time and let the splashes of the water wet your clothes. Stare at the sunset tonight, but instead of wondering about the places where the sun is going, look at the golden reflection that stands out against the cliff. Weep traveller, for tears are gonna leave an indelible mark on this very soil. Trees will grow upon your tears,

roots will be watered by them and we will have our own garden of the righteous.

But boy, but girl, keep in mind that the journey doesn't end here. We will find each other again, anywhere in the world, in every bonfire, in every riptide. We will remember the night we promised our secondi we would set the world on fire.

Vojka and Ferruccio, the kindhearted witnesses of our ever-changing Community, once sang me a song that says: "A vent'anni la vita è oltre il ponte," "At the age of twenty, life awaits for you right there, beyond the bridge." Welcome on the threshold: pack your bags, store your finest memories, leave the anchorage, check your compass. It's time to set the sails for the unexplored shores.

Lose yourself, one last time, in the warm embrace of the Adriatic.