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## TRIPtych: What It Means to Be Independent

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# TRIptych

## What It Means to Be Independent



BY GABRIELLE PHILLIPS '21

As a first-time international traveler, I learned how important it is to explore a new culture, a new way of living and independence.

Before leaving for my semester abroad at the Accademia dell'Arte, a performing arts school in Arezzo – a city in Tuscany, Italy – I was incredibly nervous because I had never traveled outside of the United States. But when I stepped off the plane, I was speechless. It was like a beautiful daydream.

I learned from other musicians in the program, as well as the theatre department and several faculty members. We traveled to several cities across Italy: Venice, Florence, Cinque Terre, Siena, Rome, Pisa and Luca. In each city, we explored the old art and music history of the cities, as well as the new, modern communities and cultures.

I found that studying abroad has its challenges, like knowing how to manage money, learning a language or simply just missing the comfort and familiarity of home. But no matter how much I wanted a hug from my momma, I knew I had so many things to be thankful for.

This experience has meant learning to go with the flow, create new and deeper relationships, to broaden what it means to be independent and to be a student, a thinker, a dreamer – and to be myself. Whether going to the coffee shop and studying, taking a day trip to a new city, or taking the time to enjoy the scenery and to journal, this has been life-altering. ♦



The students of Accademia dell'Arte visit with Arezzo Mayor Alessandro Ghinelli (center) and his fiancée at Arezzo Town Hall.



Clockwise from left are Matisyn Darby '20, Mark Britt, who is the chairman of Furman's Department of Music, myself and Karen Mendes '21 during a workshop at Accademia dell'Arte.



Stopping to rest after touring Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Italy, are (clockwise from left) Darby, Mia Berindea '21, Mendes, Vanna Tsiknias '21, Jake Henjes '21 and me.

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