

VareseNews

Darren, an American teacher at High School

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Darren teaches at the “Tosi” High School in Busto. He is young, he has a warm smile, although his Italian is not quite perfect.

Darren Kusar comes from Pittsburgh, in the United States, where, through music, he got to know the Italian language and culture. **“I have an artistic background.** I like singing and I’m good at it. So, at university, I continued to perfect this great passion of mine. My first intention was actually to become a doctor, that’s why I studied **Latin**; during my college years, I came to Italy with my class, to visit towns that are famous for art, and monuments. Then, **during my academic studies, I started studying opera singing.** That music was my gateway to Italian culture. And, little by little, my scientific interests were replaced by art subjects. Now I’ve graduated, but before studying for a doctorate in musicology, I’ve decided to get some experience, teaching in Italy. So, here I am.”

Darren came to the **scientific high school in Busto through the Cite Program, which is run by the “Pacioli” Institute in Crema.** “The Italian school system is struggling to innovate,” explained Ms Ciapparelli, who teaches **mathematics and physics**, and who is responsible for internationalisation. “We have CLIL (content and language integrated learning, where non-language subjects are taught in a foreign language), but it’s hard to obtain the necessary certification. So, we create opportunities and models that can get around this limitation. Both students and parents have been asking for a foreign teacher. I asked the ‘Pacioli’ Institute, and we were included in the network.”

The young American will teach English conversation for twenty hours, to every class in the first

biennium. “We wanted to invest in these years, because the students have to get used to having a discussion in English. It’s not possible to improvise CLIL in the fifth year, it’s necessary to have a well-structured course where the students learn in English, enabling them to overcome the language barrier.”

But what happens in the classroom when Darren enters?

“I present a philosophical, cultural or current affairs topic to the students. We start discussing it, following a ‘debate’ model; the class is either divided to support opposing points of view, or they discuss freely. I listen to them and rarely intervene in the discussion, only when they make mistakes that change the meaning of the sentence. Otherwise, at the end, I point out any errors, and explain them. I want the students to overcome their fear of making mistakes; it’s only by actively taking part that they’ll acquire confidence.”

Until June, **“the Yankee teacher” will be a regular presence at the “Arturo Tosi” High School.** “He got a very warm welcome,” said Ms Ciapparelli. “Everyone in the school knows about him. As he’s young, the students stop him, to ask for advice or get him to help them.”

Darren is being put up by students’ families: he will be staying with three families, until June, so that he too can get a broad view of “Italian style”. “I feel good here. The climate is similar to that of Pittsburgh. It’s a small, but cosy town; everyone smiles at me. I like going to the bars in the centre and talking to people. When I came here, like all Americans, **I had an idealized view of Italy**, a country where everyone is happy, where you can really live well. I realised that our lives are similar, with concerns, problems, but also parties and socialising; just like in the States. I think that the only way to appreciate a place is **to let yourself be captured by it, to open up to it, leaving your preconceptions behind and forgetting the stereotypes.** We should be curious to discover who we have in front of us.”

di Translated by Mogavero & Rudi (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)