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## Moneti, Annamaria and Graziana Lazzarino. *Da capo.*

**New York: Thomson Heinle, 2007. Includes: multimedia support material in text audio CD format and companion Website. ISBN: 1-4130-1862-9.**

The 6th edition of *Da capo* is geared toward students at the post-secondary level and high school students enrolled in an advanced placement Italian course. Multimedia course components include a text, an audio program in CD format, a companion Website, and a workbook. The strength of the program lies in the comprehensive approach where the focus is on the acquisition of the four language skills.

These features increase the learner's motivation while providing a solid understanding of intermediate Italian, needed to succeed in eventually acquiring proficiency. Having taught Italian at every level — from elementary to university to evening courses — we fully appreciate the genuine strengths of this program.

In our classrooms, we have used the text, selected activities, and the multimedia materials as complements to the instructional activities of Italian classes. The subjects were engaging for both advanced and intermediate students. Real-life situations were presented while students learned the associated vocabulary. Interspersed throughout were grammar lessons that reinforced the learning of the core components of the specific unit and were paired with the core curriculum content standards.

Each chapter starts with an introductory section, *Per cominciare*, which provides an overview of the topics covered in the chapter. It also includes a list of essential vocabulary words in the *vocabolario utile*, providing invaluable reference.

The cultural reading, *Vivere in Italia*, immediately introduces key grammar and vocabulary concepts through an open dialogue that could be successfully used by students in improvisation and role-playing activities. Follow-up activities providing the basis for cooperative learning are presented in the section *A voi la parola*.

The core of each chapter is represented by the *Struttura* section, which covers the main grammar concepts and related activities, arranged in order of increasing difficulty. Following the grammar portion of each chapter is a reading section that illustrates grammatical elements with respect to Italian culture.

One program component that was particularly impressive was the efficient integration of technology provided by the multimedia material. In our opinion, this feature makes this text superior to others. One might even consider the multimedia package as the core of the course while the useful workbook would provide invaluable support and reference. In *Da capo*, the conventional hierarchy between book and ancillary materials is inverted, with the clear result of creating a revolutionary and unique program of study. In fact, through the interactive virtual activities, the practice discussion questions, and the presentation of key terms and phrases with audio pronunciation and written examples used in the specific context, the learner is fully and comfortably immersed in a realistic Italian-speaking environment. The interactive material not only provides highlights from situations frequently occurring but also addresses the fundamental problems of communication that might arise from such situations, providing many opportunities for further discussion. The focus on grammatical and structural concepts that are particularly difficult for English speakers mastering Italian represents another great strength of the program. In the section titled *Studio di parole*, particular attention is given to idiomatic meanings of certain expressions that might confuse the inexperienced speaker who literally translates into English. Within the specific context analyzed, effective strategies aimed at clarifying the real meaning of those expressions are provided.

The core of the multimedia material allows students to take advantage of another opportunity to review chapter concepts and reinforce listening and speaking skills. In the reference vocabulary, the program goes one step further, providing an invaluable, fully interactive tool: the audio pronunciation of key terms and phrases. The emphasis is on creating an effective, practical course to teach the spoken language rather than the written, more academic, idiom.

The color photo inserts contain culturally relevant images that can be used in an assortment of classroom activities. Students can work with them individually or in groups and at any point during the class.

The *Ricerca* Web section of each chapter engages students in the use of technology to perform research on relevant aspects of the cultural and historical aspects of Italy. Answers and feedback are provided in real time in the interactive exercises of the companion Website, while the quizzes are automatically graded to allow instantaneous assessment of learning. The potentialities of the program surpass the general requirements of a conventional classroom setting. The structure of the program and its versatility allow for its natural application to online distance learning, making it a cutting-edge learning tool.

Overall, we would rate the *Da capo* program as superior, innovative, and extremely versatile. Without hesitation, we would recommend it as a tool to train students at both the advanced high school and university levels.

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## **Publisher's Response**

As Professors Carlucci and Paoletti state in their thoughtful review, *Da Capo* demonstrates the practical application of Italian language in the global community and provides solid preparation of intermediate Italian needed to acquire solid proficiency in the language. Through a communicative approach, *Da Capo* aptly reflects the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* and addresses the *National Standards of Foreign Language Education*, joining acquisition of language skills with exploration of Italian culture.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the program, as insightfully expressed by the reviewers, lies in its comprehensive approach, focusing on the acquisition of the four language skills. Professors Carlucci and Paoletti note how the presentation of real-life situations with associated vocabulary is engaging for both intermediate and advanced students, and the incorporation of grammar throughout reinforces core curriculum content standards. They point to the cultural readings, *Vivere in Italia*, as an example of this finely-tuned integration, as students are introduced with key grammar and vocabulary in an interactive manner.

The reviewers were most impressed with the integration of technology and multimedia, going so far as to consider the multimedia package central to the core of the course. The media components are so important because they fully and comfortably immerse the student in a realistic Italian-speaking environment through interactive virtual activities that give students another opportunity to review concepts while reinforcing listening and speaking skills. *Da Capo* is described as a “revolutionary and unique program of study”, because it focuses on the effective teaching of spoken-practical language rather than the written idiom.

Professors Carlucci and Paoletti correctly point out that the multi-media program highlights frequently-occurring situations while addressing some of the fundamental problems of communication for English speakers. The companion Website engages students in Italian culture while giving them the tools to refine their skills with instantaneous feedback on online exercises and quizzes. The reviewers find the focus on grammatical and structural concepts that are particularly challenging to English-speaking students is another great strength of the program.

I would like to point out two additional features of the sixth edition: the inclusion of *Putumayo's Italian café music CD* which students may purchase at a reduced

price through Heinle and then enjoy listening to both classical and contemporary Italian music, and Heinle's online Personal Tutoring service which allows students to schedule a help session with tutors who have advanced degrees.

It is hoped that students using *Da Capo* will further develop their language ability in Italian and gain a broader view of Italians and Italian society. And, it is hoped that instructors will teach from *Da Capo* again and again — each time with a renewed commitment to addressing the differing instructional needs of language learners in their own classrooms.

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