



Reading Primo Levi in Italy and in the World. A Video Interview with Natalia Indrimi

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“Many versions of Primo Levi exist, and they depend of course very much on the different cultures that read him...” In this video interview Natalia Indrimi, Director of the Centro Primo Levi, describes the Center’s activities, its current Fall program, and the upcoming International Symposium “New Voices on Primo Levi (New York, October 25-27.)

We meet Natalia Indrimi in the beautiful library of the Center for Jewish History, in the heart of Manhattan. The center is a consortium of research organizations studying, collecting, and preserving the history of Jewish communities all over the world. The Centro Primo Levi has become its Italian



chapter and, as Dr. Indrimi explains, this is in itself an interesting development for "t

he history of the Italian Jewish community is the most ancient of all the European communities, and it has also been the ground for mediation between the history of the Jews in the Middle East and the Mediterranean area and what happened in Northern Europe."

Notwithstanding the millenia-long history it brings upon its shoulders, so to speak, Centro Primo Levi is a very modern institution, with a strong interactive presence on the web and a very extended virtual life. "We intentionally started s an organization that can live both a social and a virtual life. And [our web site](#) [2] is not only a way through which we communicate our program, but it is becoming a real multifunctional information platform." The site informs about everything that happens in Italian Jewish studies all over the world and through this platform many people are getting connected, especially in the academoc world.

The bulk of the interview your find above is dedicated to the description of the Centro's Fall program, which has several events and three main projects: the International Symposium "New Voices on Primo Levi" (October 25th through the 27th), the residency of Lia Levi (November 2nd through the 5th), and the day dedicated to the Jews of Piedmont, on December 8th.

Dr. Indrimi also speaks about one novelty of this year: for the first time the symposium will have a special opening, a concert: "We have discovered that many contemporary composers have dedicated works to Levi and we have decided that each year we will stage one of them. This year we start with the Israeli composer Tzvi Avni, who wrote a beautiful suite for piano and soprano based on five poems of Primo Levi." The concert wil be on October 25th, 6pm, at the Center for Jewish History and afterwards Samuel Adler, of the Juilliard School of Music, will have a public conversation with composer Tzvi Avni.





Then follow the two days of study. On October 26th at Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò (6pm), the figure of Primo Levi in Italy will be analyzed under two main respects. First, Ernesto Ferrero—who has been the editor of Primo Levi at the publishing house Einaudi during almost his entire career—will be discussing the very crucial topic of memory: something that Primo Levi saw “as a very complex item.” The second topic will be philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s reading of Levi. “This is something that has been since the beginning very controversial and has attracted a lot of criticism... and yet it has had the merit of bringing the ideas of Levi and the discourse on Levi to audiences to groups of scholars who probably would not have come in touch with him otherwise.”

The second day of the symposium, October 27th, will be at CUNY Graduate Center (5pm) and will be dedicated as always to “Primo Levi in Translation.” It will discuss the **reading of Primo Levi in German as well as his recent translations in Arabic and Farsi—something that highlights “the universality of suffering,” as the title of this session says. Prior to these sessions, at 1:30pm, a series of archival interviews with Primo Levi and a television single act drama based on one of Levi’s science-fiction stories will be presented in collaboration with RAI Corporation and RAI Teche.**

In the final part of the interview, Dr. Indrimi offers some highlights of the Centro Primo Levi’s Spring program. The main project is a two-day conference with scholars who have studied the experience of the Italian Jewish expatriates in America, following the racial laws of 1938. It will be the first gathering ever dedicated to the study of this particular chapter of Italian emigration and of the history of Italians and Italian Americans in the U.S. and especially in New York. “There will be a number of issues, some sociological, some personal, and some that have to do with the ideas that these people contributed to the American society.”

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