

"New Voices on Primo Levi". The Symposium Opens in New York

(October 26, 2009)



On October 25 the International Symposium "New Voices on Primo Levi" started at the Center for Jewish History. The first day included a concert for piano and soprano composed by Tzvi Avni. Two days of discussion will follow, the 26th at Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, NYU, and the 27th at CUNY Graduate Center.

From a series of small annual meetings, the "New Voices on Primo Levi" symposium has grown to become one of the main international windows on the work of the Italian writer and scientist, held in collaboration with the New York University and the CUNY Graduate Center.

This year, in connection with the 90th Anniversary of Levi's birth, there are two important news: the collaboration with the recently born Centro Internazionale di Studi Primo Levi in Turin, and the



establishment of an annual concert featuring works on Primo Levi by contemporary composers.

On this special occasion Prof. **Andrew Viterbi**, scientist, inventor, educator, and philanthropist opened the symposium at the Center for Jewish History on October 25 with a personal reflection on Primo Levi, his cousin and friend.

The inaugural concert featured the song cycle *If This Is a Man*, that the Israeli composer Tzvi Avni based on five poems by Primo Levi. The piece was initially composed for orchestra and soprano and has been recorded by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. That version premiered in New York in 1999 as part of the Interfaith Concert of Remembrance. The version for piano and soprano, featuring German virtuoso Rainer Ambrust and the prodigious Israeli soprano Sharon Rorstorf-Zamir, was created for this event. Following the concert Tzvi Avni was in conversation with Juilliard faculty Samuel Adler.

The line-up of prominent speakers include, among others, post-memory theorist Marianne Hirsch, anthropologist Talal Asad, life-time editor of Levi and author of one his finest intellectual biographies, Ernesto Ferrero, German comparatist Ernestine Bradley, world-renowned Israeli composer **Tzvi Avni**, Algerian novelist Boualem Sansal, novelist and founding director of the New York University's Center for Dialogues Mustapha Tlili, and Hebrew University Italianist, Manuela Consonni.

A rare appearance of Primo Levi's Italian editor at Einaudi, Ernesto Ferrero, held under the aegis of the **Primo Levi International Research Center** in Turin, will offer the opportunity to come closer to the set of cultural and ethical references of Levi's life, that has largely eluded his biographers. Dr. Ferrero is currently head of the International Book Fair of Turin. The Primo Levi International Research Center was created by Levi's family and local government agencies to sustain the research on his writings and foster interest in the many intellectual debates he initiated.

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.

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