

Spring Literary Events

Highlight of the season will be the visit of esteemed novelist Jonathan Coe to Florence who will appear in conversation with our own Baret Magarian at Le Murate Literary Café on March 17th at 6:30 pm. Birmingham born, London resident, Coe is the author of eleven novels, including the three prize-winners *What a Carve Up!*, *The House of Sleep*, and *The Rotters' Club* and, most recently, *Number Eleven*. His biography of the novelist B. F. Johnson, *Like a Fiery Elephant*, also won the 2005 Samuel Johnson prize in the best non-fiction book of the year category. Coe's longtime friend and interlocutor at Le Murate, Baret Magarian, is a British-born Armenian writer residing in Florence, writing and teaching literature at various US universities in Italy. He's fresh off of readings of his own work at both the British Institute and at the Florence Writers series at St. Mark's church. You can also hear his original music online under the name Floto Music. Baret promises "A searching and profound dialogue about the art of fiction and about literature's importance." Can't wait! The Florence Writers group at St. Mark's Church in Via Maggio is, as usual, hosting a series of literary events this spring, highlighted by publishing day on May 14th. This all-day event will allow prospective authors to meet with literary insiders and discuss publishing with a

panel consisting of literary agents Kimberley Cameron and Andrea Cirillo, an editor at HarperCollins, Martha Ashby, and author Nuala O'Connor. If you're interested in attending this exciting opportunity, please register by March 15th to insure yourself a spot—there is a fee and participation is limited. See the FlorenceWritersItaly facebook page or email info@stmarksitaly.com for details.

Also up at St. Mark's this spring, on Tuesday, March 15th, Stephen Citynskij will launch his recently published book, *Sasha*. The novel tells the story of a woman's awakening to family mysteries in the wake of the passing of a loved one. Also St. Mark's annual open mic will take place on the evening of Thursday April 7th at 7 pm. All are invited to listen and sign up and read from their own works or a favorite poem. Negronis will be served to stir resolve.

The Florence Writer's group are still running their monthly Open Mic at the Hostel Tasso in Via Villani, near the piazza named for the troubled Ferrarese poet. Already through their ninth edition, this open celebration of prose, verse, and song happens on the first Wednesday of every month—all are welcome to read or perform their original work to the liveliest audience in town! Scottish magician and playwright Lorenzo Novani will be handing the hosting duties for the March edition.

Christ Stopped at Eboli, Levi at Piazza Pitti

Book explores Carlo Levi's universe

"Still today it is not easy to reach Aliano." It is precisely this the beginning of a recent book by journalist and writer Nicola Coccia on Jewish writer Carlo Levi. Exiled by the Fascist regime to the small southern Italian city first and to France afterwards, after returning to Florence during the war years Levi wrote his masterpiece *Christ Stopped at Eboli* in an apartment of a friend at Piazza Pitti hiding from the fascists and nazis.

Published by ETS Edizioni and divided in three parts, *L'arse Argille Consolerai. Carlo Levi, dal Confino alla Liberazione di Firenze attraverso Testimonianze, Foto e Documenti Inediti*, is based on previously unpublished witnesses, photos and documents that Coccia meticulously researched and that

In the apartment of Anna Maria Ichino in Piazza Pitti, accompanied by the noise of the bullets of the civil war flying in the streets, with a pencil Levi wrote his masterpiece

bring new evidence on the facts that marked the human, artistic and intellectual path of Carlo Levi. The first part explores the exile period: the ten months when Levi was confined to Aliano and the period that he spent in France with Paola Olivetti, who with was sharing his life and the fight against fascism. Coccia describes the life of Levi with the peasants of the small, isolated village between art (Levi was also a painter), social activities, misery and Malaria.

In the second part of the book, the longest, Coccia reconstructs the Florentine months of Levi, from the German occupation to the liberation of the city. Written almost as a novel, the 25 central chapters have as their protagonists important and common people alike, intellectuals and artists as well as anonymous figures, joint together by the common cause of the anti-fascist war. Among all these characters, the most striking is that of Anna Maria Ichino, the woman who offered her apartment in Piazza Pitti as a refugee to Levi where, accompanied by the noise of the bullets of the civil war flying in the streets, between the end of 1943 and the summer of 1944 he wrote his masterpiece. Anna Maria Ichino is also the woman who offered

to type the manuscript that her lover had written with a pencil, thus transforming it into a book that, among its other merits, had that of raising attention to one of the historical problems of Italy, destined to re-emerge dramatically in the immediate post-war years: the Italian southern question. In the pages of Levi, Aliano becomes the metaphor of all those places in the world that are still waiting for a moral, social and economic redemption. It does so also in those of Coccia: in fact, "still today it is not easy to reach Aliano."



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