



Comune di Roma
Assessorato alle Politiche Culturali



Ministero per i Beni
e le Attività Culturali
Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma

LETTERATURE

6th International Festival in Rome

The Basilica of Maxentius – the Roman Forum

May 18th – June 21st 2007

close, distant

Rome, April 12th 2007

THE FESTIVAL

From May 18th to June 21st the **sixth edition of “Letterature – Rome’s International Festival”** will be held, hosting some of the most important authors in the literary world, in the suggestive setting of the **Basilica of Maxentius** at the Roman Forum.

This year **17 authors have been invited**, 13 foreigners and 4 Italians. They will appear in **10 events** under the vaults of the Constantinian basilica, celebrating texts and words, always the absolute leading players on the stage at Maxentius.

Created in 2002, the *Letterature* Festival has already hosted in the course of the first five editions, many extremely prestigious authors, such as David Grossman, Toni Morrison, Gunter Grass, Manuel Vasquez Montalban, Daniel Pennac, Ian Mc Ewan Abraham B. Yeoshua, Doris Lessing, Andrea Camilleri, Don De Lillo, Susan Sontag, Banana Yoshimoto, Paul Auster, Antonio Tabucchi, Jonathan Franzen, John. M. Coetzee, Carlos Fuentes, Salman Rushdie, Javier Marias, Amos Oz, Nadine Gordimer, Zadie Smith, Gore Vidal... to mention only a few. The Festival has been a great success with audiences registering the presence of about 40.000 at each edition, becoming an established and popular event in the capital for those curious about literature and those with a passion for books.

Each year the authors invited to participate in this event have presented to the audiences a **new text** written specifically for the Festival and based on a specific theme, different for each edition: “alone, together” in 2002; “past, future” in 2003; “real, imaginary” in 2004; “fear, hope” in 2005; and “natural, artificial” in 2006.

The theme chosen for the 2007 edition is *close, distant*: an antinomic pair of words we have translated into English as *crossover*. This year the Festival asks the authors to express themselves, with their texts and their stories, on the nomadic, transitional, bewildering and constantly crossing over dimension of all that is *contemporary*, a dimension characterising expressive cultural forms, but also and above all our collective and individual existential experiences. Interactions, sliding, continuous moving from one world to another, from one state of mind to another, from one country to another, from one artistic form of expression to another... in possible continuous transformation, superimposition, counterposition. What is close can suddenly become distant, and what is distant can suddenly become close, in a game of cross-referring that art and literature manage to reflect and portray guaranteeing the existence of various points of view, conjugating positive energies, reconciling instinct and reason, often destroying clichés and prejudices.

Inspired by this theme, all the authors invited will therefore write a new text that they will read to the audience in their **own language**.

The subject however for this edition, has also inspired **the new formula** that will be presented **in five of the ten events**. The **novelty compared to past editions, is the presence on these occasions of artistic images**: these will be **video works of art** by great artists, mainly foreign ones, often seen “for the first time in Italy”, used to introduce the authors. The works of art shown will introduce the audience to the author’s world, proposing an evocative and exciting ‘crossover’ between the author’s words and the artists’ images.

The other five events will instead follow the **traditional formula**, representing the successful elements of past editions. Before the *readings* of previously unpublished texts by the authors invited to the Festival, Italian theatre and film actor will introduce the authors, reading passages from their books already published in Italy.

All ten evenings will end, as always, with live music performed by excellent Italian musicians chosen in cooperation with the ‘Casa del Jazz’ in Rome.

The Festival’s artistic direction is by the director of the Casa delle Letterature, **Maria Ida Gaeta**; while artistic consultant for the five events introduced by actors is **Piero Maccarinelli**; artistic consultancy for the five events introduced by artistic works of art is provided by the **Masbedo duo** (Nicolò Massazza and Jacopo Bedogni) in cooperation with the musician *Vittorio Cosma* and, for the selection and borrowing of the works of art, with the *La Gaia* collection in Busca (Cuneo).

THE EVENTS

The Festival will open on **Friday May 18th**, and is entrusted to the extraordinary Chilean author **Isabel Allende**. She will be introduced by video artists

The evening of **Tuesday May 22nd** will be dedicated to two authors of novels characterised by strong social commitment.

Ismael Beah, the child-soldier from Sierra Leone and **Rita El-Khayat**, one of Morocco’s most important intellectuals. Both authors will be introduced by video artists.

Tuesday May 29th will see two important Irish authors on stage: **John Banville**, considered one of the greatest contemporary English language authors and **Catherine Dunne**, one of the most important representatives in great popular literature written by women. Both authors will be introduced by two Italian actors.

On **Thursday May 31st** we will hear a pair of foreign authors who achieved international fame as real publishing events: **Robert McLiam Wilson**, the Irishman “who writes like God” and **Gregory David Roberts**, author of the best seller *Shantaram*. Both authors will be introduced by video artists.

Tuesday June 5th will be an evening devoted to Turkey, with **Elif Shafak**, a real literary case with the book *The bastard of Istanbul* and **Feridun Zaimoglu**, the Turkish author who has lived in Germany for over 35 years; both authors will be introduced by the work of a number of artists.

Thursday June 7th, the first Italian to appear in this edition of the Festival, **Giancarlo De Cataldo**, will be present on the stage at Maxentius. Before his reading of his new text, an actor will read the prologue to his new book which is to be published during the Festival.

Tuesday June 12th will see the presence of two great authors, investigators of history and the past but also great maestros in an introspective analysis of interpersonal relationships: **E. L. Doctorow**, considered one of the most important contemporary American authors, and **Roberto Calasso**, one of Italy’s most important writers. Their evening will follow the traditional format with actors.

A murder-mystery evening on **Thursday June 14th**, with two authors famous for being great maestros of this genre.

Gianrico Carofiglio, the writer who inaugurated the Italian "legal thriller" series and **Alicia Gimenez-Bartlett**, the acclaimed Spanish author. Their new readings will be introduced by actors.

Tuesday June 19th will have **Scott Turow** as the Festival's reading character, a real star of American and international literature. A great actor will read a passage from one of his books, already published in Italy and then he will read a text written for the Maxentius Festival.

The **Festival's final evening, on Thursday June 21st**, will be held in the sign of investigative novels with a ideal link between Naples and Mumbai, hosting the Italian author of the book of the year *Gomorra*, **Roberto Saviano** and the Indian author **Vikram Chandra**. They will be introduced by great Italian and foreign video-artists.

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