**“TRANSATLANTIC KAFKA”: THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE IS PREPARING A FOUR-DAY EVENT FULL OF DISCUSSIONS AND TALKS THAT WILL HIGHLIGHT AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE WORK OF FRANZ KAFKA**

PRAGUE, JUNE 5, 2024

**From June 17 to 20, the Jewish Museum in Prague will be inviting both local and international visitors to a series of seven talks and discussions centered around the ideas of Franz Kafka in a present-day context. Simultaneous interpreting will be provided. This project will bring together prominent writers, academics, and artists from the United States and Europe to provide their various perspectives on the work of Franz Kafka and on his relationship to love, friendship, and Jewishness.**

Pavla Niklová, the director of the Jewish Museum in Prague, adds the following: “The aim of our “Transatlantic Kafka” series of talks and discussions is, among other things, to provoke innovative, inspiring, and topical discussions on contemporary social events with regard to a writer whose ideas have traveled the world. All of our distinguished guests will literally be bringing Kafka’s American voice back to Prague, where it will be heard in both Czech and English over the course of four days.”

Since the late 1940s, Franz Kafka has been considered one of the 20th-century’s most influential thinkers and writers in Europe and the United States. His work was particularly well received in the United States, where Salman Schocken, a Jewish émigré from Nazi Germany, published English translations of Kafka’s books in 1945, thereby introducing this unique author to the American public. At the same time, the philosopher Hannah Arendt, another refugee from Nazi Germany, interpreted Kafka’s works in the context of totalitarianism and fascism. Such engagement helped to bring Kafka acclaim in Europe and the United States as one of the most important thinkers and writers of the 20th century.

All three talks taking place in Prague’s Maisel Synagogue on June 17, 18 and 19 will provide a “transatlantic” view of Kafka’s work and personality.

On Monday, **June 17 at 5 p.m.**, the literary scholar, translator and teacher from the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University **Veronika Tuckerová** will be literally following the Prague footsteps of Franz Kafka and discussing how Kafka was interpreted by readers in Communist Czechoslovakia (including Václav Havel’s perception of Kafka’s work in 1980).

The centenary of Franz Kafka’s death also marks a hundred years since the writer, translator and composer Max Brod ignored Kafka’s express instructions to burn his manuscripts, instead preserving them for future generations. But what exactly was the nature of their relationship, over which a question mark still hovers? Why Brod ultimately did not reflect Kafka’s wishes will be explained in a talk on Tuesday, **18 June at 5 p.m.**, given by the writer, American Academy in Rome member and New Yorker journalist **Elif Batuman**.

The keynote talk in the Transatlantic Kafka series will focus on Franz Kafka’s relation to love. It will be given on Wednesday, **19 June at 7 p.m.** by **Merve Emre**, Professor of Creative Writing and Criticism at Wesleyan University, Director of the Shapiro Center for Creative Writing and Criticism, and Associate Professor of American Literature at the University of Oxford. Among other things, Merve Emre has explored the themes of female authors and female characters (including the work of the anonymous literary author Elena Ferrante and her collaboration on HBO’s hit series *My Brilliant Friend*).

Kafka's relationship with women is generally viewed as problematic. Merve Emre will shed light on various issues, such as Kafka's perception of marriage (Kafka never married; he was engaged to Felice Bauer twice but broke off the engagement each time, and was engaged to Julie Wohryzek but that relationship also dissolved), as well as his attitude to love at a distance and the role of letters in his amorous adventures.

An intersection of transatlantic and European perspectives on the life and work of Franz Kafka will be presented in the discussions taking place mostly at the Maisel Synagogue between June 17 and 20 and at the Václav Havel Library on 18 June.

On Monday, **June** **17 at 7 p.m.**, **Veronika Tuckerová**, the writer **Magdaléna Platzová** and the internationally acclaimed translator (including of*The Diaries of Franz Kafka*) and Guggenheim Fellowship and Fulbright Scholarship recipient **Ross Benjamin** will be discussing how Kafka has been interpreted over the past hundred years.

On Tuesday, **June 18 at 7 p.m.** (this time at the Václav Havel Library), **Magdaléna Platzová** and the author of the novel Soy Milena de Praga [I am Milena from Prague] **Monika Zgustová** will be exploring Kafka’s relationships with Milena Jesenská and Felice Bauer, and how they influenced his work. Magdaléna Platzová adds the following comments with regard to this discussion evening: “Who was Felice Bauer, a woman known to generations of Kafka fans only as a lover of meaty dishes, heavy furniture, and precise watches? Who was the woman hiding behind the poised nature and hearty laughter in the accounts? Moreover, what was the reach of Kafka’s shadow in her life? Little is known about her life after her separation from the Prague writer. She got married, had two children, and emigrated to America. For forty years, she kept the letters of the man who left her...”

On Wednesday, **June 19**, **Ross Benjamin** and **Daniel Medin**, a comparative literature professor at the American University of Paris, will be discussing Kafka’s connection to his Jewish identity. In his diaries and letters, Kafka constantly grappled with what it meant to be ‘Jewish’ in his time, and faith was an important theme in his writing.

The last talk in this series will be held in association with the Austrian Cultural Forum on Thursday, **June 20 at 5 p.m.** The Chairman of the Austrian Franz Kafka Society **Manfred Müller** and the writer **Hans Platzgumer** will be discussing the role of dreams in Kafka’s work. Who was the Russian dancer Eugenie Eduardowa, first seen by Kafka in Prague in 1909 and mentioned in his letters to Felice Bauer? Kafka later wrote that he dreamed about her for months. Does Kafka’s writing itself not occupy the space between waking and dreaming?

**For more on events organized by the Jewish Museum in Prague as part of the Kafka100 project (including a complete overview of the “Transatlantic Kafka” talks and discussions), see** [**https://kafka100.cz/akce/**](https://kafka100.cz/akce/)

**Kafka100**

The Transatlantic Kafka project is part of “KAFKA100”, a year-long series of events organized by the Jewish Museum in Prague in commemoration of the centenary of this world-renowned writer from Prague. Among the other events in this series are the urban game “In Search of Odradek” and the Samsa Enigma exhibition, which features work by the Israeli typographer Oded Ezer and is currently on view at the Robert Guttmann Gallery.

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