



ISRAELI CULTURAL AMBASADORS AT LIVORNO

by Samuel Sondak

The Belforte book store of Livorno, recipient of the Italian cultural prize of 1999 (on its centennial anniversary) by the Prime Minister, recently hosted two Israeli writers - at the presentation of their books in Italian by the editor Giuntina of Florence. Benny Barbash's book My First Sony was translated by Rosanella Volponi, who was present, and Bonds of Love by Haim Be'er, was translated by Shulim Vogelmann, the editor's son.

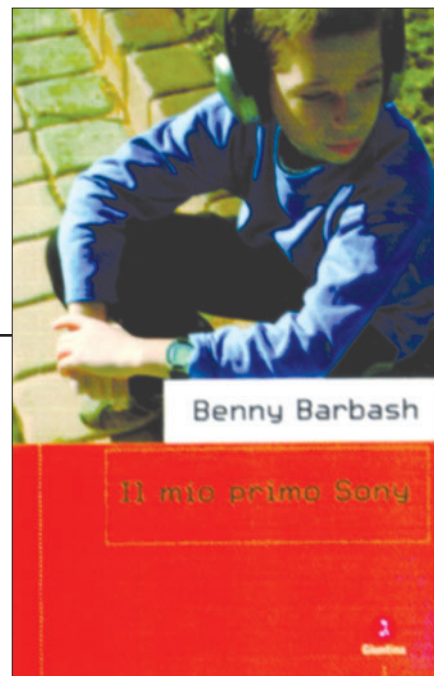
A full capacity audience at this animated event included a group of students from the Guerrazzi - Niccolini High School - Middle School who had read My First Sony as a class assignment. Fabrizio Lelli, Professor of Hebraic and Israeli Literature at the University of Lecce provided an interesting literary historical background.

Moreover, he also assisted in translating the students incisive queries and those of the public in Hebrew, as well as, the writers responses and comments in Italian. Notwithstanding a negative response by the author Barbash to a student's query as to his use of James Joyce's - stream of consciousness - the appeal of his book in England and other European countries is evidenced by the following translations: German 1996, 1999, 2003 and 2005, Greek 1997 and English 1999. The book deals with the ten year old Yotam's continuous reliance on his Sony tape recordings to relate the tribulations

of his family, the events of his infancy and that of Israel. It seems that Barbash's sense of humor reveals an affinity which typifies the comic quality for which the Livornese are noted as found in the following phrase: "This theory that followed in the footsteps of the physics theory of chaos, taht supports as well, taht everything was connected - a butterfly that defecates in the Gobi desert makes the sewers of New York to overflow".

Benny Barbash is 52 years of age and currently lives in Tel Aviv. He served in the Yom Kippur war where he was seriously wounded and ended his eleven year military career as a Lieutenant Colonel. He is also a poet, playwright and scenarist. Mr Barbash has the distinct honor of having written the script for the Israeli film beyond the Walls which won the critic's prize at the 1984 Venice Film Festival and was a best foreign film nomination for the American Oscar Award.

Haim Be'er the author of Bonds of Love was born in 1945 in Jerusalem and served in the Israeli armed forces as a rabbi. It was his maternal grandmother who urged him to perpetuate the memory of the family's rabbinical ancestors whereas, his mother encour-



aged him to read and to write with the intent that he become an author.

As opposed to Yotam, the narrator in Barbash's book, Haim disclosed strictly autobiographical events from his childhood to the last thirty months of his mother's life in the hospital with a brain tumor. In addition, there are numerous references to Jewish law and tradition and the cabala - an ancient mystical method of interpreting the Bible. A tragic event which influenced Haim permanently took place during the Kippur war.

"I found a hand that had a wrist watch still attached. From then on that hand, that I have never forgotten, writes all my prose and in it there's intimacy, pessimism but all

the same too - a bit of humor that serves to silence the mosquito's buzz of death." As a poet and novelist his works were honored by receiving the prestigious Bialik and Bernstein awards. The Jerusalem Post late October edition of 1998 stated that Bonds of Love (original title - Ropes) "is the most important work of Hebrew literature this autumn".



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