

# TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AND ARTISTIC CREATION

## PROGRAMME

### **Colloquy**

15-18 October 2002

Palais de l'Europe, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France

*We wish to express our thanks to the panel of experts for their great help in devising the programme :*

M<sup>me</sup> Martine Benayoun, vice-présidente de la Licra, France ;

M. Jacky Fredj, directeur du Centre de documentation juive contemporaine et du Mémorial du martyr juif inconnu, Paris ;

M<sup>me</sup> Anne Grynberg, professeur d'histoire à l'Inalco, Paris ;

M. Serge Klarsfeld, président de l'association «Les Fils et Filles des déportés juifs de France» ;

M. Olivier Lalieu, chargé de mission auprès de la directrice de la mémoire, du patrimoine et des archives du ministère de la Défense, France

M<sup>me</sup> Isabelle le Masne de Chermont, conservateur en chef chargé du Service des bibliothèques, des archives et de la documentation générale (Direction des musées de France) ;

M. Francis Lott, ambassadeur chargé du suivi des actions engagées par la France pour l'indemnisation des victimes de la Shoah ;

M. Max Polonovski, conservateur en chef du patrimoine, chargé de mission pour la protection du patrimoine juif au ministère de la Culture ;

M<sup>me</sup> Carole Reich, secrétaire du Comité directeur de l'éducation du Conseil de l'Europe ;

M. Yvon Roe d'Albert, ambassadeur, directeur des archives du Quai d'Orsay, France ;

M. Pierre Saragoussi, directeur général de la Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah ;

M. Claude Singer, historien, responsable pédagogique du Centre de documentation juive contemporaine, Paris ;

M<sup>me</sup> Annette Wiewiorka, conseiller scientifique du colloque, historienne, directrice de recherche au CNRS, France.

*Photograph :*

Strasbourg synagogue set on fire by the Nazis on 12 September 1940

Private collection

Extract from the book by Jean Daltroff

*1898-1940: the consistorial synagogue in Strasbourg*

Edition Ronald Hirlé, 1996, Strasbourg

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Welcome – Introduction .....	5
The colloquy .....	6
The themes chosen for the four workshops .....	11
Workshop 1 : Depicting the Holocaust – plastic arts .....	11
Workshop 2 : Depicting the Holocaust – cinema and television .	12
Workshop 3 : Depicting the Holocaust – theatre and literature ..	13
Workshop 4 : What kinds of museography for the Holocaust? ...	14
Programme of events .....	15
Cultural programme .....	18
General information.....	19



## Welcome – Introduction

The pain was too great to live with day by day but it was also too great to be allowed to die.

For those very simple reasons, stemming from the imperative of life and the need to hand down knowledge to future generations, the Holocaust, at a time when memory is passing away into history, remains for us the moment and place of absolute evil, requiring constant reflection and reconsideration.

In a world where art and culture are considered to produce what is noblest in man, we felt that the time had come to take a critical look at the meeting between the most barbaric of events and the various means of expressing it in the arts. Hence the theme of our colloquy: Teaching about the Holocaust and Artistic Creation.

To this end, the Fondation de la Mémoire de la Shoah, presided by Mrs Simone Veil, the Council of Europe and its Secretary General, Mr Walter Schwimmer, have joined forces with the International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance, chaired by France until 2003, to organise these days in Strasbourg, during which education ministers are to officially launch a day of Holocaust remembrance and prevention of crimes against humanity in the schools of the forty-eight states signatory to the European Cultural Convention.

Strasbourg, seat of the Council of Europe and a city that had its synagogue burnt down in 1940, has not been chosen by chance. Strasbourg remains the symbol of European construction and Franco-German reconciliation.

Welcome to Strasbourg. I wish you a fruitful colloquy.

The French Delegate  
to the International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance

## The colloquy

Today, sixty years after the terrible year when the efforts to exterminate the Jews of Europe reached a peak, the Holocaust has become part of history and of the collective imagination, including in countries far distant from those in which the murdered Jews lived. Many states – such as France in 1982 – have made these events part of the school curriculum, or are in the process of doing so. A growing number of seminars, colloquies, remembrance days and study visits to the death sites are being organised.

Since the era of the pioneers such as Léon Poliakov in France, Gerald Reitlinger in Britain and Raul Hilberg in America, historical research on the subject has made considerable progress, as can be seen from the increase in the number of scientific publications. This dynamism can be ascribed to the commitment shown by young researchers, who were not alive when these events took place, by increased access to archives, which are now declassified in many countries, and by the opening up of the former Soviet bloc.

At the same time, over the past twenty years the supply of all kinds of information on the Holocaust has been inexhaustible. Apart from news items on the political crises that arose when the attitudes shown at the time by certain countries, politicians, communities or companies were challenged, there is a wide range of literature on the subject (novels, comic strips, plays, etc.), a growing number of memorial museums and an endless supply of films, television fiction and documentary programmes. Those responsible for informing and educating the younger generations cannot suffer from a dearth of material, but rather from a glut, making it difficult to find their bearings and resulting in confusion.

The way in which this “memory”, in the broadest sense, developed is now well documented as a result of the considerable work done by historians concerning a large number of countries. From the art produced in the camps and the ghettos and the first post-liberation testimonies and commentaries to the impressive exhibition which opened in Berlin on 17 January 2002, people have endlessly come back to the subject of the Holocaust. A new debate is needed on the works of all kinds being produced and the many plans for memorials.

Initially, it was the survivors who bore the burden of remembrance. They wrote a great deal (mainly in Yiddish), held many commemorations amongst themselves, raised memorials to their families and friends, collected eyewitness accounts and began some historiographic work of a very high standard, *inter alia* in Paris at the Centre de documentation juive contemporaine, established as an underground organisation in 1943, in New York at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and in Warsaw at the Jewish Historical Institute. Yet, during this initial period, until Eichmann was brought to trial in Jerusalem, only works of literature reached an audience wider than the ranks of the victims. First there was the *Diary of Anne Frank*, which was translated into many languages and had, and continues to have, a considerable impact, especially since it was adapted for the theatre in 1967 and the cinema a few years later. Then there was the success of John Hershey's *The wall*, a novel in which the main character is based on Emmanuel Ringelblum, the archivist of the Warsaw Ghetto. Mention can also be made of Schwarz-Bart's *The Last of the Just*, which won the Goncourt prize in 1959, the works of Anna Langus (*Le sel et le souffre* (The whole land brimstone) in 1960 and *Les bagages de sable*, the Goncourt prizewinner in 1962) and Jerzy Kosinski's highly controversial *The painted bird*, written in 1965.

How should what happened at Auschwitz be told? Has anyone the right to produce poetry or fiction on and after Auschwitz? Could it not be said that certain testimonies (*Night* by Elie Wiesel, *If this is a man* by Primo Levi...) now belong to universal literature? Is it possible to write on the subject in the executioners' own language? This is a question frequently raised by the work of Paul Celan, the author of the symbolic poem *Death fugue*, published as *Todesfuge* in Germany as early as 1948. Where does the dividing line between literature and testimony lie? The debate on Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: memories of a wartime childhood*, first published in 1995, which the Swiss historian Stefan Maechler proved to be a fabrication, shows the extreme difficulty of defining a truth when artistic creation becomes involved.

The same questions are asked concerning film, with both similar and different implications. At a time when Claude Lanzmann had not yet finished his monumental documentary *Shoah*, the American television serial *Holocaust* kindled a debate on the merits of fiction films, a question reposed with the release of Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's list*,

and even more forcefully in the case of Roberto Benigni's *Life is beautiful*. Much has been written on the images shown and conveyed by these films and their impact. Needless to say, such films, which, unlike literature, reach audiences all over the world virtually simultaneously, exert a far greater influence than books, particularly on young people.

There would therefore seem to be a growing divide between historical accounts, concerned above all with authenticity, and fiction, whether literature or film, which seems to know no limits. Yet, the question of the limits of what can be portrayed, of what decency permits, remains open.

Since the fall of communism, the principal sites associated with the extermination of the Jews are accessible to all. In the countries of central and eastern Europe a reappraisal of history, particularly that of the Nazi and Communist eras, has allowed a very wide-ranging debate on these sites' past and the uses to which some have been put as places of remembrance. The Auschwitz-Birkenau site, in particular, has undergone significant alterations with the aim of highlighting the fact that this was the principal site of the mass murder of Europe's Jews. At the time of the People's Republic of Poland the museum exhibits and presentation were heavily influenced by the Communist view of Nazism, which grouped all the victims together as "anti-fascists". This meant that Auschwitz was a major site dedicated to the memory of the Polish resistance movement, and the fact that a vast majority of the victims were Jews was not mentioned. At the same time, "Holocaust tourism" has developed, which poses many problems. The places of persecution, particularly – but not only – the death camps, receive thousands of visitors. An international debate has begun on how to keep these sites intact, while at the same time transforming them for educational purposes.

Time leaves its mark on the sites, as elsewhere, and the barracks and barbed wire are quite naturally rotting away. Even in Auschwitz, the "original state" of the grounds and buildings is an invention. Moreover, this museum has already undergone spatial arrangement. Certain exhibits, in particular the crematorium at Auschwitz I, were transferred there after the Germans capitulated. This is but one example among others. The sites also have their own history, now spanning a sixty-year period. Some, in particular the Drancy transit camp to the North of Paris, have so far not been made into memorials. Should the number of these remembrance sites be increased? What is the most appropriate

organisation and presentation for the museums? How many memorial sites should there be in each country? Is it desirable to mark each of the countless places where Jews were martyred?

Some major memorials have also been erected away from the sites themselves. The Memorial to the Unknown Jewish Martyr in Paris, of which the foundation stone was laid in 1953, was for a long time the only one. It was followed by the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem. There are now a considerable number of memorials in the United States, in particular the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, which is located on the Mall, a sign of its official status. The building of a memorial in Berlin has caused bitter arguments. At the same time, the difference between museums and memorials has become blurred. Is Berlin's Jewish Museum just a museum?

At the sites and memorials established as far back as the immediate post-war period museums have been opened, usually showing works of art by prisoners and day-to-day camp objects. The most well-known, most heart-wrenching of these exhibits are the children's drawings on show at Terezin (Czechoslovakia). Other drawings, such as those made by children held at the Rivesaltes camp in France, were recently gathered together and put on display. The situation is the same as with the literature. The "first generation" consists of works by the inmates of the camps or ghettos, whether they survived or not. This is generally figurative art. After their liberation, some of the survivors wrote memoirs, others became painters or sculptors and drew inspiration from the terrible experience of the Shoah (Zoran Musik, Miklos Bokor). Later generations in turn came back to the subject of the Holocaust, which sometimes became a primary focus of their artwork (Christian Boltanski). Photographers, such as Mikael Levin, attempt to show the imprint left by these events on today's Europe.

Painting, sculpture, literature, film and music are regarded as major art forms. But the Holocaust is also present, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, in other forms of creative work: comic strips, popular songs (the lyrics can in some cases be regarded as a form of literature), crime novels and television series, which have a far from insignificant impact on the younger audience. The paradox lies in the fact that both the classical

art forms defined in nineteenth-century Europe and the vectors of twentieth-century popular culture are used to portray an event, the Holocaust, which was a very denial of these means of expression.

How should the Holocaust be taught? History clearly has a fundamental role to play here, and it is important that each country should take into account this part of our shared history. But history has no monopoly on the past and its ideas, or on theories about humankind and human behaviour. In France, for instance, the Ministry of Education has included Primo Levi's *If this is a man* among the four books which are prescribed reading for the A-level equivalent literature course.

Alongside traditional teaching methods, educational aids making use of new technologies (CD-ROM, the Internet, DVD, etc.) present new challenges for teachers. Further consideration should be given to these questions, as the range of educational materials concerning the Holocaust has now become both greater and more diversified, from web-sites to visits to Auschwitz-Birkenau, from documentary films to television serials, from what are now "classics" to modern works, in particular in the plastic arts.

The aim of the colloquy in Strasbourg is to consider major contemporary art forms, whatever their nature, being used to depict the Holocaust and their potential use as educational material. Holocaust education should be able to turn these many works to an advantage, or to reject them, since their use is open to discussion, for their common strength, and weakness, is that they are all personal views, artists' views, of the destruction of Europe's Jews.

### **Organisation of the colloquy**

The colloquy will comprise four workshops, held simultaneously on one morning and then repeated in the afternoon. The speakers for each half-day will differ but the workshops will keep the same chair and rapporteur. Each workshop will be addressed by four guest speakers, who will speak for half an hour. Two half-hour periods will be reserved for debate between the speakers and the other participants. This will amount to a total of thirty-two addresses for all four workshops, with a total of four rapporteurs and four chairs.

## The themes chosen for the four workshops

### Workshop 1 : Depicting the Holocaust – plastic arts

Whenever they could, Jews in ghettos and camps tried to depict the nightmarish world around them. In Terezin, children and adults expressed their distress in drawings, some of which we still have today. Some of the survivors, like Zoran Musik, have attempted to depict their memories and the scars left by the horror. A younger generation of artists, painters, sculptors and photographers have reflected the horror of the Holocaust in their works. Their vision is valuable in gauging the place of this tragedy in the modern world, even if it is not immediately understood by the public and requires a degree of publicity. Where are the limits of plastic arts in depicting the Holocaust? What are the benefits and dangers of using such works for teaching? Is the transmission of ideas through art more effective than their conveyance through historic conceptualisation?

Chair: Daniel Payot, Chairman of Marc Bloch University, Strasbourg, France

Rapporteur: Marc Jimenez, Professor of Aesthetics, Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne University, France

- Batya Brutin, Director of the Holocaust Education Centre, Beit Berl College, Israel
- Jochen Gerz, artist, France
- Patrice Loraux, Professor of Philosophy, Paris I University, France
- Elena Makarova, Curator of the Yad Vashem Memorial Archives, Jerusalem, Israel
- Michel Nedjar, artist, France
- Shelomo Selinger, sculptor, France
- Alain Tapié, Curator of the Caen Art Museum, France
- Tomi Ungerer, artist, France

## Workshop 2 : Depicting the Holocaust – cinema and television

The desire to remember and teach about the Holocaust is hampered by the contradiction between the imperious obligation to hand down knowledge and the impossibility, some would say obscenity – of showing it. Compared with the horribly graphic evidence, any fictional efforts would be seen as irrelevant, suspect or even indecent. This is a legitimate debate, even if it sometimes takes impassioned forms. Furthermore, young people, the prime target audience for those wishing to pass on their knowledge, have an ample diet of fictional images, often from Hollywood films and computer game fantasies. Are images, which are so important in modern society, necessary to teach about the Holocaust, since compiling them poses a whole host of problems, ranging from the choice of actors or décor, the level of objectivity proposed or imposed, to incidental music? Can our teaching about genocide entail the risk that it might become fiction? What use can teachers and those who pass on their memories make of the countless audiovisual creative works depicting the Holocaust?

Chair : Marie-José Mondzain, Professor of Philosophy, EHESS, Research director, department “Communication and Politics”, CNRS, France

Rapporteur : Jean-Michel Frodon, Journalist, cinema critic in *Le Monde*, France

- Ilan Avisar, associate Professor of Judaïc Studies, University of Michigan, USA
- Ruth Beckermann, historian, film director, Austria
- Jérôme Clément, Chairman of ARTE TV channel, France
- Costa-Gavras, film director, France
- Emmanuel Finkiel, film director, France
- Claude Lanzmann, film director, France
- Sylvie Lindeperg, lecturer in History, Paris III University, France
- Arnaud des Pallières, film director, France

### Workshop 3 : Depicting the Holocaust – theatre and literature

"Everybody wrote things down", said the historian Emmanuel Ringelblum in his chronicle of the Warsaw ghetto. A great many survivors of the Holocaust recorded their memories, often in literary form. The second world war period yielded countless volumes written by Jews, many of them literary works, such as the poet Isaac Katzenelson's *Chronicle of the murdered Jewish people*. The Holocaust has been a frequently visited subject in world literature since 1945. What forms does this take? What lessons can we draw today from these theatrical, poetic and literary works and what role do they play in forming our memory of this tragedy? Are limits to be laid down as to what can be written and is there a danger that literary works might obscure a more history-oriented description of the events?

Chair : Annette Wieviorka, Research director, CNRS, Centre of Political Studies, Paris I Sorbonne University, France

Rapporteur : Claude Mouchard, Professor of French Literature, Paris VIII University, France

- Ahron Appelfeld, writer, Israel
- Omer Bartov, Professor of European Studies, Department of History, Brown University, USA
- Agnès Desarthe, writer, France
- Jean-Claude Grumberg, dramatist, France
- Geoffrey Hartmann, Professor of English & Comparative Literature, Department of Comparative Literature, Yale University, USA
- Rosetta Loy, writer, Italy
- Doron Rabinovici, writer and historian, Austria
- Nicole Zand, literary critic in *Le Monde*, France

#### **Workshop 4 : What kinds of museography for the Holocaust ?**

Immediately after the war, the first memorials and museums were created, which took a straightforward, sober approach to the deportation. In the last twenty years or so, a new generation of exhibition sites has been born. These institutions dedicated to the Holocaust have used a museography more strongly reliant on built sets or display areas, using décor, intended to be either realistic or merely evocative. They still receive a great many visitors, even though public appreciation has been mixed. In a civilisation of leisure, mass tourism and various forms of entertainment, these places raise difficult questions of licence as regards historical reality. Meanwhile, the sites where Jews were persecuted and murdered, places of remembrance, are suffering from the ravages of time. What policy must be followed? Are they to be maintained come what may, at the risk of having to reconstruct or change them ?

Chair : Laurence Sigal, Curator of the Museum of Jewish Art and History,  
Paris, France

Rapporteur : Lena Stanley-Clamp, Director of the Institute for Jewish  
Policy Research, European Association for Jewish Culture,  
London, United Kingdom

- Suzanne Bardgett, project Director, Holocaust Exhibition, Imperial War Museum, London, United Kingdom
- Thomas Lutz, Curator of the Topography of Terror Memorial Museum, Berlin, Germany
- Jan Munk, Director of the Terezin Museum, Czech Republic
- Jacek Nowakowski, Curator of the collections, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, USA
- François Pin, Architect, Jewish Art and History Museum, Memorial of Unknown Jewish Martyr, Paris, France
- Avner Shalev, Director of Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Israel
- Teresa Swiebocka, Curator of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, Poland
- James Young, Professor of English and Judaïc Studies, University of Massachusetts, USA
- Peter Zumthor, Architect of Topography of Terror Memorial Museum, Swiss

## Programme of events

### Tuesday 15 October 2002

*Arrival in Strasbourg: International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance  
(Working Groups)*

11.00-14.00	<i>Registration at the Council of Europe</i>	<i>Entrance Hall</i>
	International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance	
14.00-17.30	Education Working Group	Room 1
14.00-15.30	Information Working Group	Room 2
14.00-15.30	Slovakia Working Group	Room 3
16.00-17.30	Argentina Working Group	Room 9
16.00-17.30	Czech Working Group	Room 15
16.00-17.30	Ukraine Working Group	Room 2
15.30-16.00	<i>Coffee break</i>	
19.30	<i>Dinner given for the delegations by the International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance</i>	

### Wednesday 16 October

8.30-9.00	<i>Registration at the Council of Europe</i>	<i>Entrance Hall</i>
	International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance	
9.00-9.15	Plenary sitting	Room 13
9.15-12.30	Memorials Working Group	Room 2
9.15-10.45	Academic Working Group	Room 1
9.15-10.45	Latvia Working Group	Room 3
9.15-10.45	Romania Working Group	Room 15
11.00-12.30	Hungary Working Group	Room 9
11.00-12.30	Lithuania Working Group	Room 1
11.00-12.30	Task Force Fund Working Group	Room 3
10.45-11.00	<i>Coffee break</i>	
12.30-14.00	<i>Lunch at the Council of Europe</i>	
14.00	Departure for the visits (Struthof Camp, tour of Strasbourg and places of Jewish memory in the city)	
19.30	<i>Dinner given for the delegations by the International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance</i>	

## Thursday 17 October

8.00-9.00      *Registration of members of the International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance and participants in the colloquy, Entrance Hall*

In parallel:

### **International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance**

9.00-10.30      Plenary sitting      Room 13  
10.30-11.00      *Coffee break*      *outside Room 13*  
11.00-12.30      Plenary sitting      Room 13  
12.30-13.30      *Buffet lunch*  
13.30-14.30      *Brundibar, opera*      *Entrance Hall*  
14.30-15.30      Plenary sitting      Room 13  
15.30-16.00      *Coffee break*      *outside Room 13*  
16.00-17.30      Plenary sitting      Room 13  
18.30      *Reception at the Town Hall, Strasbourg*  
   *Broglie square*  
20.00      *Official dinner (upon invitation)*

### **Colloquy on Teaching about the Holocaust and Artistic Creation**

9.00-10.30      Four parallel workshops      Rooms 1, 2, 3, 9  
10.30-11.00      *Coffee break*      *outside Room 1*  
11.00-12.30      Four parallel workshops (continued)  
12.30-13.30      *Lunch "participants are free to make their own arrangements"*  
13.30-14.30      *Brundibar, opera*      *Entrance Hall*  
14.30-16.00      Four parallel workshops      Rooms 1, 2, 3, 9  
16.00-16.30      *Coffee break*      *outside Room 1*  
16.30-18.00      Four parallel workshops (continued) rooms 1, 2, 3, 9

## Friday 18 October (draft programme)

Council of Europe Hemicycle :

### **Ministerial Seminar for the Education Ministers of the states signatory to the European Cultural Convention\***

- 10.15 Official opening  
Addresses by the Council of Europe Secretary General and the Minister of Education, France
- 10.30 Lecture by Mrs Simone Veil, President of the *Fondation pour la mémoire de la Shoah*: "How can we teach about the Shoah in the 21st century?"
- 11.00 Presentation of the findings of the Colloquy on Teaching about the Holocaust and Artistic Creation
- 11.30 *Coffee break*
- 12.00 "Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity" in schools: statements by the Education ministers of the states signatory to the European Cultural Convention
- 13.00 Official lunch laid on for the ministers by the French Minister of National Education
- 14.30 "Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity" in schools : statements by the Education ministers of the states signatory to the European Cultural Convention
- 15.30 Close and press conference.

\* Members of the GAIS and participants attending the colloquy are invited to attend the Ministerial Seminar

## Cultural programme

1. Cinéma Odyssée, 3 rue des Francs-Bourgeois, 67000 Strasbourg  
"The Holocaust in the cinema" film season :  
*The Wannsee conference* by Heinz Schirk,  
*Train of Life* by Radu Mihaileanu,  
*Sobibor* by Claude Lanzmann,  
*La chaconne d'Auschwitz* by Michel Daëron,  
*Voyages* by Emmanuel Finkiel.
2. Council of Europe projection room: Thursday 17 October from 12.00 p.m. screening of *Shoah* by Claude Lanzmann
3. Kléber international bookshop, 9, place Kléber, Strasbourg  
Encounter with writers, Salle blanche: a daily debate at 5 pm with an author focusing on a book.
4. Kléber international bookshop, Council of Europe, Entrance Hall  
Extensive display of books related to the theme.
5. Visit to the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp, a Nazi concentration camp in France.  
  
The Natzweiler-Struthof camp, the only concentration camp on French territory, was built in 1941 in Alsace, then annexed by the Reich, and was in operation until autumn 1944. There were nearly 45 000 deportees in the camp, half of whom died during the war. The location, which is now under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, houses impressive vestiges of its past and is visited by 140 000 people each year.
6. Tour of Strasbourg and places of Jewish remembrance in the city.
7. Exhibition, Council of Europe
  - the "Time of roundups", the persecution of Jews in France, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine
  - Michel Nedjar and Rosemarie Koczÿ, collection Jean-Pierre Ritsch-Fisch
  - Roger Dale, "100 views for freedom"
8. Brundibar, an opera by Hans Krasa, Domino choir (Opava, Czech Republic) and Ecole nationale de musique de Nevers (France) conducted by Marie-France Messenger

## General information

### Colloquy venue:

Palais de l'Europe  
Council of Europe  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

### Colloquy Secretariat:

International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance

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**Working languages:** simultaneous interpretation will be provided in French and English.

