

FONDAZIONE UGO E OLGA LEVI ONLUS PER GLI STUDI MUSICALI  
Venezia, Palazzo Giustinian Lolin  
12-13 dicembre 2016

**Freed from the ghetto. Sacred music of the Jews of Italy between emancipation and assimilation from the mid-nineteenth century to the Second World War.**

In commemoration of the five-hundredth-anniversary of the 1516 establishment of the Venice Ghetto, the first Jewish ghetto in Europe, the Fondazione Levi is organising – with the support of UCEI, Rome – an international conference on the new synagogue music in Italy, with particular attention to the period from the mid-nineteenth century to World War II. Clearly emerging from this repertoire is the widespread embrace of innovative liturgical practices by Italian Jewish communities on the road to integration as fostered by the Risorgimento. The theme of this conference is relevant to the fields of general history, the history of music, and the histories of European and Italian culture. It also finds great resonance in the current socio-political climate, and encourages reflection on analogous issues of tolerance (and intolerance) to the convergence of different traditions and religions in today's age of complexity.

After the Emancipation of 1848, Jewish communities in Europe were determined to reshape their identity from that of a discriminated minority to fully integrated and productive members of society. As a public display of communal identity, synagogue music was one means of achieving this aim. The music of the Jewish liturgy evolved in response to the pressures of modernity and reform then spreading across Western Europe, and reflected the stances taken by different communities towards the challenges of the times. In Italian synagogues, these innovations can be seen in the adoption of forms and genres inspired by the surrounding cultural context. Although the principles of the nineteenth-century Jewish Reform movement were never officially recognized in Italy, most Italian Jews while officially remaining under the umbrella of orthodox Judaism, introduced a number of innovations. With the advance of modernism and the acquisition of new civil liberties, they were generally open to the prevailing spirit of renewal. Moreover, the incorporation of musical patterns from outside the community was not perceived as a radical break with tradition, but rather as the continuation of a centuries-old practice: in Italy, the interweaving of autochthonous Jewish traditions with elements of the surrounding community is a long-standing custom, which, in Venice, dates to the Renaissance.

The conference will present the results of research conducted in various archives of the Italian Jewish communities. The most significant innovations to the musical liturgy that have emerged are the introduction of the organ and harmonium to accompany vocal chants (as was also occurring in Christian churches), and the use of original music for organ, of choral singing, and of instrumental pieces performed by ensembles or instrumentalists. The overall effect was that of creating a 'refined' musical repertoire with appeal to a wider segment of the population, even outside the traditional places of worship. The great extent to which this fortunate contamination of musical forms took place is attested to by the setting of liturgical texts to the melodies of popular operatic arias.

The expressions of modernity in Italian synagogue music are a unique phenomenon within the European Jewish liturgy, and for a period of time served as a source of inspiration for countries in the north. This is a new area for study in the field of synagogue music scholarship, where research has been confined mainly to the traditional Jewish liturgical repertoire. Following the pioneering perspective outlined by several recent works (e.g. Edwin Seroussi, *Singing Modernity: Synagogue Music in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Italy*, in *Acculturation and Its Discontents: The Italian Jewish Experience Between Exclusion and Inclusion*, University of Toronto Press, 2008), individual specimens from a number of unpublished works and archival documents will be presented and discussed. These include musical scores and manuscripts, contracts with professional Jewish and non-Jewish musicians (e.g., organists, choir masters, composers), and other documents from the archives, all of which have been sorted and inventoried for the occasion. The conference will feature a concert of some of the most significant works that have been analyzed.

Scientific coordinator: Piergabriele Mancuso.

The Conference is supported by UCEI, Roma

## Lecturers

**Yoram Bitton**, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Klau Library*

**Philip V. Bohlman**, *The University of Chicago*

**Roberto Calabretto**, *University of Udine*

**Davide Casali**, *Researcher and orchestra conductor, Trieste*

**Enrico Fink**, *Researcher and musician, Jewish community, Florence*

**Enrico Fubini**, *Università di Torino*

**Gadi Luzzatto Voghera**, *Boston University, Padova*

**Piergabriele Mancuso**, *Researcher, Medici Archive Project, Firenze*

**Daniele Menozzi**, *Scuola Superiore Normale di Pisa*

**Rosy Moffa Bosco**, *Researcher, Torino*

**Stefano Patuzzi**, *President of "Man Tovab", Mantua*

**Stefania Roncolato**, *Researcher, Milan*

**Edwin Seroussi**, *Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

**Pasquale Troia**, *professor of Music and Bible, Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas - Angelicum, Rome*