

Autobiographical Text by Anita Lasker-Wallfisch

Taken from the archival manuscript: *1925 – 1046 Told by Anita.*

Written and Compiled by Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, London 1988. (Pages 43-46)

Donated to the Leo Baeck Institute for the Study of German-Jewish History and Culture in 1990.

The whole document is available online:

https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/5/digital_objects/436612

Anita about the Selection Process

With the first light of day we were taken to a different barrack or 'block' - as I shall call it from now on. There the 'Welcoming Ceremony' was to take place: - I had to take my clothes off - my head was shaved and the number 69388 was tattooed on my left forearm. - All this was done, as I only slowly understood, not by Germans, but by prisoners whose job it was to work in that Block.

You feel totally naked, utterly vulnerable and reduced to a complete NOBODY.- By now I had relinquished my clothes as well, and just stood there stark naked - without hair - and a number on my arm. So, in the space of a remarkably short time one found oneself stripped of every vestige of human dignity and was totally indistinguishable from everyone else around one.

Transliteration: With the first light of day we were taken to a different barrack or 'block' - as I shall call it from now on. There the 'Welcoming Ceremony' was to take place: - I had to take my clothes off - my head was shaved and the number 69388 was tattooed on my left forearm. - All this was done, as I only slowly understood, not by Germans, but by prisoners whose job it was to work in that Block.

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Anita about Becoming a Cellist in the Auschwitz Orchestra

could be. Was this a guard or was it a prisoner. She was so well dressed and I was totally baffled. - She greeted me and introduced herself as ALMA ROSE. She was simply delighted that I was a cellist and asked me where I came from and who I had studied with etc. etc. - The whole thing was like a dream. The very last thing I had ever imagined when going to Auschwitz was that I would have a conversation about cello playing. - Remember, I was still naked holding my toothbrush. Alma was very happy about my arrival, and again I heard the words: 'you will be saved'. She said to me that I would have to go to the Quarantine Block, but not to worry, somebody would come for me soon and I would have an 'audition'. The Quarantine Block was the first - and for many

Transliteration: Was this a guard or was it a prisoner. She was so well dressed and I was totally baffled. - She greeted me and introduced herself as ALMA ROSÉ. She was simply delighted that I was a cellist and asked me where I came from and who I had studied with etc. etc. - The whole thing was like a dream. The very last thing I had ever imagined when going to Auschwitz was that I would have a conversation about cello playing. - Remember, I was still naked holding my toothbrush. Alma was very happy about my arrival, and again I heard the words: 'You will be saved.' She said to me that I would have to go to the Quarantine Block, but not to worry, somebody would come for me soon and I would have an 'audition'.

Discuss with your group and write answers to each question. Then decide who will present your group's results to the whole class:

- What happened to Anita when she first arrived at Auschwitz?
- Why do you think the Nazis wanted prisoners to look the same?
- Who was Alma Rosé, and why was she important for Anita? Go online to find out more about her.
- What is one thing from Anita's story that stands out to you the most?