

Fanya Maryanchik In A Jewish School



This is me in a Jewish school - I am standing second from the right in the lower row.

Mother and Father were very busy working, but they never forgot about their children's upbringing. Their mother tongue was Yiddish, but they spoke Russian. Mother obtained a home education. We had a lot of books at home – children's books and religious books, including prayer books. I cannot remember the names of the books. It is difficult for me to say, how religious my parents were. They never were members of any Parties, or any Jewish communities. I don't recall my father praying, we never celebrated Sabbath and we did not even know the word. But we celebrated Jewish holidays and attended the Lisatsedikh synagogue on these days. There were a lot of synagogues in Kiev at those times. There were three synagogues on Malaya Vasilkovskaya alone, where we lived: Lisatsedikh ('Zesen Tsede'), Brodskogo [Brodsky – famous sugar manufacturer in Kiev. There was a choral synagogue located on 13 Malaya Vasilkovskaya, built on his donations. Later on the Kievsky Puppet Theater was arranged there] synagogue, constructed with the use of his money (it was very beautiful) and Kupecheskaya synagogues, constructed by the merchants. At the end of the 1930s the synagogues were abolished. A sports club was organized in the first synagogue, a children's theater - in the Brodskogo synagogue (now a synagogue is being organized there again) and a club was arranged in Kupecheskaya synagogue.

I went to a private Russian kindergarten. In those times, at the beginning of the 1920s, such kindergartens still existed. They taught French there and, moreover, there was a ballet troupe with choreographer Chistyakov as a teacher. Two sisters, who studied together with me, became ballet dancers. Later I was accepted to a ballet school. I acted in 1924 in a 'Doll Fairy' ballet performance based on Bayer's music. I remember my mother bringing me before the performance to the theater and leaving me there. I was walking around there crying. Somebody found my mother in the box, I calmed down and went to put on makeup and get dressed as Napoleon doll. All our relatives came to watch the performance. I also remember a circus performance - a Chinese pantomime. I practiced ballroom dances since I was seven and I still dance.

In 1925 I was eight and time came for me to go to school. Mother wanted to send me to a prestigious Russian school, however, she failed. There were Jewish schools in Kiev at those times, and the RONO [District Department of Education] directed me to such a school located on Malaya Vasilkovskaya, now it is Rustaveli Street. It was school # 85, later #59. This school was closed after 1932.

Only Jewish children attended the school. I was accepted to the second grade. First we had to pay three rubles per month. Later we did not pay anything. All subjects were taught in Yiddish: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography and others. I did not like exact science at school, I liked languages better. We were taught Ukrainian, Russian and German. We knew nothing about Hebrew, it was prohibited. There was a Jewish theater at school and a gymnastics group. I loved to dance and do sports. We were not told anything about Jewish traditions and we had classes on Saturdays. We had approximately 30 children in our class. Now I cannot remember exactly what kind of special subjects we had in this school.

My favorite teacher was Zalman Skudinsky, I even read about him in the newspaper. He taught Yiddish. In 1931 he left our school for the Literature University at the Academy of Sciences. Dora Moiseyevna Epstein was our school Headmistress. She perished during the war in Babi Yar. Her husband worked together with me at the Manuscript Department at the Academy of Sciences Library in Ukraine before the war. I also attended a Jewish Musical College. The Headmaster Moisey Beregovsky was a famous specialist in Jewish folklore. Owing to him I came to love the Jewish folklore.