

Samuil Moisey Arditi



This is a photo of my father Samuil Moisey Arditi. The photo was taken in Sofia in the 1940s. Although he originated from the Italian Jews, papa didn't have an ear for music. He was born in Belogradchik in 1902. After he got married, he lived in Sofia. My father specially showed me a paper issued by His Majesty King Boris III, which read: 'I hereby declare the Italian citizen Samuil Moisey Arditi a Bulgarian citizen - the same'. He needed this document so that he could marry in Bulgaria. So, he became a Bulgarian citizen before I was born. My father Samuil Moisey Arditi was a very intelligent and interesting, sweet-tempered man with a very rich inner life. I think he brought me up well. He taught me not to get dead set against anybody and anything. One of his major gestures towards me was that he sold his wedding-ring in order to buy me a violin. He felt I had an ear for music; I was only four then. The neighbors reproached him for this, because 'a musician can't make a living for a family', especially if the musician is a girl. My father had suffered a lot in his life, but he was a man of great dignity. He was half an orphan: as I mentioned before, his mother - granny Beya - had a second marriage, to the banker Aron Arav, a fabulously rich man,

who couldn't stand his stepson, that is my father. Thus, being in a huge and expensive house, my father was thrown to live in the basement, and the only person who used to take pity on him was Berta the cook, around whom he grew up. Despite his merciless fate, my father managed to set off legally for France but in a goods wagon. There he started working jointly with some gypsy tinsmiths. Then he was accepted to study juridical sciences in Montpellier or in Toulouse, I don't know where exactly. As a student he found a job in a cathedral: washing the windows, cleaning, sweeping. He had worked for quite a long time there when one fine day somebody told the priest that 'he is a Jew and desecrates the church'. They fired him. After that he was a door-keeper in some French bar.