

Leontina Arditi In The One-Man Performance 'Pizho And Pendo'



This is a photo of a scene of my famous one-man performance 'Pizho and Pendo' by Elin Pelin, staged at the Army Theater, Sofia. The photo was taken in the 1960s.

I started going in for the arts more seriously in my school years. Then I was in the 5th or in the 6th class of the business high school in Sofia. Simultaneously I was playing the violin in the symphony orchestra of the Jewish Center, conducted by the superb Mario Menashe Brontsa. At the same time I took up the drama course of the great Jewish stage director Boyan Danovsky, who formed a class in acting at the Jewish library club. The first he gave us to work on was: 'For lunch at Bear's Place', a well-known fable by Krylov. It must have been 1945-1946, because I was accepted at Sofia's Theater School as a full-time student in 1946-1947 and as an extra violin student at Sofia's Musical Academy.

In my third and fourth year at DVTU I started making records for the radio. Then I experienced my first meeting with a great writer - the living classic Elin Pelin [Dimitar Stoyanov, famous under his literary pseudonym Elin Pelin (1877-1949): among the greatest masters of the short story in

Bulgarian literature, a 'painter' of Bulgarian village life.] It must have been in my fourth year, in 1950. I partnered with the unique actor Konstantin Kisimov and I nearly lost consciousness with those two classics around me. We were recording 'Choheno kontoshche' ['choha' is the Turkish word for a silky thick cloth, while 'kontosh' is a Persian word for a short outer garment to the waist]. When we came out of the room, I was introduced to Elin Pelin and he asked me: 'Where have you mastered our dialect from?' I told him I had grown up in the country. Then he offered me to perform some other of his works. This gave me wings. I performed 'Pizho and Pendo' as a one-man show - my first performance - and it became part of the repertoire of the Army Theater in Sofia after its premiere. It was presented hundreds of times over several decades and is now in the golden fund of the National Radio. I was then being sent to different regions of Bulgaria to present it, especially to military audience, at garrisons, and in library clubs.