

Amalia Blank



This is me in a performance at the Jewish theater in Baku, playing the part of the boy losele in the play of the same name. The photo was taken in 1936. I entered the 2nd course of the school right away, so I studied only for three years. In 1936 I was to graduate and get my diploma. I had two parts: Laurencia in 'The Sheep's Spring' and several parts from one-act plays of some modern actor. I played the part of the strumpet. What a combination Laurencia and a trollop. A large board was to grade the graduation performance and right after their discussion we were supposed to get a mandatory job assignment [15](#). Finally I was called into the director's office. Mikhoels and the members of the board were sitting there. Somebody from the commission said that my mandatory job assignment was at the Moscow Jewish theater. I turned it down. I said if I were younger, I would

welcome it. I was 26. I would play the parts: 'the food is served' for a year or two, then I would have the parts with a couple of phrases and then I would get old until I have real roles. I thanked the board for the estimation of my work and asked them to send me to any city, even to a provincial theater, where I would get main parts or any more important parts for that matter. Where I would have a chance, to try, to learn from my mistakes and become an actress. Mikhoels kept silent. What could he say in objection? I was right. I made my choice deliberately. There were 13 Jewish theaters in the Soviet Union and I was assigned to the Jewish theater in the capital of Azerbaijan, Baku. My husband asked for the same mandatory job assignment. Both of us left: a budding producer and a budding actress. Our common debut was in the theater in Baku. I played the main part in this performance. The play was called 'losele.' I don't remember the playwright. It was a touching drama about the life of a poor boy from a poor Jewish town. I played the part of the boy, losele. After that performance, which was a success, my husband told me that I was gifted enough to work in the theater without his assistance, so that nobody would blame me of being treated preferentially since I was the producer's wife. So, he would not give me any parts. He wanted me to show my capabilities for other producers to see me and offer me to work with them. That's the way it was and I understood that he was right. That decision eliminated all kinds of intrigues regarding both of us.