Moshe Pinkas

This is a photo of my brother, Moshe Pinkas, taken in the 1930s in Sofia. My brother expressed his musical talent from his early childhood on. My mother told me that while my father was in the war in the 1910s, my brother often used to visit my grandmother's house. Some Gypsy [Roma] families had settled there, who were very musical and sang and danced a lot. My brother was very interested in them and used to spend the whole day listening to them. When my father came back from the front my mother told him about Moshe's passion for Gypsy music, and he immediately sent him to take music lessons. He developed his musical talent very fast and enrolled to study violin with the well-known Czech professor Koh, who introduced violin education in Bulgaria. Moshe played in the royal orchestra and lived a Bohemian life with his Bulgarian friends. Moshe and the

popular Bulgarian singers Lea Ivanova, Zdravko Radoev and some other musicians founded the first jazz band in Bulgaria in 1933. Our house was bigger than those of the other musicians so they used to come to us for rehearsals. Another famous musician who first played his repertoire at our home was Asparuh Leshnikov. Moshe was a universal musician and he used to play saxophone in the orchestra. His band was very popular in Sofia in the 1930s. There were matinees in the Royal Cinema-Theater in Sofia every Sunday, and the symphonic orchestra and my brother's jazz orchestra used to play there. Those matinees were very successful, and there was always a big audience. The owners of the cinema-theater were Jews from a rich tobacco business family. There were three Jews in the jazz band. The drummer's name was Eshkenazi and he was the best drummer around at that time. His rhythm drove people crazy. Lea Ivanova was the singer. Those matinees existed for many years, I remember them as early as of 1931, and they ended in the 1940s during World War II.