

Elza Rappoport On Stage



This is my maternal grandmother, Elza Merenyi in one of her parts. [Editor's note: The interviewee is referring to Wagner's opera Lohengrin (1845--48), one of its characters is Elsa of Brabant]. The photo was taken in Barmen in 1909. My maternal grandmother was Elza Merenyi, an opera singer. She was of Hungarian origin. I don't know when she immigrated to Germany. I don't know either, why she didn't sing on stage, whether she couldn't endure physically or wasn't allowed to do it because of her origin. It's sure that there was a pianist, who sometimes came and sat by the big piano and accompanied her as she practiced the scales. But I never heard her on stage. [Editor's note: The grandmother, Elza Merenyi was the mother of the art historian Mariusz Rabinovszky (1895-1953). Mariusz Rabinovszky wrote the following about the family: 'My father, Karoly R., who had a tobacco plant in Cairo, died in 1901. My mother, nee Elza Merenyi, she had contracts performing in German operas as an opera singer. When she later married a doctor, she took me to Germany.' Thus, Elza Merenyi must have gotten to Germany at the beginning of the 20th century, and did perform on German stages.] My grandmother had a first husband, I know that he only spent a little time here in Europe; he had a tobacco factory in Egypt. I don't know the name of this grandfather; he might have been the Rabinovszky after whom my mother and her siblings were named. But later my grandmother got married for the second time, to a doctor called Eugen Rappoport. Grandfather Rappoport was a German Jew. He was an ear, nose and throat specialist at the Wuppertal Opera. So he treated the singers. He made a good living. In addition he also treated those who couldn't pay for free. Grandfather Rappoport didn't tell us children anything about his work, I only know that he had many patients whom he treated for free. And he didn't own a car, because he said that he didn't want to drive over anyone by any chance. Grandfather Rappoport was a little bit of a chubby man; he dressed very elegantly, because he earned a good living. He was very kind to us. I can't tell you anything else about him.