

Silvia Nussbaum



This is me, Silvia Nussbaum, in the picture. It was taken here in Cluj Napoca in 1962; I was playing the violin. Maybe my husband took this picture. In 1955 I graduated from the Music Conservatory. It was good to work at the Kolozsvar Philharmonic because we went on tour. It was only difficult before 1989 when we were cold, and had to cut the fingers off the gloves and played in those. It was so cold that when conductors came from abroad they didn't want to conduct. They said that they couldn't in such cold. One bought about 15 radiators so we would not be cold, and when he went they were all collected up because a decree was passed, during Ceausescu, that radiators were forbidden. It was hard to heat the rehearsal rooms as they were very large and didn't heat up well. So we froze, as they were mean with the heating during rehearsals and performances. Ceausescu passed a law about conserving electricity. Otherwise they were good years, we were abroad a lot. But we didn't get a big enough daily rate so we always took containers of food with us and ate those to save money and to buy something for those at home. Once, I believe in Italy, the boys cooked something in the hotel and blew the fuses. There was a big row and articles were written in the papers there about how the Romanian musicians live, and have to bring containers of

food with them on the tour. We went to many places. We were in France several times, and in the ex-socialist countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Russia. I had some Jewish colleagues but not many. One was Ervin Junger in the piano department. They were watched to the extent that one of them - Janos Reinfeld, who was very talented and a soloist, was told that he couldn't appear on the poster because he had a Jewish name. He's now in Germany - before 1989 during a tour he 'stayed behind.' A lot of my colleagues did that when we went on tour. Most of the orchestra was Hungarian; they couldn't discriminate between the Hungarians and Romanians. The atmosphere was very good during Communism between the Philharmonic musicians. Sometimes they didn't allow someone to go abroad, but not because they were Jewish or Hungarian, but because a security person had to go and there had to be a place for them. Then they always left someone behind. Once they left me behind just when we were going to Germany. And I asked why, because in general they didn't allow those who had relations abroad. I said, 'I have no relatives, they are all under the ground, or died in the gas chambers, so why exactly aren't you letting me go to Germany?' And without any prompting they said, 'We cannot allow you.' I was always a little moved when we played Jewish composers. But we didn't play Jewish tunes specifically.