

## Ester Khanson



That's me upon my return to Tallinn from evacuation. At that time I was working in the theater 'Estonia' as a concert master. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1946.

In 1945, when Mother came back to Tallinn from evacuation, she found a job as a translator. Then she started teaching Russian and English in Estonian lyceum, and her former boss hired me instead of her. I also worked as a translator.

Then I found out that the Russian Navy theater needed a concert master. It was a very good theater. I was eager to get back to music. I went to the theater for an audition and I was offered the job. There were such wonderful people! They were cultured composers. I was very happy. I worked with a band of singers and dancers in the sailors' club. I went on tours.

In 1946 the Navy Theater, where I was working, returned to Leningrad. Of course, I was invited to go with them, but I could not, though they tried to talk me into that. I could not imagine my life outside Tallinn, outside Estonia. That theater existed in Leningrad for a while, then it was closed down. I worked in an amateur group as a concertmaster when the marines left. I mostly worked with common Estonian people and we got along very well. I still keep in touch with some of them.

Then fate gave me another gift. The state ballet school was opened in Tallinn. There was a wonderful ballet dancer in Tallinn – the famous Anna Exton, nee Epstein, a Jew. When she quit her career as a ballet dancer before the war, she became the chief ballet master of the theater 'Estonia.' Then she organized a ballet group at the theater having selected gifted boys and girls. She had classes with them and some ballet dancers helped her out. In 1946 the choreography school was founded on the basis of that group. I was a concertmaster of the Estonian ballet in the theater 'Estonia.' When a ballet school was to open, Anna Exton suggested that I should be transferred there. I gladly accepted the offer.