

Ester Khanson And Her Colleague Emmanuel Lurie



That's me at the grand piano during classes in the chorography school. Next to me is my colleague, also a pianist of the school, Emmanuel Lurie. The picture was taken in Tallinn in 1959.

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.

I was the only pianist at the school. Then some more joined. I worked there from 1946 to 2000. I wanted to leave work when I turned 75, but the principal did not let me go saying, 'What are you going to do at home?' He talked me into staying. Only when I turned 80 I told the principal, 'Now I go. And that's flat.' By the way, the headmaster was our former student. I worked there when he was a boy. He did not become a ballet dancer upon graduation. He went to Moscow to study to

become a ballet master. Then he became the chief ballet master of the theater 'Estonia,' and with time he became the principal of our ballet school.

I am grateful to the Soviet regime for this school. There were only private ballet studios in pre-Soviet Estonia. It was unlikely for someone to found a state ballet school. At times I worked for the theater 'Estonia.' I was supply concertmaster if someone was ill or could not come to work for some other reason. My main job was at the school. I traveled a lot thanks to my work. Dancers from our school took part in all kinds of contests and I was there with them. I was in Moscow, Leningrad, Riga, Kiev and Yerevan. Those were very beautiful cities and I loved being there.