

Genrietta Raitsykh With Her Teacher Maria Fyodorovna Romanova



In this photo you can see the class of the choreographic school where my mom, Genrietta Iosifovna Raitsykh, studied from 1937 to 1939. Her teacher was Maria Fyodorovna Romanova, the mother of the already well-known and adored Galina Ulanova. Maria Fyodorovna, after finishing her career as a solo ballet dancer in Mariinsky Theater, where she danced the leading parts, devoted herself to pedagogical activity. In the photo Maria Fyodorovna wears a dress with a dark collar. She is in the last row second from the right. First on the right in the last row is my mom, Genrietta Raitsykh.

By 1932, Mom had moved with her family to Leningrad, and began to study ballet dancing. I don't remember the surname of her teacher in Baku, but I know that there was a school there that provided choreographic training. However, the Baku level of preparation was absolutely insufficient to enter a ballet school in Leningrad. Mom entered a choreographic school, but received a bad mark for technical merit, and a good mark for artistic abilities. My mother always worshipped Ulanova, she was the only standard for her in arts, because Ulanova was more than simply a ballet dancer. She was an artistic phenomenon that had an international significance, and that phenomenon had its roots here in Leningrad.

While working in Kirovsky Theater, my mom found herself in a specific environment, with its own rules and traditions. That was a special theater, the Imperial Mariinsky Theater, where Jews had never been admitted! A tradition remains a tradition. But that tradition was broken in the Soviet times. Before the revolution there were no Jews in ballet, even musicians of the orchestra all got christened.