

Lubov Ratmanskaya With Students And Teachers Of The Music School Of The Culture League



This is a photo of students and teachers of the music school of the Culture League. I am sitting in the group on the left, bottom row, second from left; my sister Vera is standing in the group on the right in the center of the back row. The photo was taken in Kiev in 1926. The school of the Culture League gave us everything. That's why I want to do so much in my life, to get everyone 'infected' with my school. Our school was wonderful and our teachers were wonderful. It was at the school of the Culture League that I first realized that I was Jewish. It was a real Jewish school. Before that I had no idea that people were different. But here we were given Jewish books and we had Itsik Fefer and David Gofstein come and teach us. Noah Lurye taught literature. He organized a literary club. He told us about Bialik, Mendele, Sholem Aleichem [10](#). He also told us about Russian poets and writers. I still remember poems from that school. We had a very good newspaper in Yiddish and Russian that we wrote. We also had some real poets visit us. We were always very impressed when it happened. They talked to us, recited their poems. Then we would recite poems to them. It was a purely Jewish school. It was in this school that I learned to speak Yiddish; only Yiddish was spoken there. But we weren't only taught Jewish subjects. M. Beregovsky led our children's choir. We sang Jewish folk songs that he brought from his expeditions. One of the girls, Feigle Zelikovskaya, that finished our school became a popular singer. She had a wonderful voice and I still remember the song she sang in our choir. We also sang Mozart's Requiem and staged an opera in which children acted and sang. Then we decided to compose our own opera. We wrote a libretto, music (Vera did most of that) and staged it. It was called Fairy Tale about Fairies. I played a prince. He had different fairies come to him: fairy of freedom, fairy of beauty. And at the end we sang together. The opera was in Yiddish. As pioneers we also staged some plays, but these plays were distinctly proletarian. They were about fighting and revolution. We knew very well that there were rich people and poor people. For instance, rich kids learned how to play musical scales first. At our music schools we

never learned that. We learned to play real works of music from the very beginning. We always laughed at those rich kids who had to learn those special scales and exercises. We also had eurhythmics at school, and our teacher, Marya Petrovna Levitskaya (who was Jewish) always told us that eurhythmics was more important than ballet. But my friend Veta Feldman and I liked ballet more and we secretly took ballet classes. We always walked around together with friends and our pioneer leader Vitya. We went to see many plays at the theater. It was all very spontaneous. We were silly. We couldn't even speak Yiddish or Russian correctly. Vitya Khanchin taught us to speak Russian properly. He then married an artist from our school, Riva Magid. Most of the children in the school were 8 to 15-16 years old. Many were from the Jewish shelter, the orphanage. The orphanage was in the center of Kiev. It was a big flat on the fourth or fifth floor. One room was for the girls - for younger and older girls - but they didn't have many boys for some reason, so the boys had a small room to themselves. There were around 50 children, mostly from outside Kiev, from very needy families or families that suffered from Jewish pogroms. Food was good there: potatoes, cabbages, sometimes even meat. It was always enough. When we had nothing to eat at our home we were sent there for a while and we gained some weight. There were three teachers and a governess - Tsipa Ratmanskaya [Lubov Ratmanskaya's cousin]. The owner was both a teacher and the director. The children did everything with their own hands. The Fourth Printing House in Kreschatik Street helped this orphanage financially. We gave concerts at this orphanage and also in some clubs.