

Riva Kozlovski



This photograph shows my elder sister, Riva Kozlovski, nee Tsivian at the age of seven. It was taken in Tallinn in 1925. Riva was a very independent child. She never went to kindergarten because there were no Jewish kindergartens then. Our parents couldn't afford to have a nurse or a governess at the time. They were busy doing their work, and little Riva would wander around the building and visit the neighbors. Later, our parents often recalled the episode that happened when she was five. She went to the apartment next door, which was a privately-owned sewing workshop.

There Riva found a beautiful brand-new beaded wedding dress. She cut the beads off the dress and, back at home, cut off a piece of a new curtain and started making a dress of her own. She was a lively girl, a tomboy even - all of her childhood friends were boys and she was their leader. She would gather all the boys from our street and lead them to a different street to fight. Later on, of course, she grew up and became more serious and quiet. In 1926 Riva went to the Jewish Gymnasium. Younger pupils studied Ivrit but all the other subjects were taught in Russian, whereas older pupils studied everything in Ivrit. Riva started learning the piano when she was little, she had a talent for music, and she was taught by Tallinn's best music teachers. They thought that Riva could grow up to become an excellent pianist. In order to do that Riva had to spend hours practicing, but she was an outgoing, cheerful, expressive person. She wanted to do sports and spend time with her friends. However, we had a strict and asserting father, at times he simply forced Riva to the instrument. And when her friends came to visit her she played the piano and all of them sang wonderful songs in Yiddish and Ivrit. I can still remember some of those beautiful songs.