

Leya Yatsovskaya



This is me in a lyceum uniform. This picture was taken in 1935 in Ukmerge.

Having finished school I entered the Jewish lyceum, where teaching was in Yiddish. It was a private institution, where tuition had to be paid for. My father managed to get some subsidies for education of four of his daughters. My elder sisters Dora and Riva also finished that lyceum. Malka and I had studied there for several years. In 1933 it was closed down and we had to transfer to the lyceum where subjects were taught in Ivrit and we successfully finished it. We studied the same disciplines as we had studied in Yiddish. I studied Ivrit rather swiftly. I did well and got prizes and awards at the end of each year. We had to wear a lyceum uniform: brown dresses with aprons and white collars and caps with green visors. Dora sent the fabric for the uniforms and my mother made dresses for Malka and me.

There were great teachers here as well. It was wintertime. Once on Chanukkah we staged a performance under the supervision of our teachers. I took part in it as well. One time we staged the performance 'Sleeping Beauty.' I played the part of the princess, whom an evil sorceress enchanted for 100 years. We had beautiful costumes from ruffled paper. The performance was accompanied by a pianist, who played classic melodies. My father was sitting in the assembly hall and was crying from admiration, affection and pride for me.

I had a lot of friends and almost all of them were Jewish children. I had different hobbies. Unfortunately, there was no Jewish theater in Ukmerge. At least there was a cinema. I liked movies a lot, but I couldn't go to the cinema very often as we couldn't afford it. Sometimes I went to the movies for lyceum students and school children as the tickets were cheap. In that period of time German and American movies were mostly screened. I don't remember what they were about. All I remember is that those several movies I saw were funny comedies. We liked to go on walks along the central square and listen to the wind orchestra.