

## Ester Khanson



That's me in 1978. The picture was taken in Tallinn.

In 1946 fate gave me a 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.