

Panni Koltai In A School Performance



This is me in a play entitled "The Hungarian Flag?", which we performed in middle school. But I can't tell you who of these people is me. The photo was taken in Eger in 1929. I went to the Jewish elementary school. I was accepted to elementary school before I reached school age [age 6]. Mom took me to the school to enroll me. I still remember that day; it was raining. When old Biedermann saw who it was, he asked her: 'Why did you bring this child, she isn't six yet?' I hadn't turned six yet because I was born in November and school started in September. And my mother said to him, 'Please accept her, they are all clever!' And old Biedermann was listening to her lamentation until he accepted me. But he said that he didn't mind because he knew that the Friedmann sisters were all clever. All four of us were very good students. In class I always had my hands up - as soon as they asked something, I put my hands up to answer it. My friends told me later, 'You always knew everything, you were horrible!' They couldn't bear this; but I was always ready to give a prompt. I only have one friend who had already been my friend in elementary school; I still call her from time to time. Then I went to middle school. It was a state school and we all studied there free of charge. I even learnt to play the piano for five years. Piri also learnt to play the piano a little. I would have very much liked to continue studying because I had an ear for music and I had a private teacher. When I was in middle school, they [the teachers] made it possible for me to observe Jewish religious traditions. On Saturday they asked the non-Jewish children to write down in our student's record what classes there would be next week and whatever else had to be written down. I had a friend, or more precisely a classmate, called Piroska Toth, who used to note down for me what homework we had for the following week. We weren't allowed to write on Saturday. It wasn't so much Dad or Mom who expected me not to write on Saturday. This came more from the Jewish community and schools weren't anti-Semitic in this respect. Some made remarks about this but they made everything possible, and I went to middle school each Saturday from the 1st grade to the 4th grade and didn't write, and it wasn't a problem.