

Renata Zisman



This is the most beautiful portrait of my partner Renata Zisman, nee Springut, taken in Cracow, probably in the 1950s when she was married to Jerzy Zisman. It's framed and in my living room.

My wife [partner] taught piano at a music school. She taught for 40 years in the same school, and it was very hard to make a living from one school. There were several head teachers, and one was Jewish; Hoffman, his name was. Another one was called Tippe. My wife Renata was a member of the Jewish community organization and the JSCS. She also belonged to the association for survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau. And she would often play [the piano] there for free. She got

acknowledgements in 50 different newspapers. She went to the synagogue, but the women didn't go regularly. The women only used to go on holidays, or when there were prayers for the dead. My partner didn't know the Hebrew alphabet. The best proof of that was that when she sat in the synagogue she held her prayer book upside-down. And someone told her. Sometimes she'd come to the synagogue without informing me in advance. I didn't know whether she'd be coming or not.

Renata didn't want to be alone. She was a widow when I met her. Her first husband had died; he was 22 years older than her. We were together a long time, 20 years. We couldn't get married because I told Renata that there was no rabbi. At that time there really was no rabbi. And secondly - I don't know whether, if there had been a rabbi, he would have let me marry a widow. I'm not allowed to marry a divorcee; as to a widow I don't know. [Mr. Bertram is not sure whether he could marry a widow, but in fact - according to the law- he could.]