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Summary

Willi Groag was born in Moravia. Before the war he had been a counselor in the Maccabi HaTza'ir/Youth movement. After the Germans entered the country, there was intense pressure for the youth groups to accept members. This was to help immigrate to Israel and to create a new society and ideals. A children's orchestra under the leadership of Chaim Wachtel was in the group that applied for membership. Wachtel had been a music teacher at the Hebrew Gymnasia in Moonkach (PH) in Russian Carpathia. Ella Polack was the orchestra's pianist. In June 1942, he was sent to the Theresienstadt ghetto. He was in there until the end of the war. When he first got to the ghetto, he worked at laying train tracks. Then, he farmed. In the summer of 1943, an old friend of his, who supervised the children's activities, Gondaretli (PH) (he had a diary published), convinced him to work with the youth as a teacher, which he did. Willi was responsible for the music programs, especially singing, in the ghetto. He talks about people he worked with in the ghetto in holding those events. His father organized an opera for children in the ghetto. Tule and Rein (PH) Klein were involved with T'chelat V'Levan (Blue and White). She was friends with his father in the ghetto. In 1942, Rosa Englander and her husband Yaacov Hazan were involved in the musical activities in Theresienstadt. Lisa Klein also worked there. In 1943, Willi asked the teachers in the ghetto to have the girls write about their impressions of the ghetto. These were compiled into a newspaper. He talks about performances in the ghetto that included music, singing, dancing, and costumes. One of the performances was a show called "The Bug" and another was "Ghetto Policeman." Hava Hefer also participated in performances. Rafi Shechter rehearsed for Verdi's Requiem there. Greta Hofmeister performed in the ghetto. As did the Milstein children, a girl and boy. The sister was a social worker in the ghetto who was very helpful. He knew Viktor Ulmann. Dr. Heinrich Yalowitz, the conductor, was his uncle.