

You were in Mauthausen in the labor camp?

Yeah.

That was a mixed camp for women-- women and men?

It was only men.

Only men.

And in the desperation, we were hunted because the Germans were hunted from the Allied. So we arrived there. And there were women as well in the last time. There were all kind of people there.

But then when we got out, we were absolutely sure because we looked more than horrible after two months is almost nothing having eaten or very little to drink. And the hygienic conditions were undescrivable. So when we got out, we stunk. And it was horrible.

So we were sure, we go just now, after knowing all, we go straight into the gas. And when we got out, the one German, the SS, an old one told to me, you are lucky. Since yesterday, the gas is not working anymore.

OK. Oh, my. So close. You were really so close.

Since yesterday, he told me or two days before. So they did not work.

So who liberated that camp when you were there, Russians, Americans?

This? That's now amazing.

They all came?

No, they-- no, that is amazing. They had an agreement that we should be-- and they delivered from the American. So the Russian were first there. But they did not dare to deliver us because it was an arrangement. And that we should have been delivered by the Americans. It was all so funny.

Yes.

So they came, the Russian came. And I must say you, you are American. And I-- no, I was wrong. The American were first. The Russian came the next day. And we should have been delivered by the American. It was just a-- [NON-ENGLISH], playing chess.

And me speaking like now, you have heard it, a little English, so they asked, who has learned to speak German, Czech, and English? And I have been. So they said, you help interpreting. I said, I don't mind. And I must say you, these small, little soldiers were primitives of the American, very primitives.

Young ones?

The young ones, they told us. And they thought its where-- how to say where? How in-- I don't know. I lose. Verdienst-- verdienst-- merit, merit, merit, I know. It's their merit that they are in this position. And the very high intellectual person which were in the Czech camp were just animals. But they look a little like animals. And it's primitive. And I was furious. And they were two days.

And they gave me lots of clock watches and I don't know what. I didn't want it. I didn't. I really wanted to be rude to them. And I told them, you behave. You don't give me something. You behave to the people which which are educated,

and you are just kettles against them. I told them. And so I lost my job. [LAUGHS]

But to tell you the truth, it must be amazing for you because when they claim, the American, to deliver us, we had the biggest loss of lives through their unknowledges. They gave milk, normal milk, to people, which had not eaten I don't know long.

And then they couldn't handle it?

No, they died just like that, and so on, and so on. And they had a camera. And the Americans use their camera like today the Japanese. Anywhere was a camera. And they made snaps of these people which we are lying, and [INAUDIBLE] swollen stomachs, and so.

And I was so furious. I was so furious, I could have stopped them and killed them at the moment. And then they came the Russians, who had suffered a lot. I don't care about a communisms or not. But they had suffered, the soldiers. And they did not have milk and all these conserves. But they had a heart.

They had life.

And they embraced, they embraced all these people, which were very dirty. And that, I liked it.

Yes. There's a book that I just read by a lady. Now, she's called, I think, Helen Lewis. She lives in Belfast many years. She was Czech. And she was a dancer. And she was in Auschwitz and other camps. But also, she was in TerezÁn for a while. And she also was asked by Rafi Schachter to choreograph the dances in The Bartered Bride of Smetana. And she did an evening with Gideon, maybe with an actress also. And Gideon created the music for the piano, which he played, and for which she danced.

Yeah.

You don't remember?

No, sorry.

Because it was a very special program.

I would have liked to.

Was a very special program.

I would have loved to see that.

Yes.

No, no, no.

And I know a wonderful, wonderful lady in London, Zdenka Ehrlich today. She was Zdenka Fantlova.

I know that name.

You know Zdenka. She was--

Yeah.

--she was Vashti--

Yeah.

--when they did the play Esther.

Yeah, I know her.

And she became an actress in TerezÃn.

Yeah.

And she tells the story that in that same attic, with that same piano, they did a play of Moliere.

I don't know that.

And Gideon made the music.

Oh.

And they stayed late to put things away, and clean up, and so on.

But he?

Probably improvised.

Improvised, yes.

Yes. And she said, he said, sit down, I'll play you something. And he played her, I think, a Chopin etude and some Scriabin in that smoky, strange atmosphere over there.

Yeah, yeah.

So then you came back to Prague?

Yeah. And meanwhile, I would have told you, you should have heard playing him. He was a really great pianist. He was really great pianist. He was not only musician, he was bright in his intellect.

That Ullmann reviewed one of his concerts.

Yeah.

And he said, he represents the kind of-- oh, how did he call it-- maybe something like the [GERMAN] kind--

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

--our younger generation of pianists.

He was so thinking, yeah.

And he had great praise. But he said, as much as he plays from the head, we hope also this generation and Gideon would begin also to add a little bit more from the heart. Did you feel it?

Yeah.

A few have said that wonderful pianism, wonderful intelligence, not quite as warm as maybe later it would have

developed.

See, if I told you about my relationship to Gideon, it's the same in the personality.

Yes.

I told you.

Yes.

I was-- with Rafael, I had the warmness. With Gideon, I had the brain, the intellect. It was absolutely different.

So it fits--

It fits.

--this description of his performance.

It is exactly what I had in my feelings.

And when you came back to Prague, then you got back to music? You continued your music.

Of course, I did.

Yes.

And because Kurz was not alive anymore, I had first to cure my TB, of course.

Sure, right.

I had an open TB. But then I studied with Ilona Kurz, which was--

His wife.

--no, his daughter.

Ah, his daughter.

Yeah, his daughter, Ilona Kurz Stepan and [? Pavel ?] Stepan.

Was she related to Pavel Stepan the pianist?

Pavel Stepan is the son of her. Ilona Kurz Stepan--

And he was the first to play Gideon's sonata--

Yeah, I'm sure.

--in '46.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. He was the first, yeah.

Yeah.

Pavel Stepan is his son.

Right. And he's still active?

Yeah, he's still active, yeah.

Still active with many, many recordings, and so on.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Well, thank you very, very much. You put out, I think, much more than you imagined that you would.

This, well, I did.

And you have very warm, and wonderful, and articulate, and elegant memories, which will be very appreciated by a lot of people.

And I'm very grateful because I have not had these feelings and these memories since about 50 years. It's an age.

And a lot of people who, somehow, were approached much later have had the same experience.

Yeah? It's wonderful.

But it's very precious. Thanks.

Thank you.