

House. I remember once a Cossack choir came to practice, they were dressed in heavy coats and long boots and smelt of felt and leather. To me they appeared to be giants with powerful and resonant voices, including the particularly deep voice known then as the 'black bass'. On one occasion, it was a female choir who stood around our large dining room table to sing. I managed to find my way under the table, from where I could study the shapely female legs, which I could not resist from touching. One young girl shrieked. The others all jumped as well, because they thought it might be a mouse (and it was a mouse in this case, as Mischa is Russian for mouse)! My father removed the precocious leg-fetishist from the room. That was my earliest erotic memory. On evenings when there were no rehearsals, friends of my parents would call and they would sit around the bubbling samovar in relaxed mood.

Sometimes I was allowed to accompany my father through the beautiful pinewoods to the Forest Opera House. The winter could be very harsh, the wind would slice through me and take my breath away so that I would have to turn to my father protection. I will never forget the calls of hungry crows and ravens hunting for food. On one particularly cold and grey day, the river froze over, I felt so melancholy when I heard that a small boy had drowned falling through the ice.

In the early 1900s, a darkness slowly but surely clouded these happy and delightful childhood memories as pogroms gradually became part of our daily reality. Fear of the Jewish conspiracy was everywhere and made