

Częstochower Klezmers

The *Częstochower* klezmers were to a certain extent artistes¹ in their trade. They played in cinemas (during the times of silent films, of course, until the advent of sound films), appeared at concerts, theatrical performances, balls, dance evenings, ceremonies and different events. Hiring a klezmer for a wedding was not so straightforward. The musicians set up whole bands, and one did not wish to play without the others.

The first violins were Zajdman, Zajdberg and Krebs. The latter two also played the clarinet and, in the last years, also the harmonica. Zajdberg died a few years before the outbreak of the War.

The violinist Ofman also played the contrabass. [He was] a specialist and an artiste. When he played the contrabass, his whiskers moved and he was constantly drowsing. He played all the overtures by heart. At weddings, he played second violin.

Lewkowicz was [also] a bassist. When he played the contrabass, he lay the instrument on his midriff, which resembled the bass [itself].

There were a great many notable musicians in the Zajdman family, but they all began their careers as klezmers at weddings.

The old Sztajnhauer was renowned for his *altówka* [Pol., viola], not only among the Jewish population, but also among the Polish.

Lewkowicz was known as "Jazz". Even though he was a tailor by trade, he had learnt to play in the army and became a klezmer.

¹ [TN: Klezmers were not considered "real musicians", as were those with a classical training.]