

LEWENSZTEJN Chonon Henryk (1902 - before 1975), actor. He was born in Częstochowa, the son of Mojsze Lejb and Dewora Danciger, the brother of actor → Chil Lewensztejn.

His mother died when he was two-years-old. At the age of fourteen, he graduated from the Crafts for Jews School in Częstochowa. At that time, a professional Jewish theatre troupe was performing in Częstochowa. Due to the fact that his father was a newspaper correspondent, he had free admission to the theatre and Lewensztejn was able to watch performances nearly every day. They made a great impression on him and, from that time, he dreamt of acting in a Jewish theatre.

It was only in 1920 that his dream came true. It was when, while serving as a Polish soldier, he was taken into Bolshevik captivity. He entered a drama studio which, at that time, existed in Leningrad. It was directed by Aleksander Kugel. His first role was as Holofernes in Hebbel's *Judith*. He returned to Poland in 1922 and began performing in professional troupes. He appeared in a number of roles, such as Jankiel Czapszowicz in *Bogu zemsty [God of Vengeance]*, Miszka Cyganiak in *Siedem powieszonych [Seven Hanged]* and Jean Valjean in an adaptation of *Nędzników [Les Misérables]*. In 1930, he was involved in the Vilno Troupe and played Jankiela Bule in *Wiejskiej młodości [Village Youth]* and the title role in *Golem*.

In 1939, he managed to escape to Soviet territory, came to Tarnopol and became involved in the state theatre there. He played Tevye the Milkman and the role of Pric in Dr Ciper's *Powstania [Rebellion]*. On the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, he fled deep into Russia. Since he spoke Russian, he was engaged by one of the best Russian theatres, playing leading roles in many Soviet plays and films. He was awarded the Stalin Prize.

In 1946, he returned to Poland. Initially, he performed in the Jewish theatre in Wrocław. In the early 1950s, he moved to the Jewish Theatre in Łódź, under the direction of Ida Kamińska. In 1955, he again performed in Wrocław and, from the beginning of 1956, in the Jewish Theatre in Warsaw.

Czenstochower Yidn, pp. LI, LII; *25 lat Państwowego Teatru Żydowskiego w Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej*, Warsaw 1975, p. 40.

Wiesław Paszkowski