

Memories of Moscow

Pianist Alicja Fiderkiewicz looks back on her early piano studies



I was born in Warsaw, Poland, and from a very early age I was besotted with music, especially the piano. It was obvious that I had some talent and at the age of six I started piano lessons which led to my entering Karol Szymanowski's Music School in Warsaw. I loved my piano teacher, and with her careful guidance I was soon making huge progress, and in no time at all I was performing in concerts and even small radio broadcasts in Poland. I became a little Polish child prodigy, and was extremely happy playing the piano, and I was lucky enough to have a wonderfully loving, supportive family and happy childhood.



Alicja aged three

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When I was nine years old, my Father was appointed a Naval Attaché and joined the Diplomatic Service at the Polish Embassy in Moscow, USSR. So the whole family, including my older siblings, moved to Moscow. My parents did not waste any time finding suitable further musical education in Moscow. So they applied for an audition for me at the most famous music school in the world: the Central School of Music attached to Moscow Conservatoire. I had just turned nine years old. I remember the day very well, I was so excited. I was playing some difficult pieces (or so I thought!!) and went into the audition room with a happy smile. Nothing prepared me or my parents (who went in with me) for the very grim, stern faces in a very dark and scruffy room. Nevertheless I got on with my programme and played it as well as I could.

When I finished, those faces were just as stern, or maybe even more so! We were told in as many words that although I obviously have some talent and potential, I was not suitable material for the school as my technique was non-existent, and I was also very small and my hands were too tiny. They took a quick look at my parents' hands and shook their heads in dismay; they were also too small, so there was no chance that my hands would ever be large enough. We were told that the children of my age had been studying at the school (primary - instrumental lessons only) from the age of