

IMPORTANT

This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees

Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive, prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.

AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive

AJR

Winston House, 2 Dollis Park

London N3 1HF

ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform

ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	6

Interviewee Surname:	Mann
Forename:	Stella
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	24 January 1912
Interviewee POB:	Vienna, Austria

Date of Interview:	19 February 2003
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Anthony Grenville
Total Duration (HH:MM):	2 hours 28 minutes

**REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE**

INTERVIEW: 6
NAME: STELLA MANN
DATE: 19 FEBRUARY 2003
LOCATION: HAMPSTEAD, LONDON
INTERVIEWER: ANTHONY GRENVILLE

TAPE 1

Tape 1: 0 minute 44 seconds

AG: First of all, Miss Mann, I'd like to thank you for agreeing to do the interview with us. Could I just ask you first of all to state your name as it was at birth, your full name, please?

SM: My maiden name?

AG: Exactly.

SM: Tuttmann.

AG: And your first name was?

SM: Stella. Always.

AG: And where were you born?

SM: In Vienna.

AG: And what date were you born on?

SM: 24th January 1912.

AG: And what part of Vienna did you and your family live in?

SM: In the 9th district, Glasergasse ten, zehn.

AG: Perhaps we could start by asking you a little about your parents. What sort of man was your father, what was his name, first of all?

SM: He was lovely, very clever. He had, he was three years in bed with a disease, fever. He was privately educated for three years. But of course he didn't go to university then. And I don't know at what age he entered Singer Sewing Machines and worked in their legal department. He ran it for the whole of Austria, with the help of a firm when it had big cases,

somebody using the name of Singer, something like this. And he ran this until he went to war, 1914. Came out of the war, didn't want to go back.

AG: When did he leave?

SM: He came out in 1919.

AG: Do you know where he fought, which front?

SM: He didn't fight, he was a sergeant in an office, paying the salaries, I think, I'm not sure. He sent us once a big case of fruit from Romania. And it was all rotten when it came. It must have been beautiful.

Tape 1: 3 minutes 16 seconds

AG: What was his first name, please?

SM: Heinrich.

AG: And when was he born, which year?

SM: On the 2nd of August 1878.

AG: So he came back from the war in 1919?

SM: Yes. And he then, my mother had a little business and he ran it, helped her run it, and he got fed up, so he went back to Singer.

AG: What sort of business did your mother run?

SM: Well, he probably didn't want my mother being the boss. He went there ---

AG: What sort of business?

SM: He was there for three years.

AG: What sort of business did your mother run?

SM: Furniture. And she advertised in Pibrichaner Bord. She couldn't live on what he was paid as a sergeant.

AG: Oh, so she started this during the war?

SM: Ja.

AG: And did you have any brothers or sisters?

SM: I had a sister.

AG: Older or younger?

SM: Older.

AG: How much older was she?

SM: Six years.

AG: And what was her name?

SM: Edith.

AG: And what about your mother, could you tell me your mother's full maiden name, please?

SM: Hauser.

AG: And her first name?

SM: Franziska.

AG: And what sort of lady was she?

SM: She was lovely. She was a very beautiful woman, none of us were as pretty as she was. She had long hair, she was sitting on her hair, big gay blue eyes, very straight nose. And she wanted to be an actress, but of course she never was. And she married when she was probably twenty.

AG: Do you remember what year your parents got married?

SM: I think a year before my sister was born, so that must have been 1905.

AG: And had your mother, did your mother work at all before the First World War?

SM: Yes, she was a seamstress, a dressmaker. And she made all my costumes when I danced.

AG: And what sort of household was it?

Tape 1: 6 minutes 1 second.

SM: We had a flat of two bedrooms, then the living room, bathroom, kitchen. We had a maid coming in, not living in, because we had no place for her to live. A sort of normal family. We went on holiday.

AG: Where did you go on holidays?

SM: We went, the first time we went to see the sea, I was thirteen. But we went to Austria: Velden, Maria Wörth and the Wörthersee, Kärnten - Carinthia. We had a very good life and a very lovely family life.

AG: Did you have a big family in Vienna apart from you and your ---?

SM: My father had three sisters, not married. My mother had four, no, three sisters as well, and two brothers. And one brother was a ballet master, and this is where I came in, I went to his classes.

AG: What was his name?

SM: Hauser.

AG: And what was his first name?

SM: Max Hauser.

AG: And he ran a sort of ballet ---?

SM: No, he was the one, he danced tango, foxtrot, etc., and the children learnt Romanian dances, Russian dances, etc. And I came with some friends, my mother took us. That was my first experience of dancing.

AG: How old were you then, do you remember?

SM: I must have been - I was ten. And that was it. I wanted to be a dancer.

AG: Before we get on to your dancing, I'd just like to ask you one other thing about the household. You were Jewish, obviously, was it an observant Jewish household?

SM: Not really.

AG: Did you go to synagogue at all?

SM: When my father was educated, he had Jewish religion, etc., and, I'm not sure I should tell you that, and I said to him: 'Why can't you speak Hebrew?' And he said, the man who came to teach him had always a drop hanging from his nose and he was so fascinated by that that he never learnt anything. But he was a very clever man, my father.

AG: Did your family go to the synagogue at all?

SM: Just for the holy days, when somebody died, somebody was born, somebody married. But we were not a religious family.

Tape 1: 9 minutes 5 seconds

AG: Right. And how did you get on with your sister?

SM: Not at all. She was the boss and she was bossing me and I don't like to be bossed. All our life, we have never really been close. But she was clever, very clever. And my father helped her with homework, and she was playing ball on the wall. And he got fed up with it, not helping her anymore. So she got all fours in her - And she should have repeated. And from all fours she got ones and twos. And she was the 'Wunderkind'! So when I came to the school they said: 'Are you as clever as your sister?' So I always was in the background.

AG: Which school, could you tell us about the school?

SM: It was just a normal, Volksschule, Bürgerschule.

AG: In the ninth -?

SM: And then I had to go to commercial school because she went, so I had to. I should have gone to university, but because my sister didn't, mother didn't think it was fair that I should.

AG: So from the Bürgerschule -?

SM: I went to commercial school but I didn't want to go. I had about 260 - no excuse for absence.

AG: Ah right, yes. Just to ask you another question about the schools, the Volksschule, Bürgerschule: were there many Jewish children in your class?

SM: Yes, yes, yes.

AG: And did you experience any difficulties?

SM: Vienna was always anti-Semitic. And I didn't actually look quite Jewish, so they would say things to me.

AG: What sort of things?

SM: And then I - I remember, here in England, I was in hospital and my husband came every day, and he was not Jewish, and the girl next to me said, 'Stella, is your husband a Jew?' I said, 'No, he isn't, but I am.' She stopped it, she said, 'You?' I said, 'Why do you think he's Jewish?' 'Oh, he speaks with his hands.'

Tape 1: 12 minutes 7 seconds

AG: You had similar remarks in Vienna?

SM: A lot of it, yes. If you wanted to get somewhere, like the opera, you had to be Catholic. And a lot of people converted. But I don't. I'm born a Jew, that's it.

AG: So you became interested in dance around the age of ten. Tell us about how that developed.

SM: I went to a camp, a summer camp and there was somebody teaching us to - We were in the garden and people were standing outside for watching and one lady said, 'The little one in the black, she is good.' And I was the one in the black. So, from that moment on, I didn't stop and I danced, I improvised. But I didn't know what improvise means. So, when I went, a friend of my sister, his sister was a singer, when he saw me dance, he said, 'She should be trained'. And my mother said, 'Where?' At the academy, Staatsakademie. My father said no.

AG: Why?

SM: His daughter won't go on a stage, she would be in an office, on a good wage, and that's it.

AG: So he wanted you to become -

SM: A secretary. So I said to my mother when we had extra typing lessons, 'I don't need typing lessons, I play the piano for seven years, I can type'. And she fell for this. And when I finished the school, I was a very good pupil, even with the unexcused absences, I couldn't type and I couldn't get a job. But I was already dancing, there, there. And I got 30 shillings, 50 shillings. My sister had a salary, to start with, 80 shillings a month. And I was working, a week, maybe earning 80 shillings.

AG: What sort of places did you appear at, dancing?

SM: We were in Wohltätig, places for, they give their money for children, you know, whatever, welfare.

AG: Charity.

Tape 1: 15 minutes 10 seconds

SM: And they paid me a taxi, a pianist and so on. I didn't take a taxi, so of course the money I earned. And I earned in a week what my sister earned in a month.

AG: How old were you then? How old were you when you left school?

SM: When I left school I was sixteen. And I left the academy at fifteen. And then went into another school, a very famous dancer in Vienna, for three years.

AG: Which was this famous school, can you tell me its name?

SM: Gertrud Krauss. She was Jewish. She was, she went to Israel, she became very famous there.

AG: What was this school called?

SM: Gertrud Krauss.

AG: Oh, I see. What was this academy that you've been to before?

SM: I was in the Staatsakademie.

AG: Who ran that?

SM: Well, there was few professors, one was Gertrud Bodenwiese, one was -, I've forgotten the name, sorry, can't remember.

AG: Did Gertrud -?

SM: Grete Gross, ja.

AG: Did Gertrud Bodenwiese -?

SM: They were all modern. Because after the war, everything classical finished, nobody wanted to know, it was stuffy, it was old, it was old-fashioned. And everything was modern. So I was a modern dancer.

AG: Did you have any people on whose style you modeled yourself, like Isadora Duncan or -?

SM: Say that again.

AG: Did you have anybody, any dancer, on whose style you modeled what you did, in I mean modern dance, was it similar to any -?

SM: Yes, my teacher was, she was fabulous.

AG: Is this the teacher at the Staatsakademie?

SM: It's the second teacher.

AG: Aha.

SM: She was a pianist, a concert pianist, and to earn money she was playing in dancing schools, pianos.

AG: Was this Gertrud Krauss?

SM: And there was a lesson and the teacher gave them something to do at home, make up a dance, etc. And when they came back, nobody had done anything. And Gertrud said, 'I have done something.' And she showed it. And it was very, very good. So she started to run this, so she went to my first teacher. Then she gave big recitals in Vienna in the concert halls. And she was my role model.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 16 seconds

AG: And how did your career develop?

SM: The first thing I did, we made a recital, three girls, me and two others, in the Kammerspiele in Vienna. And then one of them gave up, and we gave a recital as two. And then she didn't like the competition, so I gave the recitals myself and I was invited to dance in the Volksbildungshaus. Every district in Vienna had a little theatre, it was called Volksbildungshaus, and I danced in all of them - in the Urania in Vienna, 500 people. And I gave recitals every year, or maybe two or three. And then we made up a duo again with the girl who danced with me in the second recital.

AG: What was her name?

SM: Trude Godwin. And she, and Stella Mann. And we were dancing in the 'Theatre of the Komikers'. There was Hans Moser, etc. It was hilarious, absolutely hilarious. And we were the first numbers. And the same place, the same director, and the biggest cabaret in Vienna - I've forgotten the name, I'm sorry - and we, from the 'Theater of the Komikers' went to this

other place and danced there from twelve to two. And we were the best number. And the month was gone. And every day we went home, the director was standing at the door and said: 'The young ladies wouldn't like to come in and have a glass of wine?' And we'd say: 'No, thank you very much'. And we went home. So when I came to the agent, has he got another job for us? 'No'. 'Why not?' 'You didn't drink'. 'But we had it in the contract that we didn't drink'. 'Yes, but we hoped you would'. So we didn't get the job. Then my uncle, who was the ballet master, got me a job with the evening classes, in one of the districts in Vienna, and I started to teach. And I had 40 pupils.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 22 seconds

AG: Individual pupils?

SM: Ja.

AG: That's a lot.

SM: I was teaching dance. And I was about seventeen. And I made myself look older with very slim [clothes], white powder. They were all very enthusiastic and they loved the classes. But the people who ran the place didn't like me and they didn't offer me another year. So I got a studio and all the pupils came with me, they left.

AG: Where was your studio?

SM: In Vienna, Schwedenkinohaus in the Second District. There was a big studio upstairs. Then in the Baker Street, Bäckerstraße; that was off a road...I don't know, it was in the centre, I had two days there. And I had two days in the Schwedenkinohaus. And I have ended up with about 100 pupils. And then I found some premises in the Wipplingerstraße, 12.

AG: Oh, that's right in the centre.

SM: And I built the school there, my father lent me the money. And I was there from '32 til '38. Then I had to leave.

AG: So your parents approved by then?

SM: Ja, I earned a lot of money, I earned more than my father earned. But I had to leave it

AG: So you were, were you well-known in Vienna?

SM: I was dancing, I got it out of my system because I had to dance. And I was teaching, and I was quite a good teacher. But not with small children. That I learnt when I was in Belgium in a home, where there were children, a Jewish home.

AG: We will come on to that.

SM: There I learnt to teach small children, put myself down to their level. Not speaking down to them, but speaking with them. And I became a very good teacher. Actually, I have done ten articles in the *Dancing Times*; I have it in a book here, how to teach small children.

AG: In Vienna, what sort of people were you teaching, teenagers or –?

Tape 1: 24 minutes 14 seconds

SM: Well, I had some very good dancers. And we were, when Hitler came, we were going to Switzerland. And just, all Jewish girls, very pretty, good dancers, I have some photos somewhere, and a week before that we were going, Switzerland closed the border and we couldn't go. Then I should have gone to Peru with my first teacher and I was two inches too small. So –

AG: Two inches too small?

SM: Ja. I'm five foot nothing.

AG: So they –?

SM: Well, the ideal height is about five four, five six. When I was in Holland, I was dancing in a big revue in high heels like this!

AG: Can't be easy to dance in -

SM: And my hair up like this! To make myself taller.

AG: All this time when you were beginning your career as a teacher and a dancer in Vienna, were you still living at home?

SM: No.

AG: And what did you do, if anything, apart from teaching dance? Did you have time?

SM: I was in love with a Yugoslav student.

AG: Oh yes? Where was he from, what part of Yugoslavia?

SM: Say that again.

AG: What part of Yugoslavia did he come from?

SM: He came from the, what was before the 1914 war Hungary. Bačka, Baneza, or something, Veliki Bečkerek, Subotica, Novi Sad.

AG: Aha, Novi Sad. So northern -

SM: He came from this district. He spoke Hungarian, he spoke German, he spoke English, and he spoke French. And he was in the Hochschule für Welthandel. And then he became a Diplomkaufmann. And then, rather later, I helped him to become a Doctor of Economy.

AG: How did you meet him?

SM: I went into a little place around the corner with a friend, and he was sitting with another friend of mine. And she said: 'This is Stella Mann, she's a dancer'. So he was curious. He came to engage me - And this is how it started. It lasted seven years.

Tape 1: 27 minutes 22 seconds

AG: Your life in Vienna, how would you describe it?

SM: Fabulous. I had enough money to do what I wanted. I did what I liked to do. I would have liked to dance professionally in a theatre, but I couldn't make myself taller, so that was that. I had a good school. I was in love. My parents were lovely. I had good friends. I travelled a lot.

AG: Oh yes? Where did you go?

SM: I went to Germany in 1930, to a summer course, dance summer course. It was, her name was Vera Skoronell. And I went to Yugoslavia, I went to Italy, I went to France, I went to Austria. But until the age of twenty, I always went with my parents.

AG: And when the Nazis came, was this a complete surprise to you or had you expected it? Did you –?

SM: I can't hear you.

AG: When the Nazis came in March 1938, had you had any idea that this might happen?

SM: Yes, because there was books in Vienna, written by people from Germany, and I had read them. So I knew what's happening in Germany. But I did not, I'm not a political animal, I did not know that it will come later on. When I was in Yugoslavia, I said they will come here. And I was told no. I said yes, they will come here, and they did. And I told them in Belgium they will come, and they did. I know. I know what they did, because I'd read these books about concentration camps, etc. But I didn't want to go as a domestic to England. That was the only way to get out.

Tape 1: 30 minutes 8 seconds

AG: Do you remember, when the Nazis came, where were you? What were you doing?

SM: Well, I had school and one of my pupils comes in, and there were demonstrations in the Kärntner Straße, am Ring, etc. On the one side: 'Rot-Weiß-Rot bis in den Tod, Schuschnigg'; on the other side 'Heil Hitler', fights, etc. And she comes in and says: 'Stella, I go to demonstrate.' Everybody called me Stella, even here. 'You come with me. Come and demonstrate. We don't want Hitler here.' I said: 'I can't come, I'm not a political animal, I'm not going to demonstrate'. And that was about a week before Hitler came to Vienna. And I had this lesson from one to two in the afternoon, at lunchtime: people came to me to, instead of going having lunch, to do gymnastics. And there was not one Jewish girl in this class of twenty. And this girl comes in with a Hakenkreuz, being an illegal member of the Nazi Party, and she walks in and said: 'I want my money back.' And I said: 'Why? There is no rule that you can't come to me'. 'I want my money back.' I said: 'Well, no!' And out of the dressing room, the girls had just finished the class, and Stella Mann – they didn't know I was Jewish – comes out and said: 'My brother is an SA-Mann, and he will arrest you. This is not what Hitler wants.' And she went.

AG: And so she arrested the other girl, not you, yes.

SM: Yes. And then the next day, the whole class was gone, not one came back, and my school finished.

AG: Where were you on the day that the Nazis came, were you just –?

SM: One day they made this election. And they confiscated shops to make propaganda. And they were confiscating a shop in our house. They went to the caretaker: 'Is there a Jew about?' And she sent them up to me: 'Take the girl with the red hair'. Now, the girl with the red hair was my secretary, but I also had red hair then, and he took me, to wash the floor.

AG: Scrubbing –

Tape 1: 33 minutes 24 seconds

SM: 'Saujud – mach das hier, do that again!' With big boots, big and dirty, so I have to wash the floor. And I was as white as a sheet when I came out.

AG: Was that an SS man, or an SA man, or?

SM: Yes, a Nazi. And then, when I came out, my caretaker saw me coming out from the shop, and she said: 'You?' She had sent up for the secretary, because, a young girl, maybe she was rude to her, I don't know, and he took me. But when I came back to Vienna in '52, I went to my school and the caretaker saw me and she said: 'Oh, you are still alive!' I said: 'Yes, they haven't burnt me'. So, this is Vienna in '52. They haven't learnt their lesson.

AG: Can you describe the atmosphere in Vienna when the Nazis came?

SM: Well, a little story. My mother had a young woman coming to help her around the house, clean, shop, etc. And my pupils bought me for my birthday a beautiful gold bracelet. And I couldn't find it. I've forgotten the name of the girl, I don't know, and I asked her: 'Have you seen my bracelet?' She says: 'Yes, I have it. And if you go to the police I will tell them your father slept with me'... That was the atmosphere. So I don't know what my mother said, but she must have talked to her, that it was common sense, that she better leave, and she left, but I never got my bracelet back.

AG: And were you and your parents able to stay in your flat?

SM: They stayed in the flat until 1941 I think. And I was teaching in Belgium. I had a very rich pupil, Dutch pupil, and she had a studio. She was a dancer. And she wanted to rent her studio to make some money, because she didn't need it, just for two hours a day she needed it. So I was teaching.

Tape 1: 36 minutes 21 seconds

SM: And I don't know how it happened... I was dancing in cabarets, I could still dance. And German soldiers were sitting there. But they were not allowed to dance or mix. And I was, when after I danced, I was in the dressing room, I was not going out. So I got 50 Francs a day. The girls who went out got 200 Francs. And this girl came in, the Dutch girl, and she had heard that I teach. Could I teach her? So this is the way how we started. And then in comes one day a man, a woman, and a child. And they wanted their child to have lessons, spoke to

me in French, and spoke between them in German, in Austrian-German. And I said: 'I'm sorry, I cannot take your daughter to teach because I'm Jewish'. 'Ach', he said, 'I'm the Gestapo, I can do what I want!' So his wife said: 'Don't be silly! You're not the Gestapo, why do you frighten this child?' So he said: 'Have you got anybody in Vienna?' I said: 'Yes, but what are you saying? Yes, my parents.' 'I'm going tomorrow to Vienna. Would you like to send them a parcel? I would take it to them.' I said yes. And I wrote them a letter, saying, 'Dear Mummy and Daddy, I know Mr Matosiani – he called himself Matosiani – since yesterday. But he's coming to Vienna and he will bring you this.' So to warn them that I don't know him. And he went, by that time they were living in the Zirkelstraße in the Second District, a five room flat, 18 people shared. A room like this would have wardrobes to make it two rooms, and a bed here and a bed there. One room, one kitchen, one bathroom, 18 people, with a yellow star on the door. And this man in a German uniform, I didn't know he would, because when he came to me he had no uniform, knocks on the door, can he speak to Mr Tuttmann?

Tape 1: 39 minutes 35 seconds

Can you imagine my parents? And he gives them the parcel. He takes my father out for coffee. Jews had to walk in the gutter. 'With me you can go anywhere. I will bring you -' And Singer Sawing Machine has got my father, my parents, a visa for Switzerland, and the money to live there. And they couldn't get a passport anymore. And he said he will take them. He brought them Kohlen, what's it called, stuff to heat?

AG: Coal.

SM: Coal. He took my father out and they were thinking somebody is coming to save them. It never happened. But the child was my pupil and she loved me. So if I would have been – I was hidden in his place for about two weeks when I had to go into hiding. And in the first eight weeks, or ten weeks, I was maybe in ten places. 'Stella, it's too dangerous.'

AG: Let me, before we get on to, this is Belgium, perhaps I can take you back to Austria. And perhaps you could tell me how you came to leave, how you were able to leave Vienna. First of all, when were you able to leave Vienna?

SM: I leave Vienna, I wrote to a newspaper in New Zealand, Australia actually, a beauty parlour wanted a gym teacher. Photo required! And I sent this photo. And back comes a declaration of love: 'I want to marry you!' And I got cold feet. Because I look very pretty there. I was very photogenic; I was never as pretty as that. So I wrote to him and said: 'I can't marry you, I don't know you. Let me come and we will know each other, maybe something will develop.' I never had an answer. Then I was writing to people with the same name in Austri-, in America; never got an answer. We were going to Switzerland: the border was closed. In the end I bought a visa for Yugoslavia.

AG: You bought one?

SM: Yes.

AG: Was that legal?

SM: No. Nothing was legal anymore.

AG: So –

SM: I left Vienna, the first time in an aeroplane.

AG: Do you remember saying goodbye to your parents?

SM: I don't want to.

AG: So you flew from Vienna –

Tape 1: 43 minutes 2 seconds

SM: It's 50 years, it's more than 50 years, 62, 64 years, and I love them. And when I, when sometimes a young girl says 'Well, I hate you' to the mother, they don't know what it's talking about. I would have done everything I could have done if they would have got a visa to Switzerland. Then I went to Vienna and I never went up to Singer. I just couldn't bear it.

AG: When did you actually leave Vienna?

SM: I think it must have been late August '38. When I was taken to wash the floor, my father hid his [SM hides her face]: 'Leave, leave, leave!' I said: 'What will you do? 'They won't do anything to me, I was in the war.' So ---.

AG: So you went to Yugoslavia.

SM: Ja.

AG: And your sister? What happened to her, what did she do?

SM: Who?

AG: Your sister.

SM: My sister, that was very funny. Crystal Night, her husband was in the, taken to Dachau. And he was an electrician. And Australia gave visas to tradesmen, and he got one of those visas. But to wait for the visa, it had to be council channels, etc. He had to -. He got the visa to England. So he went to England and Edith followed him on as his wife. And she was the whole war in England.

AG: Ah, right. In London?

SM: In London, ja.

AG: So going back to you, you left for Yugoslavia in August 1938?

SM: Can you speak louder?

AG: You left for Yugoslavia, you flew to Yugoslavia in August 1938?

SM: Ja.

AG: And what did you do in Yugoslavia? How did you live there?

SM: Well, I married a friend of my boyfriend. That was a marriage of convenience. And there came a law out, the Yugoslavs found out that a lot of people did that, that whoever does that, or witnesses it, will be imprisoned. So we had to live together, to make that we are married. Well, I didn't want to be married to him. So we took a furnished room, and he was teaching in one town, and I was in another town.

Tape 1: 46 minutes 36 seconds

AG: Which town were you in?

SM: I was in Subotica.

AG: This is all near Novi Sad?

SM: It is Hungarian, and he was in Veczgereg. And his parents didn't know, because he got money for that. My boyfriend paid him. Because I didn't want to marry, because the family was so against me, and I wanted to help my parents. And I had a job which I could do anywhere. And then he wanted to consummate the marriage. He was on his knees. I have never seen anything like it. And I said no. And he told my boyfriend he shouldn't come to see me anymore, we are man and wife. And he didn't come and see me. So I wrote to him and he came and I said: 'You should know me better'. So then I got this engagement, I got a passport, I got an engagement to Belgium.

AG: Was this a Yugoslav passport?

SM: Ja. That was 'Royaume Yugoslavie', 'Kingdom of Yugoslavia', before anything happened there. And I got a visa to Brussels. And then I got a visa to Holland, and I was dancing in Holland because I've danced before. But not anymore nine guilders, five. But still, I could live on it, I could save on it. And the Jewish Committee in Belgium helped me a great deal. Because, you see, I was going to dance in Holland, they wouldn't give me a visa unless the Belgians would give me a return visa to come back. And the Jewish Committee got this through, so I could go and come back and go. It was for three months, a month holiday, and I go back again. I was in the Scala in Den Haag, rehearsing. And then we went to Amsterdam, or visa versa, I don't remember anymore. And just when I should have gone back to Rotterdam, the Belgians were invaded. So I stayed in Belgium.

Tape 1: 49 minutes 44 seconds

AG: And where were you living?

SM: I was then dancing in the Jewish Theatre in Antwerp.

AG: Were you living in Antwerp?

SM: No, no, just for a week. I was living in Brussels.

AG: What part of Brussels were you living in?

SM: Rue Pont Neuf, rue de -

AG: Is that in the middle or?

SM: Anderlecht, Brussels, 42 rue de l'Hôpital, I was hidden for a year.

AG: What part of Brussels is that in? Is that in the middle of Brussels?

SM: That's all gone. I went back there. Rue de l'Hôpital was a studio, and an office for an agent, with a long corridor. It's all pulled down, the whole of Brussels has changed completely.

AG: Going back to the time of the invasion of Belgium, you were working in Antwerp, you were dancing in Antwerp.

SM: Ja.

AG: And were you, did you meet other refugees from Germany and Austria, were you in contact—?

SM: Ja. I had a friend from Vienna. Her name was Gertl Reidinger. She was a Catholic, her brothers were Nazis, and she had a Jewish boyfriend. And she was living with the Jewish boyfriend in Antwerp. And, when I came to dance in Antwerp, I stayed with her. And we were up talking till three o'clock in the morning. And I was sleeping on a mattress on the floor. And she woke me up at five: 'Stella, the war has begun'. The stukas went over. And of course she was frightened. He was in Argentine, her boyfriend, and she had to go back to Vienna. She was frightened that something will happen to her because of 'Rassenschande'. And so we said goodbye, I went back to Brussels and she went back to Vienna. And we have been friends ever since. But she died about - she was eight years older than me - she died about eight years ago. And we have seen each other many times. She went to see my parents. I sent a lot of parcels to my parents to her, and she would take them to them. She was good. Not all Austrians were bad; there were some good ones there. She was one of them.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 46 seconds

AG: Do you remember the Germans marching into Brussels?

SM: Ja. When I came back into Brussels on, they marched in, 10th May. And I was in Koksijde, I was in prison.

AG: You were in prison?

SM: Ja.

AG: Why were you imprisoned?

SM: Well, we tried to get to France. And, when we came to the French border, there were all English soldiers, and they asked for the passports. I was with five Austrians. All had this red stamp they needed. And I had a Yugoslavian passport. And they took us to prison, in Feneur, that's near Bruges. And the prison was built next to the railway station and it was run by nuns. And they said in Flemish: 'Always the Jews, always the Jews', etc. We had to leave our handbags in front of the cell. And there were -. By then, we were three Czech people; the man was in the male prison with the two boys, and the woman and the mother was with -. We

were in one cell, which was for one person, who was a criminal. One bed, one chair, one loo. No bed to sleep at on the floor. And the stink you cannot imagine! And we had to leave our handbags outside, with the money, with the valued papers. And I am very untidy, so I had money in the one, one in the other. Half of my money was gone, and the other was there when I came out. The next day, I was released because I was nation neutral.

AG: Sure, yes.

SM: So I said: 'My money is gone!' Ah, before, in the night, the one nun came in and said: 'We are going to be bombarded; the Germans will come and bombard us. We go into the cellar, but you bloody Jews – no – you bloody Germans, you will stay here and you will be killed by your own men, by your own people!' A Catholic nun! Many months later, when I lived in Brussels and we had already to register, the Germans were there, I was called to the community: 'You were in prison in Feneur?'. That was a Belgian working for the Germans. I said yes. 'What happened there?' For once, I had my head screwed on the right way and said nothing. 'It was war; we were five in the cell, nothing.' 'Are you sure?' I said yes. So somebody, one of the Czech people, must have denounced, and they wanted a witness. But I wasn't going to be a witness, so I didn't say anything, thank goodness. Because I wouldn't have lived afterwards. It was very, very difficult.

Tape 1: 56 minutes 39 seconds

AG: So after this, you couldn't get to France, so you went back to Brussels?

SM: Ja.

AG: And did you continue living in Anderlecht?

SM: Well, I went back to my flat where I had paid until the end of the month. And I'd left all my things there. It was summer, it was hot. And I had a little rechaud where I could make a cup of coffee or something. I come back into my room and the rechaud is gone! So I go down to the landlady and I say: 'I can't find my rechaud; it was standing on my table.' She says: 'I don't know anything about it.' So I took my things and found myself another room, which was still quite easy, it was not difficult. But that was the situation – grab, take what you can.

AG: Could you tell me how life developed for you in Brussels under the German occupation?

SM: Well, you see, there was -. Everybody bought what they could and put it – coffee, beans, hard things to..., like haricot, peas, hard peas, and bought that because we knew that it will not last. And then of course I never had timbres, I was not existing, because I was hidden, so I had to buy everything at the black market.

AG: Right. Before we get on to your time in hiding, I'm going to stop now because the tape is coming to an end.

Tape 1: 58 minutes 32 seconds

TAPE 2

Tape 2: 0 minute 5 seconds

AG: Now, you were just going to tell me how your life continued in Brussels once the Germans were there. At what stage did you go into hiding? When did you go into hiding?

SM: I got to hiding in 1942. That was the Final Solution. They were assembling; we were about thirty-something thousand Jews in Brussels. And we had to register before, so they knew everybody who was there. And I did not dare not to register because I was known as Stella Mann, etc. I danced in the Jewish Theatre and so I had to register. But before that I was dancing and I started to teach, because I knew the dancing wouldn't last. And I made up dances for girls who wanted to work in cabarets, etc. And I taught about ten hours a day, so I saved money. And we...where the studio was, which I hired from this Dutch girl, there was a flat free. So we had...I hired a flat, and then I furnished it and I taught, but there was already the curfew, 8 o'clock, no radio, and then there was the yellow star to wear. So it was very dangerous. And I was one of the first ones, to get, out of a thousand or something, this grey paper, to come to Malen, which was the concentration camp, where they assembled, but to say to go to work in Germany. An eighty-year old woman and a ninety-year old man, they don't go to work anymore, do they? They were all there. And little children. So I said I'm not going, I'm going to hide. And the theatrical agent who has employed me - I made dances up for troupes, which he organised for cabarets etc. - had bought a house which was never lived in, 9 rue l'Hôpital.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 9 seconds

AG: What part of Brussels is that?

SM: That is near the Bourse, not far from the Bourse. And he had a flat there, and he rented it to me. And there were some Jewish people I was friends with, they had nowhere to go. So there was a room upstairs. So I paid for the room upstairs and they came and lived with me. We lived in the flat and they slept upstairs. And, in exchange, she was going to do the cooking and the cleaning and he was a very tall, blonde, blue-eyed Jew, he was a welder. Very unusual occupation for a Jewish boy, he was the black sheep of his family. But it came well, it was good for him. And then the Queen, maybe somebody from the Royal Family, it was said the Queen, appealed to the Germans that they should not deport Jewish children of Belgian and Dutch and French origin. And they were in Malen. And I had to go and - he was called Fritz Lachs, and his wife was Xenia - and because he was a handyman, the Jewish Committee asked him to build the homes for the children. So he built the homes, six homes; it took quite a long time. And the first children were released on the day before I had to go into hiding. So I phoned him up, he was in the committee, the Jewish Committee, and told him what happened. The Gestapo had come, I was giving a lesson to Daisy, my friend, Belgian friend, and I didn't know they would hear the piano, because it was a long corridor with doors in between, a room, a corridor, a door again, a little room, bigger than this room, forty yards, something like this. I couldn't think that they would hear the piano but people heard the piano. And my bell was under my bed and in the letterbox. If the bell rang, the normal bell, I didn't open. And the bell rang and it rang and it rang. And I said to Daisy: 'You'd better have a look who that is.' And she doesn't come back. And, being very impulsive, you know, I want to run out and see, one door, one door, just before the last door I did hear her say: 'Stella Mann, Bronova, Braun, Tuttmann - I don't know her.' And I ran into the cellar, nowhere to go.

Tape 2: 6 minutes 53 seconds

Into the cellar. The cellar was under the studio. Nowhere to hide. It was black. But nothing, nothing standing there where you could hide. And I hear steps. I can't tell you what I felt. And about twenty minutes, half an hour later, I hear Daisy calling: 'Stella, où êtes-vous? Stella, où êtes-vous?' And I come out. It was the Gestapo, looking for me. He went first to the first flat, where the studio was, where I taught, and that was an agent, Noël Heiwinger, and he said: 'I don't have a photo from Stella Mann. But maybe Marcel Surville will have one', and sent him to rue de l'Hôpital. So he comes there to see Marcel Surville, the agent, if he has a photo. They were going to find the Jews with photos then. So Daisy gave them the address of Marcel Surville, and then they went, and I went and phoned, and he said, 'Come out to a place called Linkebeek, outside Brussels'. There was the official orphanage of Belgian children and in the garden was a schoolhouse, and there were 18 children from Malen, released. Two babies of twelve months, four children – I have photos – four children of about four years old, and the rest from four till fourteen, officially. One of fifteen, he said he was, had no papers. And they couldn't find what they are - they all spoke French, so no papers, they said they were Belgians. One of the little girls said: 'I saw my parents and they said: "Don't know us, don't come and kiss us! You go and get yourself saved."' And she did. The parents told her. Her name was Margot. I don't know the other name anymore. It's a long time ago now.

Tape 2: 9 minutes 32 seconds

So, full of pus where the fleas have bitten, full of lice here [SM points at her head,], lice here [SM points at her eye], and if they had anywhere else, lice there [SM points at her armpits] and we tried to entellus them. And we were three people for eighteen children. We washed the floor, we washed the bed linen – they were bed wetting – we had to make them up during the night so they don't bed wet, but still, we washed the linen. And the food was brought out from the orphanage in big containers and I went to fetch it. That must have weighed twenty kilos. And then I served the food to the children. I never in my life worked as hard as that, 18 hours and during the night. And then a new lot of children comes and starts again, and a new. We were hundred when the home in Linkebeek was opened. That was Ressebeek, and then we went to Linkebeek. And I stayed in Linkebeek from '42 till '44.

AG: This wasn't really properly hiding, or was it?

SM: Well, I was hiding from the Gestapo because they were looking for me. So I had a paper that I work in a Jewish home. But I had to wear a star. And I was there, they could take me anytime. Six homes with about 600 children. And that what's happened. They were going to take us. And the Garde Blanche - the Americans were already in France - came and warned us, said that the camions were ready to come and fetch us in two days, and we should disperse. That was on the 27th July '44.

AG: So you spent about two years at Linkebeek?

SM: Ja. I ran the home.

AG: Under your real name? You didn't have false papers or anything?

SM: No papers, no.

AG: No papers. I'm trying to understand whether you ran the home under your own name.

SM: No, no!

AG: You had false papers?

SM: I had a false yellow paper. Foreigners had either a white paper; it was valid for six months or a yellow paper, which was valid for two years. And I bought a yellow one. And I had that. But I mean it wouldn't have helped me, they would have known.

Tape 2: 12 minutes 47 seconds

AG: Who did you buy it from? How did you buy it?

SM: I don't know. I really don't remember.

AG: Anyway, going back, you were telling me that someone warned you that the lorries were ready.

SM: Ja, the Garde Blanche. The Garde Blanche was the Underground in Belgium. They came and warned us that they'd come in two weeks. And they gave us a thousand Belgian Francs, half a pound of butter and a tin of sardines and 'debrouille-toi!' – 'do what you can!' So I phoned up Daisy and I had a lesson with her, because it was my day free when I should... And the pianist was called Philippe, and he was a Jew, but he was married to a Dutch woman, who was a Catholic, and his children were brought up Catholics, so he was safe, he could work. But he couldn't hide me. He came. And then the other friend, Anna, she came, and she was hiding me before, before I had the flat. And - she had the studio that was the woman who had the studio – she came. And I left. They said we should leave because the children will be taken to peasants, the peasants will look... They won't have time to fetch them, to find them. So I left about seven o'clock in the morning. And I arrive in this place where the studio was to give Daisy a lesson. And there was a young lady on the corner – I was there at eight o'clock, so I was early – she was serving coffee. It was in the middle, where the stop was, avenue Louis, you know. And she had a torticollis, which is a stiff neck. And she was talking to a lady having her coffee that she has a stiff neck. And then she came to me and said: 'What would you like?' and I said: 'Can I have a coffee?' And then the lady went and I said to her: 'Have you got any cream, because I have learnt massage and I can make your neck better.' 'Yes.', she said. So I massaged her every twenty minutes. And I got this neck working.

Tape 2: 15 minutes 37 seconds

And then she said to me: 'Would you like to go out to lunch with me?' I didn't want to go out to lunch. I said: 'Where are you going?' 'To the Catholic Mission.' I said: 'Okay, I'll come with you.' So we went and walked up. She said: 'Mademoiselle, are you worried? Vous avez des soucis?' 'No, no, no.' So we have lunch, and we came back, and Anna came, Daisy came, and Philippe came, and we had – . 'What do we do with Stella?' Philippe couldn't take me, Anna couldn't take me anywhere, Daisy - the Gestapo had been to find me - she couldn't take me. And Philippe goes out of the room and comes back with this little blonde lady, and she says: 'I take you home, Mademoiselle. Why didn't you tell me?' I said: 'I'm very sorry, but -' [interruption]

AG: Just continuing after the interruption; you were saying that the lady whom you've met, this little blond lady –

SM: Yes, she said she would take me home and she took me home. She lived somewhere outside Brussels, somewhere, and she had a little daughter of four. By then I knew how to teach little girls of four, because in the home I had them from three on. And they went to work, the couple, and they gave me food, I had no timbres. They didn't want any money.

AG: Ration cards, ration coupons? You said you had no timbres, is that ration coupons?

SM: I had no coupons, because I was not existing! So everything I ate I had to buy on the black market. And my money was running out. Anyway, so they went to work, and Lilliane was her name, she was four, very clever, and we had a ball of a time at home. I taught her singing, I taught her French songs, I taught her – I had an accordion – and I danced with her, I told stories, I painted with her, made puzzles. It went very very good. This marriage was breaking up, so it was a bit difficult. And I stayed there maybe two or three weeks, and the bell rings.

Tape 2: 18 minutes 54 seconds

In comes the Garde Blanche: 'Who are you?' I said: 'I'm a Yugoslav and I'm a Jew and I have been hiding here.' 'Do you know...?' I don't know the name, Marcel or something. 'No.' 'Do you know her?' To the girl and she says no. And they went. The story afterwards, the child said to me: 'I know Marcel, but I didn't want to say it'. Marcel was hiding and he was looked for by the Garde Blanche. He was one of the Belgians who thought the Germans will win and worked for the Germans. And when he saw what was happening with the French already, he stole some revolvers or something, so that the Garde Blanche would look for him. And told everybody: 'The Garde Blanche is looking for me.' Or, 'The Germans are looking for me'. And a friend hid him, not knowing that he worked for the Germans. Neither did the parents know. Neither did Lolita or Pierre know, nor the little child, but she wasn't saying that she knows him, so she was very clever, at four! And then the Gestapo came and they went upstairs. So I was in danger then. Nothing happened. And one day, the British came to Brussels, and Lolita comes in: 'Stella, the English are here!' We went out, and it was something we will never forget. The camions with the British soldiers, everyone gave them beer and wine and carried them on their shoulders into restaurants. They couldn't do enough for them. It's changed a bit now, hasn't it? They forgot. And we were mad. And they went plundering. All the Belgians went where the Germans had sugar and flour and animals, living animals, cows!

Tape 2: 21 minutes 55 seconds

They were plundering and taking them. And they were making flags, dyeing them yellow, red and black to hang out of the windows. It was fabulous. And I went to Brussels and got myself a flat. I had lived without a wardrobe and on the floor, with a little shower and a kitchen and a bedroom. Near the Bourse. I've forgotten the name, 42 something, can't remember. Anyway. And I went to my agent, he was there, also Jewish. And he got me an engagement. And then I worked. And every time I had to have a permission from the Belgians to work. And they left the papers lie, and there was a week's work by the time the week was..., the paper came out. So I said: 'I'm not doing that, I will make a troupe.' And I made a trio. With Teresa, which I have taught, another girl. And we called it SDS and we worked in the biggest places. We were very good. I was the soloist, and they were the sort of background. And very well dressed, beautiful, money, costumes. And I paid for the costumes. The music had to be written for the orchestra, photos, and made up the dances. And we shared the money in seven sevenths. The

girls got two sevenths, two sevenths, and I for what I paid got three sevenths. And we danced for two years.

AG: What sort of places did you appear in?

SM: Big places. Big hotels. There was a place near Verviers, near the German border. American, big theatre, big cinemas, big acts. And we were very glamorous. The two girls were very pretty, and I didn't look too bad either. And we danced. This is when I met my husband.

AG: Tell me about that. How did you meet your husband?

Tape 2: 24 minutes 54 seconds

SM: Well, because of the food we were eating, my hair came out in strands, my nails broke. Lack of vitamin, lack of calcium, I don't know. And they had rallonches.

AG: They had what?

SM: Rallonches it was called: R-A-L-L-O-N-C-H-E.

AG: What's that?

SM: It was hair, and it had two clips. And you clipped it in your hair and you had lovely hair. Because I had long hair. There is a painting with me with long hair. But it was thin, you know. Because I combed it and it came out. And the food – we got very good food and the nails grow back to their strength, and the hair. I still have very good hair for my age. So we had all rallonches, also the two girls. And one day we were working for the Americans, for the Officers' Club, and then we had - it was, the place was Belgian-German-Germany-Belgium-Germany, etc., on the border, 1914, 1918, 1940, 1944 it changed.

AG: Ah! Eupen?

SM: Eupen, yes, maybe, ja. And we had to be fetched because there was a curfew for the Germans. And we were stationed in families. But we couldn't go out after eight o'clock; we had to be fetched by American transport. And then we were taken for dinner in the evening, before we danced or after we danced. So, we were sitting with them, eating, and my friend, Ilse, said to them: 'Why are you so keen on -? You have beautiful women in America. Look at the film stars, etc.' And this boy said to her: 'Yes, and everything is false. That [SM gestures to her breast] is false, and that [nose] is false.' And then he takes her hair and pulls it – thank goodness not on the rallonche! – 'And that is false!' Imagine he would have pulled off this rallonche – he would have been the laughing stock of the whole camp!

Tape 2: 28 minutes 4 seconds

AG: And how about your husband? You were going to tell me how you met your husband.

SM: Well, this woman who took me in, Lolita, with the little child, when I danced, she was – her marriage broke up, you know - she came every day to see me dance and mix and dance with the English soldiers. But I had to have some help to put the rallonche on because I did a very turbulent dance, a gypsy dance, turning and jumping, etc. And I was frightened it will

come off. So she came and put it on for me. Well, one day, when I came out, she was standing with a British soldier, and she says: 'Can you explain what he wants? I can't understand what he says'. So I asked him and he says: 'My hobby is making paper flowers. And I would like to have some thick paper. And I would like to see her again, she looks like my wife!' I wouldn't want to look like a wife, you know. So I said to Lolita: 'Do you want to see him again? Do you want to buy this paper?' She says, yes, okay, I will. So we made an appointment on Wednesday. When I came to dance she didn't come along to do my hair. So I had to go up and find her. And she was dancing with my husband. And I had to wait until the dance finished so to see where they go and sit down. And when I go there: 'Come on, sit down!' I said: 'No, I'm sorry, I can't. I am engaged here as a dancer. Lolita, have you forgotten?' 'Oh yes!', she said. So she came with me and did my hair. From this moment on, my husband was there every day. There were five of them, this one brought four friends, they were all sergeants. That is all, you see.

AG: Could you tell me your husband's name?

SM: Derek Ashby Mott.

AG: And what sort of man was he?

SM: He was two years younger than me. And he wanted to marry me. After a few weeks. He was there every day. Whenever I danced, he was there. And he said: 'Would you marry me?' He was married before, and he told me. And I said no. 'Why not?' 'You are 32, I am 34. You are English, I am Austrian. You are Christian, I am a Jew. It won't work.' 'You want me to become a Jew? I become a Jew!' That did it. I said: 'No, I don't want you to become a Jew. There are enough unhappy Jews about in this world, we don't need another one.' But that he offered made me think. That's it.

Tape 2: 32 minutes 7 seconds

AG: And during this time, have you made any attempt to contact you parents once the war was over?

SM: My dear, in two weeks time I have a hip replacement, in a week's time. I will be in hospital. I shall be in the King Edward's, Beaumont Street. If you want to come and see me, if I'm well enough. I will be on crutches. And then I go into a convalescent home, but I don't know yet where.

AG: What I asked you was in this time when the war ended, did you try to contact your parents in Vienna?

SM: I didn't do anything else. Derek did a lot with the Red Cross and the Army, etc. All we were given was that they were deported to Minsk but never arrived. And about a year ago I got a letter from the Kultusgemeinde where they write there is an act of my father. And they have asked for it and they sent me a copy. And they also told me that they were deported to Minsk, but on the Russian border there was an SS castle, and they were shot. They didn't even bother anymore to put them in a camp. That was the Final Solution.

Tape 2: 34 minutes 3 seconds

AG: Did you think at all of going back to Vienna when the war ended?

SM: No.

AG: Why not?

SM: I went back. I went back as a visitor. I went back and we were, you see, Derek was a Christian, and we had some Austrian company. In comes a man into a Gasthaus, you know, where you eat, claps me on the shoulder and said: 'Heil Hitler!' Everyone was a Christian, but he touched me. I said: 'You have just touched the right one.' I couldn't have gone back there.

AG: And did you have any contact with your sister? When did you re-establish contact with your sister?

SM: Well, she lived here. She was here, so I didn't. But I knew that she tried to get in touch with Singer sewing machines. And that she arranged the visas for Switzerland, which were never -. So I knew where she lived. And then, when Derek became my friend, I told him I have a sister in England, but I don't know where she lives, but could he write a letter to the Singer sewing machines and ask them if they know where she is. And he did. And he wrote a letter that he has met me and that we are very happy and we are getting married. And he spoke to the man on the phone, who had this letter. He said: 'Would you like to open it?' And he read it and then gave him the address of my sister. So I got in touch with her. And then, of course I had very little money at the beginning. That was the second week of the British occupation that I met my husband. And he was a very good ballroom dancer, he did competitions, etc. He had a school in Brighton. And when he went out he always took his dancing shoes in a little case. And in the dancing shoes he had tins of salmon, cheese, whatever, bringing it to me to eat. 'Have you eaten today?' 'Yes.' 'What did you eat?' 'Coffee, bread.' He started bringing me food. And then she sent him food, and he brought it to me.

Tape 2: 37 minutes 32 seconds

AG: When did you actually get married?

SM: '46.

AG: Here or in Brussels?

SM: Brussels.

AG: Can you describe the wedding?

SM: Well, it was in a town. Like here, you go to a..., like in Marylebone Road.

AG: A registry office.

SM: In Brussels, there is this very beautiful, it's like a church, but it's not a church, it's a community something. And outside stand soldiers with weapons, etc. That's where we married. And it didn't cost anything because British soldiers didn't pay. I have some photos of that as well.

AG: How long did you and your husband stay in Belgium then?

SM: He stayed in Belgium until about '45, and then he was stationed in Hamburg.

AG: Did you go with him to Hamburg?

SM: No, no.

AG: So you stayed in Brussels?

SM: I stayed in Brussels. Then we, remember, the Germans attacked again, the Rundstedt Offensive.

AG: Yes, before the end of the war.

SM: And I was so frightened that they will come back to Brussels! And Derek said: 'I come and fetch you and hide you in one of our -, whether he would have done that or not I don't know, whether he would have been allowed to do that I don't know, but that's what he said. But they didn't come.

AG: When did you and your husband move back to England?

SM: I came to England in May '46.

AG: With your husband?

SM: No. He was discharged on -. We married on 10th of April '46, and he should have come back to be discharged. He stayed for two nights. So he was a, what do you call them?

Tape 2: 40 minutes 8 seconds

AG: Deserter?

SM: Deserter. And frightened stiff. Nothing happened. Anyway, he came back to London and he stayed with his father in Brighton. And then he went to tell my sister, and they found a furnished room in Greencroft Gardens 83, for £ 2.10.

AG: For you?

SM: Ja, for us. And my sister had a shop with my brother-in-law, electricity, television – if there was television then, I don't know.

AG: Where was this?

SM: In Willesden. And Derek became a partner. But the salary was not very good, so we had £5 to live on, in '46. £2.10 went for the room. And I didn't get a job, I tried. And then one day I looked for a room where to teach; somebody told me about the Austrian nursery in Netherhall Gardens, number 5. And I thought, well, there were big rooms there, so maybe they would let me have a room? So I went up and rang the bell and they said: 'Who are you? What do you want?' I said: 'I wonder if you would have a room I could teach dance.' 'Who are you?' 'Stella Mann.' 'Stella Mann from Vienna? Come in! Would you like to teach our

children?' I said: 'I would love to.' And from one day to the other, the children paid 3 shillings a day; I earned 15 guineas a week. And that started it.

AG: What were your first impressions of England?

SM: The English are very difficult to know. Derek was different, very different. He could have been a continental anywhere. He can make a good mix, talk some German, in Spanish, in French, you know, very jolly. But when you know them, they are good friends.

AG: Did you mix much with English people other than your husband?

SM: Very much. Because he was English and of course he had friends and made friends, and I had pupils, they were English.

AG: Were you accepted by the English?

Tape 2: 43 minutes 18 seconds

SM: I was, yes. And a lot of them don't know my story. I never told it.

AG: Did you encounter any hostility because you were obviously not English?

SM: Ah well, you hear the sort of 'bloody foreigner'. I think they were very tolerant. I made a poem about that.

AG: Oh yes? Show me that at the end. And how did your teaching develop? You started at the Austrian nursery.

SM: Well, the children went from five to school. And I had taken a studio opposite, number 8 Netherhall Gardens. And they came to me to dance. And what I earned - we had a joint account - I invested in the school. Because I was a modern dancer, and in England they were very classical, they didn't want to know. I came here at the wrong time. Now it would be right, then it was wrong. So I couldn't get a job. So I said my pupils will have to have classical ballet and modern, and then they won't be in the same situation as I was. And that was what I did. I engaged a woman called Olive Cadiz, we are still friends, in 1946, '47. She was about twenty. And she did the classic. And I did ten minutes modern with the children, in every lesson. And we ran it. And then I got St. Christopher's School in Belsize Lane and I taught there. And I taught in Eton Avenue, in another school. And in another nursery. So I earned money and everything that I earned went back into the school, so I got more teachers, I got better studios, we went to Finchley Road, I had two studios, then we had another studio in Pond Street.

AG: In Hampstead.

Tape 2: 46 minutes 7 seconds

SM: When I got the college going, when I got the teachers going. And I have pupils all over the world, which still are in touch with me, and write me letters. And I had my 90th birthday last year and I had 47 people in the restaurant here, in Vasilias, Italian restaurant. And I didn't know it would happen. I had some pupils there; one is an examiner, the other one is an examiner, the third one is an examiner. One came from Canada, one came from Spain,

from all over the world, one came from Italy. And teachers. And after the lunch, Pauline Withers, one of the examiners, stood up and said: 'I am one of Stella's pupils and we didn't know how lucky we were, what fabulous training we had. We only found out when we went out into the teaching world and see what happened somewhere else.' And there was Caroline Ash, she owns Lauderdale House, she stood up, and she told every one of the pupils she knew who were there that they have to speak. There was a Norwegian girl. And everyone stood up and said what happened to them when they come and see me. And they could always come into the office when there was trouble. They could tell boyfriend trouble, trouble in the place they lived, food trouble maybe. And I was helping. And I was loving it.

AG: When was your school moved to the premises in Finchley Road, do you remember?

SM: We were in Netherhall Gardens from 1948 til 1958.

AG: And then you moved to 3 Finchley Road?

SM: Ja. But now they have five studios.

AG: All over England?

SM: They have the studio here in the church, on the corner of Frogal Lane. They have the studio which I had already in Pond Street where the centre is, where you go and-. And they have now the two studios which the windows looked out over Netherhall Gardens when I first was there. And that costs about £35 an hour.

AG: Did you have much contact with other Jewish refugees from Austria?

Tape 2: 49 minutes 36 seconds

SM: I had a lot of pupils from Vienna and we were speaking about Austria: Austria is a beautiful country, it's lovely. And of course we were talking how beautiful-. And Derek said: 'I can't hear that anymore! What's so wonderful about Austria?' And then the first time we went back to Austria, we were in a train. I had a thyroid operation, and we went by car, the car on the train. And we went to Switzerland, Tyrol, in the car, with the train. And I was sleeping. And my husband comes in and said: 'Come out, you must see that, you mustn't miss that!' 'Derek, I have lived here for 26 years, I know it. Let me sleep.' 'No, no, you have to see it.' Then he understood how beautiful it is.

AG: What year was this?

SM: It must have been '52, '51. Ja, it was '52.

AG: This was when you first went back to Vienna?

SM: Ja.

AG: What was that like for you, going back after 14 years?

SM: Terrible. Everything was changed. We were driving on the left, like here. They drove on the right. We had a car, but I couldn't find my way. There were one-way streets going the

other way! So to find your way in Vienna, at the beginning, with a car, when you know it left, and then suddenly you know it right, very difficult.

AG: Where did you stay in Vienna when you went back?

SM: I stayed, I met one old school friend, that was before I was in Vienna, I went to Velden, by myself, and we were up in the dressing room, and she said to me: 'Are you Stella Mann?' Oh no, she says 'Stella Tuttmann'. I said: 'Yes.' She says: 'I'm Maria Schurner'. She was a pupil in the same school, and obviously had followed my progress, because I was known like a bad penny. And she was married and I met her husband. And I always wondered what uniform he was in. I have a photo of him. He looked a typical Nazi officer. I never asked. You don't scratch the surface because what you find is not nice.

Tape 2: 53 minutes 10 seconds

AG: How long did you stay in Vienna on this occasion?

SM: When I went the first time, I went to my home. And I went up, we were on the second floor, and I rang the bell. And nobody answered. And I went to the school; there was the caretaker and said: 'You are not dead? Ah, you're alive?', she said. No.

AG: Did you go back to your family flat again?

SM: Yes, I became a Soroptimist here. You know what a Soroptimist is?

AG: You told us, yes.

SM: And I went to Vienna, and they have Soroptimists there, so I wrote a letter and said I come. So I got beautiful flower arrangements sent to me; I stayed in a hotel or somewhere. And the woman, I'm not sure that I remember that right, she was a 'von'. And I said, you know me, I have to see somebody who is noble in Austria. The trouble was her father was a Jew. And he was from a mixed marriage and there were some Adelige. So we clicked. And then when I brought my husband, they made a great fuss of him because he could sing the 'Ich hab zwei...' - the 'Ferkellied'. He could sing it in German. I can't say it anymore. So they made a great fuss of him. But no, I couldn't live there.

AG: So coming back to this country: when you moved to Finchley Road, how did your school develop?

SM: Well, we had the upper part of two places. And because I'm very impatient, I get very easily bored. And I taught in the morning children, little children in the schools, but my work in the school started after school, because I had children, no grown-ups. And I put them in for exams. And they had to have exam tunics. And there was difficulty with the dressmaker, so I said I make them myself. And I got a dressmaker, got someone to cut, and I made tunics. And then I went up to the Royal Academy and I said: 'Have you got difficulties to get tunics made?' 'Yes, Miss Mann. Why do you ask?' I said: 'Because I make them.' 'Oh, would you make them for us?' So I opened up a business called 'RA Tunics'.

Tape 2: 57 minutes 14 seconds

AG: Is the 'RA' from Royal Academy?

SM: Ja. And made the tunics for the Royal Academy. And then I had some showcases in Swiss Cottage. They are not there anymore, where the theatre is, and the bank is, there were some showcases. Big, about three metres long, three. And one I had with tunics, and one I had with the school. And then Gandolfi came, Jean Gandolfi, he's a shoemaker, a Paris shoemaker, and wanted to hire one. And then he asked me if we would make the leotards for him. And my husband and I started a tunic business. If you go over this drawer, I can show you. And this became a very big business and it's still there.

AG: Where is it?

SM: In the same place, where the school is.

AG: In the school, in the same building?

SM: On top.

AG: Well, I think this tape is coming to an end, so we'll have a break there.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 34 seconds

TAPE 3

AG: This is Tape Three of the interview with Stella Mann. We are continuing the interview on the 21st May 2003 and completing the interview. One of the tapes was faulty and we are redoing the interview. Thank you very much indeed, Miss Mann, for allowing this to continue and come and see you again. In the interim period, you had a hip replacement and I hope this was successful.

SM: Yes, thank you.

AG: Good.

SM: Very painful.

AG: Is it still painful?

SM: No, no.

AG: Well, many congratulations.

SM: It's well worth it.

AG: Yes, it's remarkable that you made such a good recovery so quickly. Now, in the previous two tapes that we did a few weeks ago, we covered all of your life before you came to this country; and almost all of your professional life in this country, especially dancing classes and the tunic, RA Tunics, firm. So I'd just like to conclude that by asking you a couple of questions. One thing that interests me is whether you had any contact with any of the other continental experts in modern dance, like Kurt Jooss or Laban?

SM: Kurt Jooss, he was in England and he returned to Germany. And his partner, Sigrid Leeder, was the teacher, Jooss was the choreographer. And he gave lessons in England, and they were wonderful.

AG: So did you know Sigrid Leeder and Jooss?

SM: I went to his classes. I went for three years.

AG: As a pupil?

SM: As a pupil, yes.

AG: Could you tell me a little about that?

SM: Oh, it was just out of this world. It was not, I have never known any modern teacher who inspired as Sigrid Leeder did. And I had a letter on the computer from a woman who makes a book about Leeder, and she found that my name-, because I was going to some summer courses, I never went. And she asked me: 'Why didn't he make a success of his life in England?' He was just here at the wrong time. Like I came, nobody wanted to know about modern dance. They didn't even know what it is.

AG: When was this that you attended these classes? Do you remember what year?

Tape 3: 3 minutes 2 seconds

SM: Oh yes, I came here in '46, and I had an operation and I had to wear a corset. And I went to his classes with that, with long trousers. That must have been '47, '48. '50, '49, something like that.

AG: Where were these classes held?

SM: In St. John's Wood, in, I don't remember the name. It was a building of a studio, and they have redeveloped this place, so he lost it. And then he went to Covent Garden, and that was very much more difficult for me, because I had to travel early in the morning. And it wasn't as nice as St. John's, it lacked a thing. But I went there as well, about a year. And then he disappeared, I don't know where he went.

AG: What sort of man was he?

SM: He was an artist. He was a teacher. And very, very good. I mean I have been with Gertrud Krauss, I have been with Skoronell, I have been with Bodenwieser, never have I seen a modern teacher like Sigrid Leeder.

AG: What would you say was special about him?

SM: Well, the whole system was different. Whilst modern dance hasn't got a vocabulary, it depends on the teacher. I am concerned with music, so my girls, or whoever, were trained to use music. If the music goes high, you don't go down to the floor. And if the music is broad, you don't do that [SM puts her arms around her body]. But he made his studies, and he had this writing which was very much like music writing. He wrote all his studies down. So if he did something good, it didn't get lost. Whilst I was lazy. I did something good and I said: 'Oh

well, I'll do something else good'. I never wrote. But he did. And these things he did were very, very good.

AG: And the other people who attended these classes in St. John's Wood and then Covent Garden, were they mostly English?

SM: Yes.

AG: So he had some following?

Tape 3: 6 minutes 4 seconds

SM: Oh yes. He had quite a following. And we were all absolutely enchanted.

AG: Were there any famous -?

SM: No, there were not famous there, not that I think there were. When we improvised, he left me improvising, because I was good at that. And he said: 'Oh Stella, the artist Stella!' But he never said 'that was very good' or 'that was shocking'. But he was encouraging and he got you there. He was a real teacher. I don't think he's alive anymore. He must have been, he came to Vienna in 1928, with Jooss. And there was, I don't know what it is, it's not a concert, it's not a symphony, it's singing and music, and that was in the Konzerthaus in Vienna. And I was a pupil then of Gertrud Bodenwieser, so I must have been 14 or 15. And they asked for pupils to help, because they brought a small part of their students and they needed to fill out, so I was dancing there. And I saw Jooss and Leeder at work, at 14. And then they came to Vienna after they'd won the first prize in Paris with the Green Table. Do you know anything about it?

AG: I heard of it.

SM: It's an anti-war ballet. And I wanted to drop everything, my school, my boyfriend, and follow on like a pupil and go back to learn. But I had school, I couldn't do it. And then I wrote to them that I would like to come to a summer course. And I came to England and I got cold feet. And I didn't go there. In retrospect, I think I would have probably been accepted into the company, because I was very gifted. But you don't know that when you are sixteen. You need somebody to tell you and to push you.

Tape 3: 9 minutes 9 seconds

AG: I'd also like to ask you a very general question. Could you tell me what dancing and teaching dancing meant to you?

SM: Everything.

AG: How do you feel about it?

SM: Well, you have to have a lot of patience, because you get the girls, mother sent them to have a good posture. They have flat feet; they have a little tummy, so they come for a physical reason. And then between those, you have the one, or two, which are talented and you want to do something with them. And I have quite a lot of people who have not gone on to the top, but... One of mine now just took over a school in Bushy, and she was with me from her fourth

to her eighteenth, and then she went to the Royal, and then she came back to me to teach, and now Bushy.

AG: What's her name?

SM: Vivian Sexton.

AG: What's she doing at Bushy?

SM: She is the principal of a school, which was a bit run down and she will bring it up.

AG: How did you feel when you were performing yourself, when you were dancing?

SM: Oh, I loved it. I loved to dance.

AG: How did you feel?

SM: I don't know, it was just my life. I wouldn't have gone into an office. My father wanted me to. I didn't want to.

AG: When you look back on your career, dancing and teaching dancing, what are you particularly proud of?

SM: When I have now, when I get letters from former students. I had a letter from America; I think I told you this. She has got 600 pupils.

AG: What part of America?

SM: I've forgotten.

AG: What's her name?

SM: She was Anita Nootsie, something like this; and now she is Hagopian, she is married to a Greek, but an American. And he has on the computer; he typed in 'Stella Mann', and up comes my website. So she wrote to me and thanked me for the wonderful training she had. That's one. Then there's another one, she's in Suffolk, she's Swedish. And she has 450 pupils. So that is nice.

Tape 3: 12 minutes 32 seconds

SM: And I get letters from, mostly America, from Spain, from France. And they remember. And that's nice. So I'm in contact with a lot of younger people. That probably keeps me fit. A teacher never earns a lot of money, not in England. In America, yes. But the job satisfaction, to get somebody who is sort of the mother's child, too fat, etc., and you can do something with the body, and out comes a very nice girl. And they work hard. They have-. I always said: 'The first thing is, you'll soon come to sixty. Make sure that you save some money. Pay your income tax, etc., etc., but not to swindle, or to do something on the black, etc.' And you can educate them. It's really quite interesting.

AG: Good. I'd like to turn now to the main area that we didn't cover on the two previous tapes, which is your own private life in England. As far as we got, you were still living in Goldhurst Terrace -

SM: I never lived in Goldhurst Terrace.

AG: Where was it? Correct me.

SM: Greencroft Gardens that was the first one. Then Netherhall Gardens, where I had the school.

AG: So you lived, as it were, above the shop, as they say?

SM: Ja.

AG: Do you remember when you moved to Netherhall Gardens?

SM: Ja, I know very well. In 1948.

AG: Was this still a rented flat?

SM: No. I was teaching in the House-on-the-Hill. Did I tell you that?

AG: House on the Hill, that's the Austrian nursery.

Tape 3: 15 minutes 4 seconds

SM: That's it. I was teaching there every day, music, singing, I had an accordion. And dancing of course. And when they left, there was opposite another nursery, who opened up in competition. And I didn't know what has happened, they left. And I went there and I found this beautiful studio, going out into the garden, bay window, beautiful. Not very big, about 28 foot. And I rented it, not knowing that she had no permission. And I thought, well it's not a change of use, so I took it over. And the council came up. And I wrote letters and went to see my neighbours and said: 'I haven't disturbed you, would you help me?', and they did. And I got permission. And I was there for ten years.

AG: So you and your husband lived there?

SM: Ja.

AG: And what was your husband doing during this time?

SM: Well, when I met him, he was an engineer, he was in charge of, like Mary Cartwright in this article. Where Montgomery was, he was, he had I don't know how many lorries and tanks. And then he didn't want to do that anymore when he came to England. And he had a driving school, Whitehead School of Motoring. And a lot of people passed their test first time. And then the Suez Crisis came and everybody could drive without making a test. And he faded away. By then, I had started tunics, so he came into tunics. And he was very artistic. He painted as well. And he made new leotards, models, etc. And he learnt to cut. So he worked in tunics.

AG: So you were in Netherhall Gardens until 1958.

SM: Then I found Finchley Road.

AG: Yes. That was for your school?

Tape 3: 18 minutes 2 seconds

SM: Ja. But it was two parts of houses, three for three, and three for five. The upper part. And three for three, also the basement.

AG: Yes, you did actually tell me quite a lot about the school and the various branches. I'd like to concentrate on the way you were privately, because, presumably, you didn't live at Netherhall Gardens after you -

SM: No, we moved into Finchley Road.

AG: Again, you moved. And how long did you live in Finchley Road?

SM: It must have been until I retired, 1985.

AG: Did you actually own these buildings?

SM: I almost did. But I was short of £10,000, and no way could I raise them. And then we saw Arkwright Road being built, and I said: 'Over my dead body, if anybody else gets this house!'

AG: Which number Arkwright Road was it?

SM: 11f.

AG: Is that up towards the top end?

SM: Ja. Next to the Union, ASLEF; they have a big house there.

AG: That's the Train Drivers' Union, isn't it?

SM: Ja. And we had a beautiful house then. Didn't look anything from the outside, like a man's cottage, but inside, lovely.

AG: So that was your home – when did you buy that?

SM: I got mad at this time, because in Finchley Road; we had a kitchen. Then in '68 we bought a mobile home on the Thames, I had a kitchen. And then I wanted to go abroad and have a home abroad, so we bought in Spain.

AG: Where in Spain?

SM: That was in Cala Brava, in Mallorca. And I got to know the dancing community there. And I was going to teach in the conservatory there, the fifth year I think - they were there for five years, the girls - to teach them how to teach. And, because I was a foreigner, it didn't

materialise. And then some of these teachers wanted to have instruction, but they didn't want to go to another teacher, because the jealousy there was just impossible. But they came to me because I didn't have a school, I didn't pretend to be anything. And they paid me. And I had a studio for nothing. So I went twice a week, or three times a week, and taught. And the first time, the first teaching part I had was choreography.

Tape 3: 21 minutes 55 seconds

SM: To make up dances. To make up enchaînements, if you know what that is, steps put together. And that was very successful. And then they wanted me to teach anything, everything, whatever I know. So I taught. And then they asked me to do the choreography for the show. And they had never seen anything like this. I got a standing ovation. I got some flowers. I have a silver tray outside there, where all the teachers thanked me, etc.

AG: In which city was this?

SM: That was in Palma.

AG: And where were you living in Mallorca?

SM: In Cala Brava first, and then we decided to live there. Because I was 73, my husband was 70 and a half. And he wanted to give up, not me. And I'm very sorry I ever did. But, when you come to this age, you have to think about your future. And I had a bad knee, so it was not easy to teach. And then he got ill. He had cancer, all over his body. By the time they got to it, he was dying. And we came back to England.

AG: When was this?

SM: 1991.

AG: Was that the year that he passed away?

SM: Ja. And in the end I slept in the same room in the hospital, in the Lindo Wing in St. Mary's. And it was shocking. Nobody should die like this. You should be able to say, 'I have had enough, thank you'. They can do that now, in Holland, I think.

Tape 3: 24 minutes 30 seconds

And then I was alone. And I come back to Mallorca. We are up on the sixth floor. Next door to us, she was on the aircraft, you know, getting the planes in, etc., in the big tower, never at home. Under me, a Frenchman, comes for holidays, never there. On the other side, a Spaniard, who lived in Palma and used it as a weekend place. And we had answer phones. So you asked: 'Who are you?' and they start speaking in Spanish and you don't understand. I couldn't live there alone. So I decided to sell it. This was just when the prices all dropped, do you remember? And the people who bought it, we are still friends. They can't thank me enough. It's a beautiful place.

AG: Can you tell me a bit about the place?

SM: Well, I've got some photos here. It had twice the size of this living room. And then it had a round sort of window into the kitchen. You came into the dining room, there was no

hall. Then there was a hall to the two bedrooms, and shower, and bathroom. Actually, the same as here, I've got a shower and a bathroom. But this is miniature that was big.

AG: What sort of view did it have?

SM: Fantastic! You could see from our place the castle in Palma, you could see Valedemossa, you could see the convent where Chopin lived, you had the whole range of mountains. It was beautiful. But it was Spanish, not many foreigners there. And people in the road, you know, it was a bit dangerous.

AG: When you came back to England, did you go back to Arkwright Road, or had you sold Arkwright Road?

Tape 3: 27 minutes 3 seconds

SM: I sold Arkwright Road.

AG: How long did you live in Arkwright Road, seventeen years?

SM: Thirteen years.

AG: How do you remember Arkwright Road?

SM: Because I couldn't have lived there later because of my knee. It was on seven levels. You came up a few steps into the hall, and there was the kitchen and a cloakroom. Down seven steps, into the big living room, which was about 40 foot long, immense. Then up onto a dining shelf, which went half over the living room. And the windows in the living room were 18 foot high. And I had two sets of curtains. It was beautiful. Then again, seven steps to two bedrooms. One was my office. And then again seven steps to the main bedroom and bathroom. And again seven steps up to the second big bedroom. And a patio.

AG: Did you have a garden?

SM: Ja.

AG: What was the garden like?

SM: Well, it had 14 feet of lawn. Then it had steps up, and this was the roof over the double garage. A patio. It had a patio there, lawn, and a patio there. It had three patios on the whole. And my husband said: 'That's a good place to have a barbecue.' And I said: 'It's a man's job.' And he said: 'Oh, we'd better not have one.' So we didn't have a barbecue.

AG: Did you get to know people in Arkwright Road and in Hampstead?

SM: Not much. Not much.

AG: And when you were in Mallorca, did you mix much?

SM: Very. We had a lot of Spanish friends. And Derek spoke Spanish quite well. Because he learnt on television. Whilst I was teaching downstairs, he learnt on television. And he spoke, he could joke in Spanish, make them laugh.

AG: When he got too ill, you decided to come back to England?

SM: We had to come back because he had to have this operation. And then they gave him chemotherapy, and they thought he had -. And he came back. I was just doing the third choreography for the school when I had to leave and go back with him. And that was a hospital stay of, from October until he died. The bill was £ 42,000.

Tape 3: 30 minutes 22 seconds

AG: When did he actually pass away?

SM: On the 25th April, 1991.

AG: And when you came back to England for good, did you move straight in here?

SM: No, I had a flat in this court, on the corner back, I've forgotten the name, before you come to Frogmal Lane or West End Lane on this side - Hillside Court or something like this. And I had a flat on the sixth floor. And there were a lot of bedsitting, like this, small flats, let to Japanese and whatever. And the lift didn't work. And once I go down from the sixth floor to the ground floor, but I didn't get to the ground floor, I got to the basement. And then I tried to get through and I got to the fourth floor. And then I tried to ring the bell and the bell didn't work. And finally I got out and I went to the housekeeper, caretaker, and I said: 'I got stuck in the lift.' 'Yes.', he said. And I said: 'The bell didn't ring.' 'No, it doesn't.' I said: 'Why don't you do something about it?' 'Costs too much money. We need a new lift.' So I went back to Mallorca, I had to sell my flat. And then I sold it. And there were two penthouses, but they went out to Finchley Road, and I don't like noise. So I opted for that, but they were bigger. It's nice and quiet here.

AG: It's got a lovely view. Is there anything else about your own private life in England that you'd like -?

SM: Well, I started to paint.

Tape 3: 33 minutes 4 seconds

AG: Yes, you're painting! When did you start to paint?

SM: About, well, Derek died in '91, probably in autumn '91. I went to college and had some lessons there.

AG: Which college?

SM: It's in - Kingsway College, it's in a different part of Hampstead, Fleet Road. And it's a Grade II building or something; would make a lovely ballet studio. Beautiful big rooms. Not a studio, it would make a big establishment, because it has about ten or twelve studios. And it was going to be pulled down but it's still there. And then I got fed up with my teachers. And one of the men there, I asked him if he would teach me privately, and he came here. And then I had an exhibition and I sold seven paintings.

AG: Did you? Where was the exhibition?

SM: In Highgate in, what is it called -?

AG: In a gallery?

SM: A gallery, yes. It's a house where they do all sorts of things.

AG: Not Lauderdale House?

SM: Lauderdale House, yes! And I had an exhibition downstairs in a big gallery. And of course a lot of former students came and parents. And I sold, but I just did even, because the gallery cost money. We had some caterers, you had some advertising, you had the transport, you had insurance. And all the £1,700 I made with the paintings went on this.

AG: What sort of subjects do you paint mostly?

SM: Landscapes.

AG: I should say for the film that the walls of the flat are covered in lovely landscape paintings.

SM: But I do some dancing, I do some animals, but mostly I do landscapes.

AG: They are mostly sunny.

SM: Well, I've been traveling a lot. This is the view from the flat.

AG: We will take a photo of that at the end.

Tape 3: 36 minutes 4 seconds

SM: And my husband painted this one.

AG: And do you still paint?

SM: Ja. I paint now in oil, which is difficult. And sometimes I sell, not much now, because I don't do any exhibitions, it's too much for me. Too much work.

AG: I wonder if I could ask you a few general questions about yourself and your sense of how you see yourself with your identity. Do you feel yourself to be British? Jewish? Austrian? Or what?

SM: Not Austrian. I'm Jewish. But I have never been religious. I don't go to synagogue. I don't celebrate any -. I've just been born Jewish and that's what I am. I'm British, but you see, when I go somewhere and the people don't know me, 'How do you do? Where do you come from?' is the next question because of my accent.

AG: What do you reply?

SM: Well, I get very cynical. Because I say: 'It took you five minutes. When I came to England, it only took half a minute before they asked me where I come from'. So! There's a

lot of, when you speak English, when you learn it as a child, that's okay. But when you learn it at 34, you can't ever get rid of the accent.

AG: So do you feel this marks you out as -?

SM: Ja, ja. And I don't like that.

AG: You'd rather be more -?

SM: I'd rather be not seen, not - and then I make enough noise not to do that.

AG: Do you mix much with other former refugees from Austria or Germany?

SM: Not really, no.

AG: What sort of people are your friends?

SM: Most are English.

AG: English Christians or English Jews?

SM: English Christians. Here in the house, they are not Christian. But I have never made a friend in this house.

AG: Did you mix mainly with people that you knew through dancing and the arts?

SM: Well, I did, but of course nowadays, since '85, I retired at 70 years, and I'm 91. So! I have a former teacher, she came to me when she was 20, and I was 39, and we are still friends. And she shared my flat in Netherhall Gardens, and my kitchen, for 11 years.

Tape 3: 39 minutes 55 seconds

AG: You must be good friends if you share a kitchen for 11 years!

SM: Ja. And we never had a quarrel.

AG: What's her name?

SM: Olive Grasburg, now. She was Olive Cadiz when she came to me. And she came for a job, and I said: 'I don't want you to teach my pupils, because they are clever. They will know you are on probation. So you better teach me'. And she taught me and she put her finger straight on the things which were obvious, of course. Because I wasn't ballet trained, I was modern trained. And I thought, yes, she's nice, and I will try. And she came to London with £5, and I gave her a job. And she had a bedsit in Kensington. So when we finished work at half past eight, she came home and her food was in the oven, dried out, etc. So I said to her: 'That's not on. You can't live like this; you have to have a meal. You better have lunch with us'. So she came in the kitchen and we had lunch in the kitchen, my husband, Olive and me. And then there was the washing up to be done. In my whole life I could not wash up because my hands peel. So I always find somebody else, but I pay for it. So Derek did the weekend; Olive did the breakfast and supper, which we all had at different times, because he had the driving school and we were teaching, and I did the lunch, I cooked the lunch and I did the

lunch. And I had a lady coming to me to clean; her daughter was a pupil. And I asked her would she wash up for me? So of course she did and I paid her for that, because I just can't. And the only time we had, not an argument, but a sort of, Olive said to me: 'But you don't wash up?' I said: 'No, but I pay for it. And you are very welcome to do the same'. That was finished. We never had another, nothing. She was born on the 19th February, she's an Aquarius; I'm an Aquarius, I believe in that. And we are still friends.

Tape 3: 42 minutes 59 seconds

AG: Where was she born?

SM: In Warrington, up in the north. And she had never met a Jewish person in her life. And of course I told her what happened, she asked. So we got very good friends. And she married, and she had two children, she came back to teach. When I retired, she didn't want to stay, she retired as well.

AG: Do you have other comparable close friends like that that you'd like to mention?

SM: I have a lot of close friends. This one here, Daisy - Denise Beuscart, she saved my life.

AG: Ah yes, you talked about her.

SM: She lives in Brussels. I had my former secretary from Vienna, she lives in Paris, and we were great friends. But they are all over the world. I have one in San Francisco. The other day, another one got in touch with me, also in San Francisco, I have the telephone number to phone her up. I don't know the time, so I have to find out what time is it there in the afternoon, so I don't phone up in the middle of the night or something. And here in London, they have all moved away. One died, she was a very, very good friend. She was the secretary of- the chocolate things to drink, it's very well known-

AG: Horlicks?

Tape 3: 45 minutes 21 seconds

SM: She was the secretary, she came from Switzerland. She spoke English, I speak English. She spoke French, I speak French. She was born in Switzerland, she spoke German, and I speak German. So, our birthday, she was born on the 23rd January, I was born on the 24th of January. And our life was so parallel! She was in prison, like I was. She was deported, like I was. It is amazing.

AG: What's her name?

SM: Well, she's dead.

AG: What was her name?

SM: Elli Barel. And her daughter is a beautiful woman and lives in America. And she has a brother who lives in the north, I have lost contact. But we met every day and then she goes. She went about a good ten years ago. I was already living here, so maybe it's nine years ago, I don't know. Then I have friends in Yugoslavia, my first boyfriend's son, you see this painting? So, his son went to Oxford, and his daughter married into Canada, a Yugoslav. And

Michel lives in Belgrade, so they phone me up. When they come to England, they come here. But most my friends are all over the world.

AG: I think that gives us a pretty good picture of your private life. Before I close the interview, is there anything else that you'd like to mention that we haven't covered?

SM: Not really, I don't know. You know that I write poetry?

AG: Yes, you talked about that. And we'd like you later to read one of the poems. But, first of all, I'd just like to finish the main interview. The very last thing that I'll ask you is whether you have a message for anybody, any friends, or children of friends, of yours that watch this filmed interview, if you have any message that you'd like to pass on to them about your life, about yourself, or about life in general?

Tape 3: 48 minutes 33 seconds

SM: Well, you see, in England I never talked about what happened in Brussels. I didn't want to boast or speak about. I had once a little exhibition here, for friends. And the editor of 'The Dancing Times' came. That's the lady who wrote this article I showed you. And she was very good to me. Always came to my performances and wrote about what a good teacher I was, etc. And I had these books - my pupils never saw them - on a table here. And I opened them up, and I thought they could have a look. And she came and had a look. And she came and she said: 'Stella, you should write a book'. And I said: 'I'm not a writer. The only way I can write about this is either laugh about it or be sarcastic or be very sad'. I said: 'You are sitting here with a jailbird, do you know that? I was twice in prison'. 'Oh, you were twice-how come?' They don't know. So that what you do might be a very great surprise for some people who came to me for years. And never knew.

AG: Well, in that case, Stella Mann, I'll just say thank you very much for agreeing to do the interview with us.

SM: I'm delighted to have been able to do it.

AG: So are we. Thank you very much.

SM: Thank you.

Tape 3: 50 minutes 33 seconds

AG: I'm going to ask Stella Mann to read some of her own poems. The first one is called 'This is England'.

SM: I warn you, I'm not very good at this.

“Workshops, theatres, concerts, mime, architecture, inventions, a precious time.
Dance and drama, art and TV, so much talent, so much to see, this is England.
Blue eyed, gentle, kind, and tall, laughs at itself, can be silly and funny.
Works hard, plays hard and never has money.
More sympathetic as their fathers before, who paid for their errors during the war.
And still they joke, they laugh, are funny and kind.

Long live England and their open mind.”

AG: Thank you. This one is called ‘London’.

SM: “One of London’s treasures is not its lousy weather
But its parks, trees, open spaces and flowers.
You can walk in its gardens, not seeing a building for hours.
High-rise atrocity, dirty and cramped full of crimes are now torn down.
They have had their time.
A cluster of small towns it really is.
To live in some, like Hampstead, Kensington,
Is pleasure and bliss.
A monster full of fumes, noise, crime and congestion.
To live somewhere else is out of the question.”

SM: I’m sorry I can’t read it better than that.

AG: That’s fine. The last one is called ‘To Alice’.

SM: Now, can I say something before I read? Alice is Chinese; she was a student. And she married to a Malaysian, also a Chinese man. She had two children. She went to Canada, became a Canadian citizen, and has now gone to live in Canada and wants to be a writer. She wants to write my story but I don’t think it will ever come about. And her daughter was going to get married and she was staying here to try to buy a dress, shoes, a hat, etc., for the wedding.

Tape 3: 53 minutes 58 seconds

SM: “You say it hurts your feet.
Mine hurt too.
I’ve made all the shops in town and cannot find a shoe.
I’m ignoring the hot weather by staying in the shade.
Here, we normally have rain and endless we complain.
Are we content now, happy, and smile?
The sun has shone for quite a while.
No, my dear, a pain in the neck we are.
Rain is what we wait for.
We British are a bore.
I should like to live somewhere with no snow.
Where it’s warm and dry.
Where the sun shines in its blue sky.
Where people love me and take extra care.
Where my friends and I have lots to explore.
Where I feel at home and don’t want to move anymore.
This would be my fifth emigration.
Why do I want a new sensation?
Austria, Belgium, England, Spain.
Am I seeking paradise in vain?
Stay where you are, you are, you silly old cow.
Eighty-seven, you should be settled by now.”

AG: Thank you very much.

SM: I can't read.

AG: No, that's fine. Do you feel that your dancing and music has helped you to integrate into Britain, into British society?

SM: Yes, because, I don't think the English realise, but they are very talented.

AG: Do you think so?

SM: Ja. If you look at the English body of the girls who come to dance, long-legged, beautiful, right proportions, blond, blue-eyed, short-nosed, very, very nice. And they are talented, they are musical, they are graceful. And we have some very good dancers in England. Look at music. We have the most beautiful concerts. We just take it all for granted. The Austrians make a lot of noise with their music. We have just as good music here. We haven't got a concert on the 1st January, which goes all over the world. You have painters, you have sculptors, you have architects. All of England is talented. Most of the painters are amateur painters and you would think they earn their living with it. And we don't realise, we don't appreciate. We are always underestimating. That's not me; I'm speaking about the English, the very English. They're always underestimating their talent.

Tape 3: 57 minutes 29 seconds

AG: Do you think it takes an outsider like yourself-?

SM: That's it, ja, to see it. I mean, if you look at television, okay, for the moment it's lousy. But who would quarrel with our sitcoms? You can sit and you look at 'The Good Life' I don't know how many times and you would love it; 'To The Manor Born', you would love it. 'Stepdancer', you would love it; 'Dad's Army'. There is no country, which has this wealth of humour. People write this. And there are actors who act it. And it will live. It will live much longer than we live. They will see 'Dad's Army' in fifty years.

AG: Thank you very much.

Tape 3: 58 minutes 35 seconds

TAPE 4

Tape 4: 0 minute 7 seconds

AG: Moving to the photographs now, could you tell me what this photo is of? (1)

SM: There is my grandfather, my sister, her husband, my mother.

AG: Where was the first photograph taken?

SM: In Vienna, outside Vienna, in Pötzleinsdorf.

AG: What year was it taken, do you remember?

SM: No. I seem to be about twelve, so 1924 or something.

AG: Thank you very much. Who are the people in this photograph? (2)

SM: They are all school-friends. And we had the photo taken enlarged and gave it our teacher.

AG: On what occasion was it taken?

SM: When we left school, primary school, at eleven.

AG: And which one are you?

SM: I'm the tallest, with the band on my head, the second on the right.

AG: And where was this taken?

SM: I don't remember. In Vienna.

AG: And the year would be?

SM: 1912, and then eleven, '23.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (3)

SM: This is my family. It's my father, the husband of my sister, my mother and me.

AG: When was it taken?

SM: That was in probably 1925.

AG: And where was it taken?

SM: Türkenschanzpark. That's in the 18th district.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (4)

SM: It's a family group. And I am about 15.

AG: Which one are you?

SM: I'm on the left side.

AG: And where was the photograph taken?

SM: In the Vienna Wood, I wouldn't know where. It's quite a big place.

AG: And what year would that have been?

SM: About '27 or something.

AG: Who is the person in this photograph? (5)

SM: That's me.

AG: And when was it taken?

SM: I must have been about thirteen, 1925.

AG: And what are you doing?

SM: I don't know. Just a little boy, doing handstands and things.

AG: Who are-? (6)

SM: That's like the time span, you know, all with the hats, it must be 1930, 1928.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 34 seconds

AG: Could you just tell me who the people in the photograph are, please?

SM: Well, on the right of the photograph, there is Gertrud Krauss, Tordis, Elena Tordis, Grete Gross, and the fourth I don't remember. And this was in Munich, at a dance congress. Do you speak German?

AG: Yes. When was it taken?

SM: '28, in Munich. It's a big Tanz-, and we took some Jewish dances to it. Stupid. To Germany, in 1928! And in this Gertrud Krauss comes with her dancer and it was 'grauselig', 'ein Grauss'! I have never forgotten that. That was really silly. And it took a lot of courage. That was all after '29. We had this Braunhaus in Vienna.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (7)

SM: They are my pupils at the school was in the Schwedenkinohaus, 2nd District in Vienna. And I had quite a few pupils there, I had two schools then, before I had Wipplingerstraße.

AG: And when was this taken? (8)

SM: That must have been taken before I had Wipplingerstraße, so 1930.

AG: Who is the person in this photograph? (9)

SM: That's me.

AG: And where was it taken?

SM: The Danube had a canal and it was called 'Donaukanal'. And there was a sort of garden there. And it was taken there.

AG: When was it taken?

SM: Must be '31 or '32 because I'm with my first boyfriend.

AG: Look at this! Fritz Grünbaum, Paul Morgan, whom you appeared with, Jimmy Berg.

Tape 4: 6 minutes 32 seconds

SM: That was in the Theater der Komiker.

AG: Fantastic! I mean, these are legendary names.

SM: Fritz Grünbaum came into the dressing room and said: 'Stella Mann! Oh, I'm so pleased to meet you.'

AG: Who is the person in this photograph? (10)

SM: That's me.

AG: And how old were you then?

SM: Sixteen.

AG: So that was taken in -?

SM: '28.

AG: And where was it taken?

SM: In Vienna, because all the photographers in Vienna invited me, for nothing, because I was so photogenic. And they could make big photos and get customers.

AG: Was this a publicity photo?

SM: Ja, probably.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (11)

SM: This is the dance group of Gertrud Krauss. And we did the Farandole by Bizet. And that's about it. It's a lovely dance.

AG: Are you on this photograph?

SM: I am there, ja.

AG: Which one are you?

SM: I think I'm down there somewhere, on the floor. I can't see it from here.

AG: When was it taken?

SM: That must have been '28, '29.

AG: And where?

SM: In Vienna.

AG: Who is the person in this photograph? (12)

SM: It's me.

AG: And when was it taken?

SM: I should say around about 1932 maybe because it was in my prospectus.

AG: And where was it taken?

SM: In Vienna, probably on the roof of the Schwedenkinohaus, when they had an evening and I was dancing.

AG: Could you tell me what these documents are? (13)

SM: These are programmes and probably advertising material. A programme here, and it tells you who appears, at the Hochhaus, it was the only high building in Vienna.

AG: From what period do these programmes date?

SM: The date? I don't know. All around about '28 and '32, '33. I was dancing every day at the Hochhaus. I earned a lot of money.

Tape 4: 9 minutes 41 seconds

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (14)

SM: In this with the three girls: the first one is me, the second one is a girl called Trude Goldwien, and there is somebody on TV, Trude Goldwien, and I just wonder if it is her relative, and the third one is Gerda Marais. And it was a study in modern dance, a bit crazy. Funny!

AG: And when was it taken?

SM: It was round about the first recital we gave, that was also in 1928, in the Kammerspiele.

AG: Who's in this photograph? (15)

SM: It's me, walking on the boulevard in Brussels.

AG: And when was this taken?

SM: Between '40 and '41.

AG: Under German occupation?

SM: Ja, when you could still walk around then.

AG: Who is the person in this photograph? (16)

SM: It's me.

AG: And when was it taken?

SM: Probably after '44, between '44 and '45.

AG: And where was it taken?

SM: In Brussels, at the best photographer.

AG: Do you remember the name of the photographer?

SM: Verhassel.

AG: Who are the people on this photograph? (17)

SM: It's called Trio SDS – Stella, Daisy, Sonia. Actually, Stella, Sonia, Daisy.

Tape 4: 12 minutes 15 seconds

AG: Who are Sonia and Daisy?

SM: They were not as good dancers, they were pupils of mine.

AG: And what about Daisy?

SM: Daisy was taking lessons with me through the whole war. And then, when I was hidden, she saved my life.

AG: What was her full name?

SM: Denise Beuscart.

AG: And Sonia, what was her full name?

SM: Sonia, I don't remember. I've never seen her again.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (18)

SM: Some people from Brussels. That is probably Daisy.

AG: Yes, it's your group.

SM: Ja. They were always the same. We went on tour to Germany.

AG: When did you go on tour to Germany?

SM: '45.

AG: And where did you go in Germany?

SM: Well, we started on the border of Germany. And we went to a place called Düren, which was completely flat. And there were some like chimneys coming out of the earth, and they were cooking, in the cellars.

AG: And who organised the tour?

SM: The Americans.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (19)

SM: That's my husband and me.

AG: And on what occasion was this taken?

SM: It was taken in front of the place where the wedding took place, outside.

AG: So, it's a wedding photo?

SM: Ja.

AG: When was your wedding?

SM: 10th April 1946.

AG: And the wedding ceremony was held where?

SM: In a sort of, like a, the major's house, in the centre, on the Grande Place in Brussels.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (20)

SM: That's again a wedding photograph of my husband and me, taken in Brussels on the Grande Place.

Tape 4: 15 minutes 15 seconds

AG: And the date it was taken was?

SM: On the day of the wedding, 10th April '46.

AG: Who are the people in this photograph? (21)

SM: It's an end of term photograph of the Stella Mann School of Dancing.

AG: And when was it taken?

SM: '79, I think.

AG: And where was it taken?

SM: In my studio.

AG: What is this document, please? (22)

SM: That is an early prospectus of the school, when we moved to Netherhall Gardens, to Finchley Road.

AG: About when does it date from?

SM: That was in 1958. But this figure I had on my prospectuses in Vienna. (23)

SM: That's my husband and I.

AG: And where was it taken?

SM: That is on the terrace of our flat in Portixol, in Mallorca. And there was a conservatory on the terrace, and this is in the conservatory.

AG: When was this taken?

SM: It must have been taken round about '88, '89, '87, something like this. (24)

SM: You have the story?

AG: Who is the person on this-?

SM: This is me at sixteen, in Vienna.

AG: Could you tell me a little about the painting?

SM: This painter came to Gertrud Krauss where I was a pupil and asked me to sit for him.

AG: Do you remember his name?

SM: Ja. He was Hungarian. And you write it Sekely, but you pronounce it 'Sikay'. And he won the first prize for the painting in a modern gallery in Vienna.

AG: You were telling me about how the painting came to be done.

Tape 4: 18 minutes 12 seconds

SM: It was sold, in Vienna obviously, and when my husband had died, I went to Finchley Road to have a coffee or something like this. And I've met a lot of people who knew me personally. And this lady was sitting next to me and she says: 'Are you Stella Mann?' I said: 'Yes.' She said: 'My daughter was a pupil of yours. But she didn't like it'. So I laughed. And I said: 'How old was she?' And she says: 'Three'. I said: 'She was much too young. You shouldn't have sent her at three'. 'Oh, I've seen a lovely painting of yours.' And of course that rang a bell, because my parents had one of my paintings. And I said: 'What did it look like?' And she told me, so I knew it was this painting, which one the first prize. And I said: 'Where is the lady?' She phoned me up before that, this lady, and said: 'Are you Stella Mann

from Vienna?’ And I said: ‘Yes’. She said: ‘I have a painting from you’. And I went to see it. And she didn’t want to sell it. So, when this lady speaks about this painting, I say: ‘Where is the painting now?’ And she says: ‘Probably with her son. He lives somewhere in Truro’. So I said would she get the address, and I would like to get in touch with him. And then I came home and I thought I’m not waiting for her to get the address, I write to Truro, I have a pupil there, who’s got a school, and she can find out. And I wrote to this pupil and she came back with ten, twenty, addresses of the name of the man who had the painting. The same like Greenway or something like this. So I wrote 20 letters with 20 answer coupons, etc., and told him that I am Stella Mann and I would like to buy this painting. And he wrote back and said no way would he sell it, but it hangs in Kilburn at his aunt and I can go and photograph it. And I went, and I had it photographed. The aunt said it was hers and she wouldn’t sell it. So that was that. And then, years later, this lady phones me up and said she would like to sell it because she’s old and she needs the money. And she wanted 5,000. And I said no way, I’m going to have it hanging up here, I have got enough photos of mine. And then I got it for 3,000 and I thought I buy it. And there it is.

AG: Thank you very much

SM: It’s nice.

AG: Absolutely wonderful.

Tape 4: 21 minutes 35 seconds

THE END