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LATVIJAS
NACIONĀLĀ
BIBLIOTĒKA

NO 1986. GADA 31. JŪLIJA - 3. AUGUSTAM

ELEVENTH
LATVIAN SONG FESTIVAL
IN GREAT BRITAIN

Leicester, 31st July - 3rd August 1986

78

LATVIAN SONG FESTIVALS

*I was born singing
I grew up singing
I have sung my whole life through
My soul will go singing
To paradise*

Latvian folksong

The rhythms of human life and the cycle of the changing seasons are reflected in Latvia's rich cultural heritage of almost a million folksongs, which have 20,000 melodic variants. Folksongs and folk dances, performed in national costume, are an integral part of Latvian festive occasions, maintaining and strengthening the historical and cultural continuity of the nation. At regular intervals, folksong and dance are integrated into a programme of choral music, theatre, literary recital, modern music and arts and crafts, bringing together the Latvian community in a Song Festival.

The tradition of a Song Festival has strong roots in the mind of every Latvian. The first nationwide Song Festival took place in Latvia in 1873, and the subsequent festivals firmly established these joyous and colourful events as a national celebration. The last nationwide Song Festival of an independent Latvia was held in 1938, in the capital city of Riga. Over a period of three days, 16,000 singers performed before an audience of 100,000.

Today, Song Festivals are a powerful unifying force for Latvians in the Western World. They are held in Europe, Canada, USA and Australia. In Britain, there have been ten previous festivals, with London, Leicester, Leeds, Manchester and Bradford acting as host cities. This year Leicester is again the festival city, and on August 2nd and 3rd, De Montfort Hall will echo to the sounds of the eleventh festival celebrations, when the combined Latvian choirs of Britain will be joined by Latvian guest choirs from West Germany. The display of Latvian national costumes, dances, songs, music and arts and crafts will give everyone a chance to sample the cultural heritage of the Latvians, a people who now find themselves so far from their homeland on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea.

The Eleventh Latvian Song Festival in Great Britain once more unites Latvians in the pleasure of sharing their culture and voicing the supplication of their national anthem

GOD, BLESS LATVIA ...

FESTIVAL CALENDAR

Wednesday 30th July

- 19.30 ORGAN RECITAL by Brigita Mize
St. James the Greater Church, London Road
Tickets: £3

Thursday 31st July

- 20.00 THEATRE "Atkal atraitnis" a play by G. Grieze
YMCA Theatre, East Street
Tickets: £3

Friday 1st August

- 15.00-
20.00 LATVIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS EXHIBITION
YMCA Building, General Purpose Room 1, East Street
Also open 2nd August 9.00-20.00 and 3rd August 10.00-15.00
Tickets: Donation on entry
- 20.00 THEATRE "Ir Akmeņi raud" a play by U. Silpiņš
YMCA Theatre, East Street
Tickets: £6, £4 (£3)
- 22.45 LITERARY RECITAL devoted to the Latvian poet Aleksandrs Čaks
Gilbert Murray Hall, Leicester University halls of residence
Tickets: Donation on entry

Saturday 2nd August

- 10.30 LATVIAN FOLKLORE (display of Latvian folk dancing inter-
woven with recitals of folk poetry)
De Montfort Hall
Tickets: £4 (Children under 16 free)
- 14.30 CONCERT OF LATVIAN MUSIC
St. James the Greater Church, London Road
Tickets: £6 (£4)
- 20.00 SONG FESTIVAL BALL. De Montfort Hall
Tickets: £5

Sunday 3rd August

- 10.30 THEATRE "Atkal atraitnis" a play by G. Grieze
YMCA Theatre, East Street
Tickets: £6, £4 (£3)
- 14.00 INTERDENOMINATIONAL CHURCH SERVICE
St. James the Greater Church, London Road
- 16.15 CHORAL CONCERT (combined Latvian choirs from England
and West Germany)
De Montfort Hall
Tickets: £8, £6 (£4), £4 (£3)
- 20.00 FAREWELL EVENING. "Straumēni", Catthorpe Manor, Catthorpe,
Nr. Lutterworth
Tickets: Donation on entry

Prices in brackets indicate reductions for 'under 16' and senior citizens.

Advance booking (including payment and self-addressed stamped envelope) from Assistant Honorary Treasurer, Ms A. Balode, 173 Howard Road, Leicester LE2 1XQ. (Cheques should be made payable to "Latvian Song Festival in Great Britain Committee")

€0,10



LATVIJAS NACIONĀLĀ BIBLIOTĒKA



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LATVIA

An historic language, music, song, dance, poetry and folklore are all features of the strongly individual Latvian culture, which has developed on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea after the tribal ancestors of the present-day Latvians settled there more than 4000 years ago. The Latvian culture was moulded by the Indo-European influence which reached far into Northeastern Europe and survives still in the deeply rooted customs, traditions and language of the Latvian people.

Following the upheavals of World War I, the sovereign state of Latvia was proclaimed on the 18th November 1918. During the following 20 years of independence, this small agricultural country (63,700 sq km) achieved a high degree of economic, social and educational development. The three Baltic states - Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania - enjoyed the highest standard of living in Eastern Europe, a comprehensive welfare system and a highly developed educational system.

Following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the arbitrary division of Eastern Europe in 1939 by Hitler and Stalin, Poland was invaded by Germany and before the collapse of Polish defences, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Poland. The Baltic states were forced, in October 1939, to concede the stationing of Soviet forces in military bases there. Outright occupation followed in June 1940. The continued presence of Soviet forces in Afghanistan suggests a similar turn of events. During the first year of Soviet occupation 33,000 Latvians perished in prisons and deportation camps, and over the following war years, a further 15% of the Latvian population suffered a similar fate. By the end of 1945, over 100,000 Latvians had also become exiles, joining the European tide of refugees fleeing from Russian domination.

Now, four decades later, Latvia remains an occupied country. Under continued Soviet Russian rule, Latvians are still deprived of independence and freedom. The Soviet policy has long been to destroy the characteristic Latvian farming community by deportation to distant areas of the Soviet Union and by forced creation of collective farms. During the last decades, this policy has been bolstered by forced urbanisation and industrialisation, resulting in a deliberate 'russification' of the country through massive injections of workers from other parts of the Soviet Union. The result of this influx of mostly Russians has been to reduce the population of native Latvians in Latvia to about 52% (from 75% prewar). In the capital, Riga, as well as most other major cities, Latvians are already in a minority. There is no shortage of Russian books and newspapers, whereas the books of popular Latvian authors are sold out within days of publication because numbers are kept too small to satisfy demand. Most television broadcasts are in Russian.

Today, the growing and changing pattern of Britain's multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society is enriched by the personal and cultural activities of about 8000 Latvians now established here. The ideals and goals of once-independent Latvia live on in the aspirations of its expatriates and their children for the rebirth of a free Latvia and national self-determination.