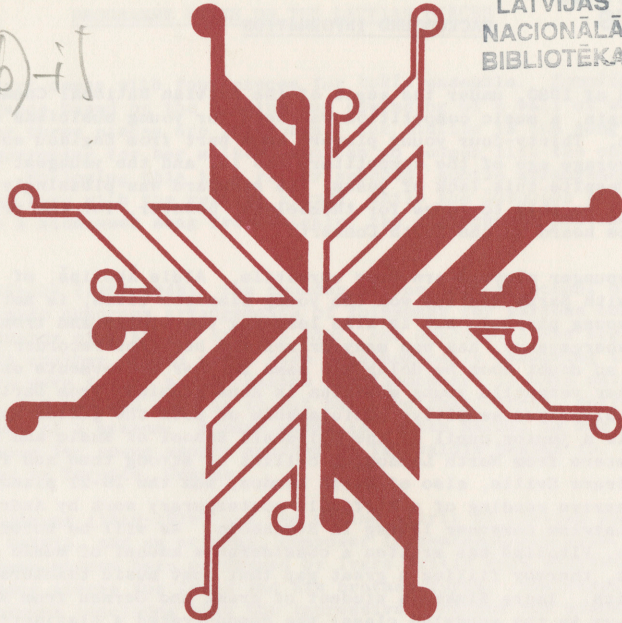


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LATVIJAS
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**TENTH LATVIAN
SONG FESTIVAL
IN GREAT BRITAIN
LEICESTER
24-26 JULY 1981**

YOUTH CONCERT

YMCA Theatre, East Street, Leicester

Friday 24th July 4.00 p.m.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the autumn of 1980, under the aegis of the Latvian National Council of Great Britain, a music competition was held for young musicians of Latvian birth. Thirty-four young players took part from England and Wales; the average age of the competitors was 15, and the youngest were aged nine. Despite this lack of years, the standard was pleasingly high. Audiences will be able to judge for themselves, however, for the prize-winners can be heard in the Youth Concert.

Some of the younger players are very versatile. Aldis Āboliņš, of Harrow, who with Šarah Tauriņš won the young pianists class, is not just a confident young pianist, but is also learning the violin and trombone. Sarah, from Abergavenny, has won many prizes for her fine recorder playing and will no doubt soon be doing the same for her achievements on the flute. Another versatile young musician is Anna Krūmiņš, from Dartford in Kent, who displayed sensitive musicianship on both the guitar and flute. She is a junior pupil at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, as is Jāna Tetera from North London, a cellist of strong tone and firm technique. Ivars Sviliis, also of North London, won the 16-21 piano class with an impressive reading of a difficult contemporary work by Andris Vītoliņš, a Latvian composer living in Stockholm. As will be noted from the programme, Vītoliņš has written a considerable amount of music for young players, thereby filling a great gap that most music teachers have to contend with. Indra Sinka, a student of drama and German from Reading, was a runner-up in the woodwind class; she demonstrated a distinctive approach by performing on both the sopranino and descent recorders and exploiting the birdsong-like qualities of the former instrument in her choice of pieces!

Our non-Latvian friends will probably be particularly interested in the groups playing the *kokle*, a type of psaltery which can be regarded as the Latvian national instrument. After near extinction, the instrument has undergone a remarkable revival, particularly in the last twenty or so years, so that now there are once more makers, players and writers of music for this silvery-toned instrument. In Latvia, the *kokle* has been considerably modified, with levers, dampers, chromatic tuning and up to 25 strings, while in the West it has retained its traditional techniques, stringing (up to 13 strings) and tuning. This basic simplicity ensures its appeal for young players, many of whom are self-taught. Five groups took part in the competition, all demonstrating great progress in their approach to playing, and greater flexibility than has been evident even a few years ago. Unfortunately one of the winning groups, from Halifax, cannot appear in this concert, but the Leicester group and runners-up, from Bradford, will demonstrate the beauties of the *kokle* in arrangements of folksongs and dances.

Finally, all the competitors will get together in a piece written specially for them and the Festival, in which everyone will have an opportunity to show his or her skills.



PROGRAMME NOTES ON THE LATVIAN PIECES

The concert opens with four pieces for *kokle* ensemble. *Kamolīdēja* is a folk dance based on the winding and unwinding of a ball of wool, while the other three pieces are folksongs. *Tek saulīte* is the song of an orphan sorrowing for her mother, who can no longer lift the child into the sun. Following this is a rather subdued, subtle arrangement of a midwinter song with the refrain *kaladū*, while the *Latgales līgotne* is based on a midsummer song from Latgale, the easternmost province of Latvia.

Jāzeps Vītols (1863-1948), the founder of the Latvian school of composition, made numerous arrangements of folksongs for various combinations and standards of players. *Kas tie tādi, kas dziedāja* ("Who are they, who sang") is another orphan song, here metaphorically referring to all the serfs who were forced by the barons and landowners to work until after sundown, and who had nothing to eat but hard chaff-bread, softened in the waters of a stream. *Mazais maršs* (A Little March) is one of the many pieces for young people written by Tālivaldis Ķeniņš (b. 1919) who now lives in Toronto, Canada.

Alberts Jērumis (1919-1978) was the moving spirit of Latvian song festivals outside Latvia, and an original composer in contemporary vein. The two small piano pieces here performed by Ivars Svīlis were written by Jērumis as teaching pieces for Ivars and his brother Juris. The first half of the programme concludes with the impressive *Prologue* for piano (written in 1965 and dedicated to the revolutionary Latvian poet Jānis Rainis) by Andris Vītoliņš (b. 1931). The piece contains many interesting effects, such as sudden dynamic contrasts, chord clusters and large blocks of sound played by placing the whole hand or forearm across the keys.

The second half of the programme is again opened by pieces for *kokle* ensemble. *Jūriņ' prasa smalku tīklu* ("The sea asks for a fine net") is a very lyrical folksong in which one can almost hear the lapping of the sea as a young man sails away to woo the beautiful daughter of the North Wind. *Vēlo pelīte saldu miegu* ("Little mouse, bring sweet sleep") is a tender lullaby, followed by the *Garais dancis* ("Long dance"), a ritual dance with a very ancient melody. *Kas tie tādi, kas dziedāja* is another arrangement of the folksong described above, while the robust *Kāzu deļa* ("Wedding dance") brings this group to a close.

Andris Vītoliņš has written many pieces for children and children's ensembles, including folksong arrangements like *Pie niedrītes laivu sēju* ("In the reeds I tied up my boat"); this could be played by flute or oboe as well as recorder. The song concerns a young man who ties up his boat and his horse, then climbs a hill to view the young maidens; unfortunately the one he prefers to all the rest rejects him. Also by Vītoliņš is the *Dziesma flautai un klavierēm* (Song for flute and piano). The *Ārija* by Jānis Medīņš (1890-1966), written in 1913, is from the first suite for violin or cello, and has become very popular, being played also in arrangements for other instruments. Based loosely on folk elements, *Spēlēju, dancoju* ("I played, I danced") is a fantasia-like piece bringing together ideas from folk songs and dances to conclude the concert.

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