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LATVIJAS
NACIONĀLĀ
BIBLIOTĒKA



THE TENTH
LATVIAN SONG FESTIVAL
IN GREAT BRITAIN

LEICESTER, 24th - 26th JULY, 1981

78



Combined Choirs in 1975 Festival

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 many 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 nine previous festivals, with London, Leicester, Leeds, Manchester and Bradford acting as host cities. This year Leicester is again the festival city, and on July 25th and 26th De Montfort Hall will echo to the sounds of the tenth anniversary celebrations, when the combined Latvian choirs of Britain will be joined by Latvian guest choirs from West Germany and Sweden. The display of national costumes, dances, songs, music, 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 Tenth 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 . . .

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THE FESTIVAL CALENDAR

Thursday 23rd July

- 20.00 THEATRE 'Kāmiņa klusu dzied vējš',
a play by H.Gulbis. YMCA Theatre, East Street
Tickets: £2.50 (£2.00)

Friday 24th July

- 15.00 LATVIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS EXHIBITION
-22.00 YMCA Building, General Purpose Room 1,
East Street. Also open 25th July 10.00 - 18.00
26th July 10.00 - 14.30.
16.00 YOUTH CONCERT, YMCA Theatre, East Street.
Tickets: £3.00 (£2.00), £2.00 (£1.00).
19.00 THEATRE 'Karmen, Karmen', a play by A. Eglītis
YMCA Theatre, East Street.
Tickets: £4.00, £3.00 (£2.00).
21.30 THEATRE 'Karmen, Karmen'
Tickets: £2.50 (£2.00).

Saturday 25th July

- 10.30 LATVIAN DANCING DISPLAY, De Montfort Hall.
Tickets: £3.00 (£1.50). Children under 16 Free
14.00 LITERARY RECITAL (Latvian authors and poets reading
their own works) YMCA Theatre, East Street.
Tickets: £2.00 (£1.50).
16.30 CONCERT OF LATVIAN MUSIC (choral, ensemble, organ,
piano, violin). De Montfort Hall.
Tickets: £5.00, £4.00 (£3.00), £3.00 (£2.00).
20.00 SONG FESTIVAL BALL. De Montfort Hall.
Tickets: £3.00.

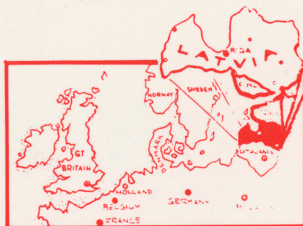
Sunday 26th July

- 10.30 THEATRE 'Kāmiņa klusu dzied vējš', a play by H. Gulbis
YMCA Theatre, East Street
Tickets: £4.00, £3.00 (£2.00).
14.00 INTERDOMINATIONAL CHURCH SERVICE
St. James the Greater Church, London Road.
16.00 CHORAL CONCERT. (Combined Latvian Choirs from
England, West Germany and Sweden).
De Montfort Hall.
Tickets: £6.00, £4.50 (£3.00), £3.00 (£2.00).
20.00 CLOSING DISCO
Percy Gee Building, Leicester University.
Tickets: £1.50.

Price in brackets indicates a reduction for 'under 16' and senior citizens.

Advance booking (including payment and self-addressed stamped envelope) from Assistant Honorary Treasurer Miss A. Balode, 126 Lytton Road, Leicester LE2 3BX.

€ 0,10



LATVIA

An historic language, music, song, dance, poetry and folklore are all features of a strongly individual Latvian culture, which has developed on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea since 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 north eastern Europe and survives still in the deeply-rooted customs, traditions and language of the Latvian people.

Following the upheavals of World War I, on the 18th November 1918, the sovereign state of Latvia was proclaimed. During the following 20 years of independence, this small agricultural country, no larger than Denmark, achieved a high degree of economic, social and educational development. The three Baltic republics — Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia — 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 of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were forced, in October 1939, to concede the stationing of Soviet forces in military bases. Outright occupation followed in June 1940. The recent entry 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 per cent. 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 seeking freedom from Russian domination.

Nearly 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 'russianisation' of the country through massive injections of workers from other parts of the Soviet Union into its industry and commerce. The result of this influx of mostly Russians has been to reduce the population of Latvians in Latvia to about 52 per cent. (from 75 per cent. prewar). In the capital, Riga, as well as in cities such as Daugavpils, Latvians are already in a minority. There is no shortage of Russian books and newspapers, whereas the books of the most popular Latvian authors are sold out within days of publication because numbers printed are 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.