

## *Latvian Folk Dances*

The characteristics of a people may best be seen in their folk art and dances. In the dances of Latvians we see their basic philosophy; their life's cycle, relationship with Nature, the belief that good triumphs over evil and their pleasure in life. There are dances to celebrate the chief events in man's life, for each part of the year's cycle and the work associated with it, in fact for every aspect of life. The dances are characterized by simplicity, naturalness, courtesy and equality between men and women.

Folk dances are influenced by the environment and lifestyle of the people. Dances originating with hunters in a rugged area are fast and spontaneous and feature individual dancers. The Latvians, however, were farmers, so their dances are, on the whole, restrained and disciplined, very often representing some aspect of a farmer's life, but in a symbolic not a realistic way. They are accompanied by folk songs and so follow a definite plan or pattern, usually with symmetrical, repeated movements. Many are based on the circle, symbolizing the cycle of life. They are group dances with few opportunities for spectacular individual display, yet in their dignity and order we see the simplicity and beauty of the way of life they represent.



LATVIA'S geographical relation  
to other European countries.

### **ADDITIONAL FESTIVAL EVENTS**

include religious services, performance of a play, comedy hour, a writers' session and the Festival ball.

Exhibit of Paintings by Latvian artists at Willamette Center and the Fine Arts and Crafts Exhibit at Mariott Hotel.

Advance ticket sales at  
Stevens and Son, Lloyd Center  
Phone 284-2101

## **9. WEST COAST LATVIAN SONG FESTIVAL**



**PORTLAND, OREGON**

**June 30 to July 5, 1982**

LP2018.105

## *The Festival Calendar of Events*

Thursday, July 1, 2:00 pm  
Mariott Hotel

### **THE OPENING OF THE FESTIVAL**

Thursday, July 1, 5:00 pm  
I Presbyterian Church, 1200 S.W. Alder St.

### **CONCERT OF SACRED MUSIC**

Friday, July 2, 6:00 pm  
Portland State University, Lincoln Hall

### **SOLOIST CONCERT**

featuring music by Latvian composers.

Saturday, July 3, 2:00 pm  
David Douglas High School, 1500 S.E. 130th Ave.

### **PERFORMANCE OF LATVIAN FOLK DANCES**

featuring some 200 folk dancers from U.S.A.,  
Canada and Australia.

Saturday, July 3, 7:00 pm  
Mariott Hotel

### **CONCERT OF POPULAR MUSIC**

featuring members of a Latvian Pop group  
DZINTARS.

Sunday, July 4, 4:30 pm

### **PROCESSION OF THE CHORUSES**

to the CIVIC AUDITORIUM

Sunday, July 4, 5:00 pm  
Civic Auditorium

### **THE GRAND FESTIVAL CONCERT**

presenting some 300 singers from U.S.A.,  
Canada and Australia and orchestra in a pro-  
gram featuring Latvian folk songs, original  
songs and cantatas.

## *Latvia*

Latvia compares to West Virginia in geographical size and population. It is located on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, surrounded by Estonia to the North, Lithuania to the South, and the U.S.S.R. to the East.

From the 13th century on, Latvia became a central battlefield in the incessant struggle between the Slavic East and the Teutonic West. Finally, in the wake of World War 1, the Baltic peoples broke free from foreign domination. The independent Republic of Latvia was established in 1918. In the following two decades, the small nation achieved remarkable economic and social progress. In 1940 the Baltic territories, including Latvia, were seized by Soviet Russia; the path of the invading armies was strewn, as usual, with broken treaties and promises. Thousands perished during the occupation; in the first year alone, about 33,000 (out of a population of 2 million) were forcibly deported to Siberia. When the Soviets, once again, invaded the country in 1944, approximately 150,000 Latvians fled into exile.

A large number eventually found a new home in America. Today, some 6,000 Latvians reside in the Western United States. They have found diverse occupations: there are Latvian doctors, scientists, engineers, industrial workers, students and members of the Armed Forces. As for contributions to the realm of art and beauty, the Song Festival will, hopefully, serve as one example.

## *The Meaning of the Song Festival*

The Latvian nation has endured foreign domination for more than seven centuries. Yet its people preserved a distinct language and folklore. The quality of the cultural heritage can be only experienced; it cannot be fully communicated. But the sheer magnitude of it - 957,000 folk songs and almost 8,000 folk tales - surpasses the comparable folklore of many large nations. Even today folk melodies and dances, native costumes, traditional feasts and observances attest to the remarkable historical continuity with an ancient way of life.

The first Song Festival was celebrated in 1873, over a century ago. At that time Latvia was under the domination of the Russian Empire. The multitudes of people gathered at the festival began to sense, perhaps for the first time, a new meaning in the ancient songs - the distant promise of independence. In subsequent years, as the spiritual tension grew, the Festivals came to embody the true ethos of the nation. The "Castle of Light", a new choral, symbolizing the vision of freedom, was recited more frequently than any other song.

Today Latvia, again a conquered land, must endure the harsh rule of Communism. For that reason, the songs heard at the Festival in Portland will carry echoes of special poignancy. Perhaps the "Castle of Light" will become a beacon, once more, of man's hope for a rebirth of freedom everywhere.