Rainis’ play **“Indulis and Ārija”** (*„Indulis un Ārija”*) (1912)

The tragedy of youth “Indulis and Ārija” was composed in 1911, while the exile in Switzerland, Castagnola. This is a work, in which Rainis maximally used the material of Latvian history merged with folklore motifs. Rainis considered the story about Indulis and Ārija to be one of the Latvian historical legends. He used a variation of the legend that was published in a book arranged by Friedrich Bienemann in the German language “Book of Livonian tales” (*“Livländisches Sagenbuch”*). At the legend’s core is a love tale between Indulis — the son of the ruler of Embute castle who is also a Couronian chief, and Ārija — the daughter of the German castellan of the Kuldiga castle. Rainis depicts immense historical background of the 13th century. At the time of Courland’s subjugation campaign from 1243 to 1244 the Lithuanian forces led by Mindaugas and the German order fought over the Embute castle. ““Indulis and Ārija” was intended as a separate drama in a whole chain of Latvian historical plays. The complete flow of Latvian history would be depicted in the ten plays of this chain of dramas,” explained Rainis.

“Indulis and Ārija” — that is a love between representatives of two warring sides. The tragedy could be considered a Latvian “Romeo and Juliet”. The dramatic conflict is built by two conflicting sides — Indulis, who bears the responsibility for his folk and his love for Ārija. This time Rainis didn’t speak in symbols, but created a psychologically precise characters and relationships. To mark the idea of a country of the future, he needed some link with some ancient form of statehood. It was necessary to strengthen the identity of the nation. Here Rainis bravely stepped over the borders of the legend and history, placing an emphasis on his ideology and confronting Indulis with Mintautas and democracy with autocracy. Two systems clash — “may everyone be lord” with “only one may be lord”. Mintautas stays in his 13th century and acts according to the reality of the era, Indulis’ dreams and spirit carry him into the far away future — the 20th century, where the fate of the folk is once again to be decided. “Later when a new idea was portrayed in “The Fire and the Night” (*„Uguns un nakts”*) like in a fantastic painting — unheard of at the time — about Latvia as a country, then there was the need to create this first attempt of a country and its idea of growth in the historical scene. This had to be done in a historically recognizable example, which nevertheless would allow a certain branching of free thought and wouldn’t tie too much to uncertain and unavoidable historic details,” wrote Rainis. The epicenes of the legend and even the dry historical facts gain an emotional force, melody and colourfulness in the literary work.

The first edition of the drama was published in St. Petersburg at the end of December 1911, by the publishing house “Anša Gulbja apgāds”. The play was translated in Russian. The premiere was held in April of 1912 at the New Riga Theater. The play’s producer was Teodors Amtmanis, the actors include: Indulis — Alfreds Amtmanis-Briedītis, Ārija — Tija Banga, Mintautas — Ādolfs Kaktiņš. On the 19th November 1920 the freshly opened Daile Theater opened its doors with the performance of “Indulis and Ārija”.