

FOLK DANCING EXHIBITION

LATVIAN SONG FESTIVAL CENTENNIAL CONCERT

LATVIJAS  
NACIONĀLĀ  
BIBLIOTĒKA



**23. AUSTRALIJAS  
LATVIEŠU  
KULTŪRAS DIENAS**

**SIDNEJĀ**

**1973. GADĀ**



# 23rd Latvian Arts Festival

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## FOLK DANCING EXHIBITION

28TH DECEMBER, 1973 — 8.00 P.M. — SYDNEY TOWN HALL

The Latvian folk dances are many centuries old, most of them originating in the period from the 13th to the 16th centuries, but some are considerably older. Some dances have passed down the centuries unchanged while others have been modified and still others have been created recently.

Latvia is divided into many districts each having some cultural differences, thus providing a large variety of dances and more strikingly, a large number of different costumes from the various regions.

In Australia and wherever else Latvians gather, young Latvians keep the old traditions of dance alive through personal participation in folk dancing groups. The people who teach today's folk dancing groups have at some time been dancers themselves. Personal experience and a limited number of texts are the only means of passing the tradition on to the young.

This year approximately 280 dancers from 12 groups will participate in the folk dancing performance. These groups are from Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Newcastle and Sydney. The performance is based on four meaningful seasons in an ancient farmer's life:

**METENIS** — is a personification of spring; as ice thaws, new life and growth begin and a farmer welcomes the sun as a giver of life and prepares for the hard work ahead.

**ŪSINŠ** — is a deity associated with horses. The horse was loved by every ploughman and necessary to his existence. As the pastures grew green, the horses and cattle were led out to graze at night after a long winter's stay in stalls. The young people celebrated this first night by singing and dancing around fires.

**JUMIS** — was a mysterious elf-like deity who lived in the field. He brought a plentiful golden harvest which was a blessing after all the hard work. This imaginary sprite hid in a double head of corn and capturing him meant good luck to the finder. With the harvest and the stocking of barns completed, the farmer was indeed thankful and offered praise for his success to the kind deities who aided his work.

**MARTIŅŠ** — was autumn personified; he arrived with a jangle of spurs and a flashing sword. He was supposed to ride around the fields to inspect the work and give credit for work well done. When the harvest was reaped, barns filled, animals shut in for the winter, and everything was in order, the people used to spend long evenings indoors doing domestic tasks by the light of a taper. There were songs, dances and stories to while away the long hours; neighbours came visiting dressed in various masks to frighten evil spirits of darkness — fun and merriment for young and old, but predominantly there was work, as no farmer could stay idle.



# 23rd Latvian Arts Festival

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LATVIJAS NACIONĀLĀ BIBLIOTĒKA



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## LATVIAN SONG FESTIVAL CENTENNIAL CONCERT

29TH DECEMBER, 1973 — 8.00 P.M. — SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

Latvian Consular Representative in Australia — Olgerts Rozitis.

LATVIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM.

There is an old saying about Latvians — They are born with a song, they live with a song, they die with a song and they meet their God in Paradise with a song on their lips.

Singing is a way of life to the Latvians. About 180,000 folksongs known as Tautas dziesmas or dainas exist; there are 18,000 melodies belonging thereto. Latvians sang perpetually, in joy, in sorrow, toiling and at play. Every small community had its own choir or singing group, who met regularly for rehearsals and to celebrate special occasions in song.

Organised choral work began in the 19th Century. In June, 1873 in Riga, capital of Latvia, the first general Latvian song and Arts festival was held. On this occasion the Latvian National Anthem, God Bless Our Latvia, was performed for the first time. This festival was held regularly at 5 to 9 year intervals — by 1940 nine festivals had been held. In the last one 350 choirs from all over Latvia took part, 15,000 voices singing to an audience of 100,000.

Latvians, in exile, have not forgotten this custom and Song Festivals have been organised everywhere in the free world. This year is commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the first general song festival and the centenary of our Anthem, song festivals were organised in Cologne, Germany, in Cleveland U.S.A. and also in Sydney, as part of the 23rd Latvian Arts Festival in Australia.

Latvians in Australia have organised song and arts festivals in each capital city in rotation. This year we, in Sydney, have the honour of holding this concert of the combined choirs from all over Australia with over 500 voices in Sydney Opera House.



€ 0,20

## PROGRAMME

### YOUTH CONCERT

Wednesday, December 26th,  
2.00 p.m. Latvian Hall,  
32 Parnell St., Strathfield.

### OPENING OF THE FESTIVAL AND RECITAL OF LATVIAN MUSIC.

Wednesday, December 26th,  
8 p.m. Sydney Town Hall.

### LATVIAN PLAY.

Thursday, December 27th,  
3.00 p.m. & 8.00 p.m.  
Friday, December 28th,  
3.00 p.m. Latvian Hall,  
32 Parnell St., Strathfield.

### FOLK DANCING.

Friday, December 28th,  
8.00 p.m. Sydney Town Hall.

### LATVIAN SONG FESTIVAL CENTENNIAL CONCERT.

Saturday, December 29th,  
8.00 p.m. Concert Hall,  
Sydney Opera House.

### CHILDRENS' CONCERT

Sunday, December 30th,  
11.00 a.m. Bankstown Town  
Hall.

### POPULAR CONCERT

Sunday, December 30th,  
7.30 p.m. Sydney Town Hall.

### EXHIBITION OF LATVIAN PAINTINGS AND ARTS AND CRAFTS.

Sydney Lower Town Hall.  
Open from 12.00 noon — 7.30  
p.m. 26th December and from  
10.00 a.m. — 7.00 27th — 30th  
December.

## A FEW WORDS ABOUT LATVIANS

Although it is known that some Latvians migrated to Australia as early as the end of the last century, the majority of the Australian Latvian population settled in Australia as a result of the increased intake of migrants after the Second World War. Today there are some 20,000 Latvians living in Australia. If one considers that the population of pre-war Latvia was only about 2 million, the number of Latvians living in Australia is quite remarkable.

Latvia is situated on the eastern shores of the Baltic sea, and is one of the group of countries known as the Baltic states. Latvia is a cold country if one compares it with places like Australia, but climatic extremes are moderated by the gentle waters of the Gulf Stream, which manages to penetrate into the Baltic Sea.

Latvians, together with other Balts, settled in the region comprising present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Eastern Prussia, and part of present-day Russia over 2,000 years ago. Their culture and their customs are distinctly different to those of any other European country and they speak a language which is not related to any of the modern European languages.

Archaeological findings in the Baltic region indicate a well-developed culture dating back to well before 1000 B.C. Despite many influences from the East as well as from the West, much of the Latvian culture has been retained in a pure form up to the present day. The recorded Latvian folk songs are very old indeed, as are many of the fairy-tales and legends. Forms and designs used in Latvian handicrafts today form the oldest part of the Latvian cultural heritage as they have been replicated from findings in archeological excavations.

For the 23rd successive year, Latvians in Australia gather at one of their Arts Festivals which have been organized not only to keep alive their old culture, but also to add to it by new works in the various fields of artistic and cultural expression.