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Sun, Thunder, Daugava: Accessible Choral Music from the Latvian Choral Tradition

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SUN, THUNDER, DAUGAVA: ACCESSIBLE CHORAL MUSIC FROM THE LATVIAN CHORAL TRADITION

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I have been fortunate enough to visit Latvia twice, once in 2009 and again in 2023. With connections made through the global outreach arm of the Lutheran Church Missouri–Synod, I was able to incorporate myself into Latvian culture in ways that may not have been possible had I been a standard tourist. I am grateful to have been invited into the homes of Latvian friends, to have studied in the Jāzeps Vītols Music Academy Library, and to have celebrated both the Jāņi midsummer festival in the Latvian countryside and my twenty-second birthday on the shores of the mighty Daugava River. Upon observing and participating in these events, one truth becomes abundantly clear: choral music and group singing are inherently woven into the fabric of the Latvian people.

Despite a rich history of choral music, repertoire from the Latvian choral tradition has yet to become ubiquitous among high school, college, and community choirs across the United States. While there could be many reasons for this, I believe two main barriers exist: 1) the inherent level of complexity found in Latvian choral music, including large amounts of divisi singing as well as extended choral techniques, and 2) American's general unfamiliarity with the Latvian language. Having taught choral music at the middle school, high school, and collegiate levels, I have sympathy and appreciation for

the thousands of decisions that go into choosing repertoire each semester. While we strive to be as inclusive as possible, repertoire that is too difficult is (rightfully) stashed away, and the time to execute deep-dive searches for appropriate foreign repertoire is a luxury often not afforded.

The purpose of this study is to make known a handful of accessible pieces from the Latvian choral tradition that can be learned in a reasonable amount of time by the average high school, collegiate, church, or community chorus. By highlighting pieces that fit my personal parameters for the term “accessible” I hope to remove any barriers that may exist which prevent programming more of this often-overlooked segment of choral repertoire.

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SOLI DEO GLORIA!

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Of the 267 pieces of music selected by the forty-five states that hosted an SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) All State ensemble during the 2015–16 academic year, just one Latvian composer was represented: Ēriks Ešenvalds.[1] Two of his pieces, *Stars* and *Northern Lights,* were performed with the latter being the only one to use the Latvian language. In Lorraine Lynch's study of choral repertoire sung by a selection of High School mixed choruses at the Eastern Division American Choral Directors Association conferences spanning 1978 through 2016, none of the 287 pieces surveyed were by Latvian composers or sung in the Latvian language.[2] Of the 3,447 pieces performed at National Conventions of the American Choral Directors Association from 1991–2019, only twenty-seven were by Latvian composers.[3] Of those twenty-seven, just twelve used the Latvian language.

Upon realizing how infrequently Latvian choral music is performed in the United States, I became curious to find out why. I believe it is primarily due to two factors: 1) The Latvian's expertise in singing and early participation in choral ensembles affords Latvian composers the luxury of writing music that is complex, and 2) the Latvian language is unfamiliar to most choral conductors in the United States. While neither assertion can be proven beyond any doubt, there is a plethora of anecdotal and musical

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[1] Donald Christopher Fowler, "A Study of Choral Repertoire Performed by All State Choruses (2015–2016)" (D.M.A. Diss., The University of Georgia, 2017), 50–58.

[2] Lorraine A. Lynch, "Trends in Choral Repertoire Performed at American Choral Directors Association Eastern Division Conferences by Selected High School Mixed Choirs from 1978 Through 2016" (D.M.A. Diss., Rutgers University, 2020), 201–229.

[3] Jonathan Randall Hall, "An Index of Choral Music Performed During the National Conventions of the American Choral Directors Association (1991–2019)" (D.M.A. diss., University of South Carolina, 2020), 91–484.

evidence that paints a convincing picture. In 2016 an article from *The Economist* describes the following scene in a traditional Latvian school:

> It's eight o'clock at the Taurenitis School in Jūrmala, a resort town some 25km west of Riga. 78 children, half of the school's total number, have assembled for their twice-weekly choir practice. Sitting with their backs straight, and giving the conductor their full attention, they rehearse Latvian folk songs—as do children in ordinary state schools across Latvia every week. This early choir drilling has turned Latvia into the superpower of choral singing.[4]

The Taurenitis school choir featured in this article is just one of the more than five hundred such choirs offered to primary-aged students in Latvia.[5] This is not data sourced from specialized music schools—these choirs constitute what is available to students who voluntarily begin singing multi-part music at an early age as part of their public, state funded education.

In addition to the choral training received in standard schools, there are exclusive music schools, along with a variety of semi-professional youth and professional adult choirs, available to the Latvian people. One such music school is the Emil Dārziņš School of Music located in the capital city of Riga. Opened in 1945, this highly competitive junior conservatory acts as training ground and feeder school for the upper level Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music.[6] Competition is fierce, with students as young as seven years old sitting entrance exams for a small number of open seats. Interestingly, it is determined after year eight if a student is fit to continue in their music studies at the

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[4] "Latvia, the choral superpower," *The Economist,* April 1, 2016.

[5] "Latvia, the choral superpower," *The Economist*.

[6] Emily Botdorf Schmalstieg, "Soviet Latvia's Emil Darzin School of Music: Rigorous Training for a Highly Prized Art," *Music Educators Journal* 58, no. 5 (Jan., 1972): 72. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3393973.

school.[7] As of 2018 there were 112 such Music and Arts specialty schools in Latvia, educating a total of 16,600 students, and nine additional Music Gymnasia that teach another 800 students.[8] Those 17,400 students accounted for roughly 14% of primary aged Latvian school pupils in 2018.[9] For a country whose population today is just under two million, a significant number of students were (in American terms) essentially majoring in music beginning in kindergarten.

Youth and professional choirs continue to be a popular draw for Latvians and there are many world-renowned ensembles that exist outside of educational settings. These ensembles represent the fruits of Latvia's robust music education endeavors. The Latvian youth choir *Kamēr...* was founded in 1990 and has travelled the world collecting many prestigious awards and honors, including winning the International Choir Competition in Marktoberdorf, Germany (2009), achieving first place at the European Grand Prix for Choral Singing (2004, 2013, 2019), and earning three gold medals at the World Choir Games in China (2006).[10] BALSIS, formed in 1987, is another highly decorated youth choir based out of Riga. The 40–50 voice mixed ensemble performs Renaissance through Contemporary music and are mainstays on the international choir circuit, performing at international choir competitions across the world including recent

[7] Schmalstieg, "Soviet Latvia's Emil Darzin," 72.

[8] Maija Sipola, "Overview of Higher Music Education System," accessed Jan., 29, 2024, https://aec-music.eu/members/national-overviews/latvia#:~:text=There%20are%20112%20Music%20and,supplement%20to%20their%20general%20education.

[9] Data retrieved on Jan. 29, 2024, from www.worldbank.org. https://data.worldbank.org/country/latvia

[10] About Us, Kamēr...Youth Choir website, Accessed Jan. 29, 2024. https://www.kamer.lv/en/23-english/about-us

stops in Norway, Estonia, Austria, Italy, and Latvia.[11] The professional choirs include The State Choir Latvija, The Latvian Radio Choir, AVE SOL Chamber Choir, and Latvian Voices. These ensembles are some of the most highly regarded in the world, and recordings are readily available on all major music streaming platforms including Spotify, YouTube, Apple Music, and the Naxos Music Libraries.

Completely independent of Latvia's educational, pre-professional, and professional choirs are the overwhelming number of amateur, church, and community ensembles that are active throughout the country. As the host nation for the 2014 World Choir Games, more than 27,000 singers from seventy-three countries descended on Riga for the festival—the largest event in World Choir Games history. Latvia, one of the smallest nations to compete, was declared outright champions in six out of the twenty-nine competition categories, won the most gold medals (29), and won the overall medal count with a total of fifty-four.[12] Additionally, the National Song and Dance Festival is one of the most remarkable choral music events found anywhere in the world. What began in 1873 as a song festival featuring 1,000 singers is now a week-long celebration that includes choirs, wind bands, dance groups, folk art displays, folk costumes, and theatre productions. In 2023 choirs auditioned from across Latvia and more than 40,000 participants from over 1,600 groups were selected to perform in the sesquicentennial

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[11] Laura Padegs Zamurs, Liner notes for Laura Jēkobsone, Mārtinš Brauns, Andrejs Jansons, Andris Sējāns, *Ziemassvētki laika vējos (Latvian Christmas in the Winds of Time),* BALSIS Youth Choir, Ints Teterovskis, conductor, recorded January 3–4, 2020, Albany Records, TROY1851, 2020, streaming audio, accessed Jan. 29, 2024, Naxos Music Library.

[12] "8th World Choir Games," Accessed Jan. 29, 2024, https://www.interkultur.com/events/world-choir-games/riga-2014/.

event held in Riga from June 30–July 9.[13] The final mass choir event was held at the end of the week as tens of thousands of singers flocked to the recently renovated Silver Grove Stage in the heart of Mežaparks, Riga's Central Park-like gathering space in the northeast corner of the city. The mass choir closed the week singing folksongs and newly composed pieces, both accompanied and unaccompanied, led by the finest conductors the country has to offer in front of thousands of audience members. The festival's role in preserving Latvian culture, history, and tradition through times of hardship and prosperity cannot be overstated.

The effects of such a rich musical heritage are revealed in the compositions written by Latvian composers. One such composer previously mentioned whose works have gained popularity in the United States is Ēriks Ešenvalds. He began his studies at the age of six by enrolling in the Priekule School of Music, a small town roughly twenty-five miles inland off the west coast of Latvia.[14] He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in composition at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music and has studied abroad in France, Czechia, Amsterdam, and Norway.[15] Of his 161 compositions for choir,[16] fifty-one are in the Latvian language (31.6%). Of those fifty-one, just eighteen are written for non-divisi voicings, including eight for SATB, four for SSA (soprano, soprano, alto), and two each for SSAA, TTBB (tenor I, tenor II, baritone, bass), and two-part choir. The

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[13] **"**XXVI Nationwide Latvian Song and XVII Dance Festival," Accessed Feb. 1., 2024, http://www.dziesmusvetki.lv/en/about-the-celebration/the-song-and-dance-celebration/.

[14] Vance Wolverton, "Ēriks Ešenvalds: Latvia's Choral Enfant Extraordinaire," *The Choral Journal* 53, no. 4 (November 2012): 24.

[15] Vance Wolverton, "Ēriks Ešenvalds," 24.

[16] Music sourced from both the composer's personal website, as well as his exclusive publisher's website, Musica Baltica.

average voicing across all choral works by Ēriks Ešenvalds are SSAATTBB for mixed choir, SSSAA for treble choir, and TTTBBB for bass choir.

In Vance Wolverton's 2012 biographical article about Ešenvalds, he described the piece *Tāla celš* (Long Road) as being "..an example of Ešenvalds' empathy for amateur choirs."[17] *Tāla celš* is scored for SSAATTBB choir with an additional trio or quartet of sopranos and altos, as well as triangles, recorders, and ocarinas to be played by the choir.[18] The piece was originally written for the award-winning Latvian Youth Choir *Kāmer...*, with the English version being dedicated to Stephen Layton and his professional choir Polyphony. Wolverton goes on to say, "*Long Road* is typified by five to six-part chords whose measured, but mostly unresolved dissonances, tend to mask any sense of a definite key center."[19]

For the purposes of this paper, the terms "accessible" and "amateur" will need to take on a broader definition. If Wolverton's definitions are correct and music written for SSAATTBB choir with SSA trio that contains ambiguous tonal centers and instruments is accessible for an amateur chorus, then there will be many high school, collegiate, church, and community choirs who are left feeling ostracized. If Latvian music, either written by native composers or in the Latvian language, is to proliferate among choirs in the United States, conductors must have access to viable options for choirs of all abilities and skill levels.

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[17] Vance Wolverton, "Ēriks Ešenvalds," 27.

[18] Vance Wolverton, "Ēriks Ešenvalds," 27.

[19] Vance Wolverton, "Ēriks Ešenvalds," 27.

Oftentimes words such as *easy* or *difficult* are used when categorizing music, by music publishing websites, conductors, and choir members in rehearsal rooms across the country. Not only are these descriptors an inadequate (and often incorrect) way of guiding repertoire selection, but they cause an inherent bias towards associating "difficult" selections with being "of a higher quality" than "easy" ones. To perform any song with an appropriate level of artistry and expression will take a considerable investment of time and talent. Instead, this paper will discuss its chosen choral repertoire using the terms *simple* and *complex* and will analyze each piece in the following three categories: 1) rhythmic complexity, 2) intervallic and melodic complexity, and 3) harmonic complexity. These classifications are objectively quantifiable; rhythmic figures can be syncopated or not, intervals can be closer together or further apart, and harmonic function can be predictable or unpredictable. Additionally, the definition of *accessible* choral music from the Latvian tradition will adhere to the following characteristics, with relatively few exceptions:

1) Pieces that are composed or arranged by Latvian-born composers and use the Latvian language or contains Latvian ties (e.g., Liene Batņa's *Dixit Maria* sung by Latvian choirs across the country).
2) Pieces that avoid persistent and complex divisi.
3) Pieces that contain simple rhythmic figures that often repeat or are doubled in other voice parts.
4) Pieces where the melodic material moves mostly by step and avoids an abundance of harsh intervals.
5) Pieces where the harmonic function operates within clearly defined tonal centers with few instances of key changes and atonal harmonizations.

While certain elements of this endeavor remain inherently subjective, such as which songs are chosen for inclusion, it is my hope that this method of analysis will provide choral conductors practical insight into each piece, making the choice to program

this music an easy one. The music analyzed in Chapter 4 is organized from simplest to most complex, as music for all levels of choral ensemble are presented, but not prescribed.

All musical scores are available for purchase and, unless otherwise noted, can be downloaded digitally from Latvia's premier music publishing company Musica Baltica. Additionally, many of the pieces have been professionally recorded and are available to purchase or stream digitally. A comprehensive list of scores and available recordings are included in chapter five. Finally, it should be noted that this paper is not meant to be all-encompassing. An exhaustive inquiry of Latvian choral music is not feasible, and what is included in the following pages only scratches the surface of what this incredible country has to offer the singing public.

CHAPTER ONE:

"THE COUNTRY THAT SINGS"

Figure 1.1, The Baltic States, Public Domain,
reproduced by permission of the University of Texas Libraries.

The three countries that make up the modern-day Baltic States are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Finland lies to the north, Russia and Belarus to the east, and Poland to the south. The Baltic Sea lines the western coast of all three nations while the Gulf of Riga accounts for a significant amount of coastline for both Latvia and Estonia (fig. 1). The original inhabitants of these lands were hunter-gatherers who, as the Pre-Historic age advanced through the Iron Age, shifted towards agricultural work.[20] While these peasant-farmers experienced comparatively low levels of class stratification compared to the rest of Europe, impending invasions by German crusaders would signal more than seven centuries of a tyrannical back-and-forth exchange of power by various occupying

[20] Andres Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States* (England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 1.

forces.[21] With the blessing of Pope Innocent III, Bishop Albert von Buxhoevden of Lübeck led a successful crusade into Latvia (then called Livonia) and founded the city of Riga, near the head of the Daugava River in 1201.[22] The earliest instances of Latvian folk song singing are thought to have been in both the monophonic and polyphonic style, including utilizing a drone and a singular female voice as the song leader in polyphonic settings.[23] While traditional folk song melodies would eventually give way to the four-part chorale style introduced in the 16th century, recent efforts in scholarship have been made to preserve any extant Latvian folk song melodies in the ancient style.[24]

The Germans remained in control, albeit loosely, throughout the Medieval Era and into the Renaissance, establishing Christianity throughout the region and championing the ideals of the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500s.[25] A benefit of the Reformation was the advent of congregational hymn singing. In addition to the oral tradition of native Latvian folk songs, musical participation in church gave Latvians yet another way to join their voices in song. Some of the earliest mass-produced pieces of literature throughout the Baltics were religious writings and song books. It was through the hymnbooks that communal Latvian singing was brought out of the home and established in the public square.[26] Over the next two centuries, four-part hymn singing

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[21] Kasekamp, *A History,* 8.

[22] Kasekamp, *A History,* 12.

[23] Vance D. Wolverton, "Breaking the Silence: Choral Music of the Baltic Republics. Part II: Latvia," *The Choral Journal* 38, No. 9 (1998): 39.

[24] Wolverton, "Breaking the Silence: Latvia," 40.

[25] Kasekamp, *A History,* 30–39.

[26] Guntis Šmidchens, *The Power of Song: Nonviolent National Culture in the Baltic Singing Revolution,* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2014), 53.

played an important role in establishing the singing culture of the Baltics that would play a significant role in the 20th century. While some inhabitants on the outskirts of the Baltic countryside would continue ancient singing traditions, the chorale soon became the preferred style of singing among the Latvian people.[27]

The eventual rise of the Swedish Empire in the north and a burgeoning Poland-Lithuania alliance in the south put the land of Livonia in a political pressure cooker. Conquered by Poland in 1581, the country would change hands again in 1629 and come under the rule of the Swedish realm.[28] The reign of the Swedes is looked on relatively favorably by the Baltic people. Of all the occupations, King Charles XI of Sweden (1661–1697) abolished serfdom and gave rights to both the tenants who controlled the land and the serfs who rented and worked it.[29] While the Balts continued to suffer from war, famine, and the plague, Tsar Peter I of Russia invaded and defeated the Swedes, taking full control of present-day Estonia and Latvia by 1721.[30] Foreshadowing hardships brought on by the Russians of the 20th century, the Baltic peasants were once again relegated to serfdom as families were bought, sold, and divided between the nobility. Their lives and possessions belonged to the ruling class.[31]

Of particular importance for Latvian peasants throughout the 18th century was the influence of the Moravian Brotherhood. This Protestant religious order, whose

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[27] Guntis Šmidchens, "A Baltic Music: The Folklore Movement in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, 1968–1991" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1996) 104, 106.

[28] Kasekamp, *A History,* 42–47.

[29] Kasekamp, *A History,* 52–55.

[30] Kasekamp, *A History,* 54.

[31] Kasekamp, *A History,* 58.

beginnings pre-date even the Lutheran Reformation, was responsible for spreading a message of class equality and nationalism among 18th century Latvians. If the crusades had been a political power move, the religious movement started by the Moravians was a spiritual awakening.[32] This also marked the last vestiges of Paganism in the land as secular events became increasingly Christianized. An enduring example of this was the rechristening of the midsummer solstice as St. John's Day (Jāņi Festival). This remains one of the most important festivals in Latvia and is celebrated annually on the longest day of the year.[33]

While the peasant class continued to experience varying degrees of freedom and servitude, mid-18th century Riga was a bustling combination of opportunities in business and education for the remaining German nobility and the current Russian occupiers. It is here, finally, that Latvia's artistic and musical folk history rises to the forefront of research and scholarship, albeit not without obstacles. Johann Gottfried Herder, a German philosopher, educator, and pastor, moved to Riga in 1764 and brought with him philosophical ideals born of the Enlightenment that would change the Baltic people forever.[34] Enamored with local language, stories, and poetry, Herder would become famous for his two-volume publication of Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian folk songs. The books, known as *Volkslieder,* were gathered over many years and eventually published in 1778 and 1779.[35] Herder's focus on native historical languages as the

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[32] Kasekamp, *A History,* 58–59.

[33] Kasekamp, *A History, 59.*

[34] Guntis Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 26–27.

[35] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 26–27, 30.

gateway to national identity sowed the seeds for the eventual National Awakening of all three Baltic States during the 19th century. Gotthard Friedrich Stender, a local Latvian pastor, provided grammar books, dictionaries, and encyclopedias in Latvian for use by the peasant class at the close of the 18th century.[36] Garlieb Merkel, a student of Herder, aggressively advocated against the German landowners and derided their treatment of the Latvian serfs at the turn of the century.[37]

The Baltic singing tradition was directly impacted by the influence of Germany and the German noble class living in Latvia throughout the 19th century. As German speaking countries across Europe invested their time and energy into secular choral song and the rise of the *Liedertafel* (Song Table, or Singing Club), the Germans in Latvia soon took an interest, and the Baltic German Singing Society was founded in Riga in 1834.[38] In 1824 the Latvian Literary Society was formed by local German Lutheran pastors, and literacy among the lower classes soared. The first Latvian newspaper (Latviešu Avīzes) appeared in 1822 and another (Mājas Viesis) followed in 1856. 1848 saw the formation of the first Latvian Men's Choir, and the need for local Latvian-educated church leaders rose significantly.[39] It is also in the early 1800s that reports emerge regarding Latvians singing in rural choirs.[40] In 1857 an overture was made in the Mājas Viesis newspaper that proposed a unification of the Courland and Livland provinces under a new name:

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[36] Kasekamp, *A History,* 61.

[37] Kasekamp, *A History,* 61.

[38] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 74.

[39] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 70–71.

[40] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 55.

Latvia.[41] It is this combination of literacy, education, and communal worship that allowed the Latvian's tradition of choral singing to truly flourish.

With their cultural and national awakenings well underway, critics of the emerging Baltic States were skeptical of the ancestral claims now being made on the land. Having been subjugated since the Middle Ages, the Latvian people had little to no written evidence of land rights and, perhaps more significantly, shared no national origin story as a people. At the risk of over-simplifying more than 800 years of Northern-European history, the question arose: How could Latvians lay claim to an historical existence that spans millennia when there are no Latvian renaissance philosophers, no Latvian classic, baroque, or romantic era poets, artists, or composers, and the very name of the country itself did not exist until 40 years before the 20th-century?

Answers to such questions were found via the humble folk song. The work began by Johann Gottfried Herder would reach its zenith through Krišjānis Barons, the Latvian researcher and musicologist credited for codifying the text for more than 200,000 Latvian folk songs, which he termed *dainas.* Instead of collecting them in the field, Barons collaborated with journalist Fricis Brīvzemnieks and issued a plea for Latvian folk song text submissions to be sent in so that he may begin the daunting task of organizing them all. The rigors of this endeavor, which would take over most of his adult life, are described herein:

> The songs, recorded across the land, kept flowing to Barons in a tangled, shapeless, confused mass. Barons transcribed them onto tiny slips of paper in his precise, spidery hand, cut up the sheets sent in by others to reduce them all to the same format, read, pondered, sorted, filed them, arranged them in little boxes, transferred them to his custom-built cabinet with seventy special drawers. Thus, slowly, working painstakingly and meticulously over four full decades of a dedicated life, from tens of thousands of little strips of paper Barons came to

[41] Kasekamp, *A History,* 76–77.

> reconstruct the world of the *dainas* as a conceptually coherent, aesthetically sophisticated and emotionally moving accomplishment of the human spirit.[42]

It was through the *dainas,* songs passed down orally through generations of Latvians, that their collective history was finally organized, codified, and revealed to the world. *Dainas,* as organized by Barons, contain four lines of unrhymed poetry whose subjects range from the ordinary tasks of everyday life to milestone celebrations like weddings, funerals, and everything in-between.[43] Despite a straightforward first impression, they often carry a significant double or hidden meaning. It is for this reason that Barons' collection is often compared to Elias Lönnrot's Finnish national epic the *Kalevala* as both served the same unique purpose for their respective countries.[44] First published in the year Barons was born, the *Kalevala* is a collection of songs and poetry detailing the mythological beginnings of the Finnish people, whose stories have since been adopted and incorporated by artists, performers, architects, and others into everyday Finnish life.[45] Unlike the *Kalevala,* Barons' Latvian *dainas* were written in the lyric style as opposed to the epic style, making it more difficult to translate them into other languages without losing their true essence. For this reason, Latvia's collection of *dainas* have not enjoyed the same international relevance as the Finnish *Kalevala*. Both collections, however, accomplished the overarching purpose of offering a sense of

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[42] Vaira Vīkis-Freibergs, *Linguistics and Poetics of Latvian Folk Songs* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989) 8.

[43] Valdis Muktuvpāvels, "Latvian Traditional Culture and Music." *Smithsonian Folklife Festival Booklet* (1998): 71.

[44] Vikis-Freibergs, *Linguistics and Poetics,* 3, 6.

[45] "Kalevala: Finnish Literature," Britannica, accessed April 2, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Kalevala

cultural legitimacy to the often-oppressed native inhabitants whose very existence was consistently under threat.

Much of the comparisons to Lönnrot's epic are due to the story-like way Barons categorized and presented the copious amount of source material. By grouping the four-line poems into categories based upon their subject matter and usage, he was able to paint a broader story that intimately reveals the way Latvians live and celebrate their lives. It should be noted that the *dainas* themselves do not speak of specific people or historical dates but focus on ancient Latvian life via the movements of the seasons, nature, and rites of passage, which can be applied in all times for all people.[46] Barons' contribution to the legitimization of Latvians as an historically significant people is best summarized by Vaira Vīkis-Freibergs at the closing of her chapter in *Linguistics and Poetics of Latvian Folk Songs.* She says, "He (Barons) gave the Latvian people of his time what amounts to a certificate of spiritual maturity, an international passport of cultural citizenship, with which they could confidently issue forth into the modern world and assert their equal rights and equal worth as an ethnic group and as human beings."[47]

Acquiring equal rights as a sovereign nation would prove difficult and costly, and perhaps would not have been realized at all save for the most significant piece of cultural and musical history presented in the last two centuries: the National Song Festival. Early documentation of smaller festivals in Latvia date to 1864, yet the first true national Latvian Singing Festival united both the provinces of Kurland and Lifland in 1873.[48]

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[46] Vīkis-Freibergs, *Linguistics and Poetics,* 8–9.

[47] Vīkis-Freibergs, *Linguistics and Poetics,* 11–12.

[48] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 85.

Taking four months to plan, the festival included 1,019 singers in a mixed choir that included 126 sopranos, 86 altos, 365 tenors, and 426 basses.[49] The festival scheduled an opening night in which most of the music was composed by foreign composers, and a second evening where the folk music of Latvia (set to melodies of German songs) was to be performed. Several notable historical events took place or have their genesis at this first festival in 1873; they reverberate throughout Latvian culture and buoy their national singing spirit for the next 150 years.

Firstly, there was the premier of "God Bless Latvia," a national anthem composed by Kārlis Baumanis containing text which united both provinces under the new title of Latvia.[50] The text is as follows:

> God bless Latvia,
> Our previous fatherland,
> God bless Baltija,
> Give it your blessing!
>
> Where Latvian daughters bloom,
> Where Latvian sons sing,
> Let us rejoice in happiness,
> In our Baltija![51]

Šmidchens is quick to point out the significance of a national anthem that unites a people without discussing the topic of war but instead requests a blessing on the entire nation (rather than its King or Queen) and avoids talking about one's enemies. This non-violent characteristic of the Latvian people will continue to resonate throughout the conflicts experienced in the 20th century.

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[49] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 85–86.

[50] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 86.

[51] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 86–87.

The 1873 festival also saw the premier of composer Jānis Cimze's song "Riga Rings" during the folk song portion of the event. The song translated into English reads:

Rīga rings! Rīga rings!
Who is making Rīga ring?
Trallallā, trallallā,
Who is making Rīga ring?

Three good brothers for their sister
Forge a wondrous dowry chest.
(repeat as above)

Father's brother forged the chest
Mother's brother made the key.

Sister's very own true brother
Poured the lid of purest gold.[52]

Cimze, invited to speak at the event, waded into cultural hornet's nest by personifying the "three brothers" (responsible for the ringing of Riga) as the city herself, but also German schools and the German Baltic nobility. This was immediately derided at the festival by Atis Kronvalds who personified not the Germans but Latvian mothers, the Riga Latvian Society, and the Latvian spirit.[53]

An additional cultural turning point at the 1873 festival came in the form of a speech that would inspire a poem that would in turn inspire the creation of one of Latvia's most significant folk songs written by one of their greatest composers. Aleksandrs Vēbers, a German Balt, recounted during this first song festival a story of ancient Latvia wherein a hidden fortress, or castle, could only be found by identifying its magical name. That name was "Light," and once the riddle was solved God would watch

[52] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 88.

[53] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 88.

over its rise and protect it for all time.[54] It is not difficult to surmise that the fortress is Latvia and that, at the time of the story's recitation at the festival, their ascension as a nation from the depths of tyrannical forces had already begun. Moved by the story, poet Miķelis Krogzemis (pen name Auseklis) took the tale and wrote the poem *Gaismas Pils*.[55] "Castle of Light," as it is often translated in English, was set to music by the preeminent Latvian composer Jāzeps Vītols in 1899 and was first performed at the song festival of 1910.[56] It has since taken on even greater cultural significance throughout the country and is regarded as a symbol of hope for the Latvian people. A list of all song Festivals held between 1873 and 1991 is available in figure 1.6.

A few years later, at the festival of 1895, a moment of national defiance occurred as the Latvian choir and their audience used group singing as a means of non-violent protest towards their Russian overlords. A Russian Orthodox priest was scheduled to speak who, upon entering, received the required warm welcome as the Latvian choir sang the Russian National Anthem. At its conclusion the audience began to request an encore performance of the song and did so enough times that eventually the Russian dignitary gave up and left without speaking.[57] Acts of resistance such as this bolstered a cultural identity that would anchor the Latvian people throughout future decades of hardship. As the 19th-century gave way to the 20th, Russia and Germany would continue to battle with the Baltic people in the hopes that they would assimilate to their way of life.

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[54] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 90.

[55] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 91.

[56] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 92.

[57] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 101.

For the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians, however, national awakenings were underway and any attempts at subjugation now would be met with firm resistance.[58] Not only was Latvia a singing nation enjoying an increase in education, industry, and the arts, but by 1897 nearly ninety-two percent of Latvians were literate.[59] There was a proliferation not just of music, but of authors, artists, and theatre groups that all but guaranteed a distinct Latvian culture, in addition to their already established identity as hard-working farmers and industrialists, that would continue into the new century.[60] The advent of World War I would decimate much of this progress. The front line buried itself directly through the Latvian countryside, and not only would Latvian soldiers (conscripted by the Russian army) suffer the second most losses of any nation, but 800,000 Latvian inhabitants would relocate outside of the country.[61] Perhaps the only silver lining for Latvians following the war would be this; with Germany defeated and Russia's imminent civil war, a brief window of opportunity opened for all three Baltic states to achieve independence for the first time. A Latvian National Council declared independence in November of 1918 which was subsequently recognized on an international level in 1921.[62]

As Latvia began its post-WWI recovery, National Song Festivals were held roughly every five years until the outbreak of World War II. Despite multiple non-

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[58] Kasekamp, *A History,* 85.

[59] Kasekamp, *A History,* 85.

[60] Kasekamp, *A History,* 86.

[61] Kasekamp, *A History,* 94.

[62] Kasekamp, *A History,* 99, 105.

aggression pacts signed by the Baltic states and their neighbors, Stalin delivered ultimatums to all three Baltic countries in 1939, initially demanding permission to establish military installations on Baltic lands, and finally demanding the resignation of all Baltic governments.[63] 52,000 Latvian Germans, who for centuries had enjoyed operating as the De Facto ruling class, began a period of exodus to Germany and Poland effectively closing the book on seven centuries of history in the Baltics.[64] Puppet governments were installed, homes and property of a certain size were seized, and Baltic army officers were killed before their troops were added to the Soviet regime.[65] Mere weeks before Nazi Germany seized control over Latvia, 15,000 Latvians were deported to Siberia on June 14, 1941; it was the first of many such horrors to come in the following years.[66] The ensuing Nazi takeover decimated the Latvian Jewish population, killing more than 60,000 Jews during their time in power.[67] By the end of war, Latvia and its people were on the verge of destruction; young men (those who had not already fought for one or both of the Red Army or the Nazis) were called to revitalize Soviet military units, more than 140,000 Latvians fled the country, and a final tally would mark the loss of nearly one-third of the country's population.[68] Until the death of Stalin in 1953,

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[63] Mark Grizzard, "Castle of Light: A Snapshot of Latvian Choral Music as the Nation Turns 100," *The Choral Journal* 60, No. 3 (2019): 55.

[64] Kasekamp, *A History,* 126.

[65] Kasekamp, *A History,* 130.

[66] Kasekamp, *A History,* 131.

[67] Kasekamp, *A History,* 135.

[68] Kasekamp, *A History,* 140.

Latvians lived in constant fear of being deported, killed, censored, or any other such consequence of being labeled an enemy of the state.

The strict regulation and control over art and music during the Soviet years resulted in the national Song and Dance Festival being embraced by both Russians and Latvians, albeit for different reasons. Communism under the Soviet Union demanded that every aspect of life be a political event or delivery mechanism for propaganda, and music was no exception. Seeking to unite their subjugated people under the banner of Soviet ideals, song festivals in which thousands of people gathered and joined their voices appeared to be a built-in advantage for the proliferation of Stalinism. Latvian composers who did not flee their home country fell under strict censorship and any music to be included in the Song Festivals would undergo rigorous examination. While many capitulated to the Soviet's demands, there remained an avenue for dissent through texts that carried hidden meanings. While many songs were outright banned, *Gaismas Pils* (Castle of Light) was allowed to be sung at the Song Festival in 1948.[69] As the poetry (discussed earlier) told the tale of a Castle rising from obscurity, the Soviets were unaware of any interpretation other than the mythological one and let it pass. Latvians knew what it truly meant, and the song would play a significant role in the resurgence of Latvian identity as the post-Stalin era of Soviet control began in the 1950s.

The period between the death of Stalin in 1953 and the 1980's Singing Revolution (and subsequent independence of the Baltic States in 1991) is known as "The Thaw," where the egregious Soviet policies implemented since the end of World War II began to

[69] Mark Grizzard, "Castle of Light,": 56.

loosen.[70] As Communism's grip on the Baltic States began to slip and isolationist policies were slowly eroded, music and song festivals began including overt messaging that declared Latvia a sovereign state. Much like *Gaismas Pils*, Mārtiņš Brauns' 1988 composition *Saule, Pērkons, Daugava (Sun, Thunder, Daugava),* slipped by the Soviet Song Festival censors under the guise of it being a mythological story. The text is taken from a poem by the Latvian poet Rainis and describes the beginnings of the Daugava River and the Latvian people, who being inspired by the Sun (their mother), and Thunder (their father), were to take back the "keys to the gate" that were stolen by their enemies, and lay claim to their land once more.

As violence against the Baltics continued into the late 1980s, Latvians continued to respond with peaceful protests that involved music and singing. They out-sang Soviet radio broadcasts in 1987 as they peacefully commemorated the first deportations conducted in 1941, and in 1991 concerts erupted spontaneously as the Latvians went to work barricading different communications targets the Soviets intended to destroy.[71] In 1989 the now infamous Baltic Way took place as 2 million Baltic people formed a human chain spanning more than 400 miles across all three Baltic States. USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev was reaping the unintended consequences of his previously instituted policies of openness (*glasnost)* and restructuring *(perestroika).*[72] In the end the mounting pressure on Russia was too much and, without winning any military battles, Latvia

[70] Kasekamp, *A History,* 147.

[71] Grizzard, "Castle of Light," 58.

[72] Kasekamp, *A History,* 161.

regained its independence on August 21, 1991. They were admitted into the European Union in 2003 and joined the NATO alliance in 2004.[73]

Much like their first brush with independence in 1918, Latvia was now on the long road to recovery. A nation had to be rebuilt, leaders elected, constitutions drawn and passed, and national identities reclaimed. They were ahead of schedule on that final issue, in no small part due to their national identity as a singing nation. Song Festivals continued in earnest, with the first festival in this new era of freedom occurring in 1993. Serendipitously, Latvia's Song and Dance Festival managed to avoid the Coronavirus Pandemic and operated without interruption in both 2018 and 2023. The 2023 festival took place in Riga from June 30–July 9, welcomed more than 40,500 participants, and debuted the newly redesigned Song Festival grounds with the Silver Grove Stage. This new architecture (figures 1.2–1.5) replaced the structurally compromised Soviet Era stage built in 1955. The redesign considers the song festival ground's natural setting in the Mežaparks forest, while paying attention to the acoustical treatments necessary to facilitate mass choral ensembles in the tens of thousands.

[73] Grizzard, "Castle of Light," 58.

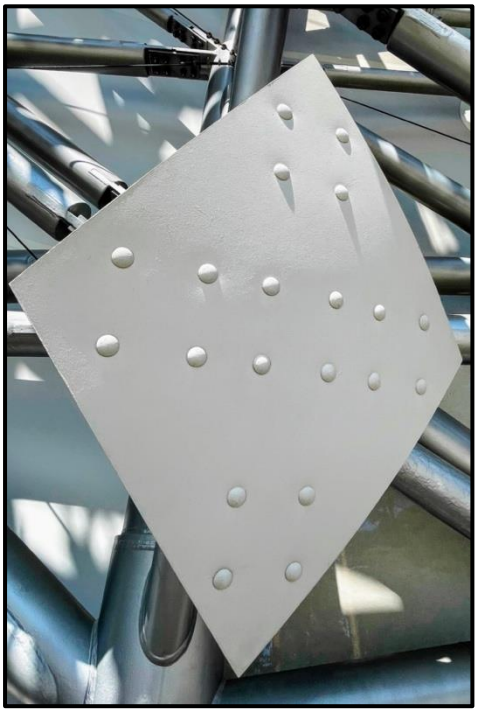

Figure 1.2, Silver Grove Stage, acoustical panel – Mežaparks, Riga. Photo by author, 2023.

Figure 1.3, Silver Grove Stage – Mežaparks, Riga. Photo by author, 2023.

Figure 1.4, Silver Grove Stage and Grounds, Mežaparks, Riga, Latvia. Photo by author. 2023.

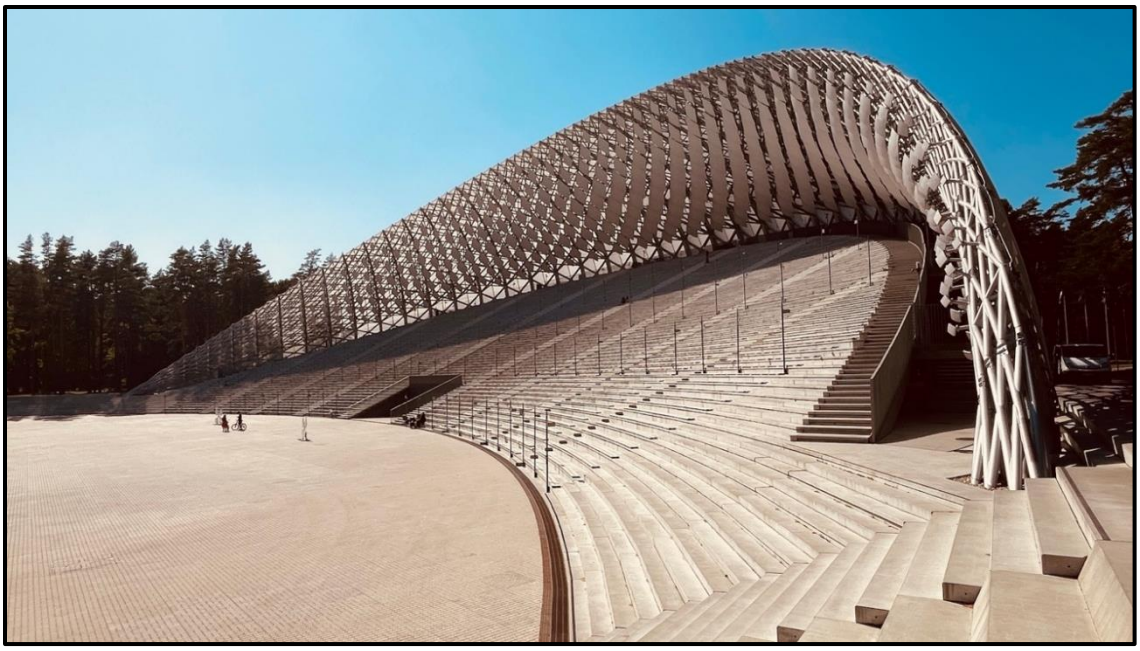

Figure 1.5, Silver Grove Stage, Mežaparks, Riga, Latvia. Photo by author. 2023

SONG FESTIVALS IN LATVIA 1873–2023[74] [75]

Festival	*Date*	*Place*	*Singers (Choirs)*	*Total Participants (dancers, folk groups, etc.)*
Czarist Latvia (to 1918)				
I	1873	Riga	1,003 (45 choirs)	—
II	1880	Riga	1,653 (70)	—
III	1888	Riga	2,618 (117)	—
IV	1895	Jelgava	3,000 (89)	—
V	1910	Riga	2,300 (89)	—
Independent Latvia (1918–1944)				
VI	1926	Riga	6,526 (158)	—
VII	1931	Riga	11,853 (275)	12,000
VIII	1933	Riga	10,600 (251)	10,600
IX	1938	Riga	14,450 (384)	16,000
Soviet Latvia (1948–1991)				
X	1948	Riga	14,542 (271)	20,803
XI	1950	Riga	13,866 (308)	18,735

[74] Festival as Reconciliation: Latvian Exile Homecoming in 1990," *Journal of Folklore Research 33,* no. 2 (1996): 101.

[75] "Celebrations," Collection of the Latvian Song and Dance Celebrations, Accessed March 7, 2024. https://dziesmusvetki.lndb.lv/en/festivals/.

XII	1955	Riga	10,767 (226)	14,192
XIII	1960	Riga	11,248 (195)	14,800
XIV	1965	Riga	12,331 (251)	15,589
XV	1970	Riga	12,700 (249)	16,000
XVI	1973	Riga	14,800 (285)	18,000
XVII	1977	Riga	14,446 (280)	19,000
XVIII	1980	Riga	17,425 (318)	24,000
XIX	1985	Riga	16,850 (323)	26,000
XX	1990	Riga	20,399 (350)	35,438
Independent Latvia (1991–Present)				
XXI	1993	Riga	13,000	24,746
XXII	1998	Riga	13,402	28,864
XXIII	2003	Riga	12,380	29,000
XXIV	2008	Riga	18,000	38,000
XXV	2013	Riga	15,000 (388)	40,600
XXVI	2018	Riga	16,500 (429)	43,400
XXVII	2023	Riga	15,870 (454)	40,560

Table 1.1, Song Festival Data Chart 1873–1991.

In summarizing the contextual history of a country where choral music has played such a significant role, one statistic from the 2023 song festival leaps off the page; the age distribution of those who participated is remarkably similar for all age groups between one and ninety-six years old (fig. 1.7).[76] This is especially astounding when one remembers that participating in a National Song Festival is not a simple question of who is willing to volunteer. Rather, the number of participants is the direct result of a lengthy audition process where choirs from across the country prepare for strict adjudication by festival representatives over the course of many years. Of the 15,870 singing participants, many more were left waiting for an opportunity in the coming years.

[76] "Latvian Song and Dance Festival Facts and Figures," Accessed March 8, 2024. https://eng.lsm.lv/article/culture/culture/30.06.2023-latvian-song-and-dance-festival-facts-and-figures.a514911/#:~:text=The%20idea%20of%20a%20song,singers%20and%20school%20children%20participated.

AGE	PARTICIPANTS
1–13	2,239
14–18	4,942
19–29	6,832
30–39	6,226
40–49	6,828
50–59	6,906
60–69	4,348
70–96	2,226

Table 1.2, 2023 Song and Dance Festival participation data by age.

While it remains a subjective and futile exercise to determine which country produces the "best" choirs, Latvia certainly makes a compelling argument for the title. For centuries they've sung hymns in church and adopted the four-part chorale style into their folk songs. They've held massive singing festivals on a nationwide scale for more than 150 years, and the opportunities for youth to participate in music ensembles (both in school and extra-curricular) are second to none. Latvia can truly lay claim to the title as "The Nation That Sings."

CHAPTER TWO:

SINGING IN THE LATVIAN LANGUAGE

Contrary to popular belief, Latvian is a language that intrinsically lends itself to choral singing. Having more in common with their Lithuanian neighbors (as opposed to Russia, Germany, Estonia, or Poland) Latvian can be pronounced exactly as the letters look, with a few notable exceptions.[77] There are Latvian variations of the five standard vowels that differ from how they are pronounced in English, and they are as follows: ā (longer than a), ē (narrower than e), ī (as in "meet"), o (triphthong), and ū (as in moot). When singing Latvian vowels, there are the ten diphthongs and one triphthong that have unique pronunciation characteristics. Unlike when singing in English, Latvian diphthongs are sung with equal time given to both vowel sounds, as opposed to favoring one over the other for a longer amount of time. The Latvian triphthong occurs on the letter [o] and results in a clear "u-oh-ah" pronunciation. There are a total of nine consonants that are not found in the English language, and they are as follows: č, dz, dž, ģ, ķ, ļ, ņ, š, and ž. Solutions for pronouncing both the extra vowels and consonants in the Latvian language can be seen in figure 2.1 below.

One common pitfall is to allow vowels to form too far back in the throat, perhaps to imitate similar sounds heard in the more-often performed Russian language.[78] Of the six vowels pronounced in modern Russian, four of them use placement towards the back

[77] Heather MacLaughlin Garbes and Andrew Schmidt, "Baltic Languages: Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian," in *The Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet in the Choral Rehearsal,* ed. Duane R. Karna (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 218.

[78] Heather MacLaughlin Garbes and Andrew Schmidt, "Baltic Languages," 221.

of the throat.[79] The Latvian language, however, is rarely covered or dark, and vowels are forward and pure. The consonant "r" is always rolled, and great care should be made to avoid the "hard" American "r." Perhaps most confusing are the diacritical markings that denote short vs. long and narrow vs. broad. Garbes and Schmidt write the following: "At times, note durations must be shortened, or accented to sing the correct word. In the first line of *Dievs, Svētī Latviju,* the words "Latviju" and "tēviju" are notated with the same dotted rhythm. "Latviju" must be clipped in length because it is a short vowel whereas "tēviju" lasts through the dot because it is a long vowel."[80] These types of alterations to the rhythmic values may not be easy to parse out at first, but the task is not much more difficult than obstacles faced in other foreign languages, such as German, Italian, or French. Additionally, this is where recordings of Latvian choirs can and should play a large role in a conductor's score study in preparation for performance.

The following chart (fig. 2.1) is a combination of materials from two different sources and is intended to be a reference guide for the conductor looking to perform any of the Latvian pieces analyzed in this paper. The first source consulted included the IPA charts found in chapter 20 of Duane R. Karna's book *The Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet in the Choral Rehearsal.* Authored by University of Washington graduates Heather MacLaughlin Garbes and Andrew Schmidt (both of whom studied under the renowned Baltic scholar Guntis Šmidchens), great care was taken to consult both academic texts and professionals in the field, including Andrejs Jansons (Director of

[79] David M. Thomas, "Russian Diction," in *The Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet in the Choral Rehearsal,* ed. Duane R. Karna (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 258.

[80] Heather MacLaughlin Garbes and Andrew Schmidt, "Baltic Languages," 221.

the New York Latvian Choir), and Maija Riekstins (Director of the Seattle Latvian Community Choir).[81] The charts contained in the source text included the following three columns not produced here: 1) the manner of articulation, 2) the place of articulation, 3) and a sample Latvian word. The second source consulted was the International Phonetic Association's online resource center, specifically their PDF detailing the name, IPA name, and IPA number for each IPA symbol.[82] This author has long been troubled by the lack of identification of IPA symbol names (i.e. [ɛ] = Epsilon) in IPA symbol charts. Including the names of each symbol will help facilitate discussion and reduce confusion between conductors regarding proper pronunciation, especially those who are not well-versed in the International Phonetic Alphabet. All of this has been done in the hopes of removing as many roadblocks as possible for conductors who may be considering programming Latvian choral music.

One final note regarding those who believe the Latvian language would be too difficult to teach or that there is too much to lose by getting it "wrong:" while it is anecdotal in nature, the author has it on good authority that Latvians would rather we make our best attempt and come up a bit short than continue to ignore programming their music altogether. At the same time, every attempt should be made to pronounce the Latvian language correctly, and the resources discussed in this chapter should be consulted during the score study period. Given the misconceptions regarding how difficult singing in Latvian may be, and native Latvians' desire for their music to be

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[81] Heather MacLaughlin Garbes and Andrew Schmidt, "Baltic Languages," 233.

[82] International Phonetic Association. "UNITIPA Symbol List of the International Phonetic Alphabet." Accessed March 24, 2024. https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/IPAcharts/IPA_chart_orig/pdfs/IPA_unitipa_2020_symbollist.pdf.

heard, there remains only one reason why a conductor may be reticent to program this music: finding accessible pieces for their ensemble. This issue is directly addressed in chapter four.

LETTER	IPA SYMBOL	IPA NAME	ENGLISH EQUIVALENT
VOWELS			
a (short)	[a]	lower-case A	as in ‘park’(shorter than ā)
ā (long)	[aː]	lower-case A	as in ‘car’ (longer than a)
e (broad)	[æ]	ash (a/e ligature)	as in ‘let’
e (narrow)	[ɛ]	Epsilon	as in ‘bed’
ē (narrow)	[ɛː]	Epsilon (long)	as in Andr̲e
i	[ɪ]	small capital I	as in ‘sit’
ī	[iː]	lower-case I	ee as in ‘meet’
u	[ʊ]	Upsilon	oo as in ‘look’
ū	[uː]	lower-case U	oo as in ‘moot’
DIPTHONGS & TRIPHTHONGS			
ai	[ai]		as ‘ai’ in ‘aisle’
au	[au]		as ‘ow’ in ‘brown’
ei	[ei]		as ‘a’ in ‘late’
ie	[ie], [ia]		as first ‘e’ in ‘mere’, or ‘ea’ in fear
o	[ɔː/uoa] (triphthong)		as Italian ‘uo’ in ‘uomo’
ui	[ui]		as ‘oi’ as in ‘doing’
CONSONANTS			
b	[b]	lower-case B	as in ‘bike’
c	[ʦ]	T-s	as ‘ts’ in ‘bats’
č	[ʧ]	T-Esh ligature	as ‘ch’ in ‘chips’
d	[d]	lower-case D	as in ‘door’ (tongue touches teeth)
dz	[dz]	D-Z ligature	as ‘ds’ in ‘lids’
dž	[dʒ]	D-Ezh ligature	as ‘j’ in ‘jug’
g	[g]	lower-case G	as in ‘goat’
ģ	[ɟ]	Barred dotless J	as ‘gy’ in ‘eg**g** **y**olk’
j	[j]	lower-case J	as ‘y’ in ‘yes’
k	[k]	lower-case K	as in ‘kite’ (less aspirate than eng.)
ķ	[c]	lower-case C	like ģ but forward – tongue does not touch the roof of the mouth
l	[l]	lower-case L	as in ‘love’
ļ	[ʎ]	turned Y	roughly as ‘ll’ in ‘million’
n	[n]	lower-case N	as in ‘nice’
ņ	[ɲ]	Left-tail N	as ‘ɴ’ in ‘new’(n+j)
p	[p]	Lower-case P	as in ‘Paul’ (less aspirate than eng.)
r	[r]	Lower-case R	trilled or rolled
s	[s]	Lower-case S	as in ‘seven’
š	[ʃ]	Esh	as ‘sh’ in ‘shoe’
t	[t]	Lower-case T	as in ‘lit’ (not aspirated)
v	[v]	Lower-case V	as in ‘vibrant’ (voiced)
z	[z]	Lower-case Z	as ‘z’ in ‘zebra
ž	[ʒ]	Ezh; Tailed Z	as ‘s’ in ‘leisure’

Table 2.1, IPA pronunciation guide for the Latvian language.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE COMPOSERS

Listed chronologically by date of birth.

Jānis Cimze (1814–1881)

Regarded as one of the musical giants who helped usher in the 19th-century Latvian national awakening, Jānis Cimze is remembered for his contributions to music education at a time when Latvia was still forging its cultural and national identities. As demand for local church musicians increased in the 19th-century, the Lifland Province began a teaching seminar, led by Cimze, and over the course of four decades educated more than 400 Estonians and Latvians in music pedagogy techniques that Cimze himself learned in Prussia.[83] Cimze's impact on music and the arts not only reverberated for the generations of students he taught, but throughout all of Latvia, up to the present day.

Cimze was born in 1814 on a dairy farm in the town of Rauna, a village town located 65 miles east of Riga. He took lessons on organ, violin, and piano, and studied in Latvia, Germany, and Prussia. Unlike other composers included in this paper, Cimze devoted much of his life to the sole study, composition, and proliferation of choral music. He, and eventually his students, were crucial in the formation of the first ever National Song Festival held in 1873, at which many of Cimze's arrangements of folk songs were performed. His collection of choral music *Dziesmu rotas (A Garland of Songs)* was published between 1872 and 1874 and represented the first collection of its type ever produced for the Latvian people.[84]

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[83] Šmidchens, *The Power of Song,* 71.

[84] "Jānis Cimze," Latvian Music Information Centre, accessed March 7, 2024. https://www.lmic.lv/en/composers/janis-cimze-272#work.

Lūcija Garūta (1902–1977)

Lūcija Garūta was born in the city of Riga in 1902 and was one of the first women in Latvia to hold social status akin to her male counterparts. Her career is characterized by two distinct phases: pre-1940s independent Latvia and Soviet-occupied Latvia post World War II. During the former part of her career she attended the Latvian State Conservatory, earned degrees in both composition and piano (the first woman to do so), twice studied abroad in Paris, and established herself as both an accomplished composer and performer. Music was alive in Latvia as the National Opera, the Latvian Conservatory of Music, and the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra (originally the Latvian Radio Centre Orchestra) all found their beginnings during this period. The latter half of her career saw her works censored, her name stigmatized, and the loss of her performing career as her health deteriorated. Despite her accomplishments, Garūta's life ended in tragedy as her home country was gripped by communism, her compositions were suppressed, and her mental health deteriorating.

Garūta was known as a vivacious and forward-thinking artist. She filled her music with personal emotion, conflict, tension, and beauty. It was these characteristics that made her work a target for the Soviet regime, who sought to stifle any artistic vision that painted the communist world as anything but good. She composed over 200 works including pieces for orchestra, chorus, organ, piano, instrumental chamber music, and an opera that was completed but never performed. Her compositional catalogue is worthy of world-wide recognition, yet her singularly best-known work remains the cantata *Dievs, Tava zeme deg!(God, Thy earth is aflame!)* It is this piece that tied Garūta directly into the hearts of a nation whose identity is deeply rooted in choral music, and it is from this

work that Garūta's setting of The Lord's Prayer *(Mūsu Tēvs Debesīs)* is excerpted and included for analysis in this paper.

Valters Kaminskis (1929–1997)

Valters Kaminskis was born in 1929 and lived his entire life in Cēsis, a small town located roughly fifty-five miles Northeast of Riga. His education at the Jāzeps Mediņš Music high school included classes in choral conducting, composition, and theory.[85] He holds a degree in composition from the Latvian State Conservatory and served as an educator at both the Jāzeps Mediņš high school and the Alfrēds Kalniņš Music School in his hometown. In addition to choral music, he is proficient in several genres including symphonic works, musicals, cantatas, oratorios, and songs for solo voice.[86] His coming of age in the 1950s coincided with the death of Stalin, the fruits of which eased some political tensions throughout Latvia and the Baltic states. In this relaxed climate, Kaminskis pushed the envelope of composition, eschewing modesty in favor of thematic expression.[87] He is well remembered for his choral arrangements of folk songs and a lyrical, story-telling style he infused them with. His melodies avoided the over-worked chromaticism of the day and, much like his harmonization, remain quite lyrical. These compositional traits are inherently present in his work *Bēdu, Manu Lielu Bēdu* which is analyzed in chapter four.

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[85] "Valters Kaminskis," Musica Baltica, accessed March 7, 2024. https://www.musicabaltica.com/catalog/product/view/id/92606/s/valters/.

[86] "Valters Kaminskis," Latvian Music Information Centre, accessed March 7, 2024. https://www.lmic.lv/en/composers/valters-kaminskis-2143#work.

[87] "Valters Kaminskis," Musica Baltica.

Mārtiņš Brauns (b. 1951–2021)

Mārtiņš Brauns was a composer with wide-ranging interests who wrote works for the stage, the screen, pop groups, and choirs. Born to a musically inclined family of doctors, Brauns discovered he had perfect pitch at an early age and eventually enrolled in the Emīl Dārziņš school of music where he studied composition, music theory, conducting, and sang in choirs.[88] His early adult years were devoted to rock and popular music as he performed in several different bands, playing the keyboard and writing music. At the age of nineteen he enrolled in the Latvian State Conservatory and majored in composition.

Brauns spent his first professional decade writing music for movies and theater productions before gaining a relative amount of fame as part of the rock group Sīpoli (Onions).[89] While the band and their music would prove popular, Brauns used the opportunity to flex his compositional muscles, opting for extended compositions based on complex, dense poetry rather than the standard, pithy, three-minute pop song. The late 80s saw a return to writing for the stage as well as ventures into the choral world. In 1986 he became associated with the youth choir "Sindi putnu dārzs" and composed two operas. His most enduring composition is the choral anthem Saule, Pērkons, Daugava (Sun, Thunder, Daugava), a four-minute saga that details the struggle between light and dark, combining musical styles both contemporary and ancient. Originally written for a stage play, the song became so popular with the Latvian people that an official petition began

[88] "Mārtiņš Brauns," Latvian Encyclopedia, accessed March 24, 2024. https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/133755-M%C4%81rti%C5%86%C5%A1-Brauns.

[89] "Mārtiņš Brauns," Latvian Encyclopedia.

in 2011 for it to supplant their current national anthem.[90] The song and its message of freedom over tyranny has reached across the globe; in 2014 the Catalonian people asked permission to use the music and change the words to fit their fight for independence. Brauns granted permission and accompanied a mass choir of Catalonians in Spain as they sang the newly minted version.[91]

Brauns remained a prolific composer and performer throughout the rest of his life. He continued to write music for all types of performing ensembles, including collaborations with the Latvian Radio Choir, and opened his own recording studio for his film and television work. He received the award for Creative Contributions to Latvian Culture in 2001, was awarded the national cinema award for film composition seven times, earned the Order of the Three Stars in 2018, and received the equivalent to a lifetime achievement award for his contributions in music in 2019.[92] His choral works continue to be heard at the Latvian Song and Dance Festival held every five years.

Selga Mence (b. 1953)

Selga Mence is a decorated composer from Liepāja, Latvia, who currently serves in the composition department at the Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music in Riga. Her compositions have been performed by choirs all over the world and carry a fondness for the traditions found in Latvian folk songs. She attended both the Emilis Melngailis Secondary Music School and the Latvian State Conservatory, graduating from the former

[90] Lelda Benke-Lungeviča, "Latvian Song Becomes the Unofficial Anthem of Catalonia," *3 Seas Europe,* February 4, 2023. https://3seaseurope.com/latvian-song-catalonia-saule-perkons-daugava/.

[91] Benke-Lungeviča, "Latvian Song."

[92] "Mārtiņš Brauns," Latvian Encyclopedia

with standard and advanced degrees in composition.[93] She held two significant positions before her appointment at the State Conservatory, including working at the Composer's Union and the Latvian Cultural Ministry Repertoire Editorial Council.[94]

As a composer, Mence has found significant traction in the world of children's and folk songs. The lithe yet substantial treatment of Latvian and Livonian folk song texts result in music that is both playful and serious, appropriate for choirs of all ages. She says, "I am proud that I am a Latvian composer, since we have an incalculable wealth—Latvian folk songs, whose melodic intonations and substantive imagery is an inexhaustible fountain for works in many different compositional techniques."[95] Her works for choirs have been performed both across Latvia and at many choir festivals around the world including Norway, Canada, and the United States.[96] While she is most well-known for her choral works, she has also written numerous compositions for piano, organ, solo voice, orchestra, and wind orchestra.[97]

Ilze Arne (b. 1953)

Ilze Arne is a composer, educator, and performer and holds degrees in composition from the Emīls Dārziņš College of Music and Music Education from the

[93] "Selga Mence," Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music, accessed March 24, 2024. https://www.jvlma.lv/en/academy/administrative-staff/selga-mence.

[94] "Selga Mence," Latvian Music Information Centre, accessed March 24, 2024. https://www.lmic.lv/en/composers/selga-mence-278#work.

[95] "Selga Mence," Latvian Music Information Centre.

[96] "Selga Mence," Latvian Music Information Centre.

[97] "Selga Mence," Latvian Music Information Centre.

Latvian State Conservatory with an emphasis on teaching improvisation to young people through Latvian folk Songs.[98] She has composed works for choir, piano, organ, and instrumental ensembles. Her choral works include pieces for mixed choir, SA choir, TB choir, and children's choir, and often include Latvian folk song texts. Her music has been heard across Latvia, including the National Song Festivals, and abroad, including the United States and Canada.[99] She can be seen as a frequent performer, clinician, and adjudicator at events across Latvia.

Jānis Porietis (1953–2021)

Jānis Porietis was born in Riga and studied at the Emīls Dārziņš College of Music and the Latvian State Conservatory of music, graduating with a dual emphasis in choral conducting and music theory.[100] He held numerous jobs within the music profession, including working as a recording and sound engineer for Latvian Radio, teaching composition in Cēsis, Gulbene, Ērgļi, and Riga, managing the music group Zvaigznīte while in the army, and leading the children's choir Kolibri.[101] In 1991 he was appointed the director of the Alfrēds Kalniņš College of Music where he served until 2000, eventually taking the post of director at the Latvian Republic Culture Ministry State

[98] "Ilze Arne," Latvian Music Information Centre, accessed March 7, 2024, https://www.lmic.lv/en/composers/ilze-arne-309#work.

[99] "Ilze Arne," Musica Baltica, accessed March 7, 2024, https://www.musicabaltica.com/catalog/product/view/id/92010/s/ilze-arne/.

[100] "Jānis Porietis," Musica Baltica, accessed March 24, 2024. https://www.musicabaltica.com/catalog/product/view/id/92436/s/porietis-janis/.

[101] "Jānis Porietis," Latvian Music Information Centre, accessed March 24, 2024. https://www.lmic.lv/en/composers/janis-porietis-386#work.

Cultural Education Center.[102] Porietis specialized in writing music for the voice, either choirs or solo vocal music, but also wrote numerous compositions for instrumental chamber ensembles, piano, organ, orchestra, and wind orchestra.

Rihards Dubra (b. 1964)

Rihards Dubra was born in Riga in 1964 and attended the Jūrmala College of Music, the Emīls Vītols Special Music College, and the Jāzeps Vītols Music Academy studying music theory and composition.[103] As a child his home life was dominated by music and faith, as he was born into a Catholic family that played multiple instruments and sang folk songs.[104] These two traits would eventually play a significant role in his life as a composer and musician. Dubra writes sacred music almost exclusively, and his compositional style has matured into one of meditative minimalism. Music critics have drawn positive comparisons to the likes of composers Steven Reich, Phillip Glass, Arvo Pärt, and John Tavener. Dubra says of his own music:

> "I try to write in the style of meditation…The style of my music is always in affinity with Gregorian chant or the music of the Middle Ages through the view of a man who lives in the twentieth century…More than this I cannot say—usually I think that all that I want to say I have said about my music. Listen to it and it will tell you everything much better than I can."[105]

[102] "Janis Porietis," Latvian Music Information Centre.

[103] Kevin Smith, "The Style of Meditation: The Choral Music of Rihards Dubra," *The Choral Journal,* 44, no. 3 (2003): 8. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23554522.

[104] "Rihards Dubra," Latvian Encyclopedia, accessed March 24, 2024. https://enciklopedija.lv/skirklis/190926-Rihards-Dubra.

[105] Kevin Smith, "The Style of Meditation," 9.

Dubra writes mostly choral music with an emphasis on the sacred genres of motet, cantata, missa brevis, settings of the Mass ordinary and propers, and settings of other religious texts. He ranges in style from completely homophonic to complex polyphony, while his harmonic language usually moves slowly. He often incorporates the stylistic traits of the Renaissance and Medieval eras, including melodic material that move by step, ostinato, the use of modes, and drones.[106]

Dubra's compositional output includes, but is not limited to, unaccompanied and accompanied works for choir, large vocal symphonic works, symphonies, an opera, chamber music, and film music.[107] He has collaborated with the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra, the State Academy Choir, Sinfonietta Rīga, the youth choir Kāmer, the Cambridge Chorale, and the Royal Holloway College of London University, to name a few.[108] He holds numerous awards and his choral works are performed by ensembles throughout Latvia, at their National Song and Dance Festival, and around the world.

Liene Batņa (b. 1976)

Liene Batņa (also known as Austriņa) graduated from the Jelgava College of Music and the Jāzeps Vītols Music Academy with degrees in conducting, and music education. She currently serves as the Department Chair in Arts Pedagogy at the Latvian Academy of Music and is studying for a doctoral degree in Psychology from the

[106] Kevin Smith, "The Style of Meditation," 10.

[107] "Rihards Dubra," Latvian Encyclopedia.

[108] "Rihards Dubra," Latvian Encyclopedia.

University of Latvia.[109] In addition to her duties as an educator, Batņa has conducted multiple vocal ensembles including the much-acclaimed female choir VIA STELLA. VIA STELLA won the gold medal at the International Johannes Brahms Festival in 1999 and 2002, was awarded first place at the Silver Bells international choir competition in 2004, third place at the IX Choir and Dance Festival of Latvian Schools in 2005, and first place at the Emīls Dārziņš Choir Competition (2006), the International Children's Choir Habanera contest in Spain (2006), and the Music Inspiration Landscape prize (2007).[110] She remains in demand as an educator and conductor across Latvia.

Laura Jēkabsone (b. 1985)

Laura Jēkabsone attended the Jāzeps Mediņš music high school in Riga and graduated in 2005 with an emphasis in choral conducting. Four years later she graduated with a degree in Music Education from the Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music, and has kept an active schedule as composer, clinician, and conductor ever since.[111] She is the Artistic Director and Conductor of the highly regarded vocal group Latvian Voices. According to the group's website, Latvian Voices began in 2009 as a female a cappella group and has since come to dominate most of Jēkobsone's time and creative output. The group added a bass singer in 2020 and continues to enthrall audiences with their creative blend of Latvian folk songs and the choral sound Latvia has become famous for. They

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[109] "Liene Batņa," Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music, accessed March 24, 2024. https://www.jvlma.lv/en/academy/administrative-staff/liene-batna-1.

[110] "Liene Batņa," Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music.

[111] "Laura Jēkabsone," Musica Baltica, accessed March 24, 2024. https://www.musicabaltica.com/catalog/product/view/id/92248/s/laura-jkabsone/.

currently have nine studio albums to their name and have performed in more than thirty countries while collaborating with The King's Singers, The Swingle Singers, Katarina Henryson, and the Estonian Voices.

Despite being the youngest composer included in this paper, her list of accomplishments and collaborations with top groups from around the world demonstrates that age is not a factor in determining the validity of one's musical contributions. Notable performances of her music listed on her website include the likes of Latvian Voices, the Latvian National Symphonic Orchestra, the State Choir LATVIJA, the Riga Cathedral Choir School girls' choir Tiara, The Real Group, and the Latvian amateur choir Maska. Her compositional output is dominated by works for divisi treble choir, yet she also writes for mixed choir, bass choir, children's choir, chamber ensemble, and orchestra. Notably, Latvian folk music is a significant source of inspiration for Jēkabsone and will often include the *kokle* (a traditional Latvian flute-like instrument) in her compositions.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE MUSIC

The pieces in this chapter are arranged from least complex to most complex as determined by the author. While these rankings are subjective, effort has been made to consistently evaluate the following categories: rhythmic complexity, harmonic and melodic complexity, vocal ranges, and the amount of Latvian text to learn. Video scores are accessible in table 5.1 or by following the following link: Chapter Three Scores. Publisher and purchase information is also available in table 5.1.

PUTNU MĀTE PUTNUS SAUCA (2017)

Ilze Arnes (b. 1953)
SA choir, unaccompanied, duration: 1:30
Latvian folk song arrangement with English translation by Māra Sinka
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB2100

Background, Text, and Translation

The score indicates that this is an arrangement of a Latvian folk song and research into the text of the piece reveals that traditional Latvian *dainas* were adapted for use in the verses. While not a word-for-word exact match, *dainas* number 2,675, 2,551, and 2,697-1 match sections A, B, and the final narration.[112] The translation is included underneath the Latvian text in score.

Putnu māte, putnus sauca?	*Who's that walking through the bushes?*
Meža malu staigādama.	*It's the Spirit of the Forest.*
Vai ir visi vakarāi?	*Where are all the birds this evening?*
Rubenītis rubināja	*Mrs. Grouse is clicking, clucking,*
Purva bērza galiņā	*Perching on the tallest tree.*
Irbīt teka paceliņu	*Penny Partridge waves her feathers*
Cekuliņu grozīdam.	*As she wanders aimlessly.*
Cielaviņa baltgalvīte	*Wally Wagtail flitters, flutters,*

[112] Song Cabinet, "Catalogue," Accessed March 24, 2024. https://dainuskapis.lv/katalogs.

skrien pa gaisu čiepstedam!	*With a white hat on his head.*
Sloka Grieta, irbe Maija,	*Seagull Sally, Penny Partridge,*
Paipaliņa Madaliņa!	*Queenie Quail and Robin Red-breast!*
Žigu žagu žagatiņas.	*Miggy Maggy Madam Magpie.*
Narration:	*Narration:*
Es apsēdos mežmalā	*I sat down at the edge of the forest*
Putnu dziesmas klausīties:	*To listen to the birds' songs:*
Zīle dzieda, žube vilka,	*The bluetit sang, the chaffinch chirruped,*
Lācis sauca: "Saturies!"	*The bear shouted: "Keep it up!"*

Table 4.1, Text from *Putnu Māte Putnus Sauca,* translation in English by Māra Sinka (included in score).

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture, and Articulations

Ilze Arnes's arrangement of this Latvian folk song is set for unaccompanied SA choir with no divisi. It is in ABB form and contains a coda with aleatoric bird calls and poetic narration. The opening A section is marked *Andante cantabile* (a measured tempo in a singing style) and alternates between 3/4 and 2/4-time signatures. Note values range from half notes to sixteenth notes yet the song contains minimal instances of syncopation. The most rhythmic variety occurs in the A section and contains dotted quarter-notes, notes tied over bar lines, and sixteenth/dotted 8th note figures in the melody (figure 4.1). The entire choir sings in unison for the first two measures of the opening and then are independent as the lower part sustains their final note and the top part imitates the Spirit of the Forest calling to the birds. This is repeated three times with a slight variation the third time.

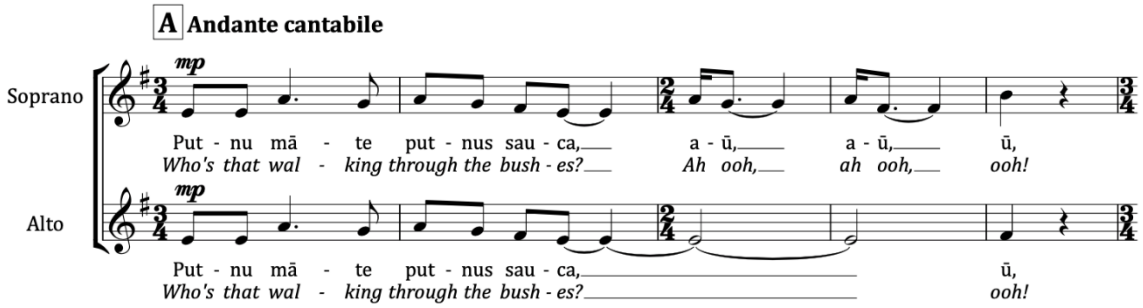

Figure 4.1, *Putnu Māte Putnus Sauca, mm. 1–5.*

Rhythmic figures in the final two sections of music are entirely made up of 8th notes set with varying articulations, tempi, and dynamics. The coda contains seven varieties of birdcalls that range from simple to complex. While this section looks quite complicated, the instructions written at the bottom of the page inform the performers to freely express themselves "on the theme of Bird Songs." It is the author's assertion that what is written in measure 62 is to be taken as suggestions and conductors may determine how best to execute the spirit of the moment. Individually complex rhythmic figures will not challenge the choir as much as the rhythmic interplay between the two parts might. After the opening A section, the two parts alternate back and forth between melodic material and vocal interjections. These interjections usually occur in the first part after quite a few measures of rest, and in the second part after only one or two measures of rest. Additionally, the aleatoric bird-call coda could present a significant challenge with younger choirs. Suggestions for performance are listed in the concluding section of analysis for this piece.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

Like many Latvian folk songs, the melodic phrases in Arnes's arrangement are short and repetitive. There are only three intervals larger than a major second and they are

the minor third, major third, and perfect fourth. Most of the perfect fourths are sung by the first part, while most of the major thirds are sung by the second part. Whenever a melodic leap occurs, the voice part in question immediately moves by step in the opposite direction. There are zero instances where a singer is required to make two consecutive leaps. Vocal ranges for the piece are as follows:

SOPRANO	**ALTO**
E_4–D_5	C_4–A_4

Table 4.2, *Putnu Māte Putnus Sauca* vocal ranges.

Harmonic Complexity

The given key is E minor and utilizes the natural minor scale throughout the entire A section. The opening melodic phrase ends with a B♮ in the first part and an F♯ in the second, perhaps implying a half-cadence without a third at the end of the first two phrases. The third phrase of section A ends on a unison F♯, which is used by the altos as the opening note for new melodic material. The B section contains a clear shift in style, articulation, and tonal center. The new melody appears to be in the key of D major with a lowered seventh scale degree (figure 4.4), which could now be labeled as D mixolydian as our key signature (one sharp) has not changed.

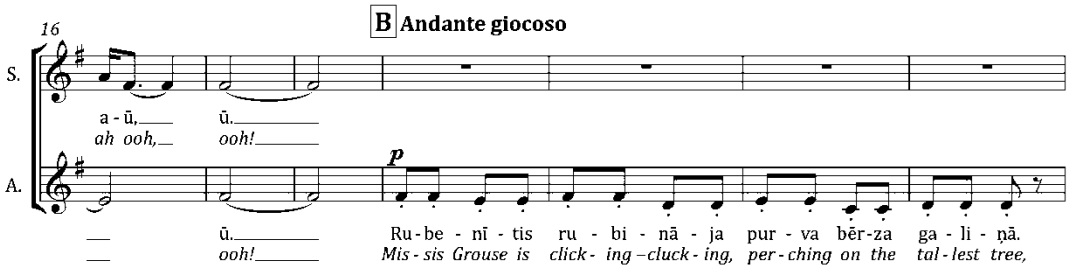

Figure 4.2, *Putnu Māte Putnus Sauca,* mm. 16–22.

After two short, one-note vocal interjections, the sopranos introduce a brief two-measure melodic phrase in measure thirty-one that is centered around the fifth scale degree. The altos have their own vocal interjections, built on the first three notes of the scale, that occur towards the end of the B and C sections. The harmonic function of the piece, and what the choir is expected to have in their ears, revolves around two distinct tonal centers that are joined by a common note (F♯) and contain melodic material that moves by step almost exclusively. The coda contains no tonal center in theory, as it requires birdcalls at various pitches and text narration.

Performance Suggestions

With an understanding that many Latvian folk songs would have been led by women, it is the author's suggestion that, given its universal subject nature, this piece can be appropriately programmed for treble, bass, or mixed choirs in any key, octave, or voicings necessary for your ensemble. As alluded to earlier, it is the author's belief that the closing D section (fig. 4.3) can be manipulated towards the needs of your ensemble, as well as to a conductor's musical and aesthetic taste. For example, one recent performance approached measures 59 to the end in the following manner:

1) Measure 59: the pitches D and A were added to the unison "Čiū."
2) Most of the choir continued holding the vowel *ū* as a drone.
3) Select members began the birdcalls utilizing whistling instead of syllables.
4) Narration began and paused halfway through the final line: "The bear shouted:"
5) With that line as their cue, the chorus performed the downbeat of measure 63 in unison on the syllable "Džim."
6) The narrator finished the poem ("Keep it up!") in the space provided by the rest in measure 63.
7) The chorus answered with the final two syllables (džam-džam), but notes were assigned to each part, resulting in a V-I cadence in the key of D major.

This outline represents one of the many ways conductors may choose to interpret the ending, yet this version results in a musically satisfying conclusion for both performers and audience members alike. Interpretations that include additional bird calls, changes in dynamics, and un-pitched closing syllables could be equally effective.

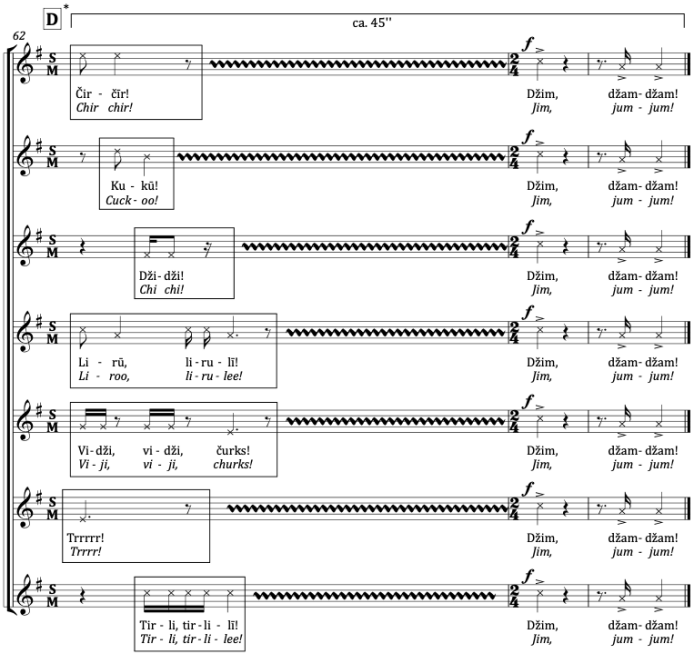

Figure 4.3, *Putnu Māte Putnus Sauca,* mm. 62–end.

SAULĪT' VĒLU VAKARĀ (2009)

Jānis Porietis (1953–2021)
SATB choir, piano, duration: 2:30
Latvian folk song arrangement, English translation by Lilija Zobens
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB0968

Background, Text, and Translation

Janis Porietis's arrangement of this Latvian folk song uses *dainas* numbers 33,878 and 4358-3 in each of the two verses of the song.[113] There are multiple arrangements

[113] Song Cabinet, "Catalogue," Accessed March 25, 2024. https://dainuskapis.lv/katalogs.

available by different composers that utilize the same title with different music, and usually share both verses contained in this version. The sun and orphans are two subjects that are often paired together in Latvian *dainas.* Orphans represent those with minority status, or those who are oppressed, and the sun's warmth takes on the physical traits of a caring mother.[114] Utilizing a hauntingly beautiful piano accompaniment the piece is divided into three strophic sections: unison SA melody, SATB harmony, and SATB unison melody on an un-texted syllable.

Saulīt' vēlu vakarāi	*In the evening when the sun sets,*
Sēžas zelta laiviņāi	*She sails in her golden boat,*
Rītā agri uzlēkdama	*In the morning, rising early,*
Atstāj laivu līgojot.	*Leaves it rocking on the waves.*
Kam, saulīte, vēlu lēci,	*Why this morning did you tarry?*
Kur tik ilgi kavējiesi?	*Where were you so late, dear Sun?*
Aiz viņiemi kalniņiemi	*Over there behind those mountains,*
Bāra bērnus sildīma.	*Keeping orphan children warm.*

Table 4.3**,** *Saulīt' Vēlu Vakarāi* text, English translation by Lilija Zobens, as found in Andris Sējāns' arrangement, catalogue #MB2085.

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture, and Articulations

Rhythmic values range from eighth notes to dotted-half notes (excluding the final measure) and all rhythms are doubled at nearly all times by at least one other voice part. It is common time throughout, with one measure of $\frac{2}{4}$ (m. 17) and another of $\frac{6}{4}$ (m.30) at the close of verses 1 and 2, respectively. Measures 17 and 30 are representative of the highest rhythmic complexity in the song as the sopranos have the eighth note triplet figure set against the rest of the chorus, who will greatly benefit at this moment from knowing how to count (figure 4.4). The third verse requires unison voices to pick up the

[114] Vaira Vīkis-Freibergs, "The Orphan in Latvian Sun-Songs: An Analysis of Semantic Links Between Two Concepts," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 11, no. 1 (1980): 51.

slightly altered melodic line on the & of beat three in measures 35, 37, and 39, as well as an off-beat pickup on beat one of the third to last measure.

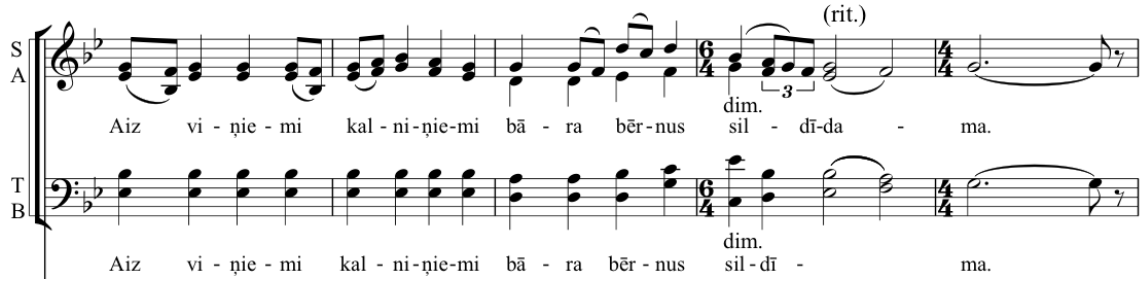

Figure 4.4. *Saulīt Vēlu Vakarāi,* mm. 27–31.

There is minimal shifting of dynamics and articulations as the unique vocal texture of each verse propels the song forward. The tempo is marked at a relaxed seventy beats per minute (to the quarter note) and there are multiple instances where *rubato*, *ritardando,* and *rallentando* can be used. The piano accompaniment operates independently of the vocal lines and is an integral, equal part of the piece. In the final verse the piano score is marked *"quasi solo"* as the choir sings in unison on a neutral vowel.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

The nine-measure melody is heard three times throughout the piece and moves entirely by step until a leap of a major sixth and major third in the seventh measure. The first six measures contain a two-measure phrase that is repeated three times in sequence. Verse two is scored for SATB choir with the altos harmonizing a third below the melody, except for leaps of a perfect fourth that are heard twice every other measure. Despite these added leaps in the alto voice, the sequential pattern in verse one is retained. The tenors and basses sing in parallel fifths outlining the harmonic structure while moving in

stepwise motion. The closing measures of verse two contain leaps of a perfect fourth and perfect fifth in the bass voice, a minor third and perfect fourth in the tenor, and the previously mentioned major sixth and major third in the soprano melody. Ranges for each voice part are as follows:

SOPRANO	**ALTO**	**TENOR**	**BASS**
F_4–D_5	$B\flat_3$–D_5	G_3–$E\flat 4$	C_3–D_4

Table 4.4, *Saulīt Vēlu Vakarāi,* vocal ranges.

Harmonic Complexity

The song is set in G minor and does not stray from the home key; there are no instances of chromaticism in either the vocal score or the piano accompaniment. The accompaniment in the first verse is built upon a series of first inversion chords sparsely arpeggiated in the upper octaves of the piano. Verse two utilizes the same harmonic progression but the chords are now in root position and the arpeggiations span both clefs. The rhythmically active accompaniment does not double the choir parts but provides harmonic support appropriate for the texture of each verse.

Performance Suggestions

Saulīt Vēlu Vakarāi is highly accessible as written to mixed choirs of all ages and abilities. Verse one may be performed by a soloist, small group, or full sections of the choir, in any octave. The piano accompaniment should be treated as an equal part of the music making process. The chorus (especially more inexperienced groups) should know what it sounds like early in the learning process, so it is not a surprise when their notes are not played for them. Conductors should feel free to alter the tempo to fit the level of

their choir. This piece works equally well on its own and when paired with another Latvian piece of a contrasting nature.

DIXIT MARIA (2001)
Liene Batņa (Austriņa) (b. 1974)
SA duet, SAA choir, organ, duration: 2:30
Latin
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB2230

Background, Text, and Translation

Written under the pseudonym Austriņa, Liene Batņa's *Dixit Maria* is composed in the style of Gregorian chant. The opening is free and unmetered before giving way to a myriad of parallel fifths in the chorus and accompaniment, in the style of medieval organum. Batņa's music is highly regarded within Latvia and is often used by choirs in international competitions. The text for the piece comes from the Liturgy for the Feast of the Annunciation and is a recounting of the Gospel account found in Luke chapter one, verses twenty-six to thirty-eight.[115] The text is as follows:

Dixit Maria ad Angelum:	*Mary said to the Angel:*
Ecce ancilla Domini,	*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord,*
Fiat mihi secundum	*Let it be done to me,*
Verbum tuum.	*According to your word.*

Table 4.5, *Dixit Maria* text and translation.[116]

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture and Articulations

Dixit Maria begins with the full text set unmetered for a soloist and in the style of Gregorian chant (figure 4.5). This melody serves as the inspiration for all further melodic

[115] Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire Volume I: Sacred Latin Texts,* Corvallis, Oregon: earthsongs, 1988, 119–120.

[116] Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire*, 119–120.

material. The smallest note value for the choir is an eighth note while the largest are several whole notes tied together, sometimes over the bar line. All voices enter on an offbeat at least once in the piece. The time signatures fluctuate often between $\frac{3}{4}$, common time, and $\frac{6}{4}$ echoing the natural rhythms of the opening chant. The piece can be divided into three distinct sections: the opening chant, imitation between the choir and soloists, and the closing homophonic section.

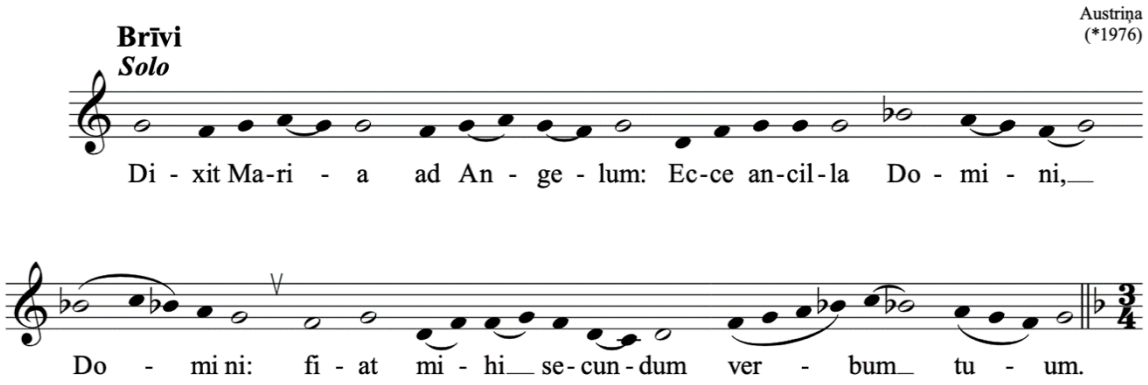

Figure 4.5, *Dixit Maria,* opening chant melody.

The voices move in homophonic imitation throughout the beginning and middle of the piece, either between the choir and soloists, or between the two voice parts. Often the SA soloists will have differing amounts of text for their given notes. The opening chant is to be sung freely by the soloist, and the tempo marking *lento* accompanies the second section. The choir is marked *forte* while the soloists are marked *piano,* intending to be an echo of the choir. The final section is marked *distincto, legato* at a *forte* dynamic, and contains a *fermata* and a *ritardando.* The piano accompaniment is closely tied to the melodic content and often doubles the chorus parts in sections one and two. The piano part is a direct reduction of the vocal parts in section three.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

The opening chant moves by step and contains intervallic leaps of a perfect fourth and a minor third which are mirrored in the melodic line throughout the piece. Within the first section the soloists have intervallic leaps of a minor third, major third, perfect fourth, and a minor seventh. Intervallic leaps of a minor third (soprano) and major sixth (alto II) are required for the transition into the final section of the piece. A recurring theme in the harmonization of the melody is the interval of a perfect fifth. It is heard in all voice parts and the piano accompaniment throughout the piece, a clear nod to chant and organum from the Middle Ages. The vocal ranges for each part are included in the chart below, although the voicing of the piece allows for great flexibility in programming, which is detailed in the "Performance Suggestions" category below.

SOPRANO solo	**ALTO solo**	**SOPRANO**	**ALTO I**	**ALTO II**
G_4–G_5	F_4–F_5	D_4–G_5	C_4–D_5	C_4–D_5

Table 4.6, *Dixit Maria* vocal ranges.

Harmonic Complexity

The opening melody is centered around G with B♭s written in the score. When the chorus enters there is a given key of one flat, but the melodic content continues to center around G, which is consistent with the key signature of G Dorian. The third section of the piece switches to D Dorian before returning to the original key in the closing few bars. Batṇa's use of modes is in line with the previously mentioned chant characteristics found in the melody. The harmonic complexity within the vocal parts is directly tied to the interval of a perfect fifth for both the soloists and chorus. Any harmonic deviations away from the given key occur in the accompaniment and are intended to bring a modern touch

of color to an ancient art form. This can be seen in figure 4.6 below as the piano chords go from G minor to F major, to E♭ major, the last of which is a chromatic mediant of the tonic. Other instances of extended harmony occur in measures 10–12, 25 (added 9^{ths}), 3, 13, 29–33 (added 7ths).

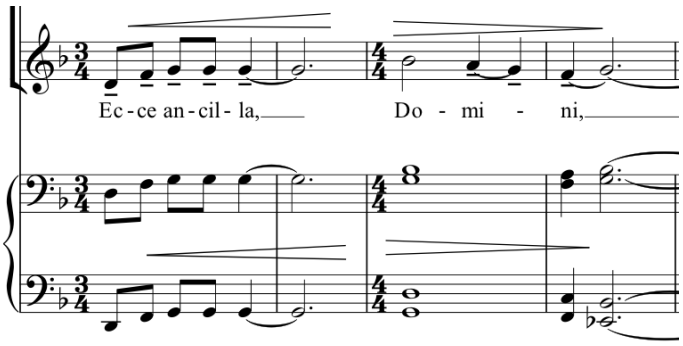

Figure 4.6, *Dixit Maria* mm. 5–8.

Performance Suggestions

Dixit Maria is scored for treble choir with soloists but could be performed by many different combinations of voices. The opening solo could be sung by the entire choir, a small group, or a soloist. A tenor and bass chorus could sing the entire work as written in their own octaves. An SATB choir could assign the top treble line to the soprano and alto sections and the tenors and basses could sing the lower treble line in their own octave. Alternatively, an SATB choir could feature two soloists or a small group on the solo lines while the rest of the chorus sings the other part. For groups with younger singers, featured soloists could handle the upper solo parts (either members of the choir or special guests) while the rest of the choir focuses on the more reserved secondary part. The accompaniment is marked for organ, yet piano or keyboard could be equally effective in performance.

Both the shifting of time signatures and singing in parallel 5ths are equally complex. Both instances provide any choir the opportunity to work on such skills in warmups that directly relate to the performance of the piece. The offbeat entrances are often prepared by a downbeat in the accompaniment, and the time signature changes often run into a fermata or the end of a section, thus putting the focus on watching for their next cue rather than complex counting.

SAULE, PĒRKONS, DAUGAVA (1988)

Mārtiņš Brauns (1951–2021)
SATB choir, piano, duration: 4:30
Text by the Latvian poet Rainis (1865–1929)
English translation included in the score; no translator attributed.
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB1342

Background, Text, and Translation

Saule, Pērkons, Daugava (Sun, Thunder, Daugava) was originally composed in 1988 as part of a play, but its inclusion in the Youth Song Festival of 1989 and the Song Festival proper in 1990 catapulted it into the pantheon of Latvian national songs alongside *Gaismas Pils* and the national anthem. The text by Latvian poet Rainis was written in 1916 and carries themes of pre-Christian Latvian mythology, including referencing external forces of nature (Sun, Thunder) as the country's mother and father, and the Daugava River as their healer. Brauns' subtly injects multiple contrasting musical styles within the piece including elements of chant, the church chorale, and rock 'n' roll music. All aspects of Latvia's coming of age are therefore represented within one song: their folklore and pagan roots, their love of singing and the influence of the music of the church, and the future music of their country. It is no surprise that many have called for

Saule, Pērkons, Daugava to replace their current national anthem. This song has enjoyed massive popularity in Latvia and has grown beyond their borders to include performances throughout Europe and the United States.

Saule Latvi sēdināja	*The Sun gave Latve*
Tur, kur gali satiekas,	*A place where all ends meet*
Balta jūra, zaļa zeme,	*With white sea, and green land,*
Latvei vārtu atslēdziņa.	*Latve has the key to the gate.*
Latvei vārtu atslēdziņa,	*Latve has the key to the gate,*
Daugaviņa sargātāja.	*The guard is the river Daugava.*
Sveši ļaudis vārtus lauza,	*Strangers came and broke the gates,*
Jūrā krita atslēdziņa.	*The key fell into the sea.*
Zilzibeņu pērkons spēra,	*Thunder struck with blue lightning flashes*
Velniem ņēma atslēdziņa.	*And took the key from the devils.*
Nāvi, dzīvi Latve slēdza,	*Latve then locked up death, life,*
Baltu jūru, zaļu zemi.	*The white sea and the green land.*
Saule Latvi sēdināja	*The Sun seated Latve*
Baltas jūras maliņā	*By the shore of the white sea,*
Vēji smiltis putināja,	*The wind blew the sand up into a storm,*
Ko lai dzēra latvju bērni?	*What could the Latvian children drink?*
Dzīves ūdens, nāves ūdens	*Water of life and the water of death*
Daugavā satecēja,	*Met in the river Daugava,*
Es pamērcu pirksta galu,	*I dipped my fingertip*
Abus jūtu dvēselē.	*And feel in my soul both*
Nāves ūdens, dzīves ūdens,	*The water of death,*
Abus jūtam dvēselē.	*And the water of life.*
Saule mūsu māte	*The Sun is our Mother,*
Daugav' sāpju aukle,	*The Daugava is pain's nurse.*
Pērkons velnu spērējs,	*Thunder, striker of all devils,*
Tas mūsu tēvs.	*He is our Father.*

Table 4.7, *Saule, Pērkons, Daugava* text, English translation included in score, no translator attributed.

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture, and Articulations

Martins set Rainis's text syllabically which results in homophonic rhythms that are shared by all voices. In the rare instance a given syllable is assigned more than one note, the part in question is doubled by at least one other voice if not the entire choir.

There are no note values longer than a dotted half note and none shorter than an eighth note. The choir is never required to sustain rhythmic figures over a bar line nor deal with any syncopation. The entire piece, save for the introduction, alternates every other measure between $\frac{3}{4}$ and common time. The score is engraved in such a manner that the eighth notes are un-beamed for every syllable of text, which can be confusing for musicians accustomed to seeing all eighth notes barred.

There are seven verses set in strophic form with varied textures throughout. Five of the seven verses are set in unison with some variation as to which octave it is in. The two verses not in unison are scored for four-part harmony, with a tenor and soprano line that are almost exactly doubled. Verses one through six are unaccompanied while the other five are accompanied by various textures in the piano, from one solo bass line to full chords. There are numerous shifts in dynamics between verses, and a few moments where articulations such as *staccato* and *tenuto* can be added. Recordings mentioned in chapter five should be consulted when considering adding articulations to the score.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

The melody of this piece is repeated seven times and moves entirely by step save for two intervallic leaps: a minor third and a major fifth. Every new phrase within the melody begins on the same pitch in which the previous phrase ended. Verses three and seven are scored in four-part harmony and require more vocal agility from the altos and basses. While the soprano and tenor voices sing the melodic phrase in unison (tenors sing the same opening phrase twice, resulting in one measure of harmony with the soprano), the alto and bass voices have similar lines that regularly leap by perfect fourths, major

thirds, and minor thirds. Intervallic leaps are required of the top three voice parts transitioning to verses three and seven, resulting in octave leaps for tenor and soprano, and a major third for the alto. Ranges for each voice part are as follows:

SOPRANO	**ALTO**	**TENOR**	**BASS**
B_3–$F\sharp_5$	B_3–D_5	B_2–$F\sharp_4$	A_2–D_4

Table 4.8, *Saule, Pērkons, Daugava* vocal ranges.

Both the soprano and tenor range could be considered intermediately difficult, especially for choirs with younger voices. Both sections are asked to repeatedly sing an F-sharp at the top of their range, which may not be comfortable over the duration of the piece. However, there are many opportunities for sharing notes between voice parts, to ease that specific burden.

Harmonic Complexity

The piece is set in D major and does not modulate. Each verse follows the same harmonic progression that exclusively utilizes the I, IV, V, and vi chords. At measures twenty, thirty-two, and sixty the harmony in the piano deviates from the norm with half-measure figures that include the lowered seventh, third, and sixth scale degrees (figure 4.7, key of D major). This adds harmonic interest to the piece but is contained within the accompaniment and does not have a deleterious effect on the choir. Much of this piece is unison throughout the choir, either in the same octave or displaced across multiple octaves. This adds texture and forward interest even though the simple chord progression remains the same in each verse.

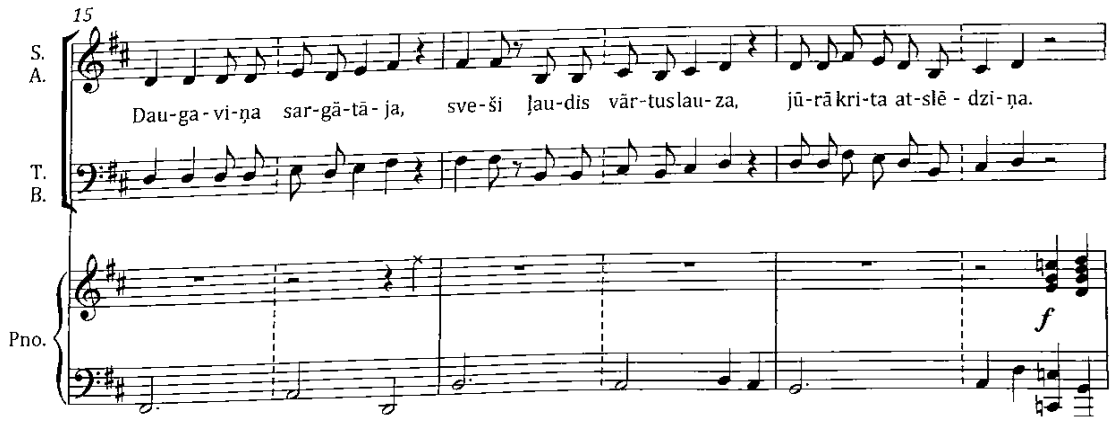

Figure 4.7, *Saule, Pērkons, Daugava*, mm. 15–20.

Performance Suggestions

The relative simplicity of the notes and rhythms should allow the choir to focus their energy on the declamatory nature of the text while simultaneously leaning into the various textures and dynamics of each verse. To avoid boredom via repetition, every member of the chorus should know the translation of the text, the story it tells, and the historical context in which it was written. Watching performance videos of the piece being performed by Latvians, both at the Song Festivals and at standard concerts, can be especially powerful in rehearsal.

The piano accompaniment in the score is augmented for many live performances, most notably the full rock band that accompanies the piece during the Song Festivals. At the time of this paper, a full score for rock band and orchestra is not currently available for purchase. However, there are reference recordings, like that of the Latvian Radio Choir, that may inspire subtle changes to the piano part that may enhance the final product. The addition of a bass guitar doubling the left hand of the piano, an arpeggiation

of the chord structure in verse five by the piano (imitating a harp), and an organ (either real or synthesized) joining from measure 60 through the end can be especially impactful.

SAULĪTE (2017)
Selga Mence (b. 1953)
SAA, unaccompanied, duration: 1:40
Text by Kārlis Skalbe
English translation courtesy of a published interview with Ilgonis Bērsons.[117]
Musica Baltica catalogue #MB2200

Background, Text, and Translation

Selga Mence set the poetry of famed Latvian poet Kārlis Skalbe in this brief composition for unaccompanied treble chorus. Skalbe was a poet, activist, and politician who got himself into trouble for supporting the Latvian revolution at the turn of the 20th century.[118] He briefly fled to Switzerland, Finland and Norway before returning to Latvia, where he would spend time as a prisoner for his anti-communist beliefs. He experienced the first, albeit brief, period of Latvian independence in 1918 and passed away in 1945.[119] The poem was composed in 1928 in celebration of Latvia's 10th anniversary as a nation.[120] Mence leaves off the final two lines of poetry, opting for a repeat of the first two instead. The text, as it appears in the score, is as follows:

Sēsties, saulīte, dimanta krēslā,	*Sit down, Sunshine, in a diamond chair,*
Valdi pār Latvijas pakalniem brīviem.	*Rule over the hills of Latvia free.*
Sēsties, saulīte, skaidrības kalnā.	*Sit down, sunshine, on the mountain of clarity,*
Aizdzen miglu no birzīm,	*Drives away the fog from groves,*
Aizdzen miglu no druvām,	*Drives away the fog from ruins,*

[117] Latvian National Front, "Warrior Karl Skalbe. Part 1," accessed March 25, 2024. https://fronte.lv/2022/08/karojosais-karlis-skalbe/.

[118] Latvian Literature, "Kārlis Skalbe," accessed March 25, 2024. https://latvianliterature.lv/en/writers/203.

[119] Latvian Literature, "Kārlis Skalbe."

[120] Latvian National Front. "Warrior Karl Skalbe. Part 1."

Sēsties, saulīte, dimanta krēslā,	*Sit down, Sunshine, in a diamond chair,*
Valdi pār Latvijas pakalniem brīviem.	*Rule over the hills of Latvia free.*

Table 4.9, *Saulīte* text and translation.

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture and Articulations

Saulīte is based around a flowing, eighth-note ostinato figure in the lower voices that is set against a bright melody in which an eighth note followed by a dotted quarter note is a recurring motif. The smallest rhythmic values are sixteenth notes (only occurring in the melody) and the longest values are whole notes. The melody contains brief moments of syncopation which are often set against straight rhythms in the lower two voice parts (figure 4.8, key of A♭ major). The piece is in ABA form and includes a slightly slower, contrasting middle section. The tempo is marked *allegretto,* and the dynamics range from *piano* to *mezzo forte.* There is a *diminuendo* and *ritenuto* at the close of the B section and another *ritenuto* at the close of the piece. The rhythmic figures in each voice part are different from one another and often are assigned different bits of text.

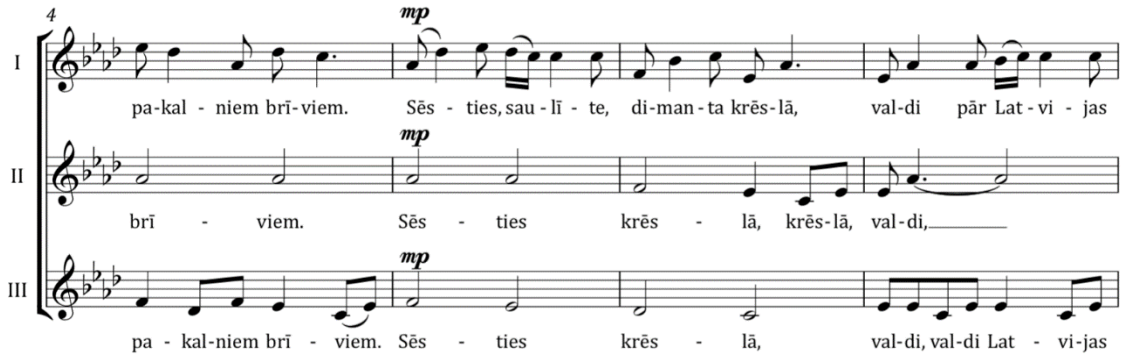

Figure 4.8, *Saulīte,* mm. 4–7.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

The melody of the piece is built around the interval of a perfect fourth which occurs nine times in section A. Unlike other songs included in this paper, the melody is dominated by leaps rather than stepwise motion. Other intervallic leaps in the melody include two instances of a perfect fifth, one minor third, and one major sixth. The lower two parts in section A are also built around leaps but this time the minor third is the most often utilized. The melody in the B section is more fragmented, occurring in one-measure bursts through the first six measures and centering around the smaller intervals of a minor and major third. There is one moment of chromaticism found in both the melody and alto II parts as the sixth scale degree is raised in measures 17 and 18 (figure 4.9 key of F minor). The lower two parts in section B continually pass around an ostinato figure based around a perfect fourth. The closing A section is a direct repeat of the opening, save for the final measure. Ranges for all voice parts are as follows:

SOPRANO	**ALTO I**	**ALTO II**
E♭4–E♭5	C4–C5	B♭3–A♭4

Table 4.10, *Saulīte* vocal ranges.

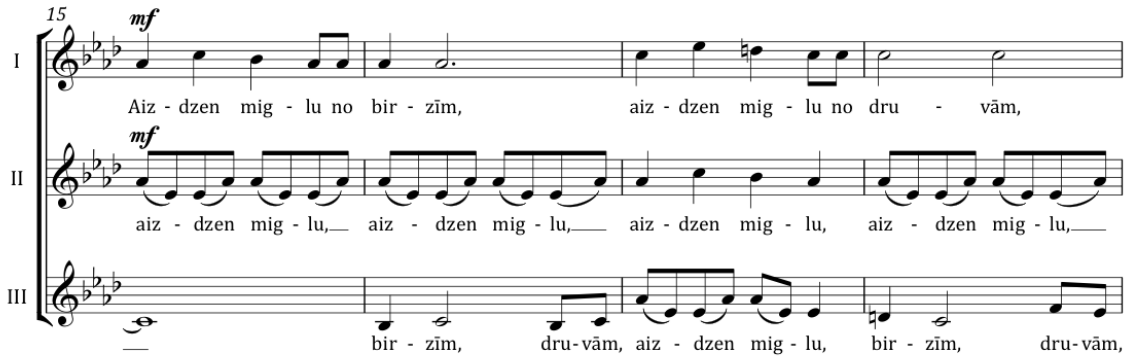

Figure 4.9, *Saulīte,* mm. 15–18.

Harmonic Complexity

Saulīte is in the key of A♭ major with a contrasting B section in its relative key of F minor. The opening and closing sections are dominated by chords in either first or second inversion; the only chord in the A section where the tonic is in the lowest voice part occurs with a D♭ major chord in measure 2. This results in the alto II voice ending up on the third or fifth scale degree of the chord, something that may prove difficult for younger singers. The first six measures of the B section revolve around the new tonic of F minor. The choir then cycles through a chord progression consisting of the major III, and major VII, before a cadence at the end of the section that is tonally ambiguous. The D♭ and F in the lower two voices indicate that it may be functioning as a IV chord in the original key of A♭ major, with the lowered 5^{th} scale degree acting as a leading tone to the tonic. From here the piece closes as it began, save for the final measure which ends on the tonic chord in root position.

Performance Suggestions

While the vocal ranges and rhythmic content indicate that this piece may be suitable for beginners, this song requires more part independence than any of the other pieces analyzed thus far. Combined with an alto II part that rarely sings the roots of the chords and a B section that jumps around harmonically, this piece would be appropriate for collegiate and high school treble groups. Reasons to program this piece include its delightful melody and refreshing tempo, the contrasting B section, and the repeated opening section which will help expedite the learning process.

RĪGA DIMD (1873)
Jānis Cimze (1814–1881)
SATB choir, unaccompanied, duration: 2:20
Latvian folk song, English translation by Guntis Šmidchens.
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB1587

Background, Text, and Translation

Rīga Dimd was composed in 1873 for the first National Song Festival celebration held that same year. The text is a combination of multiple *dainas* and was responsible for much controversy upon its premier. Like most Latvian folk songs, this text carries with it a double meaning; Cimze credited the German schools and nobility as being two of the three brothers mentioned in verse two, while Atis Kronvalds immediately credited Latvian mothers, the Latvian Riga Society, and the Latvian Spirit. Despite this disagreement, *Rīga Dimd* etched itself into Latvian history and has now been sung for more than 150 years.

Rīga dimd, Rīga dimd!	*Riga rings! Riga rings!*
Kas to Rīgu dimdinājˈ?	*Who is making Riga ring?*
Tai meitai pūru kala	*Three good brothers for their sister*
Kam trejādi bāleliņˈ	*Forge a wondrous dowry chest.*
Tēva brālis pūru kala,	*Father's brother forged the chest,*
Mātes brālis atslēdinajˈ,	*Mother's brother made the key.*
Viņas pašas īstais brālis	*Sister's very own true brother*
Zelta vāku liedinājˈ.	*Poured the lid of purest gold.*

Table 4.11, *Rīga Dimd* text, English translation from Guntis Šmidchens' *The Power of Song.*

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture and Articulations

Rīga Dimd is in two-four time and is to be performed in a spirited manner. It is in strophic form and includes an introduction (which is verse one with added fermata) and a refrain. Rhythmic values in each part include quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, that

latter being used quite effectively at the end of both the verse and refrain. The text is set syllabically, and all voice parts contain the same rhythms throughout save for two notes sung by the basses in the refrain. There are tiered dynamics in both the introduction and the refrain that should be strictly adhered to. There are accents on beat two in measures 5, 6, and 7 that add additional forward motion and rhythmic interest to the song.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

The melody is well-balanced between steps and leaps, moving mostly by major thirds, but also including intervals of a perfect fifth and minor seventh. The alto moves by step and has one interval larger than a second, however they are often tasked with moving chromatically between an E♮ and an E♯. The tenor line has much in common with the altos and the basses mimic the leaps found in the soprano part. Like the altos, the basses often return to a chromatically altered note, in this case a G♮ in the chorus. The ranges for each part are as follows:

SOPRANO	**ALTO**	**TENOR**	**BASS**
$C♯_4$–E_5	$C♯_4$–A_4	$G♯_3$–D_4	A_2–B_3

Table 4.12, *Rīga Dimd* vocal ranges.

Harmonic Complexity

Cimze scored the piece in A major, and except for the occasional borrowed chord, it stays firmly rooted in the original key. The verses and refrain each have their own unique chord structure and cadential pattern; the verses end in a I-IV-I progression while the refrain ends with a I-V-I. The harmonic rhythm changes roughly twice per measure but increases towards the end of each phrase. The verses contain the borrowed chord of

C♯ major, which is heard twice in the first two measures, the second time appearing alongside a 4-3 suspension in the alto voice (figure 4.10). The harmony in the refrain is filled with seventh chords, including the ear-catching bass line with the lowered seventh scale degree (figure 4.11).

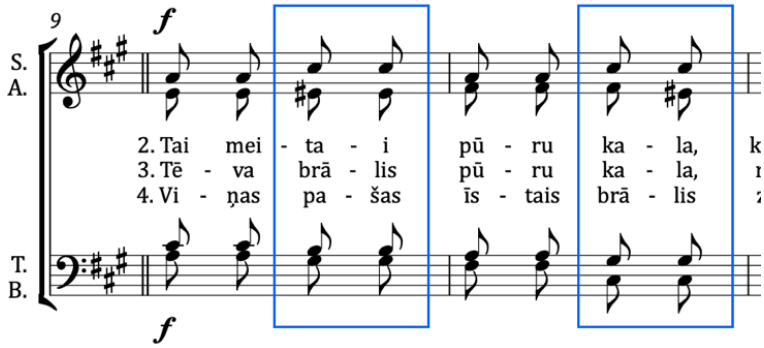

Figure 4.10, *Rīga Dimd,* mm. 9–10.

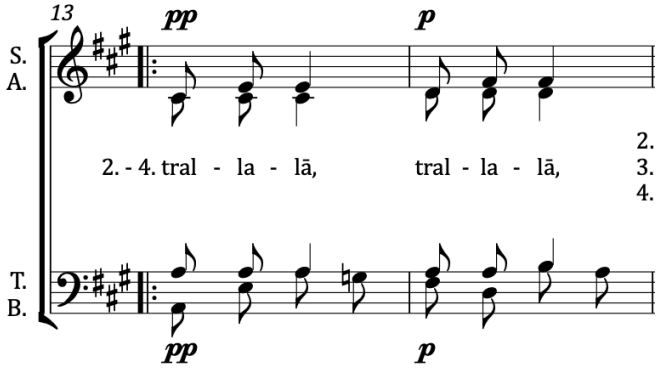

Figure 4.11, *Rīga Dimd,* mm. 13–14.

Performance Suggestions

As one may expect from a strophic folk song, *Rīga Dimd* is repetitive enough to be learned quickly, while unique enough to hold the interest of both choir and audience. The most complex aspects of this piece are the amount of Latvian text and the speed at which it moves, as well as the mixing of IV-I, and V-I cadences between the verses and refrain. The vocal ranges are all well within reach for almost any mixed choir, and the

chromaticism in the alto voice is written in a smooth manner. It should be performed a cappella, as the composer intended, and a short introduction or program note explaining its historical significance would be appropriate. The dynamics and articulations will help this piece come alive, and many ensembles take the liberty of fortifying the last measure of the song by sending some tenors and sopranos to the rafters, which all but guarantees an enthusiastic reception.

BĒDU, MANU LIELU BĒDU (1986)

Valters Kaminskis (1929–1997)
SATB choir, unaccompanied, duration: 2:15
Latvian folk song, English translation included in score, no translator attributed.
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB1426

Background, Text, and Translation

Dainas numbers 107, the first two lines of 63, and half of 619 were combined to form the text for this folk song. The three poems are categorized as texts which could ease the burden of work, a cheerful song to sing in the face of sorrow, or a joyful song to sing in one's youth.[121] The song was sung at the 1985 National Song Festival and continues to be a popular choice for musicians in a variety of genres across Latvia. A recording of the 1985 performance is linked in chapter five.

Bēdu, manu lielu bēdu, Es par bēdu nebēdāj'.	*Sorrow, oh my great sorrow,* *I didn't worry about my sorrow.*
Liku bēdu zem akmeņa, Pāri gāju dziedādam',	*I put my sorrow under a rock.* *And walked over it as I sang.*
Kad dzīvoju, tad dzīvoju, Tad i jautri padzīvoj'.	*If I lived, then I really lived.* *I lived a jolly life.*

[121] Song Cabinet, "Catalogue," Accessed March 26, 2024. https://dainuskapis.lv/katalogs.

Ar dziesmiņu druvā gāju, Ar valodu sētiņā	*I went into the cornfield with my song.* *And into my yard with my language.*

Table 4.13, *Bēdu, Manu Lielu Bēdu* text, English translation taken from the score.

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture and Articulations

Kaminskis's arrangement is set in common time and contains mostly eighth, quarter, and half notes. With few exceptions, two four-bar rhythmic figures are used and repeated throughout the entire piece. The first four measures comprise the verse (figure 4.12) and the second four measures comprise the refrain (figure 4.13). In what would otherwise be a straight strophic setting of a folk song, Kaminskis adds voices in canon throughout the arrangement to great effect. The piece is written in ABAB form with each B section in a new key and at a slower tempo. The canonic nature of the piece results in varied texture throughout, and tiered dynamics add an extra layer of musical interest.

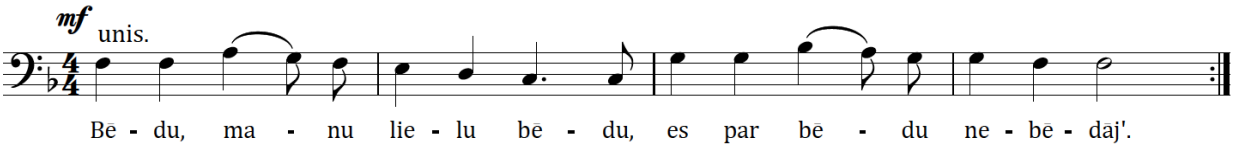

Figure 4.12, *Bēdu, Manu Lielu Bēdu*, mm. 1–4.

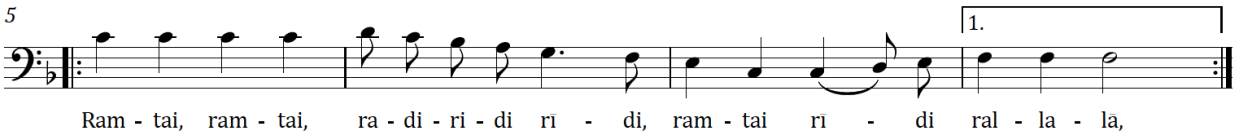

Figure 4.13, *Bēdu, Manu Lielu Bēdu,* mm. 5–8

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

The melody contains leaps of a perfect fifth, minor third, and major third (one each), and otherwise moves completely by step. The verse is set in a melodic sequence

that repeats one whole step up from the original. This melody is passed around to all voice parts for most of the song. The contrasting B section sets the altos in harmony a sixth below the melody, and the basses, altos, and sopranos have leaps of an octave before the A section returns. The vocal ranges are as follows:

SOPRANO	**ALTO**	**TENOR**	**BASS**
F_4–G_5	A_3–D_4	C_3–G_4	F_2–D_4

Table 4.14, *Bēdu, Manu Lielu Bēdu* vocal ranges.

Harmonic Complexity

The piece alternates between F major and B♭ major in the A and B sections, respectively. The harmonization in the A section is a direct result of the melody being set in canon. The harmonic progression of both sections follows a I-V-I pattern in the first four bars, followed by a I-IV-ii-V-I progression in the second four bars. While the key changes twice, there are no instances of chromaticism in any of the vocal parts. The opening of the B section changes to B♭ major, and the tenors hold a drone for two measures on the fifth scale degree, a holdover from F major in the previous section. The soprano and alto voices sing the melody in the new key, harmonized at the interval of a sixth in the alto voice. Previously the canonic material has been reserved for the refrain only, but now at measure twenty-eight the tenors and basses enter with a statement of the verse while the altos and sopranos repeat what they have already sung. The B section closes with three voices in canon (S, T, B) singing the chorus while the altos harmonize with the sopranos again at the interval of a sixth.

Performance Suggestions

While many versions of this popular Latvian folk song exist, this arrangement of *Bēdu, Manu Lielu Bēdu* should be performed as prescribed for unaccompanied mixed chorus. No specific numerical tempi are given, but the Latvian instructions for the A section translate to "cheerful" and "quick," while the B section simply says, "slow down." The opening key is in F major, which many choirs actively avoid when singing unaccompanied. While transpositions are possible, performances in higher keys will push the sopranos and tenors over a G, while a lowered key will push the altos past A_3 and the basses past F_2. As many arrangements, both with and without accompaniment, are available on streaming platforms, conductors are highly encouraged to listen to as many versions as possible, both alone and with their choir, to achieve the proper spirit in rehearsal and performance.

MĒNESTINIS NAKTI BRAUCA (2015)
Laura Jēkabsone (b. 1985)
SSAA, unaccompanied (sleigh bells), duration: 2:15
Latvian folk song, English translation from Laura Sam and the Women's Voices Chorus.[122]
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB2380

Background, Text, and Translation

The text for this folk song draws on themes found in multiple Latvian *dainas*, including numbers 33,852, 15,947, 33,898, and 33,909 to name a few. As in other folk

[122] Laura Sam, "Program Notes," Program notes for Women's Voices Chorus, *Songs of Celestial Spheres*, Laura Sam, Conductor, January 21, 2023, University United Methodist Church, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, accessed March 27, 2024, https://womensvoiceschorus.org/PDFs/WVC%20Program%20Songs%20of%20Celestial%20Spheres%20January%202023.pdf.

songs included in this paper, the Latvian language and its double meanings do not always lend themselves towards an easy translation into English. This translation was provided in the program notes for a concert by the Women's Chorus Voices in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The arranger herself is quoted discussing this topic: "It isn't easy to have an obvious translation of any Latvian folk song because mostly, they talk in symbols. In mythology, the Sun and Moon symbolize young love, so *Mēnestiņis nakti brauca* could be considered a wedding song."[123] The Latvian poetry is contrasted with a refrain filled with joyous nonsense syllables that alternate throughout the piece. The sleigh bells give the piece a Christmas or Winter concert aura, but it is appropriate to program at any point during the year.

Mēnestiņis nakti brauca Zvaigžņu sega mugurāi, Rīta zvaigzne, vakareja, Tie mēneša kumeliņi, Saule bāra mēnestiņu, Kam tas dienu nespīdēja, Mēnestiņis atbildēja: Tev dieniņa, man naksniņa, I saulīte, mēnestiņis, Jāj zu viena ku-me-liņ.	The Moon rode through the night Starry mantle on his shoulders. The Morning Star and Evening Star Are the Moon's horses. The Sun scolded the Moon For not shining in the day. The Moon replied: The day for you, the night for me. Both Sun and the Moon Ride on the same horse.

Table 4.15, *Mēnestiņis nakti brauca* text, English translation from Women's Voices Chorus.

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture and Articulations

Active rhythmic figures based on short sixteenth note motifs dominate this arrangement. The soprano and alto Is carry the fast-moving rhythms, while the soprano and alto IIs are tasked with slower moving accompaniment figures that are mirrored by

[123] Laura Sam, "Program Notes."

the rhythms of the sleigh bells (figure 4.14). The rhythmic patterns are broken into two bar repeating phrases for both the verses and refrain. These patterns are reversed in the final verse as the soprano and alto Is have the accompaniment figures and the soprano and alto IIs sing the melody in unison. The entire piece is in common time.

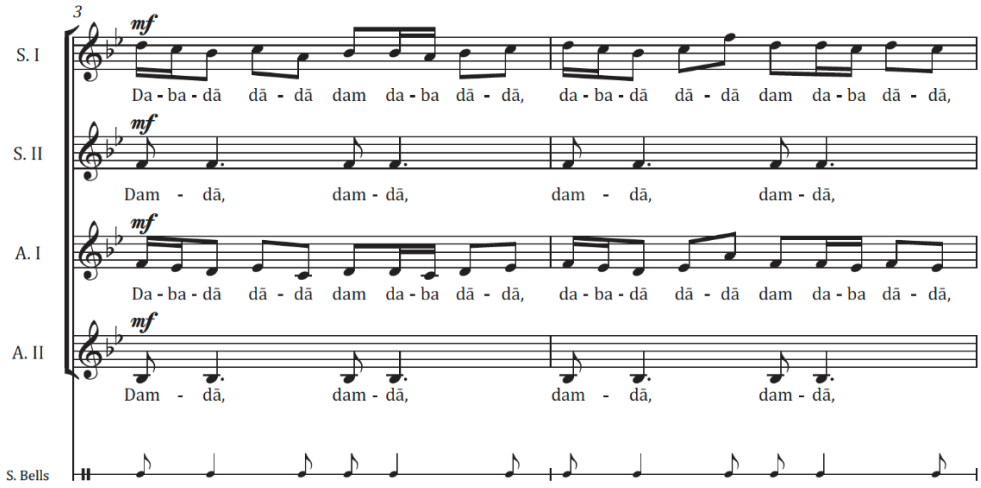

Figure 4.14, *Mēnestiņis nakti brauca*, mm. 3–4.

The dynamics are equal across all voices in the refrain but terraced in the verse, indicating that the melody and its texted harmonies are to be brought to the fore. Verse three is marked at a lower dynamic than the first two, and the choir is to get softer still on the repeat for verse four. Verse five is marked *mezzo piano* and "a little slower" than the previous, joyful tempi. The final chorus is marked *a tempo, mezzo forte* and builds to a rousing finish.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

As indicated by the active rhythmic figures shown above, the melody also emanates joy by leaping and skipping more often than other songs presented thus far.

Often these leaps will be followed by another leap of a different size, as can be seen in figure 4.14, measure four, beats two and three in the soprano line. In the refrain the most common leap in the soprano and alto I parts is the minor third. The soprano Is sing a perfect fourth and the alto Is have an instance of a tri-tone. The soprano IIs sing two notes and move completely by step, while the alto IIs have three notes and one leap of a minor third. In each chorus the soprano and alto Is sing at the interval of a sixth, even when it results in awkward intervals for the alto Is.

The melody in verses one through four contains an average of three leaps per measure, and includes intervals of a minor third, perfect fourth, perfect fifth, minor sixth, and minor seventh. The alto I part continues to sing in harmony with the melody, sometimes at the interval of a sixth and sometimes not. The alto I line in the verse leaps an average of three and a half times per measure, most of which are at the interval of a major third. The soprano and alto II parts in verses one through four are almost identical to their parts in the refrain. The final verse puts the melody in the lower soprano and alto voices, but in unison. The soprano I and alto Is have an accompaniment line that requires divisi for the altos for four measures (figure 4.15). The final measure of the piece splits the soprano I’s into two parts for the final beat and a half.

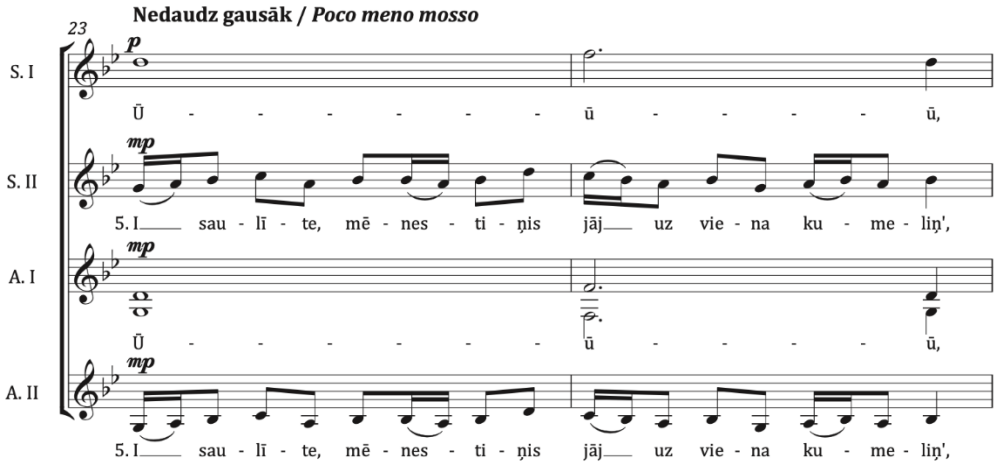

Figure 4.15, *Mēnestiņis nakti brauca*, mm. 23–24.

Vocal ranges for each part, including the divisi sections, are as follows:

SOPRANO I's	**SOPRANO II**	**ALTO IA**	**ALTO IB**	**ALTO II**
F4–F5	Eb–D5	Bb3–A4	F3–A4	G3–D4

Table 4.16, *Mēnestiņis nakti brauca* vocal ranges.

Harmonic Complexity

Jēkabsone sets her arrangement in the key of B♭ major and modulates once to the relative minor key for verse five before returning to the home key in the final refrain. There are two separate chord progressions used in the refrain and the verses that, at first glance, appear to be similar. Each share common characteristics, such as the alto II pedal tones of B♭ and G, and the soprano II line that seldomly moves. Broadly speaking, the first two measures of both the verse and refrain center around Bb (I), while the second two measures shift to G minor (vi). The variations in the melody and its subsequent harmonization by the first altos bring unexpected harmonic surprises that break up an otherwise simple and repetitive pattern.

The first two measures of the refrain alternate between the B♭ chord and a F7/B♭ on every other beat. The second two measures shift to a G minor chord which alternates with the viiº7 in third inversion (Adim7/G), before cadencing back to the tonic in measure six (figure 4.16).

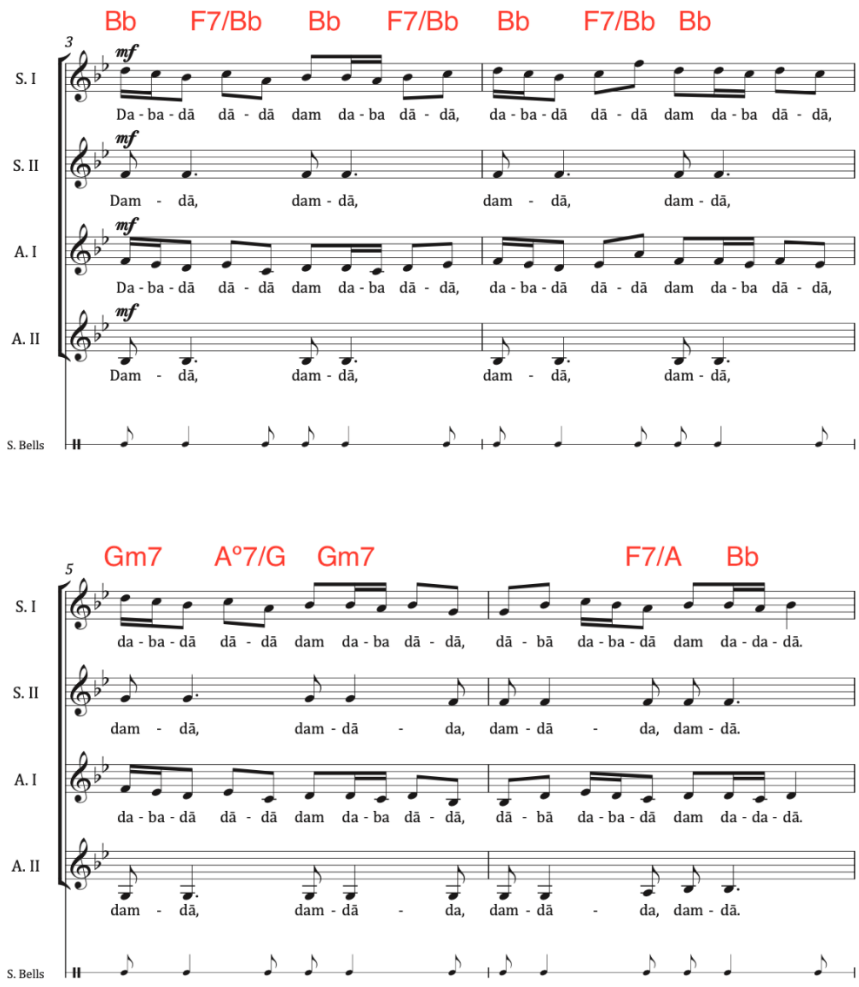

Figure 4.16, *Mēnestiņis nakti brauca*, mm. 3–6.

The first two measures of the verse alternate between the tonic chord and the subdominant (E♭7) rather than the dominant (F7) but continues the pedal tone in the second alto as before. The final two measures of the verse again center around the vi chord (G minor) but shift to the minor ii chord (C minor) rather than the diminished vii

(A^{o}7) with the G pedal tone below (figure 4.17). The end of the verse cadences in the same way as the chorus.

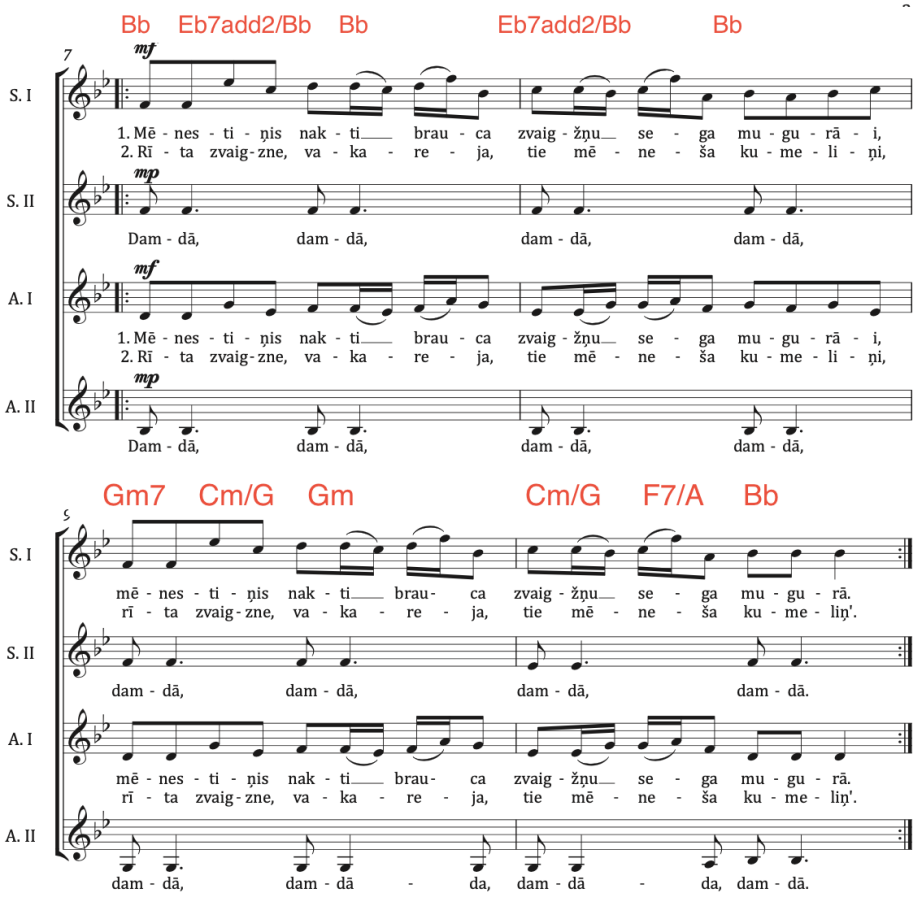

Figure 4.17, *Mēnestiņis nakti brauca*, mm. 7–10.

In verse five the key changes to G minor and the soprano and alto IIs finally get their chance at singing the melody. Jēkabsone composes a new melody for this verse and sets the other two voices in harmony with the alto Is dividing into two parts. The chord structure here goes between the tonic (Gm) and the major VII (F), before cadencing F to B♭ (V-I) in measure 26 as the key shifts back to B♭ major.

Performance Suggestions

This arrangement demands vocal flexibility, a strong sense of intonation, and a wide range. However, if those needs are satisfied by the membership of an ensemble, this folk song arrangement benefits from repetitive and engaging vocal lines where ninety five percent of the notes for the entire song are learned by the first ten measures. Many SSAA choirs who have capable enough voices will need to divide the written parts the different sections, specifically verse five, to better fit individual ranges. For example, to assign the first altos the first alto part is neglecting the fact that they are asked to sing significantly lower than the second alto part. Additionally, considering how relatively little the soprano II's are asked to do, any conductor would be wise to put the strongest voices where they are needed most, regardless of what part they would normally sing.

AVE MARIA I (1989)
Rihards Dubra (b. 1964)
SAATBB, unaccompanied, duration: 3:45
Latin motet
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB0325A

Background, Text, and Translation

Dubra's *Ave Maria* I was his first piece composed in the Latin language when he was just twenty-five years of age, the same year he graduated from the Latvian State Conservatory.[124] It was his first attempt at setting the *Ave Maria* text to music and carries a contemplative and joyous spirituality throughout. The first half of the text is taken from Luke chapter one, verses forty

[124] Rupert Gough, "Liner Notes." Liner Notes for Dubra, Rihards, *Hail, Queen of Heaven: Choral Music by Rihards Dubra*, The Choir of Royal Holloway, Rupert Gough. Recorded January 9–10, 2009, Hyperion Records, 2009, streaming audio, accessed April 4, 2024, Naxos Music Library, 4, 7.

through forty-two. The final half of text (the intercessory prayer) was introduced in the fifteenth century.[125] The text is as follows:

Ave Maria, gratia plena,	*Hail Mary, full of grace,*
Dominus tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus,	*The Lord is with thee, blessed are you among*
Et benedictus fructus ventris tui Jesus.	*women,*
Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,	*And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.*
Ora pro nobis peccatoribus,	*Holy Mary, Mother of God,*
Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.	*Pray for us sinners,*
	Now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Table 4.17, *Ave Maria I* text, English translation taken from Ron Jeffers *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire, Volume 1: Sacred Latin Texts*.[126]

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture and Articulations

Ave Maria I is in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, save for the recurring A section which alternates between $\frac{3}{4}$ and common time. The given tempo is to the quarter note at seventy-two beats per minute. There are no note values smaller than a quarter note and none longer than a whole note. There are several instances of dotted half notes tied together over bar lines and two occurrences of a fermata. The texture is homophonic throughout and the voice parts share the same rhythms and text for most of the piece. While the divisi is not challenging, it is certainly not optional. The moments that are scored for six voices should feel fuller and more substantial than the rest of the piece. There is little in the score with regards to articulation, but the given dynamics should be followed closely.

[125] Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire Volume I: Sacred Latin Texts,* Corvallis, Oregon: earthsongs, 1988, 100.

[126] Ron Jeffers, *Translations and Annotations of Choral Repertoire Volume I: Sacred Latin Texts,* Corvallis, Oregon: earthsongs, 1988, 99–101.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

Dubra scored this piece for unaccompanied SATB choir with minimal divisi for the altos and basses. The soprano voice carries the melody throughout and often moves by step. Their largest leap is a perfect fifth found in m. 26–27. The most common recurring intervals of more than a major second in the melody are the minor and major third. There is one occurrence of chromaticism in the soprano part (m. 20) as they raise an E5 one half-step while descending from an F♯$_5$. Other chromatic alterations occur in measures 57–62 as the entire choir undergoes a shift from E major to A major. Leaps in the alto part are by a minor third or a perfect fourth with one notable exception; a tritone occurs in the alto one part in mm. 36–37, leaping from A♮ down to D♯. The tenors may have the most unique vocal line in the work; they move exclusively by step until measure fifty-three, and of their ten remaining leaps two of them are minor sixths—the largest leap by any voice in the entire piece. The basses leap the most of any voice part, often by a perfect fourth. Like the first altos, basses have a tritone between measures 60–61, leaping from F♮ down to B♮. The texture is homophonic throughout, with no significant imitation or counterpoint. The vocal ranges are as follows:

SOPRANO	**ALTO I & II**	**TENOR**	**BASS I**	**BASS II**
D♯$_4$–G♯$_5$	B$_3$–C♯$_5$	G$_4$–F♯$_5$	B$_2$–G♯$_3$	E$_2$–G♯$_3$

Table 4.18, *Ave Maria I* vocal ranges.

Harmonic Complexity

Set in the key of E major, the piece opens with a unique six-measure melodic phrase wherein the soprano and alto voices move in parallel thirds and repeat their opening three measures, while the tenors and basses remain nearly static underneath,

keeping us firmly rooted in the tonic key. The harmonic language is slow and purposeful; the melody and alto line repeat their opening three measures in mm. 4–6 while the tenor and bass voices outline a vi, V7, and I chord helping achieve a sense of finality to the entire opening phrase. The opening is repeated verbatim at *pianissimo* in measures 7–12 and thus concludes the opening A section of the piece. Dubra displays an affinity for extended harmony (sevenths and ninths), added harmony (seconds) as well as non-chord tones in the form of passing tones and suspensions. One additional hallmark of these opening measures is Dubra's use of an unstable harmonic figure (B/E resolving to E) on the downbeat of the opening measure (fig. 4.18). The author has termed it unstable because the opening chord is something of an unprepared neighbor tone, which is heard in its normal state between measure one and measure two. This opening phrase ends with an appoggiatura in both the soprano and alto voices.

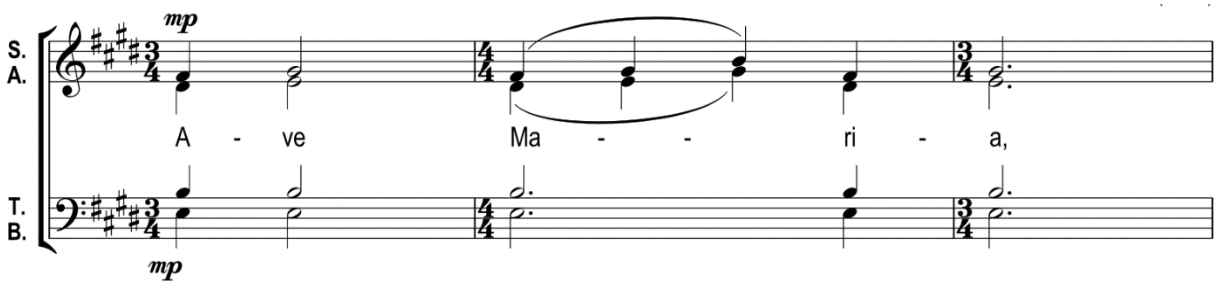

Figure 4.18, Rihards Dubra, *Ave Maria I*, mm. 1–3.

The B section begins at measure thirteen and, unlike the opening A section, the time signature remains constant throughout. The triadic relationship between the alto and soprano voices heard in the opening has been temporarily discontinued. The altos join the lower two voices in both rhythmic values and in their accompanying of the soprano line which soars above the rest. There are parallel fifths between the tenors and basses in mm. 13–14, as well as mm. 17–18, but not in such a way where the piece becomes difficult to

decipher aurally. The harmonic structure of the B section remains remarkably clear. It begins on the ii chord with an added minor seventh, moves the iii7, and comes to a moment of rest on a minor vi with a 4-3 suspension in the soprano and passing tones in the tenor. Measures 17–20 repeat this exact harmonic progression, save for the final chord, which is now VI, as the sopranos resolve their suspension to an E♯ instead of E♮. The reason for this change is unclear, however the text could provide an answer.

The shift from a C♯ minor chord to a C♯ major happens on the second syllable of the final word in the phrase *Dominus tecum,* which translates to "The Lord is with thee." The first two lines of text are attributed to the Angel Gabriel in the first chapter of the book of Luke, announcing that Mary will carry the Christ child. Dubra may have thought it appropriate to highlight this poignant statement with an equally powerful, if not brief, musical moment.

The harmonic language of the B section drives us towards a rather lengthy IV-V-I cadence that develops over the course of mm. 25–37 and sets up the most significant moment of the piece both musically and textually. The IV chord acts as a moment of rest as the lowest three voices sustain the root, second, third, and fifth scale degrees of the chord. This allows the soprano line to gently land on the ninth scale degree, doubling the tenors at the octave in m. 27, adding a sense of anticipation for what will come next. For the phrase *Et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus* (and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus) Dubra puts a pedal point on a B in the bass for nine measures while the soprano and alto, once again in parallel thirds, sing a three-note ascending phrase in sequence.

There are two suspensions on the final word, "Jesus:" an 8-7 suspension in the alto I voice and a 6-5 suspension in both the alto II and soprano voice (fig. 4.19).

Noticeably absent from the V7 chord at the climax of the piece is the presence of a third, the D♯. Dubra completes the V-I cadence with a direct repeat of the opening A section in mm. 37–48.

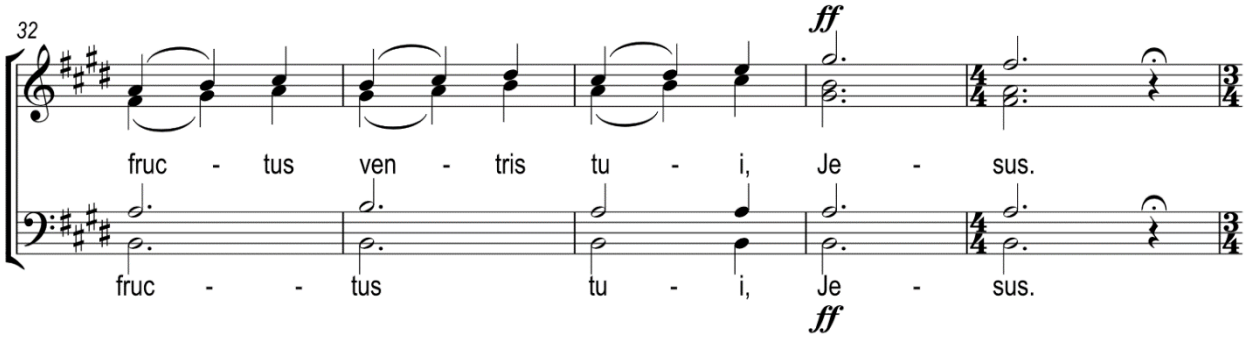

Figure 4.19, Rihards Dubra, *Ave Maria I*, mm. 32–36.

Measures 49–64 could be interpreted as either a modified B section (the soprano melody moves quite similarly to mm. 13–27) or as its own separate C section. Dubra utilizes a deceptive cadence (IV-V-vi) in the first two phrases of the section, of which the second one is a direct repeat of the first. As we have seen earlier, the C♯m7 chord in measures fifty-two and fifty-six do not contain a third. Unlike the previous B section, the alto and soprano move again in parallel motion, this time at the interval of a major sixth. The tenor and bass lines move entirely in parallel fifths until measure sixty-two. The submediant C♯m7 chord in measure fifty-six resolves directly to its chromatic mediant of A minor, and suddenly it feels as if Dubra has directly modulated to C major for four measures (fig. 4.20).

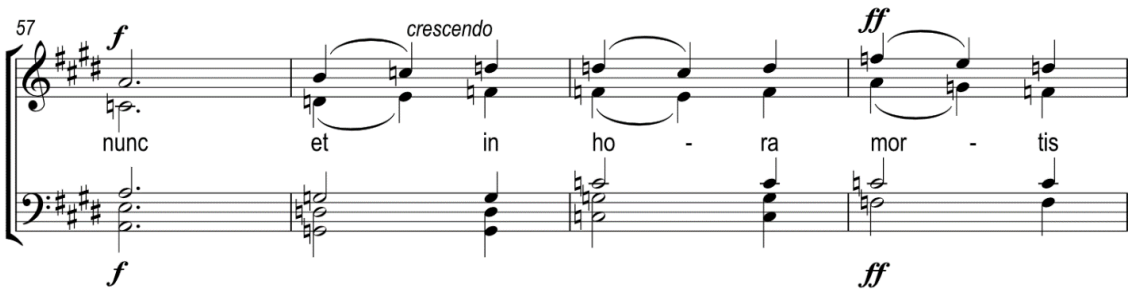

Figure 4.20, Rihards Dubra, *Ave Maria I*, mm. 57–60.

In C major, the B half-diminished 7 chord in measure sixty-one now leads us to the borrowed chord of E major (III), and thanks to that bit of mode mixture our ears have settled into E being the dominant chord in our new key of A major. The piece concludes with a modified A section in the key of A major on the word "amen." The final two phrases of the piece have divisi in the bass and alto parts, with the bass I and alto II parts doubled at the octave, save for the final D♮ in the alto II part. There is a fermata on the penultimate chord of the V-I perfect authentic cadence.

Performance Suggestions

Dubra's *Ave Maria I* contains repetitive melodic phrases, traditional harmonic movement, and minimal rhythmic and intervallic complexities that make it an excellent starting point for experienced choirs seeking an entry point into the world of Latvian choral music. Some moments are less intuitive than others, including the tritones and moments of direct modulation. However, unlike more advanced compositions from the Latvian tradition, there are no extended or aleatoric techniques required for this piece. If a chorus satisfies the vocal range requirements and can sing in tune without piano

accompaniment, then Dubra's *Ave Maria I* carries a high likelihood of programmatic success.

MŪSU TĒVS DEBESĪS *(Our Father)*
***From the Cantata* DIEVS, TAVA ZEME DEG! *(God, Thy earth is aflame!)* (1944)**
Lūcija Garūta (1902–1977)
SATB unaccompanied, duration: 4:00
Latvian, translated to English by Velta Sniķere, edited and adapted by Laima Asja Bērziņa.
Musica Baltica, catalogue #MB2486

Background Information, Text, and Translation

In 1943 a Lutheran pastor from the town of Kuldīga was inspired to hold a national competition and charged the Latvian people with creating a "Latvian prayer to God."[127] The winning text was a combination of two poems submitted by the Latvian poet Andrejs Eglītiš and reflected the dramatic, war-torn circumstances of mid-twentieth century Latvia.[128] It is important to be mindful of how devastating the German occupation of Latvia (1941–44) was, as was described in the first chapter of this paper. Garūta, for better or worse, decided to stay in her home country as thousands of others fled. She reduced the cantata for smaller performances throughout Latvia until it was expressly forbidden in 1945. Smaller versions of the work were performed outside of Latvia and became a significant rallying cry for those who were exiled. Garūta's cantata

[127] Dzidra Vārdaune, "...And he Became the Eye and Ear of the Nation's Soul," Latvijas Vēstnesis, accessed April 4, 2024, https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/77589.

[128] Marc Gaber, "Cantata for Tenor, Baritone, Choir, and Organ," accessed April 4, 2024, https://kulturaskanons.lv/en/archive/lucija-garuta/.

would not be heard again in full until 1988, three years before Latvian independence and eleven years after her death.[129]

The cantata premiered March 15, 1944, in the Old St. Gertrude church in Riga (figures 4.21–4.23). So thick was the mass of people in the audience that the poet himself, Andrejs Eglītiš, listened from the church's front doors.[130] Broadcast on Latvian Radio, sounds of the war outside the church can be heard on archived recordings. This piece immediately resonated in the hearts of the Latvian people, summarized here by Vance Wolverton: "The feelings of dread experienced by Lūcija Garūta on the eve of a second Soviet occupation found expression in her cantata, *Dievs, Tava zeme deg* (God, Thy Earth is Aflame) (1943), the most powerful monument to wartime experiences in Latvian music."[131.]

Two-thirds of the way into the cantata, the choir sings the Lord's Prayer in unison with verses of Eglītiš' poetry sung by the soloists interspersed throughout each phrase. That harmonization has historically been excerpted for performance and is now sold by Musica Baltica as a stand-alone score. It was at the Latvian Song Festival of 1990, as the country was on the cusp of independence for a second time, when the Lord's Prayer was excerpted and performed at the close of the final concert. Indicative of its longevity and meaning for the Latvian people, it received almost a full minute's silence upon its

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[129] Laura Rokpelne, "Compositional principles in Lūcija Garūta's oratorio "God, Thine Earth is Aflame!"," D.M.A. diss., (University of Southern California, 1996) 9.

[130] Marc Gaber, "Cantata for Tenor, Baritone, Choir, and Organ."

[131] Vance D. Wolverton, "A Unique Treasure: The Latvian Choral Anthology," *The Choral Journal,* 54, (2013): 11.

conclusion, a reaction usually reserved for houses of worship rather than at a concert venue. It was performed again at both the 2018 and 2023 festivals.



Figures 4.21, 4.22, 4.23, St. Gertrude's Old Church, Riga. Exterior, interior, and organ. Photos by author, May 2023.

Mūsu Tēvs debesīs,	*Our Father which art in heaven,*
Svētīts lai top Tavs vārds.	*Hallowed be Thy name.*
Lai nāk Tava valstība,	*Thy kingdom come,*
Tavs prāts lai notiek kā debesīs, tā arī virs zemes.	*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*
Mūsu dienišķo maizi dodi mums šodien.	*Give us this day our daily bread*
Un piedodi mums mūsu parādus,	*And (forgive us) our trespasses,*
Kā mēs piedodam saviem parādniekiem.	*As we forgive them that trespass against us,*
Un neievedi mūs kārdināšanā.	*And lead us not into temptation,*
Bet atpestī mūs no ļauna.	*But (deliver) us from evil.*
Jo Tev pieder valstība,	*For (Thine is the kindom,)*
Spēks un gods	*And the power, and the glory*
Mūžīgi mūžos,	*For ever and ever.*
Āmen.	*Amen.*

Table 4.19, *Mūsu Tēvs Debesīs* text, English translation by Velta Sniķere, adapted by Laima Asja Bērziņa.

Rhythmic Complexity, Texture, and Articulations

Garūta's *Our Father* is set in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, contains no note values smaller than an eighth note, and has no instances of syncopation in any voice part. The texture is entirely

homophonic, and any added articulations apply to all voice parts equally. Phrase lengths are determined by the setting of the text and are therefore unequal throughout, but do not exceed more than four-and one-half measures.

Intervallic and Melodic Complexity

The melody is in the soprano voice for the entirety of the song. The first two melodic phrases are seven measures each and are based off the same material. These opening phrases contain no chromaticism and a maximum leap of a perfect fifth. The melody contains chromatic alterations beginning in measure twenty-three as the piece builds to its highest moment (range-wise) in measure thirty-nine. The melody in these sixteen measures sits high in the tessitura and moves by several minor thirds and minor seconds. The perfect fifth returns in consecutive measures beginning in measure forty before the piece finishes with mostly stepwise motion in the melody.

By contrast, the alto part hardly ever moves by leap and when it does it is rarely more than a third. While there are no leaps a perfect fifth or above, there is one instance of a tri-tone leading into measure twenty-four. The altos are seemingly tasked with moving as little as possible, as evidenced by the three different pitches they sing over a span of eighteen measures—almost thirty percent of the song. The tenor shares similar qualities with both the alto and soprano parts, including numerous leaps of a major and minor third as well as a tri-tone in measure twenty-seven. There are no leaps higher than a perfect fifth and a small handful of chromatic alterations. Like the altos, the tenors sing one note for nine measures as the sopranos work their way towards measures thirty-nine. The basses have the most active part by far, surpassing the number of leaps in the

soprano and equaling them in terms of chromatic alterations. While they are not asked to sing a tri-tone, the basses leap most often by a perfect fifth, followed by an almost equal number of minor-thirds, major-thirds, and perfect fourths. There is one leap of a minor sixth which is also the highest found in any part in the song. The vocal ranges are as follows:

SOPRANO	**ALTO**	**TENOR**	**BASS**
B♯$_3$(C$_4$)–G♯$_5$	G♯$_3$–A♯$_4$	E♯$_3$–D♯$_4$	E♯$_2$–A♯$_3$

Table 4.20, *Mūsu Tēvs Debesīs* vocal ranges.

Harmonic Complexity

Due to its placement in the original cantata, this excerpt is set in the key of C♯ major, one that is rarely heard in choral music. Apart from the eccentric choice of key, the harmonic progressions are mostly diatonic in the opening and closing sections, with a middle section that is more chromatic. The first two phrases are quite similar and both favor moving from the I to the V in the first measure and ending on a half cadence (figure 4.24).

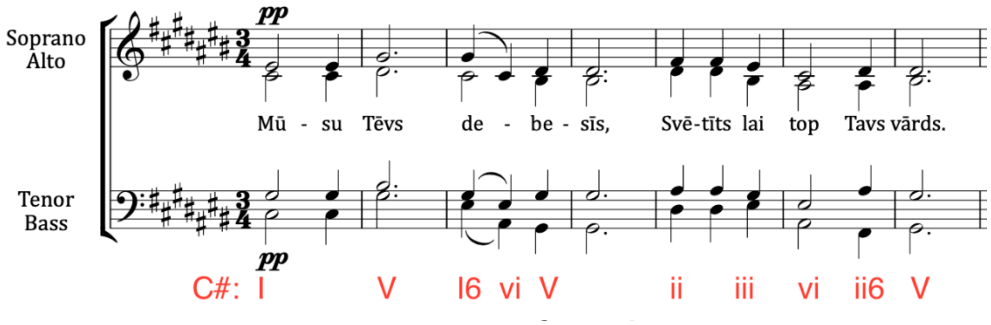

Figure 4.24, *Mūsu Tēvs Debesīs,* mm. 1–7.

Measure twenty-three marks the beginning of the second section of the piece which is more chromatic than the first. The G double sharp now present in the top three voices results in numerous half-diminished and fully diminished chords as the melody

builds to its climax on an F double sharp diminished seventh chord in measure thirty-nine (figure 4.25).

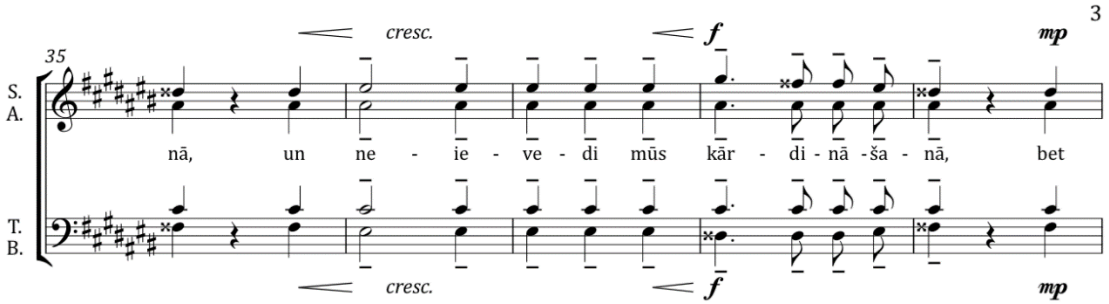

Figure 4.25, *Mūsu Tēvs Debesīs,* mm. 35–39.

From here the melody pulls back using a sequence of descending fifths before building up in measures 45–59 for the final phrase of the prayer. This final melodic phrase is repeated down the octave to end the piece as solemnly as it began.

Performance Suggestions

The written key could potentially give choristers (as well as conductors and rehearsal accompanists) unnecessary amounts of stress when reading the piece for the first time. If needed, the choir can read the piece in C major and reduce every double sharp down one-half step. The jarring nature of a seven-sharp key signature and the presence of multiple double sharps is one of the largest stumbling blocks associated with learning this piece. Other challenges presented include the chromaticism in all parts including the tri-tones written in the alto and tenor voices. There is a healthy amount of Latvian text to learn and, unlike other songs in this paper, large portions of it do not repeat. The sopranos are tasked with singing high in their range multiple times, and the basses have a non-negotiable low E. While it should be performed unaccompanied, it is not unusual for performances at the song festivals to begin with an extended organ

introduction that gives a taste of the cantata's opening and previews the first phrase of the Lord's Prayer excerpt. While not as simple as the previous nine songs, Garūta's *Mūsu Tēvs Debesīs* remains a true possibility for many intermediate to advanced SATB mixed choirs.

CHAPTER FIVE:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

This chapter contains a quick reference guide for purchasing and listening to the scores presented in chapter four. It also contains a list of music not included in this paper that may interest those who wish to study this topic further.

SCORES ANALYZED IN THIS PAPER

TITLE	COMPOSER	SCORE	REFERENCE LINK
Putnu Māte Putnus Sauca	Ilze Arne	Putnu Māte Score	Video Score
Saulīt Vēlu Vakarāi	Jānis Porietis	Saulīt Score	Video Score Folk song arrangement by Kaspars Putniņš
Dixit Maria	Liene Batņa (Austriņa)	Dixit Maria Score	Video Score
Saule, Pērkons, Daugava	Mārtiņš Brauns	Saule, Pērkons Score	Video Score 2023 Song Festival
Saulīte	Selga Mence	Saulīte Score	Video Score
Rīga Dimd	Jānis Cimze	Rīga Dimd Score	Video Score Latvian Radio Choir
Bēdu, Manu Lielu Bēdu	Valters Kaminskis	Bēdu, Manu Score	Video Score 1985 Song Festival 2008 Song Festival
Mēnestinis Nakti Brauca	Laura Jēkabsone	Mēnestinis Score	Video Score
Ave Maria	Rihards Dubra	Ave Maria Score	Video Score
Mūsu Tēvs Debesīs	Lūcija Garūta	Mūsu Tēvs Score	Video Score

Table 5.1, Scores included in this paper and their recordings.

SCORES FOR ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION

TITLE	COMPOSER	VOICING	SCORE	REFERENCE LINK
O Be Joyful in God	Rihards Dubra	SATB, organ, percussion	https://www.musicabaltica.com/2111.html	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeDXAJpLwPw
Pavasara Vējos *(In the Spring Winds), a Cantata*	Lūcija Garūta	SATB choir, orchestra	https://www.musicabaltica.com/3194.html	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc4M3nr-tEY&t=368s
Divas Miniatūras Jauktam Korim *(Two Miniatures for Mixed Choir)*	Jānis Porietis	SATB	https://www.musicabaltica.com/790.html	
Gaismas Pils *(Castle of Light)*	Jāzeps Vītols	SATB	https://www.musicabaltica.com/1115.html	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkPGcigpmGw
Juoneits Guoja Par Kalnenu *(Jānis Comes Over the Hill)*	Pēteris Plakidis	SATB	https://www.musicabaltica.com/juoneits-guoja-par-kalnenu.html	

Table 5.2, Additional scores for further study.

CONCLUSION

The small country of Latvia has produced some of the world's finest choral music and choral singers. Their comprehensive inclusion of music within their public and private education systems continues to develop not just the next generation of professional Latvian musicians, but also a lay population that is proud to sing at a moment's notice. For Latvian choral music to proliferate around the world, specifically on programs throughout the United States, conductors must be made aware of pieces that their groups can bring to a higher level of performance in a reasonable amount of time. While much of the well-known Latvian choral music is quite complex, the pieces discussed in this paper are ready to be performed by choirs of all ages and abilities. Simple rhythmic figures, tonally centered harmonic progressions, and repetitive phrases can be found in many of the works studied in this paper, and those that are more complex are still well within reach for many high school, church, community, and collegiate choirs. Additionally, a brief study of the Latvian language has revealed that it sounds much like it looks, is a language that naturally sings well, and (despite their proximity) is not as complicated as the Cyrillic alphabet used by their neighbors to the east.

On February 24, 2022, Russian forces invaded the country of Ukraine, sparking an escalation of a years-long conflict that reminded the Baltic States how quickly the world's geo-political alignments can change. With the nightmare of Soviet Occupation just thirty-one short years in the rearview, Latvians immediately took to the streets of Riga and did what they have always done: sing. The day after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Latvians constructed a stage and held a concert against war in a unique location: directly in front of the Russian Embassy. Just as they sang *Saule, Pērkons, Daugava,* on

that winter night in the streets of Riga, perhaps it is time to join our voices with theirs and show the world, once again, the overwhelming power of song.

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