

Time Travel, Tukums regions' Song Festival, June 1928

Facts, Latvia and Tukums in the 1920s

After World War One several new countries appeared in Europe. The Republic of Latvia was proclaimed in November 1918. The Russian Red Army invaded the country the same year but was defeated by Latvian and western troops.

In the year 1928 Latvia celebrated its first decade as a democratic and independent state. The leaders of the country struggled hard to find Latvia's way of democracy. Many people had returned home from evacuation. Cities and farmsteads were restored with great enthusiasm. People moved into the cities, previously mostly inhabited by Germans and Jews.

The social and cultural life was rich with lots of social activities and cultural gatherings. People tried to find a balance between the modern and the traditional way of life. Modernism and social contrasts were, for example, quite visible in the clothing.

The territory belonging to the region of Tukums was greatly enlarged in the 1920s, mostly due to the reduction of the landlord's estates. One of those estates, Durbe manor house and park, belonging to the family von Recke, was given to the Latvian poet Janis Rainis. Rainis dedicated the manor house to the teachers union as a place for cultural events and national festivals. Several song festivals took place in the Durbe park, the first one in June 1928.

Scenario, The Tukums Song Festival at Durbe Manor House in 1928

It is a sunny Sunday, June 10th 1928. Hundreds of Song Festival participants and other visitors arrive in Tukums and to the Durbe Manor House, from the vicinity and from far away. Poet Rainis, as the host, is expected to make the welcoming speech and introduce the manor house and the park. Other speeches will be held by president Zemgals, leader of the teacher's organization Kuls and Tukums district's principal Karklins.

The photographer Zanis Bergs and reporters from the local newspaper are going to document the event.

The first people arriving must get everything ready. The banners and the flags have to be made as well as bands and ribbons to the folk costumes. The stage will be constructed and the songs rehearsed.

Tekla Freiman, from special manual training class, is going to show how to paint banners and flags on cloth. Matilde Freiberg, a local dressmaker will give consultations about ornaments and folk costumes. The electricity drops frequently, so the costumes probably have to be ironed with irons heated by coal. The dinner, with music and dancing, needs to be organized. Everyone is getting ready for the singing and the festivities.

While making all the preparations there are lively discussions about local and global topics. What has ten years of democracy meant to the country? Rainis also shares his future plans for the Durbe manor house, Some critical observers are demonstrating their attitude with banners in front of the participants and officials.

Key questions

- What is Latvia's way of democracy? What is my responsibility in building up democracy in this country? What unites people? Are ideas stronger than weapons?
- In what way has the country changed the last ten years? What is better now, what was better before? Traditional and/or modern values? The agricultural reform and/or the former landlords?
- New ways of learning? Discussion in the teachers' organization.
- The idea of a song festival. To sing together, to think together.

Roles

The owner of the Durbe's manor house – poet Rainis.

Official guests - president Gustavs Zemgals,
- parliament president Kalnins,
- representative from the teacher organization Kuls,
- Tukums district chairman Karklins,

Tekla Freiman, special manual training class.

Matilde Freiberg, local dressmaker, manager of the sanatorium.

Photographer Zanis Bergs

Reporters from newspapers

Organizers of the evening event

Participants of the song festival – singers

Chief conductor – Teodors Reiteirs

Visitors

Oppositional people

Activities

- The choirs rehearse their songs
- Write/read poems and songs
- Make banners and flags
- Make congratulation cards, use paint and ink
- Construct the stage
- Decorate the costumes and prepare hair styles
- Ironing
- Make tea/coffee
- Prepare the meal
- Lay the table and decorate the room
- Meeting with Rainis and tour around the Durbe manor house

Time plan

16.15 Introduction, role cards

16.30 Dress up, scenario, characters

17.05 Opening ceremony

17.15 Activities

18.15 Procession in the park

18.25 Song festival, performances

18.50 Procession to the manor house

19.00 Meal, music, dancing, afterparty

20.00 Closing ceremony, reflections

20.30 End