



Welcome to the 2022 edition of Native Music!

The Native Music 17 ethnic music compilation offers some of the newest music in a wide variety of Latvian roots genres. The album includes recordings by the Saucējas traditional singing group, instrumental dance arrangements by Folk 7, the acoustic trio Kalnejas, post-folk pioneers Iļģi, the bagpipe and drum group Auļi with Banga and the Anima choir, the young women's group Tautumeitas, soloist Katrīna Dimanta, the up-and-coming band Jōra and the folktronic band Zari, among others.

TRACKI IST

- Saucēias Ar dziesminu laukā gāiu / I Went Outdoors with My Song. 2:15. MT: trad. From CD Dabā, Lauska, 2022
- Folk7 Vonogu dancs / The Hawks' Dance, 3:23, M: E. Kārklis
- 3. TKP Suni / Dogs, 4:11, M: trad., E. Zeps, J. Stalte; T: trad. From CD Sviests 9, Lauska, 2022
- 4. Kalneias Pie Dievina gari galdi / Long Tables at God's Place, 3:21, M: T, Valmiers, M, Valmiera, S, Vitola: T; trad.
- Kalneias Uz ūdena / On the Water, 3:00, M; T. Valmiers, M, Valmiera, S, Vītola; T; trad.

From CD Leias I. Kalneias, 2020

- Treiasmens Kas redzēja Auseklīti / Who Saw the Morning Star, 3:23, MT; trad. From CD Mežā un ciemā, Lauska, 2022
- 7. Jōra Dancoj visu Jānu nakti / I Danced All Midsummer Night, 2:46, M: D. Drava, L. Matule. I. K. Štubis. K. Vītols: T: trad. Self-released single, 2022
- 8. Auli, Banga Jānīts sēde ozolā / Jānis Sat in the Oak Tree, 3:06, M: K. Bārbals, M. Milevskis; T: trad. From CD Sit. Jānīti! Lauska. 2022
- 9. Auli, ANIMA Saulkrasti mixed choir Pērkons brauca pār debesi / Thunder Rode Across the Sky, 3:20, M: M. Milevskis, L. Leontjeva, K. Bārbals; T: trad., D. Bārbale From CD Latvju zīmēs rotāties, Lauska, 2022
- 10. Tautumeitas Ritual, 3:50, M: A. Rancane, I. Dzerve; T: trad.
- 11. Tautumeitas Arājiņš / The Ploughman, 3:05, M: A. Rancāne; T: trad. From CD Skrejcelš, Tautumeitas, 2022
- 12. Ilģi Vai tu mumsim līdzi nāksi? / Will You Come With Us?, 4:09, M: Ilģi, arrangement E. Kronbergs, T: trad.
- 13. Ilgi Trejdevini bundzenieki / Scores of Drummers, 4:01, M: Ilgi, arrangement E. Kronbergs, T: trad. From opus Mēs devini bālelini, Ilģi, 2021
- 14. Very Cool People Pelmjaški / Rapid Dough, 4:03, M: K. Lubovs
- 15. Very Cool People Renegade, 3:26, M: A. Buikis
 - From CD 50 Years Of Influence + 30 Years Of Cool Equals 13 Years Of Music Hooliganism, SIA Very Cool People, 2021
- 16. Katrīna Dimanta, Līdzskana Meža meitina / Forest Girl, 3:07, M: K. Dimanta; T: K. Dimanta, trad.
- 17. Katrīna Dimanta Kur mēs mīli runājām / Where We Speak Lovingty, 3:32, M: K. Dimanta; T: K. Dimanta From CD Krāsas, Dimanta Management, 2022
- 18. Dandari Stürsteps / Corner Step, 2:45, M: trad., Dandari
- 19. Dandari Garais dancis / Long Dance, 3:57, M: trad., Dandari From CD Divatā, Lauska, 2021
- 20. Zari Saules rīti / Mornings of the Sun, 5:14, M: I. Dreimane; T: trad. From CD Odzīte, Wiktorijas Skanu ieraksti, 2021



On springtime evenings, young women would go to a nearby hill to sing. They would also listen to each other sing, show off amongst themselves and to their neighbours, and enjoy how the trees and meadows soaked up the sound of their voices. This recording was made on a spring evening at Sāviena Hillfort, in the natural setting of this genre of traditional outdoor singing. The latest album by Saucējas, titled $Dab\bar{a}$ (In Nature), features songs sung in locations, times of the year and times of the day at which they might have traditionally been sung. Saucējas is the traditional singing ensemble of the Latvian Academy of Culture and spares neither time nor expense to bring us a great aural experience of outdoor singing also in CD format and to let us imagine for a moment what such music – spring songs beloved by girls and young women performed in what we today call traditional polyphony – sounded like as a part of everyday life 150 years ago.

The solo singer, or 'caller', in Latvian traditional music is often at the same time also the creator of the song's content. She strings together a number of four-line verses that she has inherited or created according to certain stylistic rules into a logical, interesting, topical message. The solo singer in "I Went Outdoors with My Song" is Saucéjas leader and researcher lveta Tâle.



"The Hawks' Dance" grew out of a passion for folk music and music making and was arranged by Edgars, a bagpiper from a family of musicians. His sister, Kristine, plays the violin. They and their friends once had a band called Folkvakars, which was based on musicians from the Ala Folk Club in Riga and specialised in playing Latvian traditional dances and popular songs. With Artis, they've already had an ethno-band called Brali un Masas (in which Artis played drums and arranged the music, although he plays piano on this recording). Edgars has performed with Martins (drums) and Gatis (banjo) in the band Auli for years. Folk7's sound is also complemented by guitar, bass guitar and mandolin.

Edgars describes "The Hawks' Dance" as the music of feelings. The principle of expressing feelings through music seems to be what has united musicians throughout the ages, in this case, bringing Edgars closer to those players of the diatonic accordion, violin and mandolin among his ancestors. The piece itself and its melody are newly created. We will probably never be able to tell whether such melodies were inspired by folk music or by the possibilities afforded by the bagpipe as an instrument and the musician's joy in playing it. In any case, we hope that more and more such newly created bagpipe tunes emerge, as well as more and more bagpipers.



The core of TKP – or Tā Kā Pērn, meaning 'just like last year' – consists of Ēriks Zeps (soloist and accordionist with the energetic Latgalian folk band Rikši) and Julgi Stalte (singer, violinist and kokle player from a family that serves as a custodian of Livonian traditions and also set in motion the Latvian folk revival). This leading duo is accompanied by Ingus Grinbergs on violin, Artürs Jefremovs on bass and Pēteris Narubins on guitar, mandolin and voice.

The group's sound reflects a natural combination of the Latgalian and Livonian – an aching yearning from eastern Latvia and perpetuity from the sea in the western part of the country. However, Ēriks also sings in Livonian and Julgī in Latgalian. The participants describe their music as "the enthusiasm, the energy and the ever-pulsating presence of folk wisdom; the joy, the smiles and the tears; the emotional experiences – all that is and remains immortal throughout the ages". The song "Does" is a mix of a Latgalian and Livonian folk song.



Marija and Toms are successful partners both in music and in life. They met and still play in the band Coco'nuts. Now they are also raising a young daughter, Jūle, and studying at the Latvian Academy of Music – Toms specialising in jazz double bass and Marija in jazz vocals. Spare Vitola complements the music with her extraordinary fiddling.

In their performances, the themes of folk songs grow into a shared experience that has both tension and a timeless sense of lightness and home. "Long Tables at God's Place" is commonly sung around the table at various celebrations, often in an exaggeratedly solemn, highly romantic manner. The lyrics express a wish to always be in the easier position of giver rather than taker. This interpretation by Kalnejas responds dynamically to the song, which has been taught to Latvian schoolchildren for generations, and gives it a fresh sound.

Marija's voice is complemented by Monta Kurme's vocals in both songs, while Spāre's atmospheric violin parts in "On the Water" set a mood that is reminiscent of the sound of natural horns.



Trejasmens' new album, Mežā un ciemā (Forest and Village), is realised in the best traditions of local history, including stories from the Ropaži area about its hills, roads, rivers and people's ability to live with them. This is also the group's first album to include songs from another project of lead singer Andrejs Planders, namely, an indie rock band with drum kit and electric guitar – all, of course, about ancient times in Ropaži. On the whole, the songs are so varied in style that it's hard to tell they're from the same album. Ska, punk rock... and yet, they all come together in the village of Ropaži.

"Who Saw the Morning Star" is a war ballad interpreted in the traditions of ancient-style music, 'ancient' meaning that the young men's powerful singing is accompanied by bagpipes and drums. The recording features some of the most resonant male vocals on today's Latvian ethnic music scene. Their voices ring true and genuine, because this music, like other ancient skills, serve as a platform and a space to meet our ancestors and lean on them for strength.



Jōra means 'lake' in the Livonian language. Long ago, the similar Latvian word jūra meant 'lake' also in the Baltic languages, but this meaning shifted over time to mean 'sea'. In the context of contemporary ethnic music, however, Jōra denotes a group of four energetic young people who perform Latvian music as well as music from other regions. With a small ensemble of violin, kokle, guitar, and percussion, they fuse the sounds of Latvia and northern Europe.

The members of Jōra are Dārta Drava (violin, vocals), Lauma Matule (kokle, wooden flute, vocals), Ivars Štubis (guitar) and Kalvis Vītols (percussion). The two women studied ethnomusicology together, Ivars grew up in an Australian-Latvian family and moved to Latvia only relatively recently, and Kalvis is a member of a large family of folklorists. In addition to post-folk interpretations of Latvian songs, the group's repertoire also includes Scandinavian flavours.

"I Danced All Midsummer Night" introduces the Midsummer section of this album.



Last year, Auli continued a marathon of collaborations that began quite some time ago. In one of its previous musical journeys, the Voices of the Ancestors project, the drum-and-bagpipe group met with strong male voices from near and far. Auli's more recent collaborations have focused on the local ethnic music scene. Together with various performers, they have created music for a large-scale dance performance, and, in celebration of Midsummer, they released an entire album dedicated to this important festival and featuring a variety of soloists.

A huge proportion of Latvian folk songs and melodies are related to the theme of Midsummer and cover such wide-ranging topics as preparing for the festival, picking flowers and herbs, so-called teasing songs, going from house to house to wish neighbours well, and also songs with mythological content, in which the main role is played by Jānis, or John, the festival's namesake.

"Jānis Sat in the Oak Tree" was created together with the talented folklore group Banga, which brings together enthusiastic young people from Riga with experience and knowledge of folklore. They sing a melody in traditional polyphony from the region of Kurzeme that can be used in various different situations depending on the lyrics chosen

"Thunder Rode Across the Sky" features the Anima Saulkrasti Mixed Choir, which already has experience with other ethnic and popular music projects. This piece comes from the most impressive national dance project of the pandemic period, the multimedia dance performance Latvju zīmēs rotāties (Adorning Ourselves with Latvian Symbols), in which the clips of 600 dancers were edited together to create ethnographic ornaments.



Tautumeitas have released their third solo studio album, which was planned already before the pandemic. Its title, Skrejcel's (Runway), suggests that the group is still in its early stages. Last year's changes in the group's line-up and instrumentation, as well as its search for a new producer and fortune in finding Povel Olsson to fill this role, also mean a huge change in Tautumeitas' sound.

Both songs included in this selection centre on the theme of marriage. In "The Ploughman", the singers extol the virtues of those who work the land and promise to marry only ploughmen. "Ritual's" dynamic structure portrays the pain that a young bride feels after having (historically) been stolen from her home by the bridegroom, as well as her mother's worries. The sound of "Ritual" is rhythmically and timbrally inspired by Dakha Brakha, a group that Tautumeitas greatly admire. In "The Ploughman", Laura Marta Līcīte's energetic and bright voice resounds through a megaphone and is contrasted by soft polyphonic singing.



Ilgi's most recent recording (the precursor to which, "Wedding Dance of Kunigunde and Dabrelis", was included on Native Music 15) features the longest song in Latvian folklore. Told in 65 verses over nine tracks, the story of "We, the Nine Brothers", in which the hero goes on a weeks-long journey to fulfil a mission, takes a little longer than half an hour. But Ilgi present an interesting technique, in which they seemingly stretch out time, slowly and serenely following each stage of the story, thereby delving deeper into the song and in effect stopping time. The music is highly visual, and the mood can change completely during the song, achieving a kind of epic effect. This is also why the album should be listened to at least once from beginning to end. It should be mentioned that the mood changes within the songs often seem somewhat illustrative, but the interesting multi-layered arrangements immediately brush away such thoughts, only to make the listener long for some additional beautiful animated material to accompany this wondrous music.

Ilgi presented the songs "Scores of Drummers" and "Will You Come With Us?" on the occasion of the group's 40th anniversary as well as Latvia's independence day. Ilgi are: Ilga Reizniece, vocals and violin; Māris Muktupāvels, vocals, kokles, bagpipe, accordion, wooden flute; Gatis Gaujenieks, vocals, bass, guitar, monochord, mandolin; Egons Kronbergs, bass guitar, guitar; Mārtinš Linde, percussion. Irina Mihailovska sings the role of the sister.



Very Cool People (VCP) creates modern, complicated yet very listenable music for a wide audience. Using contemporary tools, the band strives to put jazz and funk back on the dance floor and make it more accessible to ordinary people. Both pieces in this selection are from the album 50 Years of Influence + 30 Years of Cool Equals 13 Years of Music Hooliganism, which uses vivid imagery, references and irony to reflect on the tragicomic nature of life under totalitarianism and the crazy, adventurous interaction between several generations of musicians that shaped the Latvian music scene. VCP's guitarist and leader Elvijs Grafcovs comments on the tribute: "Thank you so much, renegades, for helping to raise the next generations of musicians and, in the end, paving the way for us in the off-road conditions of latvia!"

One can certainly knead dough to the pulse of "Pelmjaški". It's dynamic and seems to tell the story of a long and persistent process. For more clues, check out the music video. With "Renegade", VCP pays tribute to Latvia's musicians of the 1970s who, despite limited access to music from abroad and bans imposed by the Soviet occupation, managed to listen to and also play jazz, rock, funk and instrumental non-academic music. In it, the warm sound of a 70s vocal-instrumental ensemble is enriched with a chorus and "ba-ba-ba" scat reminiscent of an old Russian film. The piece was originally released as a single and included on the 2017 album *Singles From* 2010-2017 (These Tunes Are Not Included In Any Album), but in 2021 it was logically incorporated into the new album.



Energetic singer, musician and entrepreneur Katrina Dimanta grew up in a musical family during Latvia's period of national awakening. She first trained as a cello player but also plays violin and ukulele. Dimanta has many musical friends, yet this year's album, Krāsas (Colours), is her first solo release. Its lively songs feature light arrangements, including bluegrass and zydeco rhythms, as well as strong vocals and carefree scatting.

With her siblings and friends, Dimanta is a frequent musical guest at Latvian diaspora events in Europe, the United States and Australia. She was formerly a member of ImantaDimanta and Māsas Dimantas. She has participated in the Eurovision song contest several times and has appeared on television shows; she also uses her creativity to brighten the days of children in hospital.

"Forest Girl" serves as an anthem for joyful singing on summer days. Her second song imparts wisdom regarding friendship and harmony between people: "Where we speak lovingly, there the white clover blooms; where we quarrel fercely there the earth runtures."



DANDARI

18. CORNER STEP / STŪRSTEPS 19. LONG DANCE / GARAIS DANCIS

Dandari is a University of Latvia dance group established forty years ago. Its broad repertoire includes partner dances, multi-couple dances, quadrilles and, of course, everything one might need to lead a seasonal festival celebration. Dandari's new album, *Divatā* (The Two of Us), features a selection of the group's current dance favourites. The musicians play diatonic accordion, flute, mandolin and drum, and all the musicians and dancers also sing. The arrangements are simple and the sound could be described as relatively mellow.

The exact origins of "Corner Step" are not known – it may have been inspired by the two-step, or early foxtrot, a popular ballroom dance of the early 20th century. But, according to research by Dandari, perhaps the composer of the melody named it after a tavern in early-20th-century Riga called *Stürsteps*.

"Long Dance" is a popular Latvian dance and one of the most beautiful traditional instrumental melodies. At modern dance events, it signals the end of the evening. Interpretations of this dance are performed by many Latvian bands, including Skyforger, Ilgi and kokle player Laima Jansone as well as the mediaeval music group Lity Taler and many others. The Dandari version is based on the bayan, which gives the melody a romantic feel and brings to mind Paris.



The band Zari comes from the city of Liepāja, the rock capital of Latvia. Its sound, which the band members call 'folktronic', is unique on the Latvian ethnic music scene.

It's been five years since Zari's album Sazaroti (Branched Out, 2017), and last year the band released a new album, called Odzite (Little Adder). It contains only five tracks, but the length of the record is almost 40 minutes. Synthesised effects create unhurried aural paintings that prepare the listener for traditional folk lyrics performed in several different styles. The mystical world conjured by the electronic instruments is carried forward by the drums, guitar and bass of this alternative rock trio. The folk song texts emerge like the sound of the world, like magical formulas whispered by living and inanimate nature – the environment we humans live in. The melodies are composed by Zari singer leva Dreimane, arranged by musician Zigmärs Miemins, and interpreted by the band members on their respective instruments. Odzite is also available on vinyl.

"Mornings of the Sun" begins with the dawn, as portrayed by synthesiser and voice. This quickly leads into a funk-pop section reminiscent of the 1980s, when the band members were born. The two female vocals then harmoniously intertwine as the story crescendos into daybreak, or the blossoming of the 'fire flower'.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Latvian Music Information Centre

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Latvian National Centre for Culture

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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

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RozuKasTe
Traditional culture and music, crafts,
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AGENTS AND PRODUCERS

LATVIIAS KONCERTI AGENCY

+371 67205485 koncerti@latvijaskoncerti.lv www.latvijaskoncerti.lv Genre: classical / jazz / rock / world

HERMAN BRAUN FOUNDATION – MUSIC AGENCY

Director: Inna Davidova +371 67205444 hbf@hbf.lv www.hhf.lv

Genre: classical / jazz / world

FESTIVALS

International Folklore Festival BAITICA

Organiser: Latvian National Centre for

Culture Director: Lauma Bērza

+371 62305830 lauma.berza@lnkc.gov.lv

festivalhaltica

http://www.lnkc.gov.lv/ Frequency: triennial

Genre: folklore, traditional culture, craft

International Folk Dance Festival SUDMALINAS

Organiser: Latvian National Centre for Culture Programme Director: Maruta Alpa

+371 67228985 maruta.alpa@lnkc.gov.lv www.sudmalinas.lv

Frequency: triennial Genre: staged folk dance

World Music Festival PORTA

Manager: Ilze Apsiņa +371 29377269

ilze.apsina@festivalporta.lv

PortaFestival
www.festivalporta.lv
Genre: world / folk

International DRONF FESTIVAL

Organiser: Suiti Ethnic Culture Centre Director: Dace Martinova +371 29222103 dace.martinova@inbox.lv www.suitunovads.lv Genre: traditional

International Music Festival RĪGAS

Organiser: Contemporary Music Centre Director: Diāna Briežkalne

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RigasRitmiFestival

RigasRitmiFestiva
www.rigasritmi.lv

Genre: jazz, world, contemporary

Art, music and culture festival KOMETA

+371 26185028

info@festivalskometa.lv

www.festivalskometa.lv

Genre: contemporary music, art, lectures, movies

International folk dance festival LIPA KUST

Organiser: Upītes youth folklore group Director: Andris Slišāns

+371 29621058

lipa.kust@gmail.com

www.upite.lv

Genre: traditional dances and songs, dance masterclasses

International music festival LABA

+371 67211040

kristine@labadaba.lv

LABADABAfestival

Genre: mix, family friendly

Festival ZOBENS UN LEMESS

Organiser: Valdis Bērzvads

+371 29645264

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f zobensunlemess

http://zobensunlemess.lv Genre: Folk / pagan / metal

Ethno-Festival SVIESTS

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www.etnosviests.lv

Annual international festival featuring crafts and music

Traditional outdoor singing festival

Organiser: traditional singing group Saucējas

+371 26454974 sauceias@gmail.com

Saucejas

Genre: traditional

Festival of music, art and local harvest ZEMLIKA

Organiser: Miks Magone +371 26546213

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www.zemlika.lv

Musicians, art and music workshops, seminars, open lectures, film screenings, theatre, festival's restaurant with local produce on its menu and other activities are planned as an annual event.

ETHNIC, WORLD AND TRADITIONAL MUSIC GROUPS

ANIMA, mixed choir

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skorisanima www.korisanima.lv Genre: choral music

AULI

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Genre: traditional / world

BANGA

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DANDARI

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Genre: roots music / folk rock

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Trejasmens
Genre: traditional / folk

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VERY COOL PEOPLE

+371 29636320 www.verycoolpeople.org booking@verycoolpeople.org

serve: Massive injection

Genre: Massive injection of funk & soul combined with jazz, surf & klezmer

ZARI

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www.zari.lv
Grupa.Zari

Genre: folktronic

Concept & Text: Lauma Bērza Producer: Vineta Romāne Translation: Amanda Zaeska Mastering: Kaspars Bārbals Design: Vadims Kožins Photo: Gatis Indrēvics







