



## **CHORAL TOUR OF LATVIA – “THE SINGING NATION”** **May 19-25, 2025**

**Laura Adlers of The Adlers Agency**, in partnership with **Aira Birziņa**, the **Riga Cathedral Choir School**, and the **Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music (JVLMA)**, are pleased to present our first **Choral Tour of Latvia – “The Singing Nation”, from May 19-25, 2025**. The tour is designed for choral conductors and composers in Canada and the United States and will provide the opportunity for colleagues to immerse themselves in Latvian choral culture and the Latvian music education system. We also welcome choral singers and those who are passionate about choral music and would like to join us! The minimum number of participants for this tour will be 14, the maximum will be 20.

As the new academic and concert seasons have just begun, we are still confirming some details with colleagues in Riga, but wanted to send this initial information to you for your consideration and so you may save the dates! Once the itinerary is confirmed, Laura will follow up with those who are interested about participation fees and additional information!

We are planning a program in Riga which will include:

- attending rehearsals and concerts with amateur youth and adult and professional choirs;
- attending conducting and vocalist final exams at the JVLMA and Riga Cathedral Choir School;
- networking opportunities with Latvian composers and conductors;
- presentations by Latvian composers and conductors on Latvian choral music themes;
- the opportunity for Canadian and US choral conductors and composers to present to Latvian colleagues on themes of choral music in your countries (see below);
- meetings with cultural institutions such as the Latvian Composers Union, the Latvian Music Information Centre, and the Latvian Song Celebration Association;
- a visit to the open-air stage in Mežaparks (seen above) and the Latvian Song and Dance Celebration Exhibition;
- the opportunity to visit music publisher Musica Baltica, peruse and purchase scores;

- free time to visit Riga's many cultural attractions, including the Old Town, the Art Nouveau (Jugendstil) architecture walking tour and museum, the National Museum of Art, the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, the National Library of Latvia, the Riga Cathedral, performances of the Latvian National Opera, Ballet and Latvian National Symphony Orchestra (concerts TBA), the craft and food markets, restaurants, cafés and shops around the city, and much more!

Most importantly, this tour will be a cultural exchange between Canadian, US and Latvian conductors and composers and an opportunity for you to expand your Canadian – US – Latvian choral networks! We will invite a limited number of conductors and composers to present to your choral colleagues in Latvia on themes of Canadian and US choral traditions, composition, and/or your academic research. We will notify you of the selection process for presentations shortly.

**We are also exploring a second part for this tour, which would take us to Estonia from May 26-28, returning to Riga on May 29. We will provide more information about this as soon as we are able.**

### **MEET LAURA ADLERS AND AIRA BIRZIŅA!**

**LAURA ADLERS** is an arts and non-profit leader and producer based in Guelph, ON, who has successfully directed organizations and projects in the cultural and public sectors for more than 25 years. Through her consulting business, The Adlers Agency, she collaborates with and leads cultural and non-profit organizations on interim management, operational assessment and strategic planning, fundraising and development, artistic administration, special event and tour production, and cross-cultural projects.

A life-long choral singer herself, she is internationally recognized as an award-winning administrator of community and professional choirs, particularly in Canada and Latvia. Current and past clients include Luminous Voices (Timothy Shantz, Calgary), The Elora Singers and Elora Festival (Mark Vuorinen, Elora), the State Choir LATVIJA (Māris Sirmāis, Riga), Pax Christi Chorale (Stephanie Martin, Toronto), Orpheus Choir of Toronto (Robert Cooper, Toronto), Amadeus Choir of Greater Toronto (Lydia Adams, Toronto), and the Latvian Youth Choir BALSIS (Ints Teterovskis, Riga). Laura has been instrumental in raising the profiles of amateur and professional Latvian choirs on the world stage, producing nine international tours for BALSIS from 2009–2014, co-producing Ēriks Ešēvalds' *Nordic Light Tour* in Ontario with Robert Cooper and the Orpheus Choir of Toronto, and producing the State Choir LATVIJA's debut Canadian tour in 2019.

Laura completed a Master of Management in International Arts Management (MMIAM) in 2015, presented jointly by HEC Montréal and Southern Methodist University (Dallas). She currently serves on the Chorus America Board of Directors (Washington, DC). In 2020, Laura was appointed an Officer of the Cross of Recognition by the Republic of Latvia for her achievements in promoting Latvian culture and artists internationally. She is also a published Latvian-English literary translator and recently translated her first novel. [www.lauraadlers.com](http://www.lauraadlers.com)

**AIRA BIRZIŅA** is one of Latvia's most outstanding conductors. She has been the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Riga Cathedral Girls' Choir TIARA since 2000. Aira has been the Principal Conductor of the women's choirs DZINTARS and RASA for many years. She is a Professor in the Department of Choral Conducting at the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music. Since 2003, Aira Birziņa has been a Chief Conductor of the Nationwide Latvian Song and Dance Celebrations. She leads various workshops,

participates in conferences, and works as a member on juries at international choral competitions in Latvia and abroad. The Republic of Latvia has honoured Aira Birziņa for her work in the field of national culture, including the highest recognition of Latvia – the Order of the Three Stars (2015). She was also awarded with the Certificate of Commendation by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan in 2023 and 2021, the Acknowledgement of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia in 2018, the Annual Culture Prize of the City of Ogre in 2017 and 2018, the Culture Prize *White Sparrow* of the Riga Municipality in 2015, and the Ministry of Culture's Prize in Folk Art in 1999.

Aira Birziņa is an energetic and fascinating leader, inspiring her singers to always perform at their best. She cherishes the traditions of her teachers, the great Latvian choral conductors Imants Kokars, Edgars Račevskis and Jānis Lindenbergs, and passes this knowledge on to her students at the Latvian Academy of Music and Riga Cathedral Choir School. Under Aira Birziņa's leadership, the choir TIARA has won several international competitions and prepared many wonderful concert programmes, growing from an ensemble of a few singers to one of the most vivid musical groups in the concert life of Latvia.

**Here are two videos of Aira conducting the Riga Cathedral Girls' Choir TIARA and the mass choir of 17,000+ at the Latvian Song and Dance Celebrations in 2023:**

“Spring, the Sweet Spring”, composed by Ēriks Ešenvalds, text by Thomas Nashe, performed at the Tolosa Choral Contest (2022): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SY23qIvaNnI>

“Kur Tu biji, bāleliņi?” (“Where were you, my brother?”), composed by Selga Mence, text by Agris Pilsums (with soloist Marina Rebeka) (2023): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtiSV-l88k0>

**And to inspire you further, here are a few more clips from the Song Celebrations in 2018 and 2023. You will note the old and new open-air stages. Enjoy!**

Latvia's National Anthem (“God, Bless Latvia!”), composed by Kārlis Baumanis, conducted by Sigvards Klāva (2023): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ru\\_1E4kuTI8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ru_1E4kuTI8)

“Saule, Pērkons, Daugava” (“Sun, Thunder, Daugava”), composed by the late Mārtiņš Brauns (at the piano), text by the revered Latvian poet Rainis (with subtitles), conducted by Romāns Vanags. This is an unofficial anthem in Latvia, written in the late 1980s, a song of defiance and strength in the face of Soviet oppression (2018). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sT8WenpR8NI>

“Manai Dzimtenei” (“For my Homeland”), composed by Maestro Raimonds Pauls (at the piano, 87 yrs old!), text by Jānis Peters, conducted by Youth Choir BALSIS' conductor Ints Teterovskis (2023): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thzmvLAz9zo>

“Krustiem zvaigznes debesīs”, composed by Ēriks Ešenvalds (at the piano), text based on a folk song (with subtitles), choreographed by the late Uģis Brikmanis, conducted by Agita Rimšēviča (2018): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YnT6LalBcc>