

## TRUTH

### DAŽU SKAISTU ZIEDU AND OTHER PAGES OF THE LATVIAN CULTURE HISTORY

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#### Summary

The essence of this 'memoire paper' finds its origin in the ideas emanating from a conference organised by Bonn University some time ago (*Das immaterielle Kulturgut Musik im Spannungsfeld von 'Lebenswelt' und 'Monument' / The Intangible Cultural Asset Music in the 'Live-World' and 'Monument' Field of Tension*, 2009), such as, on the place and meaning of intangible culture in the society, the subjective and individually personal component of the history of music, and the supposedly parallel version of the academic study of human and societal experience, memory, observations and oral traditions. On the remembrance culture – the collection of individual experiences, which initially functioned only within the oral tradition, later – very slowly – gradually in parallel to it also becoming materialised (notes, letters, diaries) but nevertheless remaining a marginalized, peculiar phenomenon. Also – on the different, changing and relative, when it comes to individual or even societal perception, nature of fixed truth, researched and discussed in scientific literature. In any case – in the center of attention was placed the impulse: a view on what is and was taking place from the viewpoint of the *I* as the satellite of the *great history* but perhaps also a half-deliberate source and emotionally participatory factor. Alongside a few others I picked one main route for the article – the message on the fate and metamorphosis of the well-known, everyday life song *Dažu skaistu ziedu* [*Some Pretty Flowers*] in the unfolding of the Latvian culture in the course of almost a century and a half, but particularly in connection with personal, individual experience and especially – when it comes to the hypothetical, the debatable, *reading between the lines* – exactly what constitutes the truth: imaginary and real, personal, societal, historic and legendary... I am not writing about the scientific-investigatory aspect of it but rather the mark of the personal memory. In reality – a mosaic in miniature in which, similarly to Gidon Kremer's *Shivers of a Childhood* (*Kindheitssplitter*, 1993) more than merely the direct existence is reflected.

The very first episode of the 1967 production of the Juozas Grušas play *Love, Jazz and the Devil* in the theatre of Liepāja: in musings on what is truth, the heroine of the play lays out to the doctor the distinction between the material and nonmaterial nature of the expressions of reality. The word 'jazz' is used here already as a euphemism for the denotation of 'rock', 'underground music', simultaneously sketching

out the actually unequal nature of the *equality* of the Soviet society. In that case my own musings on the dual nature of nonmaterial culture: a rather tangible pair of mittens brings with it a completely intangible, developed through centuries and individually changing ornament in which one can only surmise connections, continuity, a spiritual process.

Musings on the *ēlerētais ķisinbīrs* in one of the variations of the folksong *Krauklīt's sēž ozolā* [*The Raven Sitting in the Oak*] shows a close link to German culture – both when it comes to the German land as a sign of a rich and prosperous life, and to specific words (from the French *ail* – the wing, and from the German *Kissenüberzug* – the pillowcase), which have merged into the today incomprehensible *ēlerēts ķisinbīrs*. The truth here has gotten *lost in translation*, carried out by life itself... At the heart of the article the metamorphosis of the already mentioned song by Franz Abt *Schöne Silberblüte* via the text of Lapas Mārtiņš *Mana dārza jaukums* [*The Loveliness / The Crown of my Garden*] to the poem of the youth of Andrievs Niedra *Dažu skaistu ziedu*, which is how we hear it up to this day. A concrete musical communication – the citation of the initial measures of Abt in the choral piece *Pie Gaujas* [*At Gauja*] by Alfrēds Kalniņš. And finally the transformation and expression of the phenomenon of Latvian choral culture, spontaneously singing *Pūt, vējiņi* [*Blow, Wind*] in the arrangement of Andrejs Jurjāns in the opera house, at the closing of large gatherings of the Soviet state. The government met it with incomprehension, truth be told – with real and true understanding, which inflamed the bearers of power with helpless anger. Will the spirit of song save the nation? We have not come that far, but one of the roads is the preservation and advancement of individual past. Because, paraphrasing a well-known man's expression *L'état, c'est moi* we can assert: *The truth – it's me*. If we really want to write a complete, all-encompassing history of our culture, observing the objective regularities and historically societal premises, we also have to include in it the other side – the subjective, supposedly independent, unconnected elements of development. This is especially true in the field of the acquisition of the culture of memory and nonmaterial culture, which are still new areas seeking their own way and value. Naturally, this also refers to the writing of the history of music – work that the Latvian culture still has ahead of it. Written without the personal viewpoint and impressions, without the individual and shared experiences the history of music would be dry and infertile, if not even inanimate, dead.

The same said in other words:

Musicological research is based in large degree on tangible source materials (e.g., notation forms, archival materials, life stories and pictorial or audio documents), through which music cultural phenomena, events and connections become 'manifest'. In comparison, the phenomena of music itself and its related cultural practices seem

rather elusive and ephemeral. The questions posed in the symposium relate precisely to this constellation of the intangible and the material or respectively medialized manifestations of music cultural practices and discourses. Against the backdrop of theoretical thoughts on the tension field between 'life-world' and 'monument' – as a fundamental scientific problem – the specific scenario of the music- and remembrance culture of the Germans originating from Eastern and Southeastern European settlement regions is to be examined, also with consideration of the thematic complex 'flight and expulsion'. The aim is to discuss music, beyond the boundaries of advanced culture, as an intangible cultural and migrational asset, to open up discussion of it with consideration of corresponding historical and contemporary music-ethno-graphic and folkloristic 'monuments', as medial repositories, and to inquire about possibilities of music history writing as well as about models of the museal presentation of music (as a lived cultural practice).