

# THE RIGA KNIGHTS OPERA BY HEINRICH DORN AND ITS MUSICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

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## Summary

The current study focuses on the opera *Das Banner von England* (*The Flag of England*) by the 19th-century German composer Heinrich Dorn (1804–1892), which was written and first performed in Riga on November 8 (according to the Julian calendar), 1841. Until now, this four-act opera has existed in an abstract form, because the only sources for the study were posters and review columns found in periodicals of the time. In 2019 – after sheet music of the former Riga City (German) theater came into the collection of the National Library of Latvia (NLL) – Dorn’s opus was found during the cataloging process. This event has radically changed the situation in the specific field of research. The score, held by NLL, could be confirmed as the author’s manuscript, it consists of about 800 pages, in addition to several dozen orchestral parts and the libretto (the opera is composed with spoken dialogues). Therefore, for the first time, it is possible to answer the question: what does this opera really mean for the history of opera in general and for the history of Latvian opera? *The Flag of England* is a so-called ‘knights opera’, which has now been added to the list of the German romantic opera branch. The article takes a closer look at the libretto, composed by Riga’s German teacher, musician and journalist Carl Alt (1807–1858), and its various sources (a novel *Talisman* by Walter Scott, 1825; a dramatic play *Der Löwe von Kurdistan* (*The Lion of Kurdistan*) by Joseph von Auffenberg, 1827). A detailed plot of the opera based on studies of the verbal fulltext manuscript is given in the appendix. Although Dorn’s opera emerged in tradition of the German musical theatre, it has been widely stylistically influenced by the new dramatic Italian opera of the time (Bellini, Donizetti), and this music “channel” has inspired the music by Dorn in some aspects too. Special attention is devoted to the male choirs in Dorn’s opera. These reflect the traditions of both Protestant chorale and Liedertafel; the latter was closely related to Dorn’s own musical activities in Riga, creating and developing this modern form of collective singing, so beloved by civil society at the time.