

Rivers of our Being

The Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh

30 November 2018

Rivers of Our Being takes its inspiration from the rivers of Europe that cross different countries, bringing together diverse cultures across the continent. It takes its cue from the famous Scottish ethnologist Hamish Henderson, who compared tradition to a 'carrying stream'.

A parallel is drawn between the flow of rivers that carry people and heritages from one area to another, with different musical traditions across the wide European space, that have intersected over time and mutually influenced one another in a similar manner.

Traditional instruments from across Europe, different languages, and themes derived from the rich heritages of Europe are harmoniously integrated in the oratorio.

Background image: Confluence of Neris and Nemunas, Lithuania
(© Ulrich Kockel 2018)

OUR HERITAGE:
WHERE THE PAST
MEETS THE FUTURE

2018 
EUROPEAN YEAR
OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE
#EuropeForCulture



**Scotland's
Winter Festivals**

North

Recital: Culture and Identity^{1,2}

Following the overture *The Same Stream of Life*, we start our journey in the North, where the West of Russia meets Finland and Estonia, and people speak the Finno-Ugric languages Saami and Votic. We hear a tune composed in the tradition of Saami yoik, an expression of emotions usually created on the spot, which flows into a song about a *Swallow's Golden Eggs* that are taken away by the wind towards the sea; there the singer takes a rake and finds the eggs in seaweed, and the birds are born.

The second song takes us to eastern Latvia, to a region called Selonja, where an angel announces an important cosmic event: the wedding of the daughter of the Sun. Thunder will lead the ceremony, and Laima, goddess of fortune, together with other mythical creatures will attend the celebrations.

The third mythical song is Norwegian. It tells us about Villemann's bride being snatched by a troll. Villemann plays his harp gently and loud by the river, thus vanquishing the troll's strength, and rescuing his bride by the magical *Power of the Harp*.

¹ Bohlman in Johann Gottfried Herder & Philip Bohlman, *Song Loves the Masses*, 2018

² Johann Gottfried Herder <https://www.saveaquote.com/quotes/moods/quote-250546?f=a:1797>

East

Recital: Identity and Performativity^{3,4}

In the East, our first song is Ukrainian. It is about *A Tree*, shelter to birds, shadow from the sun, which is the centre around which life revolves. The lyrics capture the beauty of the tree and of the raven sitting on a branch; a young girl nearby is longing for, and weeping to see, her young Cossack.

Happy Tones is an instrumental tune composed in the tradition of *klezmer*, Eastern European Jewish dance music. The happy tones are expressing joyful emotions and are aimed to resonate with the divine.

The third piece, a song celebrating hospitality, originates from the Highlands of southern Poland. The highlanders sing *We Wish You All The Best*, and 'may Jesus help you and give you many years to live, and you people, may you live long, and may you have much love around you'.

³ Mairead Nic Craith (CoHERE team)

⁴ Kurt Tucholsky, *Castle Gripsholm*, 1985

Recital: 'Others' as a Threat to Identity^{5,6}

Our first song from the South is a lullaby, *Sleep in Peace, My Child*. It is performed in the Sardinian tradition, but played by a Latvian bagpipe, whose sound resembles that of the *launeddas*, an ancient instrument of the region. The lyrics are: 'sleep my baby, sleep in peace, which will be given by God, peace and fortune that will be for you'.

An instrumental piece, *Alla Mozart*, follows, reflecting Muslim music of the South. Crusades had a strong influence on music, in particular the military music of the Arab and Turkish armies. This piece is an imaginative exploration of what may have influenced Mozart to write his famous 'Alla Turca', probably inspired by music he heard at the time.

I Have Been Redeemed is a Greek song of resistance to the Ottoman empire. It captures the Greeks' attempts to preserve their own cultural patterns and ignore the Turkish hegemony. The lyrics depict people complaining of being poor and oppressed, but keeping their faith and taking candles to the church.

⁵ Jack Goody, *Islam in Europe*, 1984

⁶ Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, 2003

Recital: Populism and Multiculturalism^{7,8}

The first song from the West, *A Swan on the Castle Tower*, is from Brittany. The swan is a sign that the king will arrive, who has a duty to protect his country. The song is about moral obligation, honour, and luck in battle for one's own side.

A *Tobacco Song* from the Netherlands follows. This song is about the colonial period, when people were bringing goods like tobacco from far away lands ; it tells of how this herb, new to Europe, can be used to improve health, and cure almost all diseases.

The final song, originally composed by Iain Campbell from Benderloch, Argyll, is from Nova Scotia, Canada, where a Gaelic community from Scotland has settled, keeping their homeland in their memories. The lyrics of *Love of the Highlands* capture the Highlanders' nostalgia, celebrating their bravery and praising the Gaelic language.

Recital: Cultural Heritage and Local Identity^{9,10}

Our journey concludes with a hymn to *The Carrying Stream*.

⁷ Ayşe Tecmen (CoHERE team)

⁸ Kurt Tucholsky, *Europe*, 1932

⁹ Ullrich Kockel (CoHERE team)

¹⁰ Hamish Henderson

South

West

Rivers of our Being is a research-by-practice output of the EU-funded CoHERE project, developed in partnership by the Latvian Academy of Culture, Newcastle University, and Heriot-Watt University. The project seeks to identify, understand and valorise European heritages, engaging with their socio-political and cultural significance and their potential for developing communitarian identities.

The premiere of this event takes place on a symbolic day, St Andrew's Day, celebrating the patron saint of Scotland, a saint shared by, and thus bringing together, different countries and peoples across Europe. St Andrew thus unites countries and traditions in a similar manner in which the oratorio musically connects the different traditions of Europe. The annual multicultural event held by the Storytelling Centre on St Andrew's day has now become a tradition in itself.

Composer **Prof. Valdis Muktupāvels** (University of Latvia/Latvian Academy of Culture) is a scholar and musician. He is professor of ethnomusicology and director of Baltic Sea Region studies at the University of Latvia, and researcher at the Latvian Academy of Culture. One of the key figures of the modern folklore movement in Latvia, he has contributed to the revival of traditional musical instruments – the *kokles* (psaltery, bagpipe, and many others. He has composed choral, instrumental and film music, and is renowned for his oratorio *Pontifex* (2004), as well as for albums of traditional and modern psaltery *kokles* (2002, 2016) and bagpipe (2000, UK release 2002) music.

Conductor **Dr Simon McKerrell** (Newcastle University) is senior lecturer in music at the International Centre for Music Studies, Newcastle University, having previously held posts at the Universities of Sheffield and Glasgow, and at the Royal Conservatory of Scotland. Prior to this he worked at the National Piping Centre, Glasgow. An expert performer of Highland-, Border- and Uilleann-pipes, he has toured, performed and taught throughout the world, and has recorded twelve commercial albums.

Vocal Ensemble

Soloists

Prof. Rūta Muktupāvela
Naomi Harvey

Choir

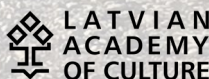
Jonathan Adams, Craig Glass, Ken Pollard,
Grace Ridley, Rebecca Roberts, Sam Sharples,
Hechen Sun, Olivia Thomas, Tom Wellesley,
Martin Baxter et al.

Reciters

Prof. Ullrich Kockel
Prof. Máiréad Nic Craith

Instrumental Ensemble

Rebecca Barnes (*horn*)
Helen Beauchamp (*cello*)
Imogen Bose-Ward (*fiddle*)
Tim Farrow (*double bass*)
Natalie Fisher (*clarinet*)
Anna Hughes (*fiddle*)
John Kenny (*trombone, conch*)
Lucy McCartan (*trumpet*)
Valdis Muktupāvels (*kokles, bagpipe*)



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