

PERTAS LATVIEŠU ZINĀS



Saturs

Daugavas Vanagi.....	5
Daugavas Vanadzies.....	5
Church services	3-4
Editor.....	1
Calendar.....	1
Folk dancing group Pērkonītis ...	5
Honorary consul of Latvia	6
LAAJ Annual fundraising.....	8,9
Language classes	5
Latvian Association of WA	6
LATVIAN NATIONAL DAY	2
Sv. Pāvila Congregation	3-5

Nr. 229

The Perth Latvian Newsletter

February/March 2026

CALENDAR

February

- 1 Church service 10:30 am
- 9 Daugavas Vanagi ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1:00pm
- 15 Church service 10:30 am
- 22 Church service 6:00 pm

March

- 1 Church service 10:30 am
- 15 Church service 10:30 am

April

- 2 Church service 6:00 pm
- 3 Church service 3:00 pm
- 5 Church service
- EASTER SUNDAY 10:30 am
- 19 Church service 10:30 am

PERKONĪTIS FOLK DANCING REHEARSALS

Tuesday evening at 6:00 pm

Latvija 100

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Pertas Latvian Newsletter

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EDITOR

Please send items for publication to the editor by the 15th of March.

Thank you to everybody who donated to the publications of the Perth Latvian Newsletter. If you wish to donate, please make out your cheque to:

LATVIAN SPECIAL FUND

because Pertas Latvian Newsletter does not have a separate bank account.



EV. LUT. SV. PĀVILA DRAUDZE

The church year began with the First Sunday of Advent — four weeks before Christmas — and we mark the beginning of the secular year on January 1. The beginning of both years encourages us to reflect on the time that has passed, as well as our energy and interest in the New Year.

What are your spiritual or secular reflections and experiences in 2025?

Looking back on 2025, we can largely be grateful for our circumstances. We have enjoyed joys, successes, and surprises, as well as hardships and health challenges. With God's help, we have endured everything, and we remember those whom God has called to Himself. Let us pray for one another so that together we may live through the New Year.

During the holidays, we once again welcomed Pastor Gunis and Signi among us. This year Easter comes early, and Pastor Gunis will again lead our worship services. This year the Lenten season will begin with an ASH WEDNESDAY service on SUNDAY, February 22 at 10:30 a.m. You are warmly invited to participate and to reflect seriously on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us.

In the Bible, in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 18, verse 20, it is written: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." These holy words affirm to us that the Son of God, born at Christmas, is with us NOW in our Perth congregation. This is a comforting reminder for us all.

Thank you to everyone who supports our congregation and its continued existence.

Ieva Vlahov
tāl. 044 719 4080



*Ziemassvētku Dievkalpojumu dalībnieki
(ieskaitot 3 viesus no Ķīnas) foto SL*

CHURCH SERVICES FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL

Date	1. February 10:30 (Zoom from Yirkala)
Day	4. Sunday pēc epifānijas
Colour	Balta
Readings	15 Psalms 1 Kor. 1:18-31 Mt. Ev. 5:1-12
Hymns	189, 190, 62, 64, 149
Reader	Sarmīte Vucēns
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	Ieva Vlahov

Prayers:

Austra Farras	Līga Gemuts
Austra Grīnbergs	Māra Hope
Austra Kaģis	Juris Liepa
Ruta Liepa	

Date	15. februāris 10:30 (Zoom from Yirkala)
Day	JĒZUS APSKAIDROŠANA
Colour	Balta
Readings	2 Mozus 24:8-18 2 Pēt. 1:16-21 Mt. Ev. 17:1-9
Hymns	250, 261, 186, 190, 196
Reader	Mācītājs
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	Ruta Auziņš

Prayers:

Zane Lewis	Ben Lewis
Silvika Lūks	Alan Lūks
Harda Paparde	Andris Paparde

Date	22. februāris 10:30 (Zoom from Yirkala)
Day	ASH WEDNESDAY
Colour	Melna
Readings	Joēla 2:12-19 2 Kor. 5:20b-6:10 Mt. Ev. 6:1-6,16-21
Hymns	73, 78, 80, 82
Reader	Mācītājs
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	-

Prayers:

Inta Robinson David Robinson
Aina Sprancis Aina Timmermanis
Astrīda Untiņš Daina Vārpiņš

Date	1. marts 10:30 (Zoom from Yirkala)
Day	2. Gavēnis
Colour	Violeta
Readings	1 Mozus 12:1-9 Rom. 4:1-8,13-17 Jņ. Ev. 3:1-17
Hymns	96, 97, 99, 101, 102
Reader	Ieva Vlahov
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	-

Prayers:

Inta Robinson David Robinson
Aina Sprancis Aina Timmermanis
Astrīda Untiņš Daina Vārpiņš

Date	15. marts 10:30 (Zoom from Yirkala)
Day	4. Gavēnis
Colour	Violeta
Readings	Jes. 42:14-21 Ef. 5:18-24 Jņ. Ev. 9:1-41
Hymns	73, 78, 80, 82
Reader	Sarmīte Vucēns
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	-

Prayers:

Ieva Vlahov Jānis Vucēns
Sarmīte Vucēns Ruta Auziņš
Mirdza Balodis

Date	2. aprīlis 18:00
Day	ZALĀ CETURDAY
Colour	Balta
Readings	2 Mozus 24:3-11

	Ēb. 9:11-22 Mat. Ev. 26:17-30
Hymns	315, 89, 316, 172
Reader	Mācītājs
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	-

Date	3. aprīlis 15:00
Day	LIELĀ PIEKTDAY
Colour	-
Lasījums	Jāņa Ev. 18:1 – 19:42
Hymns	89, 101, 80, 78, 73
Reader	Mācītājs
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	-

Date	5. aprīlis 10:30
Day	LIELDAYS!
Colour	Balta vai Zelta
Readings	2 Mozus 14:10-15:1 Ps. 118:15-29 Jāņa Ev. 20:1-18
Hymns	149,106,110,114,125
Reader	Mācītājs
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	Sarmīte Vucēns

Prayers:

Gunis Balodis Signe Balodis
Ilgvars Bergmanis Maiguta Bernšteins
Rita Džonsons Austrā Farras

Date	19. aprīlis 10:30 (Zoom from Yirkala)
Day	3 Lieldienu SvētDay
Colour	Balta
Readings	Ap. Darbi. 2:14a,36-41 1 Pēt. 1:17-25 Jāņa Ev. 24:13-35
Hymns	107,110,115,116,194
Reader	Ieva Vlahov
Duty	Jānis Vucēns
Flowers	Ieva Vlahov

Prayers:

Līga Gemuts Austrā Grīnbergs
Māra Hope Austrā Kaģis
Juris Liepa Ruta Liepa

TO KILL LOVE

“And it was about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The sun was darkened, and the curtain of the Temple was torn in two. And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ And

having said this, He breathed His last. Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God and said, ‘Certainly this was a righteous man.’” (Luke 23:44–47)

If we wish to understand the immense magnitude of human sinfulness, we must go to Golgotha. For who is it that hangs there between heaven and earth, between two criminals, with outstretched arms and blood flowing over His entire body? Who is the One being mocked there, given vinegar and gall to drink? Who is being slowly tortured to death? This is not a criminal suffering punishment for what he himself deserves, for He cries out to His Father in heaven: “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” With a shattered heart, the centurion on duty, after His death, exclaimed: “Truly, this was a righteous and innocent man!” If the One crucified was acknowledged as an innocent man only after His death, we truly must be disturbed by human wickedness—how they could hand Him over to such a tormenting death.

But here is more than an innocent man, even more than all angels and archangels. He is the Son of the Most High God. He is the Lord of glory, the Creator of the world and the God of all people, who, out of eternal love, took on human nature in order to redeem and save humanity. He traveled everywhere, preached the Gospel, forgave sins, and healed all who were under the power of the devil. And yet people seized Him, hung Him on a wooden cross, and killed Him. This is the most shameful, base, and

condemnable deed ever devised in human hearts and carried out by human hands. Here we see human wickedness at its highest degree and in its most repulsive form. We see that the human heart is capable of the most dreadful act imaginable: killing its own Creator and Eternal Love. When the sun saw this, it stopped shining, as if it could not endure such a dreadful sight. When the earth saw it, it trembled and split its rocks apart, as if in anger at this blasphemy against its Creator.

At Golgotha we see the grand scale of sin and its horrifying result. For what, then, did Christ suffer here? He did not suffer for His own sin. Rather, He willingly suffered for our sin. “Surely,” says the prophet Isaiah, “He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities” (53:4–5). What Christ suffered is what we should have had to suffer eternally for our sins. He endured the punishment, showing us that our sins deserve eternal torment. He hung naked, shamed, mocked, and humiliated—this should have been our condition, which we deserved for our sins. He was thirsty and was not refreshed, showing that our sins should have brought upon us eternal thirst and suffering. His cross was placed between the crosses of a robber and a murderer, showing that our sins should exclude us from all fellowship with the holy creation and instead cast us into the company of evil and condemned children. God abandoned Christ at that moment, emphasizing the fact that our sins deserve eternal rejection by God. He hung there in



Koris Aura Svētbrīdī foto JV

dreadful darkness, showing us that for our sins we deserve not even a glimmer of the light of grace. Christ, Life itself, died—and this is a firm reminder to us that our sins deserve eternal death and eternal condemnation.

If we do not wish to believe the terrible threats of the Commandments concerning the sinful deeds committed by humanity, then God has painted them for us at Golgotha with broad and bloody brushstrokes, removing all doubt and every excuse. On Christ's cross, before the eyes of all people, it is written: God fulfills what He has threatened. The sinner must die!

Pastor Gunis Balodis
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KDs CURCH SERVICE

On December 26, 2025, in Adelaide, a Cultural Days Devotional Service took place at St Peter's Church prior to the official opening of the Cultural Days.

The service was led by Provost Helga Jansons, Pastor Valdis Andersons, and Provost Agnis (Pēteris) Rozītis.

Guests from Latvia also took part in the devotional service—the choir *Aura* with conductor Edgars Vītols. The choir performed three songs:

- **“Bless, O Lord”** (music and lyrics by Romans Grantovskis),
- **“On the Banks of the Daugava”** (music by Ilze Arne, lyrics by Andris Ritmanis), and
- **“Light Is Dawning”** (music by Ēriks Ešenvalds, lyrics based on poetry by Rainis).

St Peter's Church has excellent acoustics, and the songs sounded beautiful. I was unable to attend the choir concert, but at least I had the opportunity to hear these three wonderful pieces.

JV



DV PERTH BRANCH

Daugavas Vanagi Perth Branch GENERAL MEETING

February 8, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.
Branch Club Premises
60 Cleaver Terrace, Belmont

Agenda

1. Opening of the General Meeting and adoption of the agenda.
2. Election of the Chairperson of the meeting, Secretary, and vote counters.
3. Reading and adoption of the minutes of the previous General Meeting.
4. Reports:
 - Chair of the Board
 - Head of the Vanadzies Group
 - Audit Committee
 - Representative – Latvian Centre (reports will be distributed in printed form)
5. Questions regarding the reports and approval of the Board's activities for 2025.
6. Adoption of the Branch budget for 2026.
7. Elections:
 - Chair of the Board
 - Members of the Board
 - Audit Committee
8. DV Australia Delegates' Meeting in Sydney, March 2026.
9. Perth Latvian Centre:
 - Election of two directors
 - Approval of the custodian of the common seal
 - Loan guarantee
10. Proposals for the Branch's activities in 2026.
11. Assistance to Latvia.
12. Other matters:
 - Upgrade of the club projector
 - Membership fees
 - Birthday greetings

You are warmly invited to attend!

Your participation is important in order to jointly discuss and secure the future of Daugavas Vanagi, evaluate the organization's work, and help plan upcoming activities.



COMMEMORATION OF COLONEL OSKARS KALPAKS, THE LATVIAN LEGION, AND THE COURLAND POCKET

*Sunday, March 8, 2026,
at 1:00 p.m. in the DV Club
premises*

15TH SAEIMA ELECTIONS

October 3, 2026

There will be a polling station in Perth.

To vote, you will need a Latvian passport. Please check whether your passport is valid.

If you need a passport or need to renew one, please read the article by the Honorary Consul. This cannot be left until the last moment, as the passport station in Perth will be available only once.



REPUBLIC OF LATVIJA HONORARY CONSUL IN WESTERN AUSTRALIAS

SURVEY REGARDING A MOBILE PASSPORT WORKSTATION VISIT TO PERTH

April 2026

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING
EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST –
FEBRUARY 16, 2026**

In order to determine the level of interest among Latvian nationals in submitting applications for passports and personal identity cards (eID cards), interested persons in Perth are invited to email the Honorary Consul of Latvia in Western Australia, Imants Kīns, by February 16, 2026, at: Imants@tewal.com.au

The email should include the following information: the interested person's first name, last name, and telephone number.

If several interested persons are included in one email, the above information must be provided separately for each individual, and an email address for each person must also be included.

Please note that this invitation is **not** an official registration for the mobile passport workstation visit, but a survey to determine potential interest, as organizing a mobile passport workstation visit requires at least **50 interested persons** in Western Australia.

NB! This invitation applies only to persons who have been assigned a Latvian personal identity number.

If an interested person does not have a personal identity number but is interested in acquiring Latvian citizenship, please contact the Embassy of Latvia by email at:

consulate.australia@mfa.gov.lv

Imants Kīns
Honorary Consul of the Republic of Latvia in
Western Australia

The 60th Australian Latvian Cultural Days in Adelaide

December 26–31, 2025

Hats off to the organizers of the Adelaide Cultural Days, so wisely and impressively led by Lilita Daenke. From the official program, I see that the organizing committee consisted of 27 dedicated members. This once again confirms the old saying: “*If you want to go far, go together.*” Cultural Days have already been held in Adelaide 14 times.

These were among the very best Cultural Days that Andra and I have ever attended. Five days filled with high-quality Latvian performances, celebrating our wonderful Latvian culture, reconnecting with old friends, making new ones, and enjoying after-event gatherings that culminated in a joyful New Year’s Eve ball. Upon returning home to Fremantle, we had to recover from the lack of sleep.

Theme: “*The Latvian nation shines and flourishes.*”

The logo reflected this theme — a diamond and a flower. The events convincingly demonstrated that Latvia has world-class musical performers.

Why it was such a wonderful experience

Excellent organization; outstanding local and Latvian artists; Adelaide is compact enough that all venues were easily accessible; a central meeting place and event hub at Talava, close to other activities such as the art exhibition, the Lutheran church service, and the DV 80th anniversary celebration. Two other major events — folk dancing and the mixed choir concert — took place at the University of Adelaide in the city center. All venues appeared to be full.

We booked our tickets very early and sat in the front row. A member of the organizing committee told me that people from Perth are always the first to buy tickets.

Guests from Latvia:

- The University of Latvia Mixed Choir *Aura*
- The post-folklore group *Iļģi*
- Katrīna and Laima Dimanta, performing together as the Dimanta sisters, modernizing folk songs

- Ēriks Dreibants, a leading Latvian chef, who led a culinary workshop (sold out!). He advocates “slow food,” the preservation of traditional Latvian crop varieties, and local products.

Friday, December 26

Church Service at St Peter’s Church, 11:00–12:00.

Opening concert at Talava, followed by a social gathering outside with drinks, food, hugs, and conversations.

The opening concert included the procession of the Latvian flag, the singing of the Latvian national anthem, and greetings from the President of Latvia Edgars Rinkēvičs, Ambassador for Diaspora Affairs Zanda Grauze, Minister of Culture Agnese Lāce, LAAJ Chair Anita Andersone OAM, and Latvia’s Ambassador to Australia Samija Serifa. Lilita Daenke warmly addressed everyone.

We heard wonderful performances by *Daugavas dūdenieki*, the kokle ensemble *Ausma*, an outstanding performance of Pēteris Vasks’ *Castillo Interior* by Jānis Laurs (cello) and Širina Lima (violin), two songs by *Iļģi*, two songs by sisters Laima and Katrīna Dimanta, and three songs by the mixed choir *Aura*. Everything connected us with our inner essence, the sun, nature, and the bees.

Honoring history, all Adelaide Latvians present who had participated in the very first Adelaide Cultural Days in 1953 were invited onto the stage. Among them were Lilita Daenke, as well as Aivars and Marīte Līdums. It was a moving tribute to the tireless work of our grandparents and parents in maintaining Latvian culture in Australia. Candles were lit in the festive *kliņģeris*, and the 1953 participants blew them out — these people are still full of energy! Later we all enjoyed the *kliņģeris* — it was excellent.

When the world-renowned University of Latvia choir *Aura* took the stage, I was struck by the youth of the singers — young Latvians. I always feel hopeful when surrounded by young Latvians. When they began to sing, it felt as though all our ancestors were speaking to us through these young voices. A tear rolled down my cheek. I told conductor Edgars Vītols about this when I met him at the New Year’s Eve ball. Edgar is an intelligent, open, creative, and sensitive young person. We need more young Latvians like him. He was also a radiant and heartfelt presence as a conductor at the Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Festival closing

concert in Mežaparks, Riga, in July 2025, which I attended with my son Namejs.

Already after the first inspiring opening concert at Talava, I felt a true sense of unity and togetherness — being Latvian above all else. This is especially important, because, as the joke goes, if five Latvians gather in one room, six political parties are formed.

In the evening, an energetic dance night took place at Talava.

Saturday, December 27

Opening of the art exhibition “Staro,” opened by Latvia’s Ambassador to Australia, Samija Serifa. Works by 37 artists and students from Latvian schools in Sydney and Adelaide were displayed. The exhibition also included a painting by our grandson Atis Medenis.

We attended the musical performance “*Forever Belonging*,” created by Simona Gaisa, featuring the Australian Latvian Theatre (Melbourne), choirs *Daina*, *Veseris*, *Ausma*, dance groups *Ritenītis* and *Piektais Ritenītis*, and soloists Gatis Zundars, Agnese Krūze, Pēteris Saulītis, Reneka Hārta, and Simona Gaisa. All performed songs with lyrics by Jānis Peters and music by Latvian composers. In Peters’ words one feels the pain of the Latvian people, as well as hope, faith, and inner strength — the strength to preserve culture through centuries of occupation. This sense of soul was especially vivid in Pēteris Vasks’ *Castillo Interior* performed by Jānis Laurs and Širina Lima at the opening concert. I later learned that Jānis Laurs is a close friend of Pēteris Vasks. The Latvian soul truly shines here in Adelaide.

Later in the evening at Talava, the creative and fun short-film competition “*Dille*” took place. Winner: Lars Sveilis with the film “*The Trenches*.” Thanks to organizer Daile Smitsa and all participants. I’m already looking forward to the next *Dille*. Interestingly, dill began appearing in menus all over Adelaide afterward! The dill revolution in Adelaide has begun — I predict it will spread.

Sunday, December 28

In the morning, as a DV Perth member, I visited the DV House in Adelaide, located just 100 meters from Talava, for the celebration of the **80th anniversary of Daugavas Vanagi in Australia**, held exactly on December 28. The exhibition marking 80 years of DV in Australia was movingly opened by Ambassador Samija Serifa. A wonderful exhibition that will travel to all Australian capital cities. Congratulations to all DV members for their

invaluable work for the Latvian community over these 80 years. In Perth, DV is the foundation of our Latvian community.

Concert of the University of Latvia EZTF Mixed Choir **Aura** at Talava. Artistic Director: Edgars Vītols; conductors: Emīls Rusovs and Lauma Eglīte. A two-part program with a 20-minute intermission.

I eagerly awaited Aura’s concert after hearing them at the opening concert. I must admit I had not heard of them before. Edgars Vītols introduced each song with depth, joy, and intelligence, explaining its background and contemporary relevance. Sitting in the front row, so close to the conductors and pianist, it felt as if I were watching and listening to old friends from Latvia whom I had not seen for a long time — that deep recognition when you meet someone for the first time but already know them at the level of the soul.

Part 1: 10 “serious” songs (as described by Edgars Vītols).

Authors and composers included Jānis Peters, Rūdolfs Blaumanis, Māris Čaklais, Nora Ikstena; arrangements by Raimonds Pauls, Elga Igenberga, and Jānis Norvilis together with Emīls Rusovs. Songs included *Dziesma pie Daugavas*, *Pacel galvu*, *Balta māte*, *Tālavas taurētājs*, *Pie Daugavas*, *Tautas acis*, *Mīlestības jūra*.

Part 2: 12 songs — all Latvian folk songs, such as *Rīga dimd*, *Pūt, vējiņi*, as well as Edgars Vītols’ *Saules dziesma* and Ojārs Vācietis’ *Tautas dziesma*. What a delight! Each song creatively arranged in Aura’s modern style. *Deviņi dēli*, *Seši mazi bundzinieki*, and *Pērkontēvs* stood out for me.

Standing ovation. I wished the concert would go on longer!

Folk Dance Concert at Scott Theatre, University of Adelaide. Two parts with intermission: 14 dances in Part 1, 13 in Part 2. Dance groups: *Auseklītis*, *Piektais Ritenis*, *Jautrs pāris*, *Ritenītis*, *Pērkonītis*. The concert began with children, followed by group dances.

The storyline followed the life of a young Latvian woman — from childhood to love, marriage, and departure to a new home as a wife and mother. Symbolic objects — a linen towel and headpieces — highlighted each life stage.

Two and a half hours of joy. The audience often clapped along to the music. Colorful, energetic, with moments when you just wanted to stand up and

dance a polka!
Everyone deserves
congratulations —
bravo!

In the evening, a folk dance after-party took place at Talava. Dance, song, and togetherness were the theme. Performers included the local band *Četri kaķi* and Katrīna Dimanta. Another joyful night at Talava!

Monday, December 29

In the morning, a children's event with *Iļģi* and the Dimanta sisters took place in the small Talava hall.

The **craft market** ran from 9:00 to 14:00 in the large Talava hall. A wide selection, good attendance, and strong sales — we bought several items to take back to Perth. A great opportunity to continue conversations with friends and meet new people.

Modern Latvian cuisine began at 15:00 at Talava.

Iļģi concert from 18:00–20:00 at the Arkaba Hotel in a specially built concert hall — sold out. Young people stood along the dance floor as there were no seats left. What a joy! Everyone stomped, clapped, or danced. I call *Iļģi* the finest Latvian folk-rock group — traditional songs fused with modern rock compositions. Technically brilliant: drums, bass guitar, electric classical guitar, bagpipes, accordion, and violin. The audience demanded more, and the concert was extended by half an hour — no one wanted it to end. Wonderful to see a multi-generational audience — children, youth, and older people who are still rockers!

After the concert, an open-mic evening took place at Talava.

Where did my sleep go? I seem to have misplaced it somewhere...

Tuesday, December 30

Early morning basketball tournament from 9:00–14:00, featuring the Perth team *Lāčplēši*, including Deivids and Atis Medenis, joined by Reinis, Namejs, and Druvis Medenis. The tournament was



opened by AL60KD Chair Lilita Daenke. Organizer: Rūdis Dancis — congratulations to Rūdis and colleagues for an excellently run event.

Modern Latvian cuisine continued from 13:30–16:00 at Talava.

Mixed Choir Concert at Elder Hall, University of Adelaide, 17:00–19:30. Unforgettable — inspiring, emotional, and uplifting.

The audience applauded as singers in national costumes entered the hall and took their places. Applause continued until the last singer was on stage. With more than 200 singers in folk costumes, we all stood and sang “*Dievs, svētī Latviju.*” The sight of a full stage of singers in national dress always warms my heart and soul and reminds me of the uniqueness and ancient roots of Latvian culture.

I felt deeply moved — and it truly was magnificent.

Choirs	on	stage:
From Latvia —	<i>Aura</i> , Riga Stradiņš Hospital Women's Choir	<i>Stradiņš</i>
From Brazil —	Brazilian Latvian Choir	
From Dublin —	Choir	<i>eLve</i>
From Australia —	DV Adelaide Men's Choir	
	<i>Daugava</i> , Adelaide Latvian Society Choir	<i>Dziesmu laiva</i> , Melbourne Mixed Choir
	<i>Daina</i> , Melbourne Men's Choir	<i>Veseris</i> , Sydney Latvian Choir
	<i>Skanda</i> , Sydney Latvian Men's Choir	

(Editor's note: one singer from China, one from Tasmania, and one from Perth)

Three parts:

- Mixed choir — 13 songs (*Sarkandaiļa roze auga, Es biju māmiņai*, etc.)
- Men's choir — 8 songs (*Brīvība, Laid iekšā'i saimniece*, etc.)
- Mixed choir — 8 songs (*Gaismas pils, Tavs karogs, Saule-Pērkonis-Daugava, Pūt, vējiņi*)

I don't remember exactly when the first tear fell, but during four songs I was overwhelmed by powerful emotions — love for ancestors and family, deep pride in Latvia. Pride, respect, joy, and also a sense of loss. I was especially happy to hear the new song "*Tavs karogs*" (Renārs Kaupers, Jānis Aišpurs), first heard at the Youth Song and Dance Festival in Mežaparks this July. It's refreshing to see a talented young generation bringing new "folk songs" into Latvian culture. Namejs and I were blessed to experience this.

After two and a half hours of choral celebration that completely lifted us out of everyday life — what next? Of course, a sing-along evening at Talava! Singing, laughter, conversations with old and new friends — and excellent food.

Wednesday, December 31

Early morning — final day of basketball. A tense day: *Lāčplēši* needed to win to reach the final against Sydney's *Spars*. Unfortunately, they didn't, and *Spars* defeated hosts *ASK* in the final.

7:00 p.m.–midnight — New Year's Eve Ball at the National Wine Centre in the Adelaide Botanic Garden. Sold out, over 300 people in formal attire. A wonderful ball and a fitting conclusion of joy, unity, and celebration to the fantastic 60th Cultural Days. Friendship and a sense of togetherness never end, and memories do not fade.

Think about this: being Latvian is both a mystical and powerful force. Latvia has only 1.82 million residents, and about 1.5 million people worldwide speak Latvian. Latvians are few, but we are everywhere. Almost everyone I meet says they know a Latvian. Latvians have resisted and preserved their culture despite a long history of occupation and oppression. Cultural Days like those in Adelaide vividly remind me of this.

We all owe heartfelt thanks to the outstanding Adelaide organizers and to the Latvian government

(taxpayers), its institutions — the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diaspora organizations — for essential funding, as well as to a private donor in Canada who helped bring 50 Aura singers. *Aura* has toured Canada — once you've heard them, you never forget their songs.

I left Adelaide with Anita Andersone's words in mind:

"May the energy gained from these celebrations of our Latvian heritage strengthen our commitment and support for a free, safe, and flourishing Latvia."

I would add — everyone with Latvian citizenship should definitely participate in this year's critically important Saeima elections on **October 3, 2026**.

Imants Kīns

*Honorary Consul of Latvia in Western Australia
January 11, 2026*

PĒRKONĪS RETURNS TO THE CULTURAL DAYS

"When was the last time Pērkonītis took part in the Cultural Days?"

This question was often heard during the Cultural Days in Adelaide.



Pērkonītis in their new folk costumes (photo JV)

When the first folk dance rehearsal took place early on the morning of December 27 at the Scott Theatre in Adelaide, the members of Pērkonītis had come together for the first time in a long while. For

various reasons, not all dancers who had planned to travel to the Cultural Days were able to attend every rehearsal in Perth. Work commitments, illness, and travel meant that someone was missing from almost every rehearsal. As a result, once in Adelaide, in addition to the combined rehearsals, many extra practices took place in the Scott Theatre café, and for some dancers this also meant learning completely new dances.

Thank you to the dancers who did not travel to the Cultural Days but came to rehearsals in Perth and filled in for missing dancers (and circles).

In Adelaide we gathered as three and a half couples. Of the seven dancers, four had previously taken part in Cultural Days. For some, the 2024 Youth Days in Sydney had been their first experience performing in a folk dance concert.

In addition, we were scheduled to perform one dance together with Melbourne's *Piektais Ritenis*. Each group had learned the dance separately and had never seen the full choreography performed together, except in videos from Latvia, which led to differing interpretations of how exactly the dance should be performed. And once again — rehearsals, rehearsals, and more rehearsals.

How would we manage to perform in the concert?

Another full day of rehearsals followed, and then in the evening came the moment of truth — the concert.

Another first: everyone was wearing their new folk costumes for the first time, funded by the Perth Branch of Daugavas Vanagi. Thank you, Daugavas Vanagi! The women's costumes were sewn in Latvia and arrived only a week before Christmas. They were well worth the wait.

When the music began, all aching feet were forgotten. For a brief moment, adrenaline took over, and everyone knew exactly where to go and what to do. The movements happened automatically.



Pērkonītis dancing together with Piektais Ritenis

And then — far too quickly — it was all over.

But the feeling of elation lingered for a long time.

Quick farewells followed, as *Daina* rushed to the airport and we each went our separate ways. Some would meet again at rehearsals or at the New Year's Eve ball; others would head home.

So when was the last time Pērkonītis had been at the Cultural Days?

In the Cultural Days programs I found that Pērkonītis last danced at the Sydney Cultural Days in **1992**. (Thank you, Ilga, for the programs.)

After **33 years**, Pērkonītis has returned!

JV