

The Music of the Past in Modern Baltic Paganism

Michael Strmiska

ABSTRACT: Modern Baltic Paganism grew out of nineteenth- and twentieth-century folklore research into the folk music, folklore and traditional ethnic cultures of Latvia and Lithuania. Research into native Latvian *daina* and Lithuanian *daino* folk songs with their rustic beauty, symbolic richness, and intriguing linkages to ancient Indo-European cultures and religions generated a new sense of pride and ethnic identity among Latvians and Lithuanians. Spiritually inclined folklorists developed religious movements that recreated rituals and beliefs linked to the *dainas* and *dainos*. Repressed during Soviet times, these movements have reemerged and flourished in the post-Soviet period. There can be no doubt that music, which over the centuries has played such a crucial role in the transmission of Latvian and Lithuanian folk traditions including native Pagan religions, will remain front and center in the continuing evolution of modern Baltic Pagan religions in Latvia and Lithuania and beyond.

In the post-Soviet Baltic nation-states of Latvia and Lithuania, there are a number of religious movements dedicated to reviving indigenous religious traditions believed to derive from pre-Christian times.¹ In order to distinguish the earlier religions from their modern reconstructions and restorations, I use the term “Pagan” to denote the older pre-Christian religions, and the term “modern Pagan” to refer to present-day revival movements of such religions.²

Latvian and Lithuanian folk music carries great importance and performs multiple functions in modern Pagan religious movements. It serves as a ritual activity, as an element of community identity, and as sacred text—musical scripture, if you will. Indeed, many of the key figures in these movements are scholars, collectors and performers of this music. It is no exaggeration to say that for many modern Baltic Pagans, traditional religion and traditional music, religious tradition and musical tradition, are almost synonymous.

In this article, I will discuss the historical background and continuing development of several modern Pagan religious movements of Latvia and Lithuania, focusing on the importance of traditional music and folkloric culture as key elements of ethnic identity and historical memory in these religious movements, and concluding with a discussion of modern Baltic Paganism’s emergence as an international religion.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Though modern Baltic Paganism is understood by its members and practitioners as a continuation or restoration of pre-Christian religions of the Latvian and Lithuanian peoples, existing Pagan organizations and activities are very much an outgrowth or further development of folklore and folk music studies of the nineteenth century, rooted in the fertile soil of nineteenth-century nationalism and romanticism. It might also be said that such nationalism and romanticism have certain roots in Baltic folk traditions. German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Herder (1744-1803), a father of nineteenth-century nationalism and folklore studies, was intrigued by Latvian music and folklore during his years in Riga (1764-1769) working as a pastor. Herder advocated the collection and preservation of folk art, literature and music as important expressions of a people’s peculiar national spirit or soul. He discussed Latvian folklore in this light in several publications, notably *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (*Voices of the Folk in Song*, 1807), stimulating interest in Eastern European and specifically Baltic folk culture across Europe as well as in the Baltic region itself.

Following Herder, nineteenth-century Baltic nationalist scholars and collectors of folklore and folk music devoted themselves to the preservation and popularization of Latvian and Lithuanian mythology, folklore, and folk music as a means of upholding national language, identity and historical memory against not merely political but also cultural and linguistic domination of their respective countries by German, Polish and Russian elites.³ This historical phenomenon is often called the “National Awakening” in the Baltic States. The collections of Latvian and Lithuanian folk songs, called *dainas* and *dainos*, were published in multiple volumes.⁴

Latvian and Lithuanian folk cultures were most predominant in the rural areas inhabited by peasants somewhat beyond the reach and beneath the interest of government officials and social elites, who typically favored German and Russian languages and cultures in the case of Latvia, and Polish and Russian languages and cultures in the case of Lithuania. The rising interest in native-language folk cultures was part of the formation process of a new class of cultural elite determined not only to preserve traditional folk cultures, but to build modern cultures in Latvia and Lithuania upon the foundation of the folk. Collecting and documenting, publishing and popularizing Latvian and Lithuanian folklore from the largely illiterate peasant population went hand-in-hand with creating works of modern literature in the Latvian and Lithuanian languages. The first activity served to demonstrate that the two nations possessed rich indigenous cultures on the folk level, while the second activity bolstered confidence in their capacity to participate in modern Europe's level of cosmopolitan "high" culture.⁵ However, folklore and folk cultures often furnished the themes, motifs and motivations for such supposedly higher art and literature, an inspirational dynamic that continues today, demonstrating the enduring influence of the folk cultures first collected and popularized in the nineteenth century.

The archaic Baltic folk songs were rich in pre-Christian, Pagan mythology and spirituality. The religious dimensions of the Latvian *dainas* and Lithuanian *dainos* were seized upon with pride as evidence of distinctive indigenous religious heritages predating Christianization.⁶ The comparative study of Indo-European languages inspired Baltic scholars to trace the pedigrees of Latvian and Lithuanian religions to the hypothetical time of ancient Indo-European unity some 4,000 years ago⁷ and to compare Baltic gods, myths and rituals with those of the ancient Greeks and Indians. Even today, the Indo-European connections of the ancient Pagan traditions remain important to Latvian and Lithuanian modern Pagans.⁸ The *dainas* and *dainos*, for example, have been compared often with the Vedic hymns of ancient India.⁹

For both Latvians and Lithuanians, then, the religious elements of native folklore were a source of pride and a support to ethnic identity, and for those who saw the Christianization of their countries as aspects of foreign domination and colonization, folk religion represented the possibility of recovering something from before the times of oppression and occupation. It is this motivation that led to the formation of modern Pagan religious organizations, for which folk culture, and particularly folk music, was the wellspring of spiritual insight and religious activity, and remains so today.

BALTIC PAGANISM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In both Latvia and Lithuania, it was not until the twentieth century that widespread interest in the religious elements of folkloric heritage evolved into stable and enduring Pagan organizations devoted to reconstructing pre-Christian religions from the foundations of folk songs, seasonal festivals and other folk traditions. In Latvia, the most important such organization is Dievturība, often shortened to Dievturi, a name meaning "those who keep faithful to Dievs (God)." In Lithuania, the main organization is Romuva, meaning both "sanctuary" and "peace," which was also the name of an ancient Pagan religious site in pre-Christian Prussia.¹⁰

Dievturi was founded in 1926 by the charismatic Latvian Ernest Brastins (1892-1941),¹¹ who compiled several volumes of selected *dainas* as foundational scriptures for Dievturi and also authored a number of books explaining what he saw as the key concepts and doctrines of the religious movement. The organization flourished in the 1920s and 1930s, enjoying close links to the Latvian Fascist group Perkunkrusts (Thunder Cross) by virtue of Brastins' anti-Semitic and ultra-nationalist views. Dievturi was banned by German and later Soviet authorities in the 1940s, with Brastins executed in 1941, but continued as an underground movement until the 1980s, when it was able to reemerge gradually into the open with the decline of Soviet control and the restoration of Latvian independence in 1991.¹²

Romuva has undergone several permutations. A Lithuanian named Domas Sidlauskas (1878-1944, also known as Visuomis) attempted to establish a Lithuanian Pagan organization called Visuombe (Universalism) in the early part of the twentieth century, and as part of this enterprise he established a Romuva sanctuary in 1929, and separate male and female Romuva congregations in 1930. Romuva, like Dievturi, was repressed by the Soviet authorities, but was revived in the late 1960s in the form of a nonreligious, strictly folkloric association, Ramuva, under the leadership of Jonas Trinkunas and other folklorists and intellectuals. The activities of Ramuva centered around collecting songs, dances and other folklore from rural areas, re-creating festivals and celebrations, and performing folk songs and dances. Ramuva was repressed by Soviet authorities for political reasons in the early 1970s, only to be revived again in 1988 under the more liberal conditions of *perestroika* and the gathering momentum for national independence.¹³ The organization was renamed Romuva in 1991, reviving the earlier name with its historic associations with Prussia, to make explicit the desire of Trinkunas and his associates that the folk culture they were

collecting and performing be understood not only as local folklore, but also as the continuing expression of ancient, pre-Christian Lithuanian religious heritage.¹⁴

For Brastins, early twentieth-century founder of the Latvian religious movement Dievturi, and Trinkunas, leader of the late twentieth-century Lithuanian movement Romuva, traditional folk music was the starting point of their religious movements. Brastins studied Latvian *dainas* in the form of transcribed texts collected by Krisjanis Barons and others, from which Brastins selected the particular song-texts to be interpreted in his three volumes of *dainas* and arranged for choral performance in Dievturi rituals. Brastins and his Dievturi colleagues also made substantial efforts to revive the use of traditional instruments that had fallen into disfavor by the early twentieth century.¹⁵

Trinkunas did not merely work from transcribed texts of Lithuanian folk songs, as had Brastins, he also collected and performed songs, in time becoming a skilled singer. In 1990 Trinkunas, his wife Inija, and others formed a choral ensemble, Kulgrinda, for the purpose of performing and recording various types of traditional Lithuanian songs, including the very archaic polyphonic songs called *sutartines*, which some believe date not merely from medieval times, but possibly even from the prehistoric era.¹⁶ The Kulgrinda ensemble remains active in the first decade of the twenty-first century, performing at festivals in Lithuania and internationally. In 2002 Kulgrinda released a CD called *Ugnies Apeigos (Rite of Fire)* containing a variety of songs used in Romuva rituals.¹⁷ This was followed in 2003 by *Perkūno Giesmės (Hymns to Perkunas the Thunder God)*, Perkunas having been the leading deity of the ancient Lithuanians, somewhat akin to the Greek Zeus.¹⁸

In Dievturi and Romuva ritual activities, folk songs are central. Dievturi weekly “praise meetings,” somewhat comparable to Christian church services, begin with singing verses of *dainas* inviting the god Dievs to join the gathering. *Dainas* of praise are then sung to Dievs, or to the female divinities Mara and Laima, seen as subordinate to Dievs.¹⁹ In a 1937 article, Brastins described the use of music at the start of a Dievuriba praise meeting:

Behind the table there is the priest, next to him a choir and *kokles* players.... To the accompaniment of stick rattles (*trideksnis*) and *kokles* [zither-like instruments], the choir is singing nine thematically appropriate folk songs. The performance should prepare the audience for the sermon and meditation and should create solemn and harmonious feelings.²⁰

As Brastins’ statement suggests, Dievturi meetings include both choral singing of *dainas* and one or more instrumental pieces played upon the *kokles*, a speech or sermon called a *svetrūna*,²¹ either interpreting religious ideas and sentiments of *dainas* or expounding upon issues of moral or social concern, after which may follow an explanation of life-cycle rites or seasonal rituals. (*Dainas* are also sung in solstice and equinox celebrations, though these are not exclusively Dievturi events.) The meeting then ends as it began, with the singing of *dainas*. In the case of Romuva, there is no single ritual structure as tightly defined as the Dievturi praise-meeting, but there is a wide variety of seasonal rites, exactly parallel to the Latvian calendrical celebrations, all featuring the singing of Lithuanian folk songs.²²

The use of folk music by Dievturi and Romuva in ritual events and communal gatherings engages multiple levels of meaning, which participants may acknowledge, ignore or interpret according to their own inclinations. Linguistically and historically, the music has a nationalistic resonance; it is the music of the Latvian and Lithuanian ancestors. The playing of traditional instruments enhances the sense of a living connection to the ancestral past. The songs are sung in the native language and understood to be of considerable antiquity, even if the exact age of many songs is not entirely clear. In the context of the two nations’ traumatic recent experiences with foreign occupation and repression, the collective singing of such indisputably Latvian and Lithuanian songs is a powerful reaffirmation of national and ethnic identity.²³ The simple but poetic lyrics speak on the one hand of the daily existence of the rural peoples in the past, their sufferings and joys, their delight in the blessings of nature and their endurance through hardship.²⁴ On the other hand, the songs refer to the gods, goddesses, myths and legends of pre-Christian times, in some cases mixing Pagan and Christian motifs. These religious and mythological references can be understood as charming relics of the pre-industrial past, or as living expressions of a continuing spiritual tradition kept alive among the peasantry during the periods of foreign cultural and religious dominance.

In both Latvia and Lithuania, certain ritual occasions observed by modern Pagans are also national holidays enjoyed by each society. The most outstanding examples are the winter and summer solstice celebrations.²⁵ These were suppressed in Soviet times but never erased from collective memory, and reemerged as popular festivities as soon as the suffocating weight of Soviet dominance began to lift in the 1980s. Dievturi leader Olgerts Talivaldis Auns and Romuva leader Jonas Trinkunas worked with folklore enthusiasts in the 1980s to organize joint Latvian-Lithuanian summer solstice festivities, which had to be arranged through various clever subterfuges to avoid Soviet police detection.²⁶

The solstice celebrations involve multiple folkloric activities that contribute to a merry, even carnival atmosphere: folk dances, games, traditional or humorous costumes, special food and drink, and, of course, music. The members of Dievturi and Romuva join with others in singing folk songs, which the members of the two groups imbue with great spiritual and mythological significance, but which may carry lesser or different meanings for other participants. Like the songs, the solstice celebrations are first and foremost part of Latvian and Lithuanian national cultural heritages. The fact that modern Baltic Pagans base their religions upon universally respected assets of national cultural heritage, which they are able to share with non-members of their organizations on important public occasions, suggests that their religious interpretations of national folk culture will continue to occupy respected platforms in the public arenas. Romuva's foundation upon folk songs and other traditional folklore is also important for the continuing efforts of the organization to receive official government recognition as a "traditional religious community," which would afford various privileges and benefits denied to Romuva in its current designation as a "non-traditional religious community."²⁷ One of the key benefits Romuva would derive from the higher official status is the right to offer courses on Baltic traditional religion in public schools as an optional alternative to classes in Christian theology and ethics. Similar classes about Latvian ethnic culture, including discussion of Dievturi, are already part of Latvia's school curriculum.

HISTORICAL MEMORY IN THE KEY OF BALTIC PAGANISM

It may be objected that the mono-ethnic, peasant-centered, folklore-based versions of Latvian and Lithuanian identities promoted by modern Pagan groups such as Dievturi and Romuva involves a biased and selective reading and representation of the Baltic past. In response, it should be noted that the folk songs and other folklore utilized by the two religious movements are not freshly minted "invented traditions" or "fakelore" as have been analyzed by Eric Hobsbawm and Richard Dorson.²⁸ The authenticity of the folk songs and other folklore collected by these nineteenth-century scholars and their successors has never been seriously challenged.

A more pertinent question might be whether the interpretations and particular usages of indigenous folkloric culture by Dievturi and Romuva fit within Benedict Anderson's category of "imagined communities."²⁹ The short answer would seem to be "Yes," but in fact, it is rather difficult to disentangle the imagining of Dievturi and Romuva as *religious* communities from the more general imagining of Latvia and Lithuania as *national* communities in the mass mobilization for ethnic self-awareness and national independence from the nineteenth century onwards. It seems appropriate to conceptualize Dievturi and Romuva as spiritualized forms of the imagined communities of Latvia and Lithuania. The same discourse of ethnic distinctiveness—based upon language, culture and history—that was part of Latvian and Lithuanian national mobilization is to be found in the self-understanding of Dievturi and Romuva, with the addition of a spiritual dimension achieved through heightened attention to the religious and mythological components of folk cultural heritages.

The understanding of the past among modern Baltic Pagans is indeed selective, focusing as it does upon the experiences and accomplishments of the speakers of Latvian and Lithuanian languages and the cultural and religious traditions they transmitted and perpetuated through music and other folkloric activities. There is little attention to the parts played by other ethnic communities in the histories of these nations, except for remembrance of the various cruelties and injustices inflicted by the German, Polish and Russian ruling classes. There is no tribute to the German building of Riga or acknowledgment of the magnificent Christian architecture that adorns Vilnius, nor any discussion of the centuries of Jewish culture that caused some to call Vilnius the "Jerusalem of the East."³⁰ This is not a balanced, pluralistic reading of the past, but a narrative that glorifies Latvian and Lithuanian ethnicity, language, and folklore, and presents revitalized Pagan religion as the proudest flower of Baltic culture.

However, if we compare this picture of the Baltic past with the version of history given in other religious traditions, it is not at all unusual. Religions are commonly built upon idealized visions of the past that provide the basis for self-congratulatory constructs of communal identity,³¹ whether one looks at the early Jewish history given in the Hebrew Bible, in which the children of Abraham descending from Isaac are portrayed as entering into a special covenant relationship with the Hebrew God, the Christian version of world history that sees the great civilization of the Roman Empire as no more than an unhappy prelude to the crucifixion, resurrection and future kingdom of Jesus, or other traditions. In the construction of virtuous, enlightened Self and villainous, ignorant Other that characterizes these religious narratives, there is little concern for acknowledging the virtues and values of the Other. This is not so different from modern Pagans' rhetorical positioning of themselves vis-à-vis the difficult course of Baltic history.³² To paraphrase a Christian scripture, we might say, "Let the religious tradition that is without historiographical sin cast the first stone."

The claim by members of Dievturi or Romuva that they are the standard bearers of a unique, pre-Christian religious tradition, which was unjustly scorned and suppressed by previous regional rulers, is no worse an interpretation of history than is found in other religions; indeed, it has a fair degree of historical, factual basis. It cannot be doubted that there are important similarities between Baltic mythologies and religious concepts and those of kindred Indo-European religious traditions; nor that Christianity was primarily imposed by force in the Baltic region at great cost to local peoples, particularly the Prussians; nor that chronicles, clerical correspondence and church records from medieval times through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries speak of the Latvians and Lithuanians continuing Pagan worship and customs long after Christianization, which in many cases seems to have been either only nominal or highly syncretistic. The quality, quantity and distribution of Baltic Pagan religion following the introduction of Christianity are all open to dispute, but not the bare fact of its survival in rural areas of Latvia and Lithuania.

BALTIC PAGANISM IN THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD: DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES

With the attainment of Latvian and Lithuanian independence in 1991 having relieved Baltic Pagans of the need to assert ethnic identity against the threat of enforced Russification during the Tsarist and Communist domination, the members of Dievturi and Romuva now face life in multi-ethnic societies in which their languages, identities and traditions face not Soviet suppression but the complex new realities of economic globalization, electronic mass culture and European integration. The question then arises how Dievturi and Romuva intend to relate to those of different ethnicities, languages and religions, and particularly whether such persons will be allowed to join the organizations.

In this regard, there are contrary indications. There remain seeds of intolerance in these movements planted in earlier times, but there is also evidence of efforts to build bridges to different ethnic and linguistic groups and encourage inclusiveness and cooperation.³³ Brastins certainly cannot be called an apostle of tolerance. In an article published in 1936, he went beyond celebrating Latvian ethnicity to calling for the establishment of *naciokratija* (ethnocracy), in which “power belongs only to the main nation of the state.”³⁴ The contemporary leaders of Dievturi do not speak in such terms,³⁵ nor do leading members of Romuva. Where Brastins desired to impose an ethnic definition on the political order that would relegate non-ethnic Latvians to second-class status, modern Baltic Pagan leaders accept the idea of a pluralistic civil society, and regarding politics they are mainly concerned with securing legal rights for their religious movements equivalent to those enjoyed by the far more numerous, mainly Christian, religious communities such as the Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches.³⁶ Janis Silins, a Dievturi leader, told me in 2002 that he had been engaged in a campaign to win equal recognition for Pagan holidays alongside Christmas, Easter and other Christian holidays. It is to be noted that Silins was not calling for the elimination of Christian holidays, but for an acknowledgement of religious parity between the sacred days of Dievturi and those of Christianity.³⁷

As this example illustrates, Dievturi and Romuva appear to have more or less accepted coexistence with their historic Christian rivals, as well as the presence in their societies of Russians, Poles and others of non-Latvian and non-Lithuanian ethnicities. However, it must be understood that the presence of Russians after independence from the Soviet Union remains a sensitive political issue, both within these nations, particularly Latvia,³⁸ and in their relations with Russia. When I interviewed leaders of these religious groups in early 2002, they were somewhat vague about the extent to which Latvian or Lithuanian ethnicity and language were prerequisites to membership in Dievturi or Romuva. I had the sense that their vagueness was at least in part a reflection of the unsettled state of public opinion in the two nations as to whether Latvian and Lithuanian citizenship should be equated with and dependent upon ethnicity and language proficiency. The leaders of Dievturi and Romuva do make clear that rituals are conducted and songs sung in Latvian and Lithuanian, which tends to exclude Russians and others who live in the Baltics without knowledge of the native languages.

A difficulty arises in regard to the occasional participation of second- and third-generation Latvian Canadians, Lithuanian Americans and others who possess ancestral links to Latvia or Lithuania but, in many cases, have little or no Baltic language proficiency. One strategy for incorporating these linguistically disadvantaged brethren into Dievturi and Romuva is to hold “ethnic culture” summer camps in Latvia and Lithuania to allow visitors from other countries to learn language, folk music, arts and other aspects of Latvian and Lithuanian cultures. There are also American, Canadian, and other branches of Dievturi and Romuva, which encourage study and usage of Baltic languages but conduct most activities in English, including substantial Internet discussions.

Jonas Trinkunas told me that, in his view, Romuva was open to all people interested in Baltic religious traditions, even Germans and Russians, the historic foes of Baltic nationalistic discourse. However, he

acknowledged that language presented a substantial barrier because the sacred songs, so central to Romuva ritual activities, are, after all, Lithuanian songs that must be sung in Lithuanian. He suggested that non-Lithuanian speakers willing to learn Lithuanian would be welcomed into Romuva. Janis Silins of Dievturi expressed a similar sentiment.

At this point in time, however, neither Dievturi nor Romuva have yet had to deal with the actual situation of non-Latvian or non-Lithuanian speakers seeking to join their religious groups. The discussion nonetheless suggests that, in the future, it may be language more than ethnic ancestry which will serve as the ultimate barrier between members and non-members of these religious groups.

INTERNATIONAL EXTENSIONS: BALTIC RELIGION BEYOND THE BALTICS

If, in the future, there is considerable growth in membership of the diasporic Dievturi and Romuva groups in North America and elsewhere, where linguistic ability is likely to remain far inferior to that of native speakers in the Baltic homelands, two developments seem likely. It may come about that the linguistic expectations of the diasporic modern Baltic Pagans will be limited to learning just enough Latvian or Lithuanian to be able to sing and understand the Dievturi or Romuva sacred songs in their original languages, somewhat akin to the former status of Latin in the Roman Catholic Mass; or that the *dainas* and *dainos* will be translated into English or possibly other languages, as happened with Latin. Either of these outcomes would preserve the central and sacred status of the folk songs, but the first result would have the additional effect of preserving the privileged, sacerdotal status of the homeland language, thereby reinforcing the ethnic and nationalistic associations of the songs and the religion. Translation to vernacular languages would weaken the importance of the homeland language, and possibly, though not necessarily, lessen the privileged status of the homeland itself. It would open a new possibility, however, of the religions being perceived and presented as universal religions for people of all nations and languages, not merely those with ties to the Latvian and Lithuanian languages, homelands and ethnic identities. This would fulfill, in a quite paradoxical manner, the early twentieth-century dream of Ernest Brastins to have Dievturi, which he saw as the sole surviving Indo-European religious tradition in Europe, recognized as a great universal faith for *all* of the peoples of Europe.

The leader of Romuva, Jonas Trinkunas, also thinks outside the box of a Lithuanian-only identity. In 1998 he invited members of other European Pagan religious groups, as well as sympathetic non-members such as myself, to the World Pagan Congress in Vilnius, with English as the main language of communication. The meeting's purpose was to strengthen ties between these groups and to share resources and strategies for protecting and promoting the Pagan traditions in each country. This has become an annual event, with the meeting re-titled the World Congress of Ethnic Religions (WCER).³⁹ Changing the name of the organization from "Pagan" to "Ethnic" was the subject of long and difficult negotiations, with the prevailing sentiment being that the term "Ethnic" best expressed the foundation of these religious groups in the folklore and folk culture of their respective nations. Although to this point the majority of WCER participants have been members of Eastern European modern Pagan groups—including Dievturi as well as Pagan associations from Russia, Germany, Poland, Ukraine and Belarus—the intention of Trinkunas and others in WCER is to encourage the interactions of a wide number of "Pagan" or "Ethnic" traditions from around the world.⁴⁰

Another example of modern Baltic Paganism broadening beyond nationalistic and ethnic boundaries and limitations is an annual music festival called Menuo Juodaragis (The Moon of the Black Horn), which has been taking place 24-26 August for the last five years in the small northeastern Lithuanian town of Sudeikiai. Menuo Juodaragis brings together a wide variety of musicians as well as artists, craftspeople and others involved with or inspired by traditional Baltic folk culture, with an explicit focus on its spiritual dimensions, as indicated in an advertisement for the festival placed on the Internet.⁴¹

The Trinkunases' ensemble Kulgrinda has participated in the festival with great success. The number of people attending the festival continues to grow, with approximately 900 attending in 2001, and about 1,500 in 2002. Festival organizer Ugnius Lioge told me via email that he is thinking about finding a larger venue for the festival on account of the ever-expanding number of participants, including people from other Baltic states and other countries.⁴²

The equal appreciation shown by the mainly youthful audience for the highly traditional folklore ensemble Kulgrinda, high-tech experimental music groups, and high-volume heavy metal rock bands demonstrates that the folk music dimension of Baltic Paganism enjoys wide acceptance among Lithuanian youth culture. In this, I see the nineteenth-century cultural milieu—in which appreciation of folklore and aspiration toward cosmopolitan, "high" art and culture were woven together with threads of romanticism, nationalism and ethnic pride—undergoing

renovation for the twenty-first century of high technology and electronic arts and communication. The folklore of fields and farms is now becoming part of the soundtrack of the electronic global village, but the appreciation of Baltic ethnic heritage remains central and constant.

The participation of Kulgrinda in Menuo Juodaragis and Romuva in WCER represents parallel extensions of Baltic, particularly Lithuanian, Paganism beyond an exclusively Baltic focus into greater interactions and connections with peoples and religious groups beyond the geographical and ethnic boundaries of the Baltic States. It is notable that in both contexts, music is able to express and transcend ethnic identity simultaneously. For those at Menuo Juodaragis and WCER able to understand Lithuanian, the performance of traditional music serves to undergird Lithuanian identity, and as such it is distinctly Lithuanian. For those unable to understand the meaning of the songs, the music speaks the language of the heart, and as such is universal.

There can be no doubt that music, which over the centuries has played such a crucial role in the transmission of Latvian and Lithuanian folk traditions, including native Pagan religion, will remain front and center in the continuing evolution of Baltic Paganism within Latvia and Lithuania and beyond.

CONCLUSION

Modern Baltic Paganism grew out of nineteenth- and twentieth-century folklore research into the folk music, folklore and traditional ethnic cultures of Latvia and Lithuania. Research into the abundant supply of Latvian *dainas* and Lithuanian *dainos*, with their rustic beauty, symbolic richness and intriguing theoretical linkages to ancient Indo-European cultures and religions generated a new sense of ethnic identity and pride among Latvians and Lithuanians, particularly among intellectuals. The preservation of native customs and traditions became a key motivating factor in the drive toward national independence from Tsarist Russian domination in the late nineteenth century and from Soviet control in the late twentieth century. Spiritually inclined folklorists developed religious movements that recreated rituals and beliefs linked to the *dainas* and *dainos*. Repressed during Soviet times, these movements have reemerged and flourished in the post-Soviet atmosphere of general cultural and religious liberty in the Baltic States.

Music remains central to modern Baltic Paganism in Latvia and Lithuania. Compact disc recordings and collaborations between practitioners of traditional Baltic folk music and modern electronic music are creating new platforms, both in Latvia and Lithuania and in lands far removed from the Baltics, for the music and spirituality of Baltic Paganism to thrive and develop in the twenty-first century without losing its foundation in the ethnic heritages of centuries past. International extensions of Latvian Dievturi and Lithuanian Romuva are building upon the Baltic diaspora in the United States, Canada and other countries, and developing virtual Baltic Pagan communities on the Internet, with the sharing, learning and performing of traditional music always a key concern. The interplay between ethnic past and multicultural present in different settings around the world may stretch and strain the harmony between variant forms of modern Baltic Paganism, but it seems safe to assume that the melody will not be lost.

One day in June 1998, I was riding in a car in Lithuania with Jonas Trinkunas, leader of Romuva, along with some other people attending WCER. An American visitor asked Jonas if he practiced yoga or meditation or any other such spiritual discipline. After pausing to consider the question, he replied, "I sing!" Trinkunas did not feel it necessary to say more, which speaks volumes about the importance of music in modern Baltic Paganism.

ENDNOTES

¹ There are Pagan revival religious movements also in the northernmost Baltic state of Estonia, but Estonian Paganism will not be discussed in this article. Estonia has a cultural history somewhat different from Latvia and Lithuania, based on its proximity to Finland and the close relationship of the Estonian language to the Finnish as kindred members of the non-Indo-European, Finno-Ugric language family, as opposed to Latvian and Lithuanian being linguistic kindred within the Baltic sub-family of Indo-European languages. Ancient Estonian Paganism and modern Pagan revivals are topics that deserve sustained scholarly attention in their own right, and such studies will be sure to expand our knowledge of religious history and contemporary religious life in Northern Europe.

² The appropriate terminology for describing and referring to modern Pagan revival movements is very much in flux in both academic and religious circles. In the past, I made a distinction between "Pagan" religions of the past and modern "Neopagan" religious movements; for example, see Michael Strmiska, "Ásatrú in Iceland: The Revival of Nordic Paganism?" *Nova Religio* 4, no. 1 (October 2000): 106-32. For the current study, I have decided to put aside the "Neo" term as possibly being pejorative to

modern Pagans. Whatever terminology is employed, what remains extremely important is to distinguish the historical situations of non-Christian religions practiced in the medieval period or earlier from modern-day versions of those religions. Some modern forms of Paganism are carefully reconstructed from folklore, chronicles and other historical texts, archaeology and other sources, while some are re-imagined religious forms without much regard for historical accuracy or cultural specificity, and still others involve the refinement and renovation of indigenous cultural resources that have never been fully suppressed by Christianization. Modern Baltic Paganism falls largely into this third category.

³ The different historical situations of Latvia and Lithuania mean that the struggles for national self-assertion were somewhat differently configured. Since both nations were under the thumb of Tsarist domination, resisting Russian political and cultural power was the first objective of the Latvian and Lithuanian nationalists, but there were also other ethnic or national groups with significant power and prestige over and against the native Latvians and Lithuanians as well as other groups such as Jews and Tatars. Latvians struggled against a long history of German colonization that had placed the German elite at the top level of society, and Lithuanians defined themselves in opposition to a Polish aristocracy that had become the ruling class as a result of Lithuania's centuries-long political union with Poland. Even under the Tsarist regime, German and Polish elites retained substantial power and privilege. Lithuanian nationalism, therefore, defined itself in opposition to both Russian and Polish domination, and the Latvian nationalist movement was characterized by resistance to both Russian and German control. Lithuania also had a sizeable Jewish community, particularly in Vilnius, and Latvia had a somewhat smaller one, both of which were decimated by Nazi forces and native collaborators during World War II.

⁴ Krisjanis Barons' monumental six-volume collection of *Latvju dainas* containing 217,996 folk songs was published between 1894 and 1915. Andrejs Jurjans' *Latvju tautas muzikas materiali* (*Latvian Folk Music Materials*) was published in six volumes between 1894 and 1926, providing information not only about folk songs but also about associated customs and folklore. Antanas Juska's collection, *Lietuviskos Dainos*, was published in several volumes between 1880 and 1882, with another set of wedding song *dainos*, *Lietuviskos svodbines dainos*, published in 1880. Other important Lithuanian collectors of *dainos* include Liudvikas Reza, whose work was first published in 1825, Simonas Stanevicius (*Dainos Zemaiciu*, 1829), and Adolfas Sabaliauskas (*Lietuvoje dainos ir giesmes saurytineje Lietuvoje*, 1911, co-authored with Finnish scholar Augustas Neimis). There is no danger of the well of Lithuanian folk-songs running dry, as the collection and publication of *dainos* continues today.

I am grateful to Lithuanian friends Jonas Trinkunas, Austra Simoniukstyte, Simonas Kielas and Dangis Verseckas for their help on the topic of *dainos*, and to my Latvian friend Inese Krumina for assistance concerning *dainas*. A concise summary of the history of Latvian folk music scholarship is given by the Latvian ethnomusicologist Valdis Muktupavels in his article "Latvia," in the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Volume 8, Europe*, ed. Timothy Rice, James Porter, and Chris Goertzen (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 499-508.

⁵ A third sector of nineteenth-century intellectual activity was the writing of indigenous history texts that generally offered a romanticized vision of the past greatness of Baltic nations. See Virgil Krapauskas, *Nationalism and Historiography: The Case of Lithuanian Nineteenth-century Historiography* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 2000); and Andrejs Plakans, "Looking Backwards: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries in Inter-war Latvian Historiography," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 30, no. 4 (1999): 293-307.

⁶ Latvia and Lithuania experienced Christianization differently. Latvia was colonized by the Sword Brothers and other German missionaries, crusaders and merchants, who implemented forced conversion to Christianity as one element in the establishment of a German Christian colonial order in which the native Latvians were reduced to servitude. The city of Riga was built as a capital by the new German elite. In Lithuania, the threat of conquest by German Christians, as observed in the neighboring land of Prussia with the result of the total destruction of native Prussian language and religion, inspired the thirteenth-century formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, an imperial, militarily powerful state, which not only successfully defended itself against German Christian conquest, but expanded to the east and south by conquests and alliances with the peoples of the former Kievan Rus state. The city of Vilnius grew around the hill fortress of the Grand Duke, at the foot of which lay a temple to the Lithuanian god Perkunas. The temple was later replaced by a Catholic cathedral, with traces of the demolished Perkunas temple eventually coming to light through archaeological research. Conversion to Christianity was negotiated quite carefully by a series of Lithuanian leaders, and used as a bargaining chip in maintaining maximum leverage vis-à-vis neighboring states, the Roman Catholic Church, and Lithuania's chief enemy, the Teutonic Knights, who were centered in Germanized, Christianized Prussia. When conversion was accepted by the rulers of Lithuania in 1369, it was part of a strategic alliance with Poland that defeated the Teutonic Knights at the battle of Grunenwald (Tannenberg) in 1410. Regarding Baltic Christianization, see Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and Catholic Frontier*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1997); S. C. Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire within East-Central Europe, 1295-1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 1-29.

⁷ In these matters, religion and language are closely linked. Timothy Snyder points out that the nineteenth-century glorification of the Lithuanian language as the closest philological relation to Sanskrit remained a point of national pride throughout the Soviet period. For Lithuanian nationalists, Soviet rule afforded the opportunity to divorce Lithuanian language, culture and identity from Polish, a division assisted by philological research that distinguished Baltic languages from the Slavic. This in turn supported preservation of the Lithuanian language against linguistic Russification. Timothy Snyder, "Durable Romanticism," in *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 96-97.

⁸ One of the most important revivalist scholars of pre-Christian Lithuanian religion in the 1800s, Vyduenas (Vilius Storosta, 1868-1953), interpreted Lithuanian myth and folklore with regard to certain parallel concepts of Hindu theology. His thinking remains influential in modern-day Romuva.

⁹ For example, in a 1960s work explaining basic doctrines of Dievturi, the author states, “Our religious ideas show a surprising closeness to those of the Indian Vedas. Such a similarity attests that the source of the religion of both peoples lies in the [religion] of the proto-Aryans to whom the Latvians (the Balts), the Indians and the Iranians have the closest relationship.” Janis Dardedzis, *Latvian Religion: An Outline* (New York: Nujorkas Dievturu Kopa, 1968), 32-35.

¹⁰ Audrius Dundzila and Jonas Trinkunas, “The Living Heritage,” in *Of Gods and Holidays: The Baltic Heritage*, ed. Jonas Trinkunas (Vilnius: Tverme, 1999), 147.

¹¹ Ernest Brastins was not the first Latvian to organize a modern Latvian Pagan association, only the first to be successful. As Agita Misane reports,

[t]he first attempts to oppose Christianity not only *de facto* but *de jure*, emerged during World War I, when a teacher called Juris Lece tried to establish a religious congregation in the Latvian town of Jelgave which was based on non-Christian values rooted in Latvian folk songs.... Lecus published two brochures in which he called for a restoration of the ancient Latvian religion—*Ariesi-Latviesi* [*Aryan-Latvians*] in 1914, and *Senlatviesu dievticiba un dveseles glitums sadzive* [*Ancient Latvian Godliness and the Soul in Everyday Life*] in 1917.

Agita Misane, “The Traditional Latvian Religion of Dievturiba in the Discourse of Nationalism,” in *Religious Minorities in Latvia* 4, no. 29 (2000): 33-52, quotation at 40-44.

I am grateful to Dr. Misane for sharing her knowledge and viewpoints, and serving as interpreter in meetings with members of Dievturi in March 2002.

¹² Agita Misane, “Inter-War Right-Wing Movements in the Baltic States and Their Religious Affiliation,” *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*, 46, nos. 1-2 (2001): 75-87, quotation at 82.

¹³ Michael York, “Pan-Baltic Identity and Religio-Cultural Expression in Contemporary Lithuania,” in *New Religions and the New Europe*, ed. Robert Towler (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 72-85.

¹⁴ This re-labeling of the organization and reinterpretation of its purpose was much to the consternation of Catholic participants in Ramuva, who had thought of its folklore activities as non-religious and in no way conflicting with their Christian affiliation. Interview with Dr. Paulius Subacius, February 2002. I am grateful to Dangis Verseckas for serving as interpreter in this discussion.

¹⁵ Explained in detail in Valdis Muktupavels, “On Some Relations Between *Kokles* Styles and Contexts in the Twentieth Century,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 31, no. 4 (2000): 388-405, quotation at 393-94.

¹⁶ Daiva Raciunaite-Vyciniene, *Sutartines: Lithuanian Polyphonic Songs* (Vilnius: VAGA, 2002).

¹⁷ Kulgrinda, *Ugnies Apiegos (Rite of Fire)*, DGCD003 (Vilnius: Dangus Music Company, 2002). The CD contains Lithuanian/English notes and lyrics.

¹⁸ Kulgrinda, *Perkūno Giesmės (Hymns to the Thunder God)*, DGCD008 (Vilnius: Dangus Music Company, 2003). This CD, like *Rite of Fire*, contains Lithuanian/English information.

¹⁹ It is noteworthy that Brastins and Dievturi interpret ancient Latvian mythology in a monotheistic manner, unlike most scholars of Baltic religion, who see it as a polytheistic pantheon in the manner of Greek or ancient Vedic religion. Dievturi sees the sky-god Dievs as “the” god of the religion, and regards feminine figures such as Laima (associated with fate) and Mara (associated with material well-being), viewed by scholars as goddesses, as manifestations, hypostases or helpers of Dievs, resulting in a quasi-trinitarian structure of Dievs-Laima-Mara.

²⁰ Translated by Valdis Muktupavels and cited in his article, “On Some Relations Between *Kokles* Styles and Contexts in the Twentieth Century,” 393. Dr. Muktupavels is himself a master *kokles* player who in 2002 released a two-CD collection of traditional and not-so-traditional *kokles* music, entitled simply *Kokles*, UPE CD 034, on the Latvian UPE record label, available at <<http://www.upe.parks.lv>>.

²¹ Solveiga Krumina-Konkova, “Development of New Religious Movements in the Social and Cultural Context of Contemporary Latvia,” presented at CESNUR’s (Center for Studies on New Religions) 13th International Conference, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, 3 June 1999; published as “New Religions in Latvia,” *Nova Religio* 3, no. 1 (October 1999): 119-34.

²² An overview of the primary Lithuanian and Latvian festivals and holy days is given in Jonas Trinkunas, “Of Holidays,” in Trinkunas, *Of Gods and Holidays*, 105-36.

²³ In her excellent study of the construction of Latvian identity in Latvian political discourse, Daina Stukuls Eglitis provides a telling example of the emotional significance of Latvian-language music for Latvians during the Soviet period:

In 1986, a song called *Dzimta valoda* [“Mother Tongue,” literally, “language of birth”] by the rock group Livi was hugely popular, in the words of one Latvian, “a national anthem” of the time. The song reflected a shared concern that the Latvian language was losing ground in Latvia and highlighted a primal tie between language and life: “The language

of my birth is my mother,” went the refrain. That the song spoke to public grievances against the Soviet regime was confirmed when, in early 1987, the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee issued a statement condemning the song’s selection as the most popular song of 1986.

Daina Stukuls Eglitis, *Imagining the Nation: History, Modernity and Revolution in Latvia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 27.

²⁴ Maruta Lietina Ray recently has called attention to how Latvian *dainas* not only express a timeless world of mythology and spirituality, as has often been suggested, they also articulate specific grievances against landowners and power-structures from the viewpoint of disgruntled serfs. “Recovering the Voice of the Oppressed: Master, Slave and Serf in the Baltic Provinces,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 34, no. 1 (2003): 1-21.

²⁵ In Latvian, the winter and summer solstice celebrations are called, respectively, *Ziemasvetki* and *Jani*; in Lithuanian, *Kaledos* and *Rasa* (also called *Jonines*).

²⁶ Interviews with Jonas Trinkunas, 3 March 2002 in Vilnius, and with Olgerts Talivaldis Auns and Janis Silins, 8 March 2002 in Riga.

²⁷ I am very grateful to Donatas Glodenis of the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice for meeting with me on 1 and 4 March 2002 and providing a wealth of information on religious rights issues in Lithuania and proposed legislation. Glodenis’ essay, “Legislation on Religion and the Challenge of Pluralism in Lithuania,” presented at the 2001 international conference sponsored by INFORM (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements), and CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), “The Spiritual Supermarket: Religious Pluralism in the 21st Century,” at the London School of Economics on 19-22 April 2001 was especially helpful.

²⁸ Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Hobsbawm gives examples of supposedly ancient folkloric traditions that were created from the modern imagination or cobbled together from various unrelated sources in the service of nationalism and other such mass movements. See also Richard Dorson, “Fakelore,” in *American Folklore and the Historian* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 3-14.

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Press, 1983).

³⁰ Regarding the Vilnius Jewish community, see N. N. Shneidman, *Jerusalem of Lithuania: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Vilnius, A Personal Perspective* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Mosaic Press, 1998); Saulius Suziedelis, *Historical Dictionary of Lithuania* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 139-43; and Czeslaw Milosz, “Vilnius, Lithuania: An Ethnic Agglomerate,” in *Ethnic Identity: Creation, Conflict and Accommodation*, ed. Lola Romanucci-Ros and George A. De Vod, 3rd ed. (London: Alta Mira Press, 1995), 249-63.

³¹ This is understandable in terms of Clifford Geertz’s discussion of the motivational function of religions, in which the community of believers is celebrated over and against other groups, which are denigrated. See Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87-125.

³² To give another example of this type of religious narrative and rhetoric, the Indian historian Romila Thapar has written insightfully on how the picture of the Indian past is manipulated by modern-day Hindu nationalists to provide maximum legitimation to their particular version of Hinduism. Romila Thapar, “Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity,” *Interpreting Early India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 60-88.

³³ The question of the linkage of Northern European Paganism with racism, anti-Semitism and Nazism has received a great deal of attention in recent years, as in the studies of the Scandinavian-Germanic “Ásatrú” Pagan movement by Jeffrey Kaplan and Mattias Gardell that focus on racist elements within Ásatrú. In my previous study of Icelandic Ásatrú published in *Nova Religio* and a forthcoming essay on Ásatrú in Iceland and the United States to be published in an anthology of writings on modern Paganism in North America and Europe, I make the case that works like those of Kaplan and Gardell overemphasize the racism of a minority of Ásatrú members and ignore the non-racial attitudes and concerns of the majority. In my meetings with contemporary representatives of Latvian Dievturi and Lithuanian Romuva, I found no evidence of racially hostile or anti-Semitic attitudes or ideology. Their primary concern is preserving and continuing the ethnic religious traditions with which they identify, not in abusing or exterminating any particular racial or religious Others. Indeed, a number of my informants complained that they felt charges of racism and anti-Semitism to be something of a “bum rap” used against them by those who seek to discredit modern Baltic Paganism without troubling to understand it in a more than superficial manner. This is not to say that there may not be a certain number of racists and anti-Semites within the larger Romuva and Dievturi communities, as well as within Ásatrú, but the same would apply to other religious communities as well, in which cases the particular instances of racism or anti-Semitism are deplored without the entire religious community being labeled racist or anti-Semitic. I believe the same standard should be applied to Scandinavian and Baltic Paganism. See Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion in America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003); Michael Strmiska, “Ásatrú in Iceland”; and Michael Strmiska, “Nordic Paganism in Iceland and America” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Michael Strmiska (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, forthcoming).

³⁴ Misane, "The Traditional Latvian Religion of Dievturība," 46-47.

³⁵ In an interview conducted in Riga on 8 March 2002, Janis Silins and Olgert Auns, leading figures in Dievturi, expressed respect for Judaism as the ethnic religion of Israel, while insisting that Dievturi was the ethnic religion of Latvia, and denied any antagonism toward Jews or Judaism in modern times.

³⁶ In Lithuania, the dominant organized religion is the Roman Catholic Church, while in Latvia it is the Lutheran Church. There are also sizeable Russian Orthodox congregations in Latvia and Lithuania, as well as smaller Jewish, Muslim, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormon communities, among others.

³⁷ Interview in Riga, 8 March 2002.

³⁸ See Andrejs Plakans, "From a Regional Vernacular to the Language of a State: The Case of Latvia," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 100/101 (1993): 203-19; and Anatoly Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 274-315. The status of Russian people and language has also been a matter of intense political debate in the third Baltic state, Estonia.

³⁹ The final section of the volume of essays on Baltic Pagan religion edited by Trinkunas is devoted to a discussion of WCER, including two declarations of principles affirmed by the participants. See Trinkunas, *Of Gods and Holidays*, 197-204. I am a signatory to the first declaration. WCER has its own website with links to the proclamations and the member organizations at <<http://www.wcer.org>>, accessed 27 January 2003.

⁴⁰ The second WCER declaration dated October 1998, located at <<http://www.wcer.org>>, states: "The WCER is primarily concerned with the protection and development of ethnic Cultures and Identities. We understand the term 'Ethnic' as referring to religions and cultures that are related to a particular people's cosmology as it is expressed in cultural and social terms as well as ancestral. We recognize that many factors make up people's identity." The declaration continues: "Historically, those of other ethnic backgrounds have been adopted into new ones if they took on the beliefs and mores that are a larger part of the identity of that people. Although we are convinced that every human being has the best possibilities within his/her own culture to re-establish the harmony within the divine aspect, it does not, however, exclude anyone from participation in their activities."

⁴¹ The event was advertised on the Internet at <<http://www.dangus.net>> in August 2002 in a text that read in part:

MENUO JUODARAGIS: neo-folk darkwave festival in Lithuania. ritual no. 5 ::: first time international.... Concept: the fest of non-commercial original artistry—directly or indirectly—connected with ethnic, folklore, tribal, mythological and alike streams linked to the basic secret structures of our Universe. Many different ways submerge—the very archaic as well as the very modern ones. The new Baltic welten-schauung. Mediums: music, lectures, video/films/art, sculpture, photo exhibitions, theatre, workshops, dance, woods, fires, air and water. Main musical paths: authentic folklore, ethnic tribal, progressive electronic, dance, industrial, noise, acoustic, metal/rock, musica magica, ambient, gothic, avant-garde.

My thanks to Dangis Verseckas and Jonas Trinkunas for directing me to this site.

⁴² Menuo Juodaragis is largely a youth festival, with about 20 percent of the people attending under age 20, about 65 percent between 20 and 30, 10 percent between 30 and 40, and perhaps 5 percent over 40.