

## Address by President of Latvia Egils Levits at the event honouring the Chief conductors of the XXVII Nationwide Latvian Song Festival and Chief Dance leaders of XVII Latvian Dance Festival

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Latvia and song are inseparable. Our country and the Song Festival are inseparable.

Through song, Latvians throughout the ages have expressed their yearning for self-determination and freedom. In song we are higher than in everyday life, we see further common goals.

150 years ago, when the people of Kurzeme and Vidzeme gathered in Riga for the First Nationwide Latvian Song Festival, the dream of Latvia had not yet been born.

The large choir of the first Song Festival started the Latvian journey to its statehood, which continued in the following generations.

The Latvian state grew out of Latvian culture as the spiritual power of our nation. It was this power that proved to be superior to all other powers.

It allowed Latvians to keep their backs straight, to speak the Latvian language, to strengthen their self-confidence, to flourish a diverse Latvian identity.

During the years of nonfreedom, the Song Festival kept alive the spirit of resistance and the hope for the rebirth of the Latvian state.

That is why the Song Festival is a special form of power that inscribes itself in Latvia's statehood, and itself embodies and protects that statehood.

That is why the Song Festival also has political and constitutional value. In a special law, we recognise the Song Festival as an event that unites the nation. We're unique in that, it is not the case anywhere else in the world.

Distinguished audience!

We celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Song Festival in an independent, free, democratic, national Latvian state.

All the reins of power are in our own hands. We are building our own country.

I congratulate our wise, talented, mission-conscious cultural and spiritual workers - the Chief conductors and Chief leaders of the Song and Dance Festivals.

Thank you for your contribution to the Festival!

Thank you for your contribution to the Latvian people and the Latvian state!

May the Song Festival always be!



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