

SONG OF A LEVEL LAND

*Text: Paul-Eerik Rummo*  
*A song by Vëljo Tormis, arranged by Tõnu Kõrvits*

Here you grew up. On a land  
which is flat.  
You get your peace and balance  
from that.  
The Egg Hill remains the  
cloud-frontier.  
The clouds are low and mouse-  
grey here.

\* \* \*

Here you were born. On a land  
which is flat.  
Your peace and balance stem  
from that.

*Soloist Celia Roose*

*Translated by Ivar Ivask*

„MEN’S SONGS“, CYCLE I  
*Texts arranged by Paul-Eerik Rummo*

I. MEN’S SONG

We are men like wild bulls,  
Aru Jaan’s grey steers,  
bellowing we go to the woods,  
trampling to the oak grove.

Let them come, the thousand  
men of Tuudi,  
another hundred from Sauga  
parish,  
we shall scatter them to the  
winds  
and take their measure by  
steelyard.

We shall heat up the cold  
village saunas,  
heal sickly maidens,  
put cupping glasses on Kaie,  
and on fallen Maie.

We do not fear drowning  
nor falling into a well,  
headlong we plunge into a  
creek,  
rush into a bear’s lair.

2. BUNDLING SONG

It bores me to be sleeping  
alone  
in this cold barn.  
Should I be going  
to drop in at Viiu’s?  
(Should I start) howling at the  
door,  
asking to be let in?  
But fear has taken hold of me,  
for how will I pass through the  
village?  
All the dogs have been beaten  
and very well trained -  
they will rush at me  
and take a bite at my thigh.  
What else can I do  
but sleep in a cold barn?

*Soloist Mati Turi*

3. BETROTHAL VISIT  
SONG

Now I’ve left behind all  
worries,  
settled my courtship.  
Bottles weren’t scarce,  
plenty had been brought home.  
I found a number in a closet,  
sundry had been held in them -  
birch tar and lamp oil,  
which you could tell by the  
smell.  
Water I measured by the pail,  
so that the spirits would not be  
strong.

Offer your bride strong spirits,  
she will learn to drink and  
booze.  
Then I lit my pipe,  
harnessed my sorrel stallion to  
the sleigh.  
Let the village women wonder,  
for today I am going to  
propose.  
Then merrily I rode  
under Mari’s dad’s window.  
Syrup they brought me plenty,  
syrup and incense,

and a whole tray of eggs:  
“Eat them all up, son-in-law.”

If I eat and get fatter,  
I’ll look like a squire.

Let’s now waste no more time,  
I’ll praise myself against my  
father-in-law.  
“Give me your Mari -  
I have a pocket watch and an  
umbrella,  
weighty notes I carry in my  
pocket,  
two-storied houses in my  
pouch.”  
Mari heard my say,  
jumped onto my sleigh -  
Oh my,  
how she hugged me!

What shall I bet on  
that soon my wedding day  
comes?

4. DRINKING SONG

When I left the tavern,  
I saw a lot of fun -  
the road went slantwise,  
the juniper had grown  
slantwise,  
the willow seemed slantwise,  
the fence had long been  
slantwise.  
All of the Russian rule was  
slantwise,  
the cabbage patch upside  
down.

Oh, you bitter spirits,  
you sweet drink,  
somersaulting you go down the  
throat,  
sprightly to the stomach.

When I left the tavern  
I saw a lot of fun -  
Well, the road went slantwise,  
the house stood slantwise in  
the forest,  
the bed slantwise by the wall,  
an old maid slantwise in the  
bed.  
All of the Russian rule was

slantwise,  
The cabbage patch upside  
down.

*Soloists Taniel Kirikal and Tõnis Kaumann*

5. SONG OF THE  
TURKISH WAR

One, two, three - and thrash!

Twenty years I served,  
was a private,  
I shot lead out of my gun  
straight at the Turks’ eyes, oh I  
did, too.

Sleighed I ten Turks  
advancing in the battle,  
then was hit myself  
at the rattle of the Plevna  
battle.

Wounded I was found there  
and cured in hospital.  
Then they gave me a white  
ticket  
and sent me back home.

There I got a golden medal,  
and a cross -  
that’s good, not bad,  
for I made some money out  
of it.

MEN’S SONGS, CYCLE II  
6. SAILOR’S SONG

See, while sailing we had fun  
when the mast was bent.  
The ship was flying like the  
Maker’s bird,  
white foam abreast.  
We reached the town of Riga  
and asked for the dances  
where a maiden would dance  
for us on the edge of the  
stone bridge.

That’s the way a sailor, too,  
must keep climbing up the  
mast.  
And once you drop into water,  
no one will be able to rescue  
you.  
No one will provide a grave for  
you,  
nor carry you to the  
churchyard -  
the pike will yawn on your  
grave  
and the roach will make a shiny  
coffin nail.

Amen, the hook and off-gone  
herrings.

*Soloist Rainer Vilu*

7. SERF’S SONG

Others have beds and others  
have games,  
I have neither a bed nor a  
game,  
trouble I have and a bondman’s  
care,  
no escape from them.

When I, poor me, get tired,  
where shall I lay this burden?

Trouble I set on the black  
beam,  
care I cast on the perch.

In the morning, bond again for  
me, the tiny,  
the wee me, (again) onto my  
master’s field.  
Trouble comes back into my  
bosom,  
care runs along into the yard.

Oh, Lord, dear Lord,  
throw down some hoisting  
ropes  
so I could enter the heavenly  
bond,  
make hay for Maria in the  
Creator’s realm.

*Soloist Rainer Vilu*

8. BAWDY SONG

Äi vidiridirit and urra-urra,  
Don’t let your daughter die.

All it happened last Martinmas  
when roaming I went in my  
shirtsleeves

With Jaak and Tõnn  
who kept mmh-mmh-mmh-  
ing.  
The mistress brought some  
mmh-mmh  
and Jaak then ate the mmh-  
mmh.

Then mmh-mmh-mmh-mmh  
we saw  
and mmh-mmh we gave her,

If mmh-mmh-mmh-mmh,  
then mmh-mmh-mmh and  
mmh-mmh-mmh.

And then who came was  
Toomas,  
a club in his hand .....

This kind of fun we’ll no more  
have,  
it all happened last Martinmas.

*Soloist Henry Tiisma*

9. DANCING SONG

Let our Mari come,  
I shall get her on her feet.

Ait-tali-rali-raa, ali-ramp-  
tamp-taa.  
Utireetu, utireetu, trallallaa.

My sock heels have holes  
like an old mare’s blaze.  
My ears are singing  
as if Jüri from next door was  
playing the pipes.

10. VILLAGE SONG

Another new song has been  
made  
that old men pass on from  
mouth to mouth,  
yet they will never finish it,  
and leave it in naughty boys’  
care.

On the brink of the village we  
have a graveyard

where the crossmaker can be  
seen.  
He is working hard, never  
sleeping,  
crucifying the villagers’ sins.  
He misses none,  
heeds all of them.  
Carefully he carves everything  
into stone  
and pulls them into a single  
line.

Down at Raama there lives a  
mighty witch  
who knows all arts and crafts.  
She keeps birds of common  
sense,  
and cups of poison in her  
chambers.  
One night some boys, they say,  
had a mind for pranks,  
yet took to flight right away  
when saw snakes in the  
farmyard.

Kassi Volts is an honourable  
guy  
who runs a prancers’ sect.  
His undertakes to teach his  
followers  
to jump for the Maker’s joy.  
His followers, they are a bit  
odd,  
yet his true orderlies.  
Nothing else they care about  
but what they hear from  
Voltsi’s mouth.

What terrible blows can be  
heard from there,  
And, now and then, some  
crying?  
An old farm is falling apart,  
which explains some ill blood.

Full siblings there  
have picked an angry fight -  
sometimes bloody, sometimes  
not,  
never with a hallo to each  
other.

Let us now praise a lad  
who is a master of all jobs.  
He put up a statue in his own  
honour  
which many didn’t like.  
Susi Mats, his little brother  
is one really nice kid.  
He would confirm young  
maidens  
and lure them on the path of  
sin.

Now let us finish the song  
but not learn from the moral:  
the song may be long or short,  
but never moralizing.

*Soloist Tõnu Aav*

„Men’s Songs“ translated by Kaja Kappel

CURSE UPON IRON

*Text from Kalevala, adapted and  
added to by Jaan Kaplinski and Paul-  
Eerik Rummo.*

*Soloists Mati Turi, Vabur Soonberg  
and Tõnu Kaljuste*

„Curse Upon Iron“ (1972)  
invokes ancient shamanistic  
traditions to construct an

allegory about the evils of war.

THE LAST SHIP

*Text: Juhan Smuul*  
*A song by Vëljo Tormis, arranged by Tõnu Kõrvits*

Literal translation:  
After death I will get my ship  
but I will never see the lights  
before that, my dear, I got the  
sky  
and the blossoming land from  
you

(...)

After death I will not need my  
ship  
While being alive I ask you  
Do not ever leave me  
Be my last ship

