

Už Raseinių, ant Dubysos Beyond the City of Raseiniai, by the Dubysa River

Music: Juozas Naujalis (1869 – 1934)

Lyrics: Maironis (1862 – 1932)

J. Naujalis composed 27 songs for choir, 13 of them with lyrics by Maironis. All of them were composed prior to 1924.

The poem “Beyond the City of Raseiniai, by the Dubysa River” appeared in the publication “Voices of Spring” in 1895. The poet draws a picture of the beauty of nature – a brilliant morning, the sun rising, the freshness of the dew-covered grass. And the pride of Lithuania: beautiful, blond girls delighting in their youth – much as we delight in the youth of our families and community.

The theme would seem to be the beauty of the countryside, the girls, and their concerns. At first everything is picturesque and wonderful. However, the later verses speak of anxiety and sadness. The girls are lovely, the scenery is splendid, the sunrise is promising a magnificent day. But the heart is restless and sad. Why?

We look for answers in the history of that time period: when was the poem written? In 1895 or somewhat earlier. What was happening in Lithuania at that time? Lithuania was under the rule of czarist Russia. All Lithuanian language publications printed in the Latin alphabet were banned (the ban ended in 1905). Compulsory service in the Russian army was for 6 years, followed by 9 years in the reserves, all together a 15 year commitment.

The final verse of the poem (which is generally not sung) provides insight into the reason for the anxiety and sadness:

Many perish, many rot away
With no one to shed tears for them
Beyond the Urals, beyond the ends of the earth,
Not in their own homeland.

This is why the widows and young girls weep – when their husbands, betrothed, and brothers do not come home. Soldiers conscripted into the Russian Imperial Army and forced to serve long years would lose their health, the best years of their life, and possibly their lives. Such a loss was particularly painful for those at home, as the men would lose their lives fighting for a foreign country.