

# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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Dear members of the Lithuanian American Community,

Currently, the Lithuanian-American Community is comprised of 52 chapters and 41 Lithuanian schools in 10 locations. This 66-year old organization is the most numerous Lithuanian group. Its mission is to bring Lithuanians together, to maintain the Lithuanian language and traditions, and to keep close cooperation with Lithuania and its institutions. I have to add that especially at this time we, Lithuanian-Americans, are worried about Lithuanian Independence and the preservation of democracy and security.

I would like to ask that the district and regional chairmen would introduce the resolutions of the Social Affairs Council to the public as well as get in touch with your local government representatives and members of the Congress. Everyone should know that Lithuania and the Baltic countries must be protected against Russian aggression. I ask everyone to do their homework!

The rejuvenated National Executive Committee is working hard to intensify Lithuanian activities, to stir up as many Lithuanians as possible, so that they would contribute to the organization of various events and festivals. Our wonderful Committee members - Algimantas Gustaitis, Austėja Sruoga, Laima Liutikienė, Auksė Motto, Valdas Buožis, Tomas Mitrulevičius, Ieva Smidt, Jonas Howes, and Juozas Kazlauskas - make the National Executive Committee activities visible to the public. In many of them, I see strong community leaders who will be able to confidently lead this organization. I also must mention an excellent community leader: my teacher and colleague Dr. Elona Vaisnys.

We are pleased that the Lithuanian American Community manages to publish several publications. One of them, Bridges, has long traditions and is coming out in English. I would like to apologize to our readers who had received the magazine late last year. As of this year, the editor of Bridges is Karilė Vaitkutė (kariledalia@yahoo.com). The Lithuanian language magazine Naujienos (News) was launched in 2013. Its initiator and editor is Loreta Timukienė (loretim@gmail.com). I invite our Lithuanian Community chapters, schools, and other groups to write to the magazines and share their joys and worries. I also invite everyone to subscribe to these two magazines and share the news about them with your friends.

In 2016 we participated in an especially beautiful event – the 10th North American Folk Dance Festival in Baltimore. This impressive festival was organized by a small group of Lithuanians in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore who were led by Linas Orentas and artistic director Tomas Mikuckas. In 2018, we will all participate in the Song Festival in Lithuania, where the 100th Anniversary of Lithuania’s Independence will be solemnly celebrated.

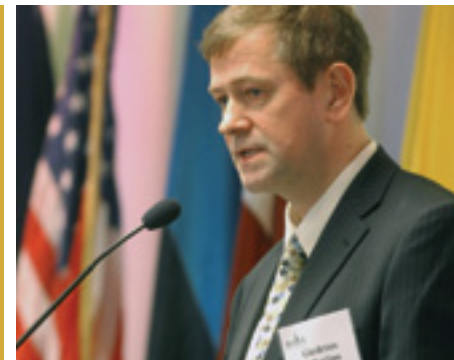
In its meeting in January, the Lithuanian American Community National Executive Committee passed a resolution regarding these important events. The gaps between these festivals should be longer than two years. An organizing committee has been formed, and several of its members are former presidents and artistic directors of former festivals. It is perfectly understandable that continuity and consistency are necessary, and the preparation for these events is time and effort-consuming work.

The LISS program has been going on for nine years. It is a program that gives an opportunity to Lithuanian-American students to receive internships in Lithuania. We have been cooperating with the Vytauto Didžiojo University, and this year we have also signed agreements with the Vilnius Gedimino Technical University. After completing a six-week practical training, students will receive credits from these universities. We added a program for younger students called Gimnazistai Lietuvai (High School Students for Lithuania), which aims to enable 15 to 18-year-olds to travel to Lithuania and set up volunteer camps together with the Lithuanian students. This year, Lithuanian students from the UK and Latvia will join the students from the United States and Lithuania. If you wish to enroll in these programs, please write to Gintarė Kazlauskas (Gintars.kazlauskas@gmail.com).

We are extremely grateful to our sponsors: the Lithuanian Foundation, the Kazickas Foundation, and the National Foundation, as well as private sponsors whose support inspire us to work further and organize wonderful events.

On behalf of the Lithuanian American Community National Executive Committee, I personally thank everyone for their sincere and selfless work.

Sigita Šimkuvienė  
LAC National Executive Committee President



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Front Cover: Taking part at the 18th annual Vilnius Book Fair. From left: Former editor of Draugas newspaper Dalia Cidzikaitė, translator Karilė Vaitkutė, playwright Kestutis Nakas, and publisher Sigita Pūkė.

Back cover: A white stork in Lithuania. Photo credit: Romualdas Barauskas





When Lithuania Ruled the World/Kai Lietuva valdė pasaulį by Kestutis Nakas.

A four-part play cycle dealing with Lithuanian history. Provocative, romantic, spiritual, and sometimes ludicrous. The play non-traditionally combines a variety of genres: farce, tragedy, grotesque, magic realism, and „pseudo-classicism.“ The action takes place in the 13th through 15th centuries with occasional leaps into the 20th century. Slang, pop culture elements, humor, and anachronisms abound.

Dear readers,

This year, I took part in the Vilnius Book Fair, the largest event of its kind in the Baltics. An American playwright Kestutis Nakas and I presented his cycle of plays entitled When Lithuania Ruled the World. I translated this four-part play into Lithuanian and it was published by “Aukso Žuvys” in both languages.

During the week in Lithuania, writers of Lithuanian descent living abroad were invited to a reception at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. At the reception, Ambassador Alfonsas Eidintas expressed a suggestion that I would like to share with you. He suggested that all periodicals that are published abroad would have a chapter in which writers of Lithuanian descent would share the news about their newly-published books, both fiction and non-fiction.

I think it is a great idea. I would like to encourage our readers to share information about such books they might know of. You could write to my e-mail:kariledalia@yahoo.com. Information should include the title, the author's name, and short description.

Let's share the news about our books and let's read them!

Karilė Vaitkutė  
Editor



Reception at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. Photo credit: Global Lithuania.

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## A Lithuanian Letter Like No Other

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Interview with Prof. Giedrius Subačius  
Translated by Karilė Vaitkutė

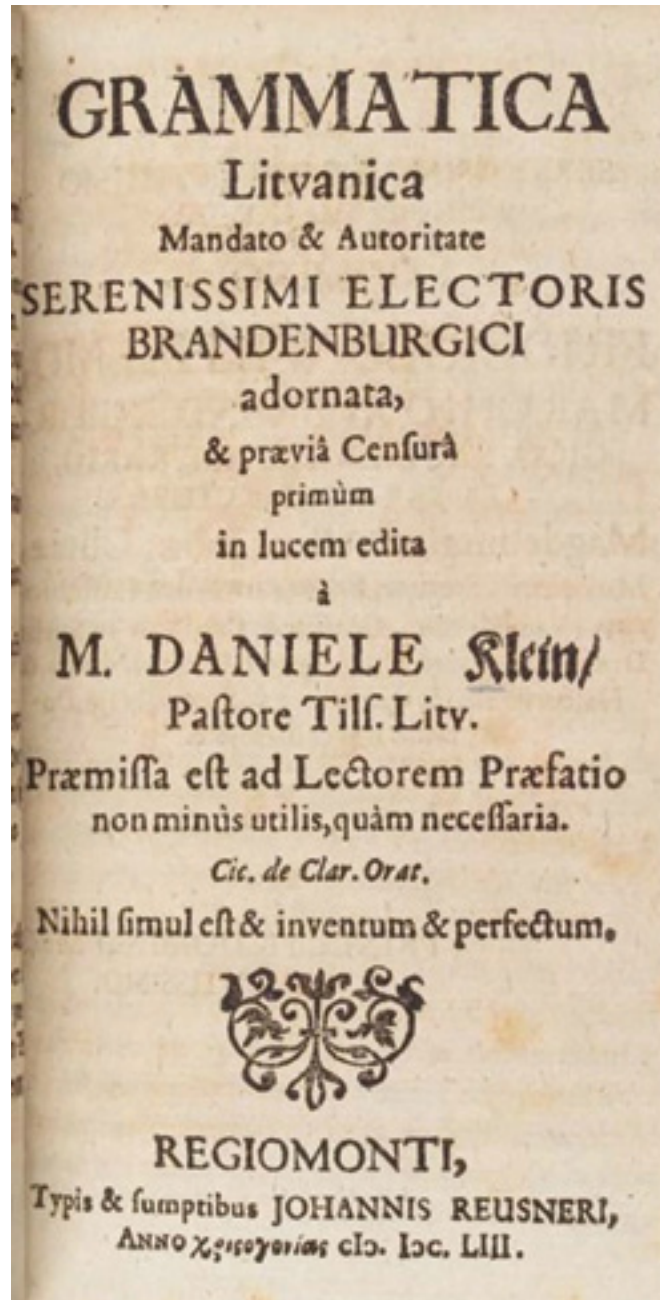
To many, the Lithuanian alphabet might seem strikingly different from the Latin-based alphabets of the rest of the world languages. These differences were examined at this year's Vilnius Book Fair. Various diacritical marks of Lithuanian letters were used on the Book Fair posters, brochures, and other advertising material.

Linguistics Professor Giedrius Subačius says that the majority of the Lithuanian diacritical signs were borrowed from

other nations. However, one letter can be called exclusively Lithuanian as it has no analogues in the world. The thirty-two letters of the Lithuanian alphabet reveal the history of the country, says the University of Illinois Professor Giedrius Subačius. "If we were to look at it from the broadest point of view, there are no such things as ethnic Lithuanian letters. The exceptional letters that we would like to call our own are the nine letters with various diacritical marks that are usually intended for helping the pronunciation to be more exact. They are either borrowed directly from other languages or constructed following the example of other languages. The ones with the little "birdies" on top - č, ž, š - we borrowed from the Czech language (the official term for this diacritical mark is "caron"). The two that have little squiggles called "nosinès" ("ogonek") under them - ą and ę - were borrowed from the Polish language. The story of the rest of them, i.e. letters ū, į, ū, and è, is the most interesting one", Professor Giedrius Subačius said. According to him, the only letter that can really be called Lithuanian and which has no analogues in other languages, is letter è. Daniel Klein was the one who invented it and used it in the first Lithuanian grammar in 1653. "The uniqueness of this letter can be perfectly illustrated by the little-known fact that in the post-war era in the United States, at the time before computers appeared and texts were being typewritten, the letter è was being printed not with a dot but with a dash in Lithuanian American newspapers. The reason for that was simple: letter è was not considered to be a letter

of the alphabet. It was thought of as a rather rarely used symbol, and printing houses had to have a special mold casted in order to print it. That is why its production was twice as expensive. While working in Chicago Lithuanian printing houses, printer Clemente Dedele actively corresponded with the foundries that were printing Lithuanian letters, and after a long time he succeeded in convincing them that è was a real letter, although unique and distinct. As far as I know, after a while American





Lithuanian Grammar by Daniel Klein.

manufacturers agreed that the letter *ė* would be casted at a cheaper cost," said the professor.

The most recent letter of the alphabet is *ū*. It was designed according to the old traditions of the Antiquity. The long dash over a letter designates its longer pronunciation. Latvians have four such letters. The remaining outstanding Lithuanian letters are *į* and *ų*. They came to the Lithuanian language from early Lithuanian writings and reflect how word pronunciation changed over a few hundred years. "Directly from the Polish we borrowed only *ą* and *ę*. However, since old times we had more sounds that were pronounced through the nose. Letters *į* and

*ų* also have this purpose. We find their prototypes in Daukša's Postilla, and later, in East Prussian writings. Still in earlier times this nasality was widespread and distinctly pronounced. For example, the requirement to write "nosinė" (a nasal letter) in nouns in Accusative or in several exceptional words like *žąsis*, *ąžuolas*, and *mišlė* comes from the fact that several hundred years ago those letters marked the nasal-voiced sound. This kind of pronunciation dilapidated but the spelling remained," professor explained.

According to Giedrius Subačius, the uniqueness of a language is powerful only when it is known how deep the common heritage that lies beyond these details is. "All nations created their written language this way. They followed the example of stronger, more developed languages that had deeper literary heritage. For example, it would be absolutely pointless to deny that until the end of the 19th century the Lithuanian language had many more so-called Polish letters – *ł*, *w*, and others. Since the time of Mažvydas we have had these letters in all our writings, they were considered our own letters. Vincas Kudirka removed letter *w* in approximately 1890 in his journal *Varpas* (Bell) because during the press ban period Tsarist Russia banned not the Latin alphabet, but specifically the Polish alphabet. Thus, Lithuanians specially modified their letters, trying to demonstrate that they were using a non-Polish alphabet. That answers the question of why we took Czech letters and refused the Polish ones. The Russian policy, based on the "divide and conquer" principle, has made an impact on our spelling, and it is likely that if the press ban would have never happened, we would have kept more commonalities with the Polish alphabet," the professor said.

Why is it difficult for Americans to pronounce the name Vilnius? According to Giedrius Subačius, we have a letter that does not mark a sound, this way revealing a fundamental difference between the written and the spoken languages. They both lie beneath the expression "the Lithuanian language" with which Lithuanians identify themselves. "This strange letter is a sign of softness - *i*. To representatives of other languages it is an enigma, and for us it is the answer why, for example, it is difficult for Americans to correctly pronounce the name of our capital city Vilnius. They read what they see written and cannot know that the second *i* in the word Vilnius only softens the pronunciation, but it itself is not pronounced," he explained.

According to Subačius, the difference between spoken and written languages becomes even clearer when we come to understand that the spoken language is in our nature, and the written language is a man-made product of a culture. "We start to speak in our native language even before realizing who we are, and we learn it very easily. Meanwhile, we study writing for a long time, and it requires quite a bit of effort. If a law to change the letters would be adopted, we would change them. Maybe not with much joy, but we would change them, because it would be possible. However, it is not possible to change sounds. We could somewhat modify and correct them,



Varpas by Vincas Kudirka.

but we would fail to change them completely," Subačius said. According to him, letters are important not only because they are visible marks but also because they reveal the history of the country and assist us in better understanding of who we are and why we exist. "Writing is not language. It is the trace that a language leaves. A language disappears but the trace it leaves behind remains. A language disappears and the signs remain," the professor said.

Giedrius Subačius is a Professor and is a director of the Endowed Chair in Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His primary scholarly interests are historical sociolinguistics, development of standard languages, history of linguistic thought, and history of the Lithuanian language and Lithuanian immigration. Subačius has prepared and published several critical editions of the nineteenth century Lithuanian linguistic manuscripts. His monographs include: *Ideas about Standard Lowland Lithuanian: Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (1998); *Kalikstas Kasakauskis: Juncture of Standard Lithuanian* (2001); *Upton Sinclair: The Lithuanian Jungle* (2006); and *The Experts of Lithuanian in Service of the Russian Empire* (2011). He is a founder and an editor of the annual scholarly journal *Archivum Lithuanicum* (vols. 1–18, 1999–present). He has initiated creation of the database of private Lithuanian (in letters, diaries, notebooks, etc.: at [www.musulaiskai.lt](http://www.musulaiskai.lt)). Subačius was awarded several important awards (prizes) by the governmental institutions of the Republic of Lithuania (Simonas Daukantas prize 1995; Kazimieras Būga prize 1999; National Prize for Scholars Working Abroad 2009) and *Lituanus* journal prize (2005).



Prof. Giedrius Subačius. Photo by Jonas Kuprys.



# Staging Lithuania

By Kestutis Nakas



Kestutis Nakas at the Vilnius Book Fair holding his book *When Lithuania Ruled the World*.

In February of this year, writer, director, performer and teacher Kestutis Nakas presented his play cycle *When Lithuania Ruled the World* at the Vilnius Book Fair. The play was translated into Lithuanian by Karilė Vaitkutė and a bilingual edition was published by Aukso Žuvis (Golden Fish) in Vilnius. Here we present the Introduction from the book as well as an excerpt from the play.

Are children of American expatriates growing up in France, Japan or Australia surrounded by images of American past glory or taught legends about Lincoln or Washington? Do they display American flags or other kinds of national emblems in their house? Are there statues of George Washington chopping down a cherry tree or throwing a silver dollar across the Potomac River? Surely they don't tell their children that they are victims of a tragic history, members of a once glorious nation vanquished and enslaved by a godless monster. Growing up in diaspora communities around the world, children of Lithuanian displaced persons or "DPs" ("Dypukai" in Lithuanian slang) usually grew up among Lithuanian cultural artifacts. In my childhood home we had many, including a wooden sculpture of an iron wolf howling up at the Lithuanian flag. In most DP households, woodcarvings of ornate wayside crosses, devil-headed nutcrackers, intricately painted wooden "eggs" or a

*rūpintojėlis* (a seated, worrying Christ figure) were commonplace. So were elaborately patterned linen sashes, tablecloths and national folk costumes to be worn on special occasions. Musical families would play the *kanklės* a fretless Lithuanian dulcimer. There were Lithuanian newspapers and the Lithuanian language was spoken in the home. Children of DPs were told Lithuanian folk tales, stories of the great medieval rulers, and the saga of their parent's traumatic flight from their homeland, evading the Soviet juggernaut. Now in exile, these parents struggled to prosper in alien lands while keeping their native language and culture alive. A boy from one of these families, growing up in the United States, might spend his day playing baseball and American football, listening to the Beatles, dreaming of hot rods or surfing. But his home remained a Lithuanian cultural space. If he lived in a big urban area like Detroit or Los Angeles he went to a Lithuanian school on Saturday and a Lithuanian church on Sunday, which placed his Lithuanian cultural sensibility into a broader social context. But if he grew up as I did, in a less populated western state like Arizona, there were few such outside cultural reinforcements. Outside the home, my world was the American southwest, alive with

intermingled mythologies of cowboys, Indians, lost gold mines, conquistadores, and cattle rustlers. Giant cacti, boundless blue sky, wide open desert space and radiant sunsets were as much a part of Arizona life as Boy Scouts, the Cold War, or strict Catholic schools run by Irish American priests. There were no outside institutions to contextualize my Lithuanian family and home life. On my own I had to reconcile it with my American experience. A process of aggressive assimilation, where children of immigrants strive to be more fiercely American than their fellows is a common thread in the American story. But for children of immigrants who came involuntarily as slaves, exiles or refugees this process is complicated by the awareness of a lost homeland. Actively assimilating, these children still dream of restoring their parents' lost Eden by redressing the great wrong that caused their original expulsion. The spring from which flows *When Lithuania Ruled the World* originates in the imagi-

nation of a child living in the tension between two conflicting cultural sensibilities, American and Lithuanian.

As a young theatre artist in New York City in the early nineteen eighties, I was a great admirer of Charles Ludlam and his Ridiculous Theatrical Company. Ludlam would mesh together different styles and tones. Old Hollywood, operatic, Elizabethan and many other styles were interwoven with the encoded humor and double entendres of New York's gay subculture. As a straight man in creative contact with gay artists, I marveled at how Ludlam's theatre could celebrate, display and conceal gay sensibilities all at once while still reaching a wider audience.

Often the plays were hilariously funny, but Ludlam was such a skilled actor that he could instantly shift the tone from comic to tragic and back again. Inspired by his style, I staged *Titus Andronicus*, arguably Shakespeare's worst play, on the tiny stage, of the Pyramid Club, a run-down but vibrant club attracting a mix of outsider artists, young edgy drag queens, and punk bands in the dicey East Village neighborhood of Manhattan. *Titus* contained graphic violence, horror, a real pig's head, gallons of blood, plenty of jokes, pseudo-historical subject matter, and a grandiose, overblown acting style. It fit right into the East Village aesthetic to put a big history into a small space. Charles Ludlam and his partner Everett Quinton came to the opening of *Titus*. When the premiere performance ended, there was a moment of stunned silence, and then Ludlam stood up and led the crowd in a standing ovation. The show attracted a wide audience and I was inspired to write my own pseudo-classical play, *The Amazing Spear of Destiny*. It told the story of the spear that pierced Christ's side as it journeyed through history. At one point in the meandering, rhymed saga, Frederick Barbarossa, on his deathbed, recites the lines: *I've spent my life fighting the pagans/But could not conquer the Lithuanians. / They whipped to shit my knights Teutonic/ and now I die of a plague bubonic*. These lines always got a laugh from the crowd at the Pyramid. The thought hit me that I could stage a whole play about the history of Lithuania. What better way to use the tiny Pyramid stage than to crowd it with the larger than life heroes of Lithuania's past? And if Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatre could reach the gay demi-monde as well as a general audience, maybe I could speak directly to my own tiny subculture of American-born children of the Lithuanian diaspora and still reach a wider audience.

By 1985 my interest in Lithuania led me to enroll in the six-week summer Lithuanian language course at Vilnius University. It was an eventful, eye opening, life changing six weeks. During this time, my curiosity about Lithuanian mythology led to several meetings with Norbertas Vėlius, an expert in the field. He did his best to instruct me in the belief systems and meanings of the pre-Christian past. One thing he said impressed me deeply, "Artistic truth comes from the imagination and is not bound by facts. If you can sense the spiritual underpinnings of Lithuanian mythology you can use it as inspiration for your creative work." Today, I doubt if Vėlius would have approved of my

creative output, but his thorough explanations of Lithuanian mythology provided all the fodder I needed for reconstructing and positing an imagined Lithuanian past.

I wanted to stage the history from Mindaugas through Vytautas in one play but as I set about writing the play, it became clear that I could never tell the whole story in one show. The story ended up needing four parts. The first would just tell the story of Mindaugas' reign. I thought I could tell a mostly-true story in various juxtaposed styles, with frequent jokes. But many things in the play were not even vaguely funny, like Mindaugas's resolve to drive out the invading Teutons at the end of the play. For sections like these I concocted a coarse imitation of the grandiose tone of Shakespeare's histories.

In the spirit of "pseudo-classicism" I used a simple verse structure dubbed "iambic funtameter", which never aspired to be great poetry but rather as an easy, enjoyable way to carry a story line. A highly original Lithuanian-American painter named Austė (Pečiūraitė) painted a stylized Lithuanian landscape backdrop complete with wayside shrines. We also invented Lithuanian "folk songs" which I wrote in English and Austė translated into Lithuanian. Soprano Julia Grella stood at the side of the stage in Lithuanian folk costume and sang these during breaks in the action. The opening of the show attracted the usual East Village bohemian crowd including luminaries like Jonas Mekas. But many New York area Lithuanians came as well, some of them in folk costume!

Part of the experience was seeing those two groups, the Lithuanians and the downtown bohemians encountering each other. Some older DPs from Queens and Brooklyn were shocked to discover that the "theatre" was actually a dingy nightclub frequented by social "radicals". Many, but not all, of the Pyramid's clientele were gay, which was normal for downtown Manhattan but strange for older immigrants from the outer boroughs who thought they were coming to a legitimate, traditional theatre. The show played to a mostly enthusiastic reception but some of the Lithuanians were offended and walked out. Jonas Mekas said he loved it. Soviet Lithuanian journalist Vilius Kavaliauskas and his wife Ramunė came. Ramunė remarked, "We have to learn to laugh at ourselves." In the days after the show Lithuanian friends told me they heard that there was outrage in certain quarters that I was "making fun" of Lithuania and had demeaned King Mindaugas by portraying him as a cuckold. I had shown him that way, but this was in keeping with a farcical, multi-toned style *a la Ludlam*. Besides, the cuckolded Mindaugas revenged himself and then heroically found the resolve to drive the invading Teutonic Knights out of Lithuania. An article by Professor Algirdas Landsbergis in the *Draugas* cultural section explained the play's style in the context of downtown New York theatre. This helped the play gain some acceptance in the Lithuanian community.

Part II was presented at LaMama, the flagship theatre of New York's "off-off-Broadway" movement. LaMama was known for launching important new American playwrights such as Sam



Shepard and for bringing to the west important East Block European theatre artists like Jerzy Grotowski, Tadeuz Kantor and Andrei Serban. It was an honor when LaMama's founder, Ellen Stewart, rang her trademark hand bell to introduce the play. This time the show attracted a wider crowd of Lithuanians. Some of the writers from the liberal Akiraciai newspaper came. So did spectators from Soviet Lithuania, visiting New York under the liberalized travel policies of Gorbachev's *perestroika*. The Lithuanian writer Kazys Saja was among these. The show opened in December 1988, just as the AIDS crisis was unfolding tragically in New York, leaving downtown communities devastated. Government agencies were doing little to deal with the health crisis. So the play began with a plague ravaging the countryside and the court or Gediminas in disarray over what to do about it. When Gediminas's own son becomes infected he turns all his energies to finding a cure. But the core of the play was actually a family drama posited as the story Gediminas's family, which itself can be viewed as a corruption of the ancient Indo European "first king" story, in which a king grants four sons lands to the north, south, east, and west respectively. His fifth and most virtuous son, who has loaned the king his youth, is finally rewarded with the central kingdom, and becomes the ruling heir. This story type was described extensively by the important French comparative philologist Georges Dumézil. Versions of this tale are found all over the Indo-European world. In Part II, just as in Lithuanian historical legends, the story of the Gediminan dynasty was adapted to construct a tale of this kind, where the ruler's sons Algirdas and Kestutis are given eastern and western lands respectively and the youngest, most virtuous son Jaunutis is given the central region of Vilnius.

The small group of *Akiračiai* writers reacted positively. But Kazys Saja was outraged. In a long harangue in La Mama's tiny lobby after the show, he said the play was disrespectful and demeaning, and accused me of denigrating Lithuania's history at a particularly sensitive time politically. "Why don't you focus on your own community and leave us alone?" A few Lithuanians who came with Saja were of the same view. It was a shock to experience such a strong negative reaction from a respected Lithuanian writer.

Part III opened in January of 1992 at Jonas Mekas's Anthology Film Archives on Second Avenue. Again some Lithuanians walked out, mostly during the *Grand Guignol*-styled scenes of Birutė's rape and mutilation, which were an echo of the rape of Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*. In performance, the show was excruciatingly long (and has since been edited to a better length) but still got a good review in *The New York Times*. The Lithuanian American director JoAnne Akalaitis came to the show. At that time she was Artistic Director of The Public Theatre, an important downtown theatre and soon after she saw the play, I was awarded a playwriting commission from The Public.

Another ten years went by before the final part was produced. It was decidedly free from controversy. This time the play was presented in Chicago, the epicenter of the Lithuanian diaspora.

It was presented at the Chicago Cultural Center, which gave it an aura of respectability. The play was well attended. There were large numbers of American spectators of Lithuanian descent. They were happy for the chance to see a show about the history of their ancestral homeland. Also, some of the leading lights of the Lithuanian community attended. They sat respectfully, and applauded warmly. Many of them were grown children of DPs who had entered the professional class. There were no walk-outs. This was no longer a fringe, avant-garde oddity, but rather a cultural event fully embraced by the bourgeoisie. Lithuania was a sovereign nation and our play had achieved respectability. I began to wonder if the work was no longer relevant but I think it will be as long as anything threatens Lithuania's existence. Saulius Žukas of Lithuania's prestigious Baltos Lankos publishing company saw part IV and expressed great enthusiasm for the play along with the hope that the work might someday travel to Lithuania. That hasn't happened yet. But I still hope that someday, somehow, the work will be presented in Lithuania.

It is true that among the shifting tones in the text, there is much that is absurd and ridiculous. This may be provocative but was never intended to denigrate Lithuanian history or culture, especially its tragic aspects. I revere my cultural heritage. But I do find it funny that the historical process initiated by Mindaugas ricocheted through time and space, bounced off diverse, distant, and strange surfaces and mutated to become the play cycle *When Lithuania Ruled the World*.

*Kestutis Nakas is a writer, performer, director, and teacher whose work has been presented at the New York Shakespeare Festival, Yale Rep, La Mama, Dixon Place, P.S. 122, St. Mark's Church in the Bowery, 8BC, The Kitchen, Highways, Prop Theatre and numerous other national venues. Performance works and plays include RIP, No Bees for Bridgeport, Railroad Backward, Remembrance of Things Pontiac, My Heart, My President, Hunger and Lightning, and The Andrew Carnegie Story. In the 1980's, he was active in New York's East Village performance scene and was Artistic Director of Gates of Dawn, which showcased New York performers. He has taught at NYU, UCLA, CUNY, and the University of New Mexico. He is a Professor of Theatre at The Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University in Chicago. His performance text about urban beekeeping, No Bees for Bridgeport, was recently published in Animal Acts, Performing Species Today, an anthology of new performance edited by Una Chaudhuri and Holly Hughes, University of Michigan Press. Kestutis is artistic director of The Bridge, a new theatre in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood. The Bridge presents original, eclectic performance and theatre. A bilingual edition of his critically acclaimed tragi-farce cycle: When Lithuania Ruled The World was published by Aukso Žuvis (Gloden Fish), Vilnius, in February 2017.*



Kestutis Nakas and Ambassador Alfonsas Eidintas at the reception in Vilnius City Hall.

## WHEN LITHUANIA RULED THE WORLD PART IV

### SCENE 1

Lights up. Above the stage a banner reads: THE SNAKE IS ON THE WAY

In prison, VYTAUTAS, Grand Duke of Lithuania is half dressed. He is exchanging clothes with a maid.

**MAID:** This is weird. Fun but weird.

**VYTAUTAS:** Quiet. Don't let the guard hear you.

**MAID:** Is this what you pagans do?

**VYTAUTAS:** It's anybody's game.

**MAID:** What did you say your name was? Vy TAUT as?

**VYTAUTAS:** Shh. No. VY tautas.

**MAID:** Weird.

**VYTAUTAS:** Lithuanian.

**MAID:** You're supposed to be a King or

something?

**VYTAUTAS:** Something.

**MAID:** What happens next?

**VYTAUTAS:** Trust me.

This changing game I've played before.

Am I a queen? Am I a whore?

Did you ever need to get away- escape?

The best way for me is to change identity.

My card to get me out of jail for free

Name, and faith, and sex are mutable

When the object is survival.

For I am Vytautas, born to be King.

Here and Everywhere.

From my jail cell window I can barely see

The border of the land they stole from me

Old songs and tales of Lithuania

Are ringing in my ears

But this German prison fort on our frontier Holds other sounds as well:

Like the clanging Christian church bell That's where they want me, too-

In the front and center pew

Oh they've got big plans for me

A bright future they foresee

As their puppet King of Lithuania

I've saved my life here in captivity

By promising to lead my loyal troops to victory

Over my cousin Jogaila

Sitting on his throne in Lithuania

Now that I'm a threat to Jogaila my dear cousin

He's offered to abet my escape from the Prussians.

Co- rule of all Lithuania he offers me

In the manner of our fathers diarchy

Everybody wants to write my script.

Adjust, revise, and edit it.

But I'm the author of my destiny

My will not theirs be done

I must get my own

Undisputed throne.

Be boss of all, from sea to sea

Assert Lithuanian Hegemony

Over the center of the European world.

For I am Vytautas the rightful boss

Here and everywhere.

VYTAUTAS take mailing tube from under the bed.

**VYTAUTAS:** Go ahead.

**MAID:** Oh guard!

The GUARD comes and lets VYTAUTAS, dressed as the maid out, while the maid, dressed as VYTAUTAS remains inside.

### SCENE 2

The forest. VYTAUTAS enters dressed as maid, with tube. He begins to open it.

Enter JOGAILA.

**JOGAILA:** May I? While you change?

VYTAUTAS hands JOGAILA the tube then begins to take off his dress.

Yes, take that off.. You're looking good, Vytautas. More like a King than a Duke or a Queen..

**VYTAUTAS:** Great cousin Jogaila, you flatter me. Grand Dukes we are, but Kings we'll be!

**JOGAILA:** No one saw you?

**VYTAUTAS:** No. The Germans think I'm

resting. They saw a woman leave my room. Me. By now they know I'm gone. We've got to move or we're dead meat.

**JOGAILA:** (Looks at plans.) Teutonic wonders never cease. But will it fly?

*German GUARD is holding a dagger to the throat of a woman dressed in man's clothes.*

**GUARD:** We looked into his room and saw the heathen Vytautas asleep. We woke him up at dawn. But he was a woman. He was gone.

**MAID:** I just came to change the sheets. He said it was all a game.

**MR. T:** Kill him. Her. **GUARD** slits her throat with a dagger. Where is Vytautas? He said he'd attack his native pagan Lithuania at sunrise. Now he's spurlos verschwunden. But where?

**GUARD:** Maybe she could have told you, Mr. T. the plans are missing.

**MR. T:** Plans?

**GUARD:** The sky machine.

**MR. T:** Gone. Go. Get a gun! Build the biggest one!

*VYTAUTAS and JOGAILA are flying in a bi-plane.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Across the world we roar.

From the Black to the Baltic sea we soar! Lithuania is and will be proud and free.

We ruling Dukes will partners be Forevermore. Forevermore.

**JOGAILA:** We ruling dukes? We ruling Kings, you mean!

**VYTAUTAS:** Sad to say The world still calls us dukes!

**JOGAILA:** I'm a very smart guy.

But I don't get why.

We don't have a boss.

We're on top!

**VYTAUTAS:** But we're circled all around by Christians.

And they refuse to call us Kings.

They want us to look small.

**JOGAILA:** Small? France is small! England's tiny! Don't they have Kings?

**VYTAUTAS:** Because they're Christian! The Pope will only give a kingly crown to Christian chiefs!

**JOGAILA:** Pope?

**VYTAUTAS:** Their biggest wizard.

**JOGAILA:** A crown from a wizard? It's unnatural.

**VYTAUTAS:** Not for Christians .

**JOGAILA:** What about Poland?

**VYTAUTAS:** Is it unnatural?

**JOGAILA:** No, do they have a King?

**VYTAUTAS:** Just a Queen.

**JOGAILA:** But they're Christians.

**VYTAUTAS:** Sad to say.

**JOGAILA:** They need a King.

**VYTAUTAS:** No pagans need apply.

**JOGAILA:** Shit. What's in a name or title?

By any title we're on top.

And this is one nice bi- plane, boss.

**VYTAUTAS:** No You're the boss, chief.

**JOGAILA:** No. You're the chief and I'm the boss.

**VYTAUTAS:** Alright, I give up. Whatever you say, my royal partner, Jogaila.

**JOGAILA:** Thank you glorious cousin, Vytautas- Lord of Lithuania protector of the lowlanders.

**VYTAUTAS:** And Thank YOU splendid almost sibling, son of my father's brother,

fellow Grand Duke of half of Lithuania, co-boss of all the land from the Black to Baltic seas.

**JOGAILA:** Trade expanding visionary. Fair minded emissary of tolerance.

**VYTAUTAS:** Buddy.

**JOGAILA:** We must not let this fog of salutations sock us in and lose the name of action. We've got the plane, let's rule the world!

**VYTAUTAS:** But we do. All we need.

**JOGAILA:** But with this weapon we'll take Poland. And sweep across the Mongol land to China.

**VYTAUTAS:** Who wants Poland?

Who needs to rule the Mongol bands?

Take me home to Vilnius.

That's where I want to land.

Stop. Hey. What's that sound?

*An explosion rips the plane apart.*

**VYTAUTAS:** We're going down. We're going down. Bail out.

**JOGAILA:** Bailing out.

*Another part of the forest.*

**MR. T:** So the big gun works. Captain!

**GUARD:** Jawhol.

**MR. T:** Follow those parachutes!

And when you find those dirty little heathens, burn them alive! Ha ha ha!

**GUARD:** Jawohl.

**JOGAILA:** Ouch.

**VYTAUTAS:** Are you OK?

**JOGAILA:** Just sore. All gone. Everything is gone.

**VYTAUTAS:** We just need to think. And we need help. Allies. Make your way to Christian Poland before they know our bi-plane's gone. Get them on our side. Even if you have to marry someone.

**JOGAILA:** OK. And you gather your forces and ride southeast. Smash the Mongol yoke.

**VYTAUTAS:** But we're after Germans.

**JOGAILA:** Unyoke the southeastern Slavs. They'll join us and the Poles. One stinging swarm around the Teutons.

**GUARD:** They're around here somewhere.

**VYTAUTAS:** Teutons!

**JOGAILA:** Shit, we're caught.

**VYTAUTAS:** Be a tree.

**JOGAILA:** What?

**VYTAUTAS:** Turn into a tree.

*They turn into trees.*

**GUARD:** Their parachutes are here. But where are they? Nothing but trees. Sheisen. Warlocks. Mein Gott.

*GERMANS go.*

**JOGAILA:** So smart. So stupid. But they won't quit until they've destroyed us. It's us or them. But we need to expand our power base to meet them. Go. Face the Mongol. Break their yoke. Then ride east like Alexander the Great once did. The plunder of Persia, India and China will pay for wars that drive out the German Teutons and open up West Europe's gates.

**VYTAUTAS:** Is that the best defense? A good offense?

**JOGAILA:** It's life or death-you gotta go.

**VYTAUTAS:** Don't know.

**JOGAILA:** GO.

**VYTAUTAS:** But-

**JOGAILA:** No buts! Our fathers lands are in your hands.

*VYTAUTAS leaves.*

**JOGAILA:** It kills me to mislead him thus. But If I'm to rule I simply must.

And rule I will. Alone.

Ascending every throne

In Lithuania Poland Prussia Russia.

His partisans are powerful

But not strong enough to smash the

Mongol.

They'll ride out to certain death.

I'll have time to catch my breath

And lay claim to all Lithuania.

Then to Poland I will declare my burning yearning

For Christian Catholic salvation.

And propose a marriage to the little girl that leads their nation.

I'll be their King and consolidate

My Lithuania into their state,

Then turn it all against the Teuton,

Who won't have a leg to stand on.

Fellow Christians we will be

And their so called crusade unnecessary.

Their support from Western Europe will erode.

We'll repel them from the center of our world.

But come what may,

I must get Vytautas out of the way.

He's far to fond of his own kind- too attached to his native land.

To rule the world you must stay separate from her.

Only then can you subdivide and subjugate.

And create a well run state- Beyond sympathies and sentiment.

Where reason, will and law cement

A kingdom spanning centuries.

This is what I have to do,

No matter how no matter who.

### SCENE 3

#### *THE ARMY MARCHES*

**VYTAUTAS:** Oh good it is to lead the men toward certain victory again.

**REPORTER:** Reporter. Can we talk?

**VYTAUTAS:** As long as you keep up.

**REPORTER:** No horse?

**VYTAUTAS:** Power walk.

**REPORTER:** Why war?

**VYTAUTAS:** The Mongols hold the east in bondage and threaten all of Europe. We are at the center. Past our frontiers they call us pagans. But we know who we are. See our army's column? It's sliding forward like a snake to swallow all that would enslave us. From the Baltic all the way to the Black Sea in the Slavic south we wind And we will spread our light across all Asia. The snake is on the way. This is me. I rule the world. Now write that down.

**REPORTER:** (*Writes.*) You rule the world.

**VYTAUTAS:** So render unto me.

**REPORTER:** I see, I see.

**VYTAUTAS:** Co-equal with my cousin who's not here.

I am King here and everywhere.

**REPORTER:** I thought you were just Grand Duke.

**VYTAUTAS:** I'm the boss of this big ass country aren't I? Doesn't that make me a King?

**REPORTER:** Where's your crown?

**VYTAUTAS:** I don't need a stinkin' crown to run my country and in my country I will be called King. WHAT'S MY NAME?

**REPORTER:** King Vytautas.

**VYTAUTAS:** Thank you. Now get this. WE WILL END THE MONGOL YOKE. Got that?

**REPORTER:** Writes. We will end the Mongol yoke.

*VYTAUTAS marches away with his army.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Thanks. Watch out for snipers. Goodbye.

**REPORTER:** Hey! Wait!

*REPORTER is shot.*

**REPORTER:** Ouch.

*REPORTER dies.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Terror to my foes I bring but friends need never fear.

For I am Vytautas, the rightful King. Here and Everywhere.

So sing a marching song along the highway south from Kiev. The jewel of Lithuania!

**SIDEKICK:** Kiev? Part of Lithuania. It's the Ukraine.

**VYTAUTAS:** Lithuania is wherever Lithuanians march. From Moscow down to Marquette Park, there beats the drum that stirs the Baltic heart.

**SIDEKICK:** Better than the rest!

**VYTAUTAS:** Not better, just very, very special.

**SIDEKICK:** Special is best!

**VYTAUTAS:** Wow. Stop. Look. Over there.

Look at all the damn Mongols.

OK. Tomorrow we attack .

**SIDEKICK:** Look south, commander! Another Mongol band.

**VYTAUTAS:** What gives?

**MONGOL:** I come to join you in tomorrow's battle against my evil uncle. I bring

fresh troops of battle hardened horsemen.

**VYTAUTAS:** We can't lose now.

*A Campfire.*

**SOLDIER:** At dawn we fight. I'm scared. And that big shot Vytautas. What's up with him?

**VYTAUTAS:** (in disguise): Oh he's just a man. Probably walking about among the troops in disguise right now. Full of compassion, consolation, cheer. One of us, really.

**SOLDIER:** Hey! I'm not scared anymore. Long live Vytautas. One of us! One of us!

**VYTAUTAS:** The morning star Ausrine stares me down unblinking. Must rally troops.

Troops! It's battle day, now march away. Be confident. Be true. I count on every one of you. And after we've won- we really, really rule the world. I mean we already do, but after this we'll rule all of it. You all will get a piece. Charge!

*MONGOL ALLY goes off in other direction.*

Hey, Mongol ally. Where are you going?

**MONGOL ALLY:** I'm not in the mood.

**VYTAUTAS:** What about defeating your evil uncle?

**MONGOL ALLY:** You'll be fine. Bye.

*MONGOL ALLY escapes. Vytautas follows him, bewildered.*

**SOLDIER:** I lay dying by a Mongol lance. And the Lithuanians have no chance

But I'm glad to surrender life and die

For Vytautas- what a guy!

*SOLDIER dies.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Everybody's dead!

**KARAIM:** Not us Karaim, great King. Run.

**VYTAUTAS:** Who?

**KARAIM:** Karaim. Tough as marines. We fight for you here in the Black Sea South.

Run.

**VYTAUTAS:** What's your deal?

**KARAIM:** We wandered to this land as Jews

And over time became a people new.

We Lost the Talmud, kept the Torah,

Our new religion grew.

Though some still call us Jews

Because we don't think Christ is King,

We call ourselves the Karaim.

Run.



**VYTAUTAS:** Want to come and live in Vilnius?

**KARAIM:** The capital? It would be a dream come true!

**VYTAUTAS:** You and your men watch my back.

Fend off the Mongols fierce attack

Long enough for my escape.

If you do this and make your way to my palace court.

I'll set you up for life in my Athens of the North.

**KARAIM:** Done. Run.

*VYTAUTAS runs.*

#### SCENE 4

*VYTAUTAS wanders.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Why'd you bag on me?

**MONGOL ALLY:** It didn't feel right.

**VYTAUTAS:** We lost everything. All my men dead. And I walk back with nothing.

**MONGOL ALLY:** I owe you one. Next time you have a final, ultimate battle, I'll be there.

**VYTAUTAS:** Sure.

**MONGOL:** Really.

**VYTAUTAS:** Point me North.

*MONGOL ALLY points then leaves.*

**VYTAUTAS:** I work and I work - tax my health and nerves and I bust through the fear and in spite of everything against me I get a small success. Then all of a sudden from out of that small luck comes more and more and more. Unearned. Suddenly I am a big shot with money, power and troops of friends. But then things fall apart. I am sabotaged or I sabotage myself. I tumble. Watch it vanish. I find myself far away making pacts with enemies just to survive. But in their camp I gain new strength. I work, survive, work harder and grow so strong. that I bust free. My vibrations topple the enemy's tower. Offers pour my way, unearned and expected. The cycle has come full blast. Can it last? Did my cousin set me up?

My army's almost gone.

If Jogaila joins his army with the Poles,

They will be the strongest force

between Prussia and Mongolia.

Man was I stupid!

How many thousand miles have I wandered?

But it smells like home.

What's that? The bi plane. Our old bi plane.

Jogaila must have fixed it up. There he is. With his punk ass brother, Skirgaila.

**SKIRGAILA:** I heard a noise.

**JOGAILA:** You always hear a noise. Start the propeller. I gotta go.

**SKIRGAILA:** Can I come? Can I come? Please? I'll sit in back!

**JOGAILA:** Back seats are for back stabbers. Sit up front.

**SKIRGAILA:** What's that sound?

**VYTAUTAS:** The once and future King.

**JOGAILA:** Vytautas? We all thought you were dead. We mourned a while then moved on. I'm getting married to the Polish queen. I'm gassed up and ready to go. Gonna be King.

**VYTAUTAS:** Of Lithuania?

**JOGAILA:** Poland too. Why not?

**VYTAUTAS:** You fixed our plane.

**SKIRGAILA:** Jogaila said you were dead. He gave me all you castles. And I'm keeping them. 'Cause they're mine! And I helped fix this shot down plane.

**JOGAILA:** Best bi plane any world. Wooden frame and linen wings. Amber handlebars, and woven woolen wheels. Nice way to get to a coronation. Bi- plane. Two wings. Two seats. Everything's double now.

**VYTAUTAS:** Even politics

**SKIRGAILA:** I'm flying down to Poland.

**VYTAUTAS:** Sorry, son. The front seat's mine.

**JOGAILA:** OK get in.

**SKIRGAILA:** What about me?

**JOGAILA:** It's not your time. Give his castles back. And give your seat to Vytautas. Aside to SKIRGAILA: Until I can get rid of him. Be patient, little brother. Ha ha ha!

**VYTAUTAS:** Sorry, punk.

**JOGAILA:** Get in. Don't worry, cousin. Soon as I'm in big with Poles, you'll be a King too. King of Lithuania. I'll see to it.

**VYTAUTAS:** Thanks, cousin.

Who's gonna say it's not our century?

Can't be late for our destiny.

*They get in the plane. It takes off. They are flying fast and looking down and looking up.*

The once and future world.

**JOGAILA:** Our dads never flew this high.

**VYTAUTAS:** But they were buddies to the end. Like us.

**JOGAILA:** Like us. But they never flew to Poland. Now I will be their King.

**VYTAUTAS:** And I'll rule Lithuania.

**JOGAILA:** Right.

**VYTAUTAS:** That suits me fine.

We fly a mile high.

Smile wide.

I don't want any Poland.

Just my city of the hill.

The city of the iron howling wolf.

Grandpa dreamed his dream.

And Vilnius was born.

**JOGAILA:** I'm going to get a real good deal over there. I'm pre-approved. They'll crown me King of Poland. All I have to do is marry the Polish queen.

**VYTAUTAS:** Sounds good.

**JOGAILA:** She's 13.

**VYTAUTAS:** Oh.

**JOGAILA:** Look! We're over Poland. We'll be landing.

**VYTAUTAS:** Will they call me King?

**JOGAILA:** Not here. Not yet. Once you've proved a good Christian, we'll talk to the Pope.

**VYTAUTAS:** That doesn't seem-

**JOGAILA:** Fasten your belt, this is going to be a bumpy landing.

*Plane lands.*

**BISHOP O:** Welcome Dukes to Holy Krakow.

**VYTAUTAS & JOGAILA:** Thank you.

**BISHOP O:** Wipe your feet.They do.Kiss the ground.They do.Turn around.

They do.Go home. Just kidding. The queen awaits. And then your coronation. You'll be King. King of Poland. Quite a promotion.

**JOGAILA:** Not too shabby for Poland when I join the vast Lithuanian land to yours.

**BISHOP O:** Not so vast.

**JOGAILA:** Vaster than yours.

**BISHOP O:** Kneel down. I know pronounce you Catholic.He sprinkles them with Holy Water. Let's get this over with. Sign. This.

Here. Here. Here and here. These are your new names. Vytatuas- You're Alexander. Jogaila, you're Ladislas.

**JOGAILA:** What-islas?

**BISHOP O:** Ladislas. That's your Polish Christian name. You're a Christain now. Bless you. You can get married. Bring out toothpick woman.

*JADWYGA enters. She is anorexic. She had a special hat that has a carrot dangling in front.*

**BISHOP O:** Time to meet the savages, dear.

**JADWYGA:** I'm not hungry.

**BISHOP O:** I now pronounce you man and wife.

*JADWYGA passes out. They carry her out.*

**JOGAILA:** I made it.

**VYTAUTAS:** Yuck.

**JOGAILA:** Shutup. Alexander.

**VYTAUTAS:** It's Vytautas.

**JOGAILA:** No. Now that your a Christian, we're all going to call you Alexander.

**VYTAUTAS:** No,

**JOGAILA:** Yes.

**VYTAUTAS:** No.

**JOGAILA:** You want Lithuania?

**VYTAUTAS:** Call me Alexander.

**JOGAILA:** Sign this.

**VYTAUTAS:** It's says I'm a Polish subject. That I take my orders from you and I have to come back to Poland anytime you say.

**JOGAILA:** So what? You want to rule Lithuania, don't you?

*VYTAUTAS signs.*

**VYTAUTAS:** I'm taking the plane back.

**JOGAILA:** No.

**VYTAUTAS:** Yes. It's half mine.

**JOGAILA:** But half mine.

**VYTAUTAS:** I'm taking it. I gotta get back.

**JOGAILA:** Just take your half. Guards!

**VYTAUTAS:** I'll walk. Double Crosser.

**JOGAILA:** Double world. Look. I got a kingdom to run and I need that plane. You got what you want- your precious Lithuania. You know how to walk. Go claim it. Good luck

**VYTAUTAS:** Child fucking whore for Poland..

**JOGAILA:** Girl's clothes wearing drag queen.

**VYTAUTAS:** I should have never let you kill my father.

**JOGAILA:** I should have never let you let me. Now take your sorry ass back to Vilnius and be grateful I'm giving you that.

**VYTAUTAS:** It's mine already. Not yours to

take or give.

**JOGAILA:** Oh really? Guards!

*Guards catch Vytautas and tie his hands, then tie stones to his shoes.*

**VYTAUTAS:** What are these? Some fancy Polish shoes?

**JOGAILA:** That'll toughen you up. Have a great workout! Bye!

**VYTAUTAS:** I'm going I'm going. But I'm not gone.

*VYTAUTAS leaves.*

#### SCENE 5

**VYTAUTAS:** Sky robbed. Feet pound ground.

Shoes of stone. Touch the earth. Rock my feet.

Don't take my sky away from me.

But get me home to family.

**EDAS:** Sesk ant manes. Sit on me.

**VYTAUTAS:** Chew off my leather handcuffs. Thanks. I've never heard of a talking horse.

**EDAS:** Before your plane was, I am. Ride me slow or ride me wild. Turn me on a dime. Slap my ass with your leather lash. Though the woods, the night. All the way through time. My name's Ed. But call me Edas.

**VYTAUTAS:** Edas. You just ride in from thin air?

**EDAS:** No, not from any where. But never far from where you are.

**BIRUTE:** Wizard, Wizard, say something. Where you at?

You know damn well I'm blind as a bat.

**WIZARD:** Birute, Birute, I'm over here.

**BIRUTE:** Has my son appeared?

**WIZARD:** Twilight means you can't tell dog from wolf.

The evening star Ausrine just came up But just south I can hear a horses gallop.

That should be Edas and your son.

Right on time they are and were and will be.

**BIRUTE:** I see. And we are ready?

**WIZARD:** As we'll ever be.

**BIRUTE:** He'll be surprised to see me quite alive.

After having sunk into the sea and died. I remember well the day I hid with you

behind the bushes on the hill above my

husband's funeral

My husband who Jogaila killed for defending our old faith.

**WIZARD:** A crocodile's tears Jogaila shed As your son set fire to the boat that held

Your husbands body, horse and servants. The fire lit up the river and set the night ablaze.

All our hope sank with that boat

And we fled to shadow lands

Where we still pray in the ancient way

And touch the source of All.

Though the outside world has gone to Christ.

We still have work to do.

**BIRUTE:** Make him see.

Tonight. Give him light.

**WIZARD:** How's your hip?

**BIRUTE:** I rubbed it with warm mud.

**WIZARD:** Your just as pretty as the day Kestutis swept you away from atop my sacred hill and made you his woman, wife and queen.

**BIRUTE:** Old as I am I'm glad to be your priestess once again.

**WIZARD:** Here he comes. Get in your box.

**VYTAUTAS:** Wow, the border.

**WIZARD:** In disguise. No Poles allowed. Back off.

**VYTAUTAS:** Please, Mr. customs man, I own all this. I'm the grand duke.

**WIZARD:** Then why the horse? Can't you fly, Alexander?

**VYTAUTAS:** I'll be back in the sky soon. And call me Vytautas. Hey how did you know-

**WIZARD:** She's in the box.

**VYTAUTAS:** Wizard! I thought you died like mom.

**WIZARD:** No. I went underground. Roaming through the woods between the borders. Taking things across. Bringing things back.

**VYTAUTAS:** You stink.

**WIZARD:** From digging my grave. She's in the box. Think deep. Dead or alive?

**VYTAUTAS:** Talk straight. No games. Who is in the box?

**WIZARD:** A girl just like the girl that married dear old dad.

*BIRUTE, VYTAUTAS'S mom rises out of her box.*

**BIRUTE:** Sonny boy!



**VYTAUTAS:** Mom! Alive! You're blind.

**BIRUTE:** I see you fine.

**VYTAUTAS:** How are you? Lonely?

**BIRUTE:** Oh my gods, no. We have friends. The Kaukai.

**VYTAUTAS:** Kaukai?

**BIRUTE:** Little people made of mud and puss. We dig a door into the ground and they come through. They have a King. A court. They belch and fart. It stinks.

**VYTAUTAS:** What have you done to her?

**WIZARD:** Just kept her company. And prayed the ancient way.

**VYTAUTAS:** Oh mama. I've always wished I could tell you all the things I never said.

**BIRUTE:** Now your father, he had guts.

**VYTAUTAS:** I thought you hated him.

**BIRUTE:** I was a vestal virgin

On the hill-

Your dad came

against my will.

**KESTUTIS:** Gotta be tough, son. Shut up. Practice. War. Defense. All that. Shut up. Teutons. Foreigners. Keep em out. This land is my land. Shut up. Rise and shine.

Drop our cocks and grab our socks. Gotta ride Gotta ride gotta ride.

*KESTUTIS is poking and prodding VYTAUTAS as he talks to him.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Go away.

*He goes.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Sleepy now...

**WIZARD:** Grab a rest, King and hungry horse.

**VYTAUTAS:** Any oats and water?

**WIZARD:** Of course. Of course.

**VYTAUTAS:** Unravel. Can't...must...

**WIZARD:** Even linen wove and worn,

For all it must go through.,

Still comes apart.

Why shouldn't you?

**EDAS:** Let the man sleep.

**WIZARD:** He'll get his most unwanted wish.

**VYTAUTAS:** Goodnight, mother.

*He lays down, weary.*

**WIZARD:** Our Grand Duke and would be King, asleep. can see a little stooping worried man.

**Flax I Am:** If I were flax and Flax I am, Made by God but sewn by man Growing in the summer sun and rain No hint of coming pain

If I were that flax seed growing from the ground,

Then it would hurt to be cut down,

And threshed, and mashed, and bleached and dried and spun and wove

Into cloth to make a linen shirt a naked man could wear

To hide a wound made by a spear.

Flax like me would all pain and passion bear

To comfort suffering man,

If I were flax and Flax I am.

**VYTAUTAS:** Little stooping worried man, I think I'll call you Flax I Am.

**FLAX I AM:** Spring forward. Fall hard. Ever been cut down?

**VYTAUTAS:** Yes. By Mongol steel.

**FLAX I AM:** Cut down like me, that's just the start. Can you be threshed, and mashed, and bleached, and dried and spun and wove? Are you tough enough?

The devil ain't. He's just a ghost who wanders through my door, not the would be savior of the world. Are you? Watch.

*THE UNION OF LUBLIN 1569*

**FLAX I AM:** A hundred fifty years and more have come and gone.

Are we strong?

**POLISH KING:** Lithuanian Nobles-

The time has come to give up your pride-ful independence.

Lithuania must join and live in Polish resplendence.

**VYTAUTAS:** Resplendence?

**POLISH KING:** Resplendence.

**LITHUANIAN NOBLE:** King, Do not use your forceful Polish upper hand to wrong our Lithuanian fatherland.

**POLISH KING:** You're threatened all around .

You need Our Polish crown.

But you must cleave much closer to us-Annexed into our Royal Colossus

Ain't no use to wonder why,

Your only choice is live or die.

**NOBLE:** We choose to live. Can't help but cry.

**FLAX I AM:** Happy?

**VYTAUTAS:** He who gives his liberty away Might live to get it back some day.

**FLAX I AM:** So it's OK?

**VYTAUTAS:** Are these the shades of

things that will be or might be?

**FLAX I AM:** Does it matter? Or is it all one? Dream about your Polish future. And your traitor heart.

**VYTAUTAS:** My heart's true as any King's. Here or anywhere.

**FLAX I AM:** Oh really? Where's your crown?

**VYTAUTAS:** On its way.

*Cock crows.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Good Morning Edas.

**EDAS:** Hi. Ready to ride?

**VYTAUTAS:** I guess. Yes. Good morning Wizard.

**WIZARD:** Good morning sunshine.

**VYTAUTAS:** I had a dream. A room of men. A building surrounded. An Ultimatum. Unite or die. And the men inside throw up their hands and vote themselves to slavery. Was it real?

**WIZARD:** It happens.

**VYTAUTAS:** When?

**WIZARD:** Now and then. Time is a door.

**VYTAUTAS:** I haven't got time for all this spooky ... My capital. Gotta go back to Vilnius. Run the show.

**EDAS:** So sit on me already.

**VYTAUTAS:** Let's go!

**EDAS:** Of course, of course.

**VYTAUTAS:** Bye mom! Mom?

*He touches BIRUTE but she is dead.*

**VYTAUTAS:** Mama. Say something. Mama.

**WIZARD:** She's gone.

**VYTAUTAS:** Bye mom. Thanks. I think.

**WIZARD:** I'm sure your welcome.

She got to see you and she's glad.

I'll put her in the ground. You go.

**VYTAUTAS:** You sure? Mama...

**WIZARD:** It's alright.

Plant a linen seed. It grows.

And that's all nice.

But then it's cut and thrashed and burned and tortured into thread.

It's a nightmare. Christ. Tough enough?

**VYTAUTAS:** You know what? You're part of a great tradition and all that. BUT YOU'RE A KOOK! GOODBYE!

**WIZARD:** Adios. Sudieu.

*(Wizard takes Birute's garment.)*



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# The Return of Storks -- Gandrinės



A white stork in Lithuania. Photo credit: Romualdas Barauskas

In Lithuania, Stork Day is celebrated on March 25th, the day that almost coincides with the spring equinox or the astronomical spring. Lithuanians used to believe that on its tail, a stork brings back a wagtail, and that wagtails would kick out the ice that is still remaining from the winter. On this day, our ancestors would have a feast for all the neighbors who would come, lifting their legs high in the air, mimicking storks. The dishes for the Stork Day feast usually included hemp-stuffed pies, cakes made of coarsely milled flour of different kinds of cereal, and šaltanosių- pies made with cow's first milk.

On this day, farmers stirred their planting seeds to increase their germinating power. Also on this day, no one could touch birds' eggs, in order for the birds to be healthy when hatched. Lithuanians held storks sacred because they believed that the bird could take people's diseases, carry them to impenetrable swamps, and leave them there. Even today it is believed that storks bring happiness. Storks are the favorite birds of Lithuanians and are called the Lithuanian national birds.

According to an old Lithuanian tale, a stork used to be a man to whom an ancient God gave a bag full of ugly and useless crea-

tures, commanding him to take the bag to a lake and drown it. The man, believing that the bag was full of good things, opened it, and all the ugly and useless creatures escaped. The man went back to God and confessed what he had done. God became angry, took a half-burned stick from the fireplace, and hit the man on the back with it, leaving a black streak. The man then turned into a stork and has been hunting for all the ugly and useless creatures ever since.

These are several of the ancient beliefs:

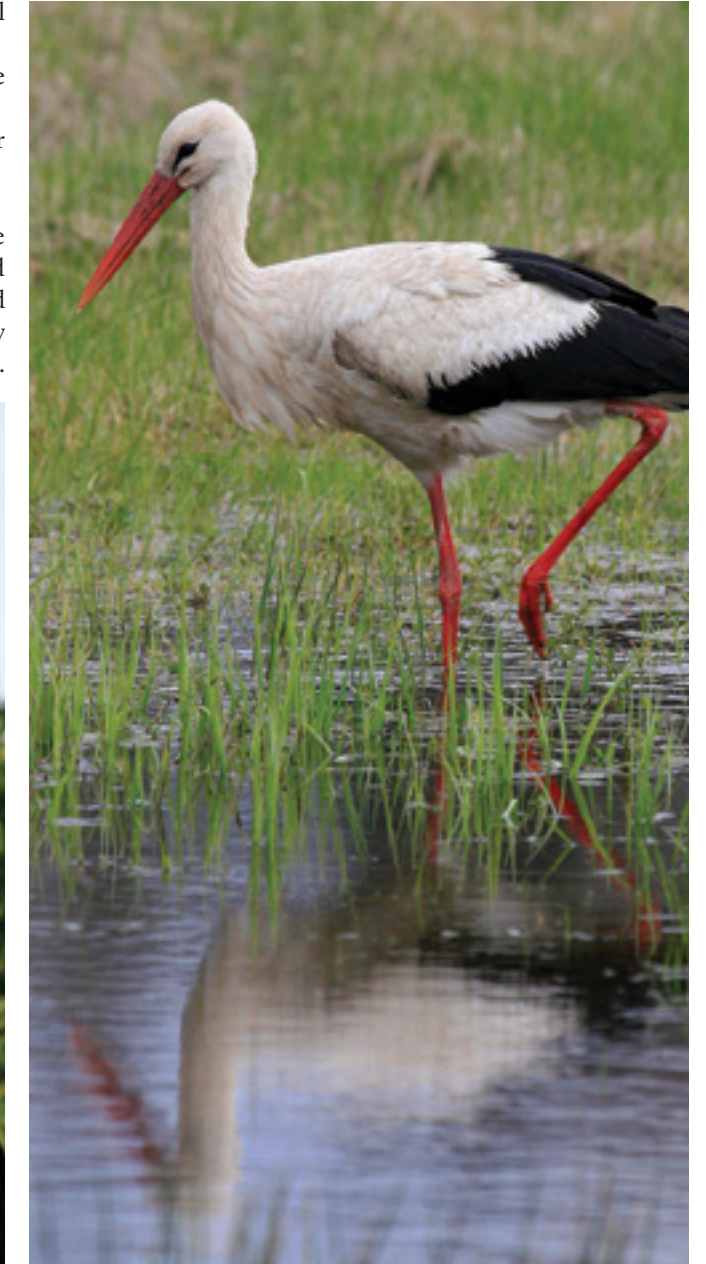
- If storks come back before the winter ice has melted, the spring will come early.
- One should not lend anything to anyone during the period between the Stork Day and April 9th. If you lend anything, your animals would not be healthy that year.
- If a stork nests by your house, people in your house will be happy.
- If you destroy a stork's nest, the stork will bring a snake into your house.

- If a stork drops its egg or chick out of the nest, the year will be a bad one.
- If the first stork you see that year is sitting, the year will be good; if the stork is standing – the year will be bad.
- If the stork does not return to your house to nest, a disaster will strike the house.

The white European stork is one of the largest birds in the stork family. It is considered to be a peace loving bird. Its broad and long wings help it to soar high, producing a lot of sound while flapping and beating its wings. White storks always fly with their necks stretched and legs extended beyond their tail.



White storks build their nest in Lithuania. Photo credit: Romualdas Barauskas



A wading white stork in Lithuania. Photo credit: Romualdas Barauskas

The European white storks are found across the European continent, the Middle East, and parts of Africa and Asia. In the Middle East, they are concentrated in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. They are found in the European countries of Spain, Portugal, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Greece, and the Scandinavian countries of the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. The white storks prefer to feed in areas of shallow wetlands, farmlands, and grassy meadows, and avoid areas with tall grasses and shrubs. They have also adapted themselves since times immemorial to live in close proximity with humans by building nests on roof tops and other places dominated by human activities.



## March Anniversaries

### 630 years ago

On March 22, 1387, Jogaila granted Vilnius the Magdeburg Rights. The Magdeburg Rights were a set of town privileges first developed by Otto I, Holy Roman Emperor (936–73) and based on the Flemish law, which regulated the degree of internal autonomy within cities and villages, granted by the local ruler. Named after the German city of Magdeburg, these town charters were perhaps the most important set of medieval laws in Central Europe thus far.

### 415 years ago

In 1602, Pope Clement VIII issued a papal brief which authorized Saint Casimir's feast on March 4 but only in Poland and Lithuania. Saint Casimir Jagiellon (Lithuanian: Kazimieras, October 3, 1458 – March 4, 1484) was a prince of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland. Second oldest son of King Casimir IV (Kazimieras IV), he was tutored by Johannes Longinus, a Polish chronicler and diplomat. After his elder brother Vladislaus (Vladislovas) was elected as King of Bohemia in 1471, Casimir became the heir apparent. At the age of 13, Casimir participated in the failed military campaign to install him as King of Hungary. He became known for his piousness, devotion to God, and generosity towards the sick and poor. He became ill (most likely with tuberculosis) and died at the age of 25. He was buried in Vilnius Cathedral and his cult grew. His canonization was initiated by his brother King Sigismund I the Old (Žygimantas Senasis) in 1514 and the tradition holds that he was canonized in 1521. The age of Protestant Reformation was not conducive to the cult of saints. St. Casimir's cult saw a resurgence in the 17th century when his feast day was confirmed by the pope in 1602 and the dedicated Chapel of Saint Casimir was completed in 1636. St. Casimir became a patron saint of Lithuania and Lithuanian youth. In Vilnius, his feast day is marked annually with Kaziuko mugė (a trade fair) held on the Sunday nearest to March 4, the anniversary of his death. There are more than 50 churches named after St. Casimir in Lithuania and Poland and more than 50 churches in Lithuanian and Polish diaspora communities in the United States of America.

### 480 years ago

On March 25, 1537, the Fifth Lithuanian - Muscovite War ended (1534-1537). In the summer of 1534, Grand Hetman Jurgis Radvila and the Tatars devastated the area around Chernigov, Novgorod Seversk, Radogoshch, Starodub, and Briansk. In October 1534, a Muscovite army under the command of Prince Ovchina-Telepnev-Obolensky, Prince Nikita Obolensky, and Prince Vasily Shuisky invaded Lithuania, advancing as far as Vilnius and Navahrudak, and built a fortress on Lake Sebezh the following year, before being stopped. The Lithuanian army under Hetman Radvila,

Andrei Nemirovich, Polish Hetman Jan Tarnowski, and Semen Belsky launched a powerful counterattack and took Homel and Starodub. In 1536, the fortress Sebezh defeated Nemirovich's Lithuanian forces when they tried to besiege it, and then the Muscovites attacked Liubech, razed Vitebsk, and built fortresses at Velizh and Zavoloche. Lithuania and Russia negotiated a five-year truce, without prisoner exchange, in which Homel stayed under the king's control, while Muscovy kept Sebezh and Zavoloche. In 1562 the Livonian War started which lasted for twenty years.

### 470 years ago

On March 21, 1547, Motiejus Strykovskis (Maciej Strykowski) was born. He was a Polish historian, writer, and a poet, notable as the author of Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitia and all of Ruthenia (1582). The work is generally considered to be the first printed book on the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.



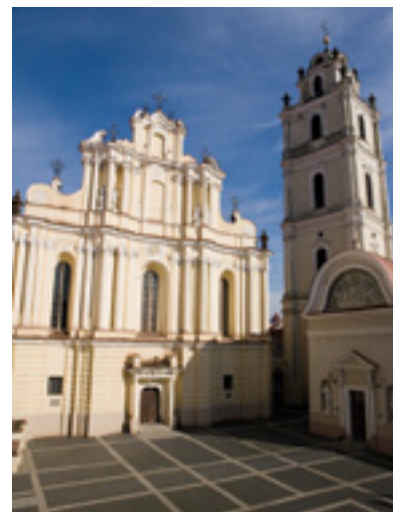
Motiejus Strykovskis's Kronika.

### 455 years ago

On March 4, 1562, the territory of the Archbishopric of Riga was incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Archbishopric of Riga was an archbishopric in Medieval Livonia, a subject to the Holy See. It was established in 1186 as the bishopric of Livonia at Üxküll, then after moving to Riga it became the bishopric of Riga in 1202 and was elevated to an archbishopric in 1255.

### 250 years ago

On March 30, 1767, Jonas Kristupas Glaubicas (Johann Christoph Glaubitz) died in Vilnius. Glaubicas was an architect of German descent who is generally considered to be the most prominent Baroque architect in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Glaubicas was born in Schweidnitz (Świdnica), Silesia, and spent the first 37 years of



St. John's Church in Vilnius.

his life there. After a devastating fires occurred in 1737 in Vilnius, he was called to rebuilt Lutheran St. Johns' Church, which in 1555 had been funded by German merchants. Glaubicas, who was among the leaders of the Lutheran community of Vilnius, is credited for developing a distinct Lithuanian school of Baroque architecture, known as Vilnius Baroque, which is best reflected in the cityscape of the Old Town of Vilnius. This has contributed to the widespread naming of Old Vilnius as the "City of Baroque". There are at least four churches in Vilnius reconstructed by Glaubicas, namely the Church of St. Catherine (1743), the Church of the Ascension (1750), the Church of St. John, the monastery gate and the towers of the Church of the Holy Trinity. The magnificent and dynamic Baroque facade of the formerly Gothic Church of St. Johns (1749) is mentioned among his best works. Many church interiors including the one of the Great Synagogue of Vilna were reconstructed by Glaubitz as well as the Town Hall in 1769.

### 225 years ago

On March 20, 1792, King Stanislovas Augustas Poniatovskis granted the Rights of Magdeburg and coats of arms to Raseiniai, Rietavas, Vilkija, and Kėdarna.



Raseiniai coat of arms.



Rietavas coat of arms.



Vilkija coat of arms.

### 110 years ago

On March 5, 1907, the Second Duma started its work. Among its representatives, there were seven Lithuanians: Povilas Kumelis, Antanas Kupstas, Antanas Povylius, Vladas Stašinskas, Andrius Bulota, and Petras Leonas. The State Duma or Imperial Duma was the Lower House, part of the legislative assembly in the late Russian Empire, which held its meetings in the Taurida Palace in St. Petersburg. It convened four times between 27 April 1906 and the collapse of the Empire in February 1917. The First and the Second Dumas were more democratic and represented a greater number of national types than their successors. The Third Duma was dominated by gentry, landowners, and businessmen. The Fourth Duma held five sessions; it existed until 2 March 1917 and was formally dissolved on 6 October 1917.

### 100 years ago

On March 9, 1917, Algirdas Julius Greimas was born in Tula, Russia.

Algirdas Julius Greimas was a French-Lithuanian literary scientist, known among other things for the Greimas Square. He is considered one of the most prominent French semioticians. Among Greimas's major contributions to semiotics are the concepts of isotopy, the actantial model, the narrative program, and the semiotics of the natural world. He also researched Lithuanian mythology and Proto-Indo-European religion and was influential in semiotic literary criticism. The year of 2017 is proclaimed the Year of Greimas in Lithuania.

### 45 years ago

On March 19, 1972, the first issue of the Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania was printed. It was the longest-running and best-known samizdat periodical in the Lithuanian SSR. Following the example of the Russian Chronicle of Current Events, the Lithuanian Chronicle was published from 19 March 1972 to 19 March 1989 by Catholic priests and nuns. In total, 81 issues appeared. It focused on repressions against Catholics in Lithuania but also included reports of other violations of human rights in the Soviet Union. Selections from its reports regularly appeared in the Moscow-based Chronicle of Current Events; in turn items from Russia and Ukraine were translated into Lithuanian.



The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania.



# Meduolis or Medaunykas

(Honey Cake)

By Jana Sirusaitė-Motivans



Meduolis is a good everyday Lithuanian cake to have on hand for family snacks or when friends drop in for coffee, according to Virginia Sakalas Mikenas and Ramune Sakalas Jonaitis, the authors of "Treasures of Lithuanian Cooking" (Toronto, 2008), whose recipe for honey cake I am sharing with you this month. Lithuanian bakers have traditionally made a variety of simple cakes using ingredients which were easily available in the countryside and kept through the winter when there was more time for baking and the heat of a hot oven warming up the kitchen was welcome. Country cooks often baked with apples, nuts and dried fruits, preserves (jams), poppy seeds, and honey.

Izabelė Sinkevičiūtė, author of "Lithuanian Cookery" (Darbininkas, Brooklyn NY 1976), described honey cakes as follows:

"Honey cakes are cakes in whose preparation honey is used. Butter, sour cream or sour milk is added to the dough of honey

cakes or else the cake will be hard. Honey makes the dough heavier, therefore, to obtain a light cake, baking soda or baking powder must be added to the dough. When baked, the honey cake must be dark brown in color. This color is obtained by boiling the honey."

The following recipe meets all these requirements. We start by boiling the honey, and baking powder, baking soda and sour cream are all included.

A special quality of honey cake is that it tastes better when aged. Plan to bake at least a day or two before you will be serving the cake. Store it in a covered container, or wrapped in plastic wrap, at room temperature. Decorate with powdered sugar just before serving.

# Meduolis or Medaunykas

(Honey Cake)

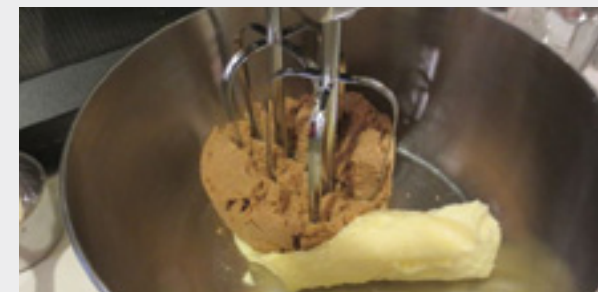
## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup honey
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
- 4 eggs, separated
- 3 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- powdered sugar (for decorating)

1. Preheat oven to 325° F.
2. In a small saucepan, bring honey just to a boil. Set aside to cool.



3. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar using an electric mixer.



4. Add egg yolks one at a time, mixing after each yolk.



5. Add cooled honey and mix well.



6. In another bowl, combine dry ingredients (flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon). Add to egg mixture, alternating with sour cream. Stir in raisins and nuts.



7. In yet another bowl, beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Gently fold beaten egg whites into batter using a spatula.



8. Put mixture into a 10-inch tube pan and bake for one hour.



9. Cool in pan for 20 minutes. Remove from baking pan and sift powdered sugar on the top before serving.



## SALFASS Snow Ski Trip in Aspen, Colorado

This year's snow ski and winter trip took place in the beautiful Aspen Mountains Resort in Aspen, Colorado on February 24th – March 4, 2017.

The trip was organized by the Šiaurės Amerikos Lietuvių Fizinio Auklėjimo ir Sporto Sąjunga (ŠALFASS) aka Lithuanian Athletic Union of North America (LAUNA) and Amerikos Lietuvių Gydytojų Sąjunga (Lithuanian American Physicians Union, ALGS).

As in the past, many sports enthusiasts from the USA, Canada, and Lithuania were attending and having a great time.



Winners of the 2017 Snow Ski Trip, from left: Juozas Jokubauskas (Men's Group B, silver), Edvardas Mickus (silver), Ramunė Fry (gold), Dr. Jonas Prunskis (gold), Birutė Jokubauskas (silver), Ambassador Rolandas Kriščiūnas (bronze).



Winners of the 2017 Snow Ski Trip in Men's Group, from left: Ambassador Rolandas Kriščiūnas (bronze), Dr. Jonas Prunskis (gold), and Edvardas Mickus (silver).

## Lithuanians Celebrated Independence in Chicago



During the celebration of the 27th Anniversary of Lithuania's Independence in Chicago, a 100-foot long Lithuanian flag was carried along the main streets of the city's downtown. Photo credit: Sandra Ščedrina.



After the flag arrived at the Navy Pier, Lithuanians celebrated Independence with a four-hour long program of songs and dances. Nearly three thousand spectators attended the festival. Photo credit: Sandra Ščedrina.

## Užgavėnės at the Chicago Lithuanian School

These photos depict the Užgavėnės or Shrove Tuesday celebration at the Chicago Lithuanian School (Čikagos Lituaininė Mokykla).

Užgavėnės is a traditional Lithuanian festival that takes place on Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. Its name in English means "the time before Lent". The celebration corresponds to Roman Catholic holiday traditions in other parts of the world, such as Mardi Gras.

During Užgavėnės an effigy of winter (usually named Morė) is burnt. A major element of the holiday, meant to symbolize the defeat of winter in the Northern Hemisphere, is a staged battle between Lašininis ("porky") personifying winter and Kanapinis ("hempen man") personifying spring. Devils, witches, goats, the grim reaper, and other frightening characters appear in costumes during the celebrations. The participants and masqueraders dance and eat the traditional dish of the holiday - pancakes with a variety of toppings.





## Lithuanian Independence Day Celebrated in Colorado

In the late afternoon on a beautiful sunny February 26th in Aspen the annual Lithuanian Independence Day celebration took place at the Lithuanian Consulate in Aspen. The guest of honor was Lithuanian Ambassador to the United States Rolandas Kriščiūnas. Also in attendance were Aspen mayor pro tem Adam Frisch as well as Hon. Consul Svaja Worthington from Alaska.

Pictured below in the front row seated are Hon. Consul Svaja Worthington from Alaska, Lithuanian Ambassador to the United States Rolandas Kriščiūnas and Hon. Consul Dr. J. Prunskis.

J. V. Prunskis, M.D.  
Knight of the Order of Merit  
Hon. Consul of Lithuania  
Dean of the Aspen Consular Corps



## The Year of Lithuanian Sports Celebrated in Washington



Lukas Jackūnas shaking hands with children's tournament winner Matas Bujanauskas.

2017 is declared to be the Year of Sports in Lithuania, and Lithuanian Americans are contributing to this wonderful initiative shown by the countrymen in our homeland. On February 18, 2017, the first Lithuanian American Chess Tournament took place at the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Washington, DC. The tournament was dedicated to the 99th anniversary of Lithuania's independence.

Visvydas Matulis, the Chairman of the Chess Section of the North American Lithuanian Physical Training and Sports Union (ŠALFASS) was the winner in the men's group. Ema Klimaitė won the gold among women. Among the children, the winner was Matas Bujanauskas, a fourth grade student of the Kristi-



The Lithuanian American Community National Executive Committee President Sigita Šimkuvienė presents gold medal to the children's chess tournament winner Matas Bujanauskas. Ema Klimaitė, second place winner in the women's tournament, is seen second from right.

jonas Donelaitis Lithuanian School in Washington, DC. Lukas Jackūnas won the second place.

The winners were presented with medals by Sigita Šimkuvienė, the Lithuanian American Community National Executive Committee President. In his speech, Ambassador Rolandas Kriščiūnas welcomed the initiative and hoped that the tournament would become an annual event.

## Winter Celebration

Every year families and friends come together at Neringa's fundraiser during Žiemos Šventė to enjoy the surrounding white nature, delicious food, good company, and Neringa's beauty.

Easter celebrations are traditionally held in the spring, but this year we decided to use this wonderful Šventė as an opportunity to combine winter and spring customs and traditions, to learn and understand how to celebrate a Lithuanian Easter, which brought many smiles to many faces. As is fitting with this spring theme, the little campers participated in Easter egg hunting which the Easter granny Velykė hid in the snow, Easter egg decorating using the scratching method and the favorite wax method, and of course, egg rolling. Many also enjoyed the chance to spend the day outside in the sun, sledding, hiking in the woods and singing by the evening laužas at the prūdas. In the chapel, decorated in spring flowers, we held a reflection hour, a chance to share in our prayers and reflect together. In the evening, many hands came together to help our incredible chef prepare a formal dinner with all kinds of Lithuanian Easter dishes. Pork, beet salads, koldūnai, tinginys, and all kinds of cakes including raguolis (which was donated by the Liudzius family from CT), were only some of the various dishes we all savoured together. The wonderful dinner began with a group prayer and the traditional egg cracking competition during supper, where the strongest egg is said to bring its owner good luck in the coming year. It was a joyous start to the evening as the strongest egg belonged to the weekend's youngest camper- Matas from VA.



Photo credit Dana Vainauskiene.

As Sunday morning crept on us, everyone wanted to stay a little longer and enjoy the spirit of Neringa, as some had long journeys to get home. This year we had families from varying places such as CT, MA, NY and VA. Thank you to everyone who participated in our wonderful sventė! Thank you once again for supporting our lovely Neringa. It is endearing to remember how many friends Neringa truly has.

See you next year,  
Rūta Strazdytė and Jessica Zikaras



Photo credit Julia Labuskes.



## Rev. Valdas Aušra Presented His Poetry Book at the Vilnius Book Fair



A poetry book by Rev. Valdas Aušra.



Rev. Valdas Aušra and Augustė Žičkytė at the Vilnius Book Fair.

### TWO TEARS

Two tears are rolling down the cheek  
-Eternity is in-between  
How to measure the distance from one to the other?

The first tear gushed out  
When a child entered the world –  
Sometimes joy brings out pain as well –  
It houses all the smiles and laughs,  
All bruises of fights, bloodied knees,  
Every vaccine,  
And itching of first broken crush,  
Bitter words of reproach,  
Betrayal, anger, and forgiveness –  
Suffering and love walk hand-in-hand.

The second tear rolls down the child's cheek  
When his mother lies still in the bed  
She is no longer here – only a body  
Death erased from her face  
Sleepless nights she spent next to her sick child,  
Wrinkles made from years and pain and joy.  
The tear of loss recalls  
A hand stroking hairs  
A soft embrace  
And a kiss right in the middle of forehead,  
The finger which was grasped  
When the first step was taken.  
Imperfect love of an imperfect man.  
What is the distance between the step of a child  
And a tear rolling down?

The third tear rushed down  
The cheek of the Lord –  
One of God's children  
After a pilgrimage returned home  
Engulfed in a perfect love  
To sing hymns of joy.  
Everything that separated –  
Pain, anger, distance –  
Dissolved into the eternity of being.

### Security

... A NATO battle group of 1000 soldiers from Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, and Luxembourg are in Lithuania with associated 36 vehicles including Leopard 2 main battle tanks and Marder infantry fighting vehicles.

... A Lithuanian court has convicted former Lithuanian Air Force Captain Sergey Pusin, 34, and a Russian handler, Sergey Moiseenko, 66, of providing Russia with information about Lithuanian defenses, NATO missions and operations in Afghanistan during 2012-2014. Pusin who pleaded guilty was sentenced to 5 years; Moiseenko, who pleaded not-guilty, was sentenced to 10 ½ years for espionage and unlawful weapons possession. A third defendant, Ainas Kazlauskas was given a suspended sentence of 2 ½ years for unlawful possession of weapons.

... A trial is underway for another Russian spy who attempted to recruit those who would bug the home of President Dalia Grybauskaitė.

... A "fake news" story regarding the alleged rape of a Lithuanian teenager by NATO associated German forces was traced back to Russia. Lithuanian officials were waiting for information attacks based on earlier attempts in Germany. Dr. Stefan Meister with the German Council of Foreign Affairs relayed that Russia has experience in using populism as a low-cost weapon to weaken and divide the NATO allies.

... The Defense Ministers of Lithuania and Ukraine signed a military cooperation plan whereby Lithuanian instructors will train Ukrainian service personnel to NATO standards.

... Russia is planning a September joint military drill with Lithuanian neighbor Belarus named Zapad (West) 2017. Much of the supplies for Russia's Kaliningrad military post come by rail links to Belarus. Russia has not disclosed how many troops will participate but Sputnik International, the Russian news outlet, said that the Russia's Engineer Troops will participate. President Dalia Grybauskaitė has met with NATO officials and US Vice President Michael Pence regarding this drill.

... U.S. Air Force cargo planes delivered 5 Blackhawk helicopters to Riga, Latvia in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve- the continuous presence of an American armored brigade combat team in Europe. The 10th Combat Aviation Brigade based in Fort Drum, NY, will arrive with 2,200 soldiers, 86 helicopters and over 700 pieces of equipment for use in Germany, Latvia, and Romania. Apache, Blackhawk and tandem rotor heavy-lift Chinook helicopters were unloaded in the German port of Bremerhaven prior to moving them to Illshheim in Bavaria, Germany.

### Business

... In an effort to snag Tesla's planned European factory for lithium-ion batteries for their electric cars(Gigafactory 2), a group of entrepreneurs hired 41 Lithuanian computer geeks over a weekend to build the virtual factory using the Minecraft video game. Their leader, Vladas Lašas, said that they wanted to demonstrate Lithuania's skill-set and enthusiasm. Tesla retweeted: "Lithuania knows the way to our heart." The proposed site in Kruonis is located in a "free economic zone" near two international airports and is ideal for renewable energy resources and the Kruonis Pumped Storage Plant water backup facility. A 2.28-minute video is available on YouTube-Welcome to the Dream – We are Lithuania 2017

... The NordBalt underwater Powerlink between Sweden and Lithuania went offline for 24 hours in mid-February. This followed a week-long outage in mid-January and a 12-hour outage in early January. The Kruonis Pumped Storage Plant was called into service. In January Lithuania imported 79% of its electrical needs which is up from 68% in December 2016. Domestic sources include wind (10%); Kruonis Pumped Storage (5%) and Kaunas hydro-(3%).

... Lithuania's State Department of Tourism launched a "Real is Beautiful" campaign and the campaign won praise from the World Tourism Organization. Unfortunately, some of the stock photos that were used were actually from Finland and Slovakia. The campaign continues with new pictures but the Department Director is now the ex-Director.

... Lithuania's year to year construction activity was third highest in the sixteen reporting European Union members. Sweden's growth was 9.4%, Netherlands 8.3% and Lithuania's was 4.2%. Latvia registered a decline of 11.8% year to year decline but a 2.5 % increase in the latest quarter.

... The Vičiūnai Group is the largest fish processor in Lithuania and one of the largest producers of surimi products and fish in Europe. It sells to 56 countries under the "VICI" brand. Imports from the U.S. include Alaska Pollack, white fish, salmon and cold water shrimp. Frozen blocks of white fish from the U.S. and India are converted to a fish paste and then formed into imitation crab legs, etc. Lithuanians consume about 18 kg (40 lbs.) of fish per year.

... Lithuania has initiated a new program called Fast-track Startup Visa for entrepreneurs from outside the EU to gain temporary residence permits for startup founders and their families. A new website explains the process – [www.startupvisalithuania.com](http://www.startupvisalithuania.com). This year's LOGIN Startup Fair which expects 6,000 attendees will take place in Vilnius on May 24-25. A series of preview road shows will be held in St. Petersburg, Kiev, Minsk, and Tel Aviv.



General

... Pope Francis has set June 25 in Vilnius for the beatification of former Lithuanian Archbishop Teofilus Matulionis (1873-1962) who was imprisoned in 1923 for not signing over the deed to his parish. He was released in 1925 but repeatedly imprisoned. He lived in the US from 1934 to 1936. Upon his return and after World War II he was arrested by the Soviets. While imprisoned in isolation in Šeduva, north of Kaunas, Pope John XXIII made him archbishop in 1962 but shortly thereafter he was poisoned.

... The World Organization for Animal Health reports an outbreak of highly contagious H5N8 bird flu that killed six mute swans in Kaunas near the river Nemunas. Since last year this strain has spread across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa and is deadly for poultry and has led to the slaughter of millions of birds and the indoor confinement of flocks.

... All 116 lawmakers in attendance in the 141 seat Parliament voted to approve a law prohibiting corporal punishment of children. This action follows the beating death of a four-year-old boy by his meth. using mother and her boyfriend. The US-based NGO Human Rights Watch now counts 58 countries with similar laws including many in the EU.

... Lithuanian NGOs are compiling lists of communities that are able and willing to take refugees directly from Greece, Turkey, and Italy without the current stop in Rukla. Major challenges include language classes, jobs, and housing because currently only a third of refugees stay in Lithuania.

... The Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance party plans to introduce a proposal to ban abortions. A previous effort in 2013 would only allow abortions when the pregnancy posed a risk to the woman’s life or health or when the pregnancy is the result of a crime. The current Minister of Health, Aurelijus Veryga, said that he was against the ban and would not support it. Poles are the largest ethnic minority in Lithuania and represent about 7% of 2.8 million residents.

... Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and more than 20 NGOs from Poland have signed an open letter to the European Union to take measures against Poland for disregarding EU values and the Rule of Law. In 2016, Poland passed laws that undermined the Constitutional Tribunal and expanded the powers of the executive. The complaint outlines new restrictions on human rights, including freedom of expression and media freedom, freedom of assembly, the right to privacy and women’s sexual and reproductive right, particularly the right to abortion.

... With excise taxes on alcohol going up March 1, a survey of 1,010 people by Sprinter Surveys found that almost 1 in 5 plan on curtailing their purchases; half do not plan on reducing their drinking and the rest plan to purchase less costly alternatives or illegally acquire an untaxed drink.

... In preparation for the 100th Anniversary of the proclamation of independence (February 16, 1918), trumpet player Laurynas Lapė and his students will perform the composition “Dear Lithuania” from the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. The daily performance will occur at 7:18 PM.

ONGOING

Through April 22, 2017  
**Daily Life: Photography from Lithuania Exhibit**  
 The Print Center, 1614 Latimer St., Philadelphia, Pa.  
 Free and open to the public  
 Tuesday through Saturday  
 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
 Info: printcenter.org, 215-735-6090

Most Fridays, 4:30-7:30 p.m.  
**Friday Fish Fry at the Rockford Lithuanian Club**  
 716 Indiana Avenue, Rockford, Ill.  
 Open to the public. Weekly specials vary. First Friday of the month—Lithuanian dumplings.  
 Info: lithuanianclub.org, 815-962-9256

Every Sunday, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
**All-You-Can-Eat Lithuanian Brunch Buffet**  
 Lithuanian Club and Gintaras Dining Room  
 877 E. 185 St., Cleveland, Ohio  
 \$15 per person; \$6 kids 6-12  
 Info: lithclub@gmail.com, 216-531-8318

First Sunday of the Month, 12-4 p.m.  
**Lithuanian Brunch**  
 The Avenue Restaurant, 71-22 Myrtle Ave., Glendale, N.Y.  
 Reservations strongly recommended.  
 Info: 347-725-3853

First Sunday of the Month  
**Rockford Lithuanian Club General Membership Meeting**  
 716 Indiana Avenue, Rockford, Ill.  
 Open to all members.  
 Info: lithuanianclub.org, 815-962-9256

Every Third Saturday, Mar-Jun & Sep-Nov, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Lithuanian Heritage Club**  
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2517 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia, Pa.  
 Use Tilton Street entrance.  
 Bring a dish to share.  
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com

Please verify all events, as places and times are subject to change.

March 9-April 17  
**No Home To Go To. The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons, 1944-1952**  
 Exhibition on display at the Arlington Public Library, 1015 N. Quincy St., Arlington, VA 22201  
 Info: info@balzekasmuseum.org or 773-582-6500

APRIL 2017

April 1  
**Benefit Concert for Neringa**  
 600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam, Conn.  
 Info: neringa.org

April 22, 2 p.m.  
**Kendall Svengalis will present his book "The Great Emerson Art Heist"**  
 Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture  
 Info: info@balzekasmuseum.org or 773-582-6500

April 22, 30, May 6 & 13 at 8p.m.  
**RIP, a musical/spoken word performance by Kestutis Nakas, Jesse Kegan and Andrew Taylor.**  
 RIP is take off on Washington Irving’s Rip Van Winkle set in New York’s East Village in the 1980’s. It’s a meditation on aging, death and collective memory written in Nakas’ trademark iambic funtometer style.  
 Info: www.thebridgeperforms.com/theatre/

April 28-29  
**14th Annual Kosciuszko Conference and Kosciuszko Day Program**  
 United States Military Academy, West Point  
 Info: http://www.kosciuszkoat-westpoint.org

MAY 2017

May 13, 6 p.m.  
**"Grandis" Annual Concert**  
 Pasaulio Lietuvių Centras in Lemont, IL  
 Info: grandis.vadovai@gmail.com

May 13-14, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
**45th Annual Baltimore Lithuanian Festival**  
 Catonsville Armory, 130 Mellor Avenue, Catonsville, Md.

May 19-21  
**Counselor Retreat**  
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
 Info: neringa.org

May 21, 1 p.m.  
**Farewell Reception for Consul General Marijus Gudynas**  
 Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture  
 Info: info@balzekasmuseum.org or 773-582-6500

JUNE 2017

June 3, 6 p.m.  
**Kestutis Nakas will present his book When Lithuania Ruled the World**  
 Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture  
 Info: info@balzekasmuseum.org or 773-582-6500

June 3-4, 2017  
**Talka Work Weekend**  
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
 Info: regina@neringa.com, 978-582-5592

June 5 – July 28  
**Baltic Studies Summer Institute**  
 Indiana University Bloomington Campus, 107 S. Indiana Ave., Bloomington, Ind.  
 Six-week intensive beginning Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian language courses.  
 Application deadline for Title VIII Fellowships is February 1, 2017.  
 Info: indiana.edu/~swseel/balssi

June 9-11  
**New England Chapter Knights of Lithuania Retreat**  
 Franciscan Guest House, 26 Beach Ave., Kennebunk, Maine  
 Info: 207-967-4865

June 24-29  
**Heritage Family Camp in English**  
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
 Info: neringa.org

JULY 2017

July 2-8  
**Family Camp for Lithuanian Speakers**  
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
 Info: neringa.org

July 9-23  
**Children’s Camp for Lithuanian Speakers 7-16**  
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
 Info: neringa.org

July 23  
**Lithuanian Friendship Day/ Putnam Picnic**  
 600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam, Conn.  
 Info: neringa.org

July 23-29  
**"Third Week" Youth Camp for Lithuanian Speakers, 12-16 Years Old**  
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
 Info: neringa.org

July 27-30  
**Knights of Lithuania 104th National Convention**  
 Holiday Inn Hotel, Dayton, Ohio  
 Info: knightsoflithuania.com

July 30-August 12  
**Heritage Camp in English, 7-16 Years Old**  
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.  
 Info: neringa.org

AUGUST 2017

August 12-19  
**"Third Week" Youth Camp in English, 12-16 Years Old**  
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.

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 Let us help you spread the word! Please send your event notice to kariledalia@yahoo.com two months in advance of the month in which you would like to see it listed.



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