

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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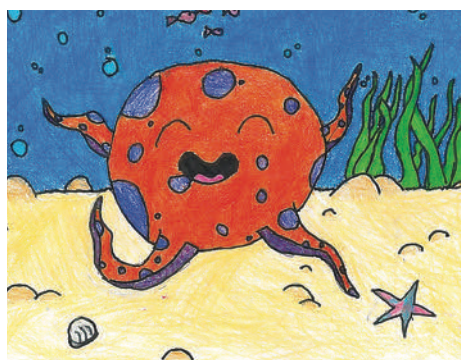
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Front Cover: Pelėdžiukai Lithuanian School students color Easter eggs. Photo by Gitana Stonkuvienė.

Back cover: The reflection of Chicago Ferris Wheel lit with the colors of Lithuanian flag in the Navy Pier on March 11, 2019. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

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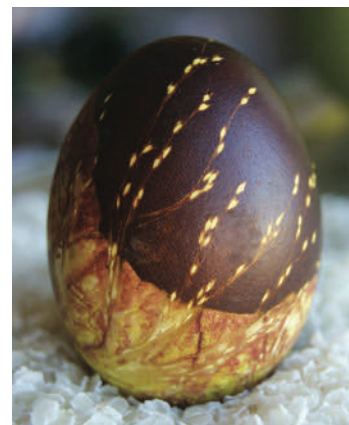
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from the editor

Dear readers,

The month of April is here. Easter will be celebrated on April 21st. Although a holiday of high religious significance in the Christian faith, many Easter traditions, such as the popular Easter egg decorating, date back to pre-Christian, pagan times. The Lithuanian language resources database has



334 examples associated with Easter posted on its web page. Among them are 245 riddles, 34 beliefs, and 9 idioms. A few examples of beliefs are such: if it's cold on Easter, the summer will be cold as well, if it's raining on Palm Sunday, Easter will be beautiful. Several samples of riddles: there is a 7-mile-long iron bridge and there is a lily on the other side of the bridge; when the lily starts blooming, all the world is going to sing; there is a high mountain and there are three lilies on that mountain; when these lilies start blooming, the Sun will be rolling on the Earth. In my mind, I can picture these riddles as beautiful paintings. There are several "characters" associated with Lithuanian Easter: Velykų bobutė or Easter granny is a woman who brings gifts to children on Easter; Velykų zuikutis or Easter bunny is a creature that brings gifts to children on Easter. There is also Vėlių Velykos (Easter of the Souls). It falls on Holy Thursday, which, according to some ancient beliefs is the day when the souls of the dead come to the church. For many, Velykos is also a celebration of nature awakening, springtime joy, and fun.

I wish you a beautiful and peaceful Easter. I would also like to remind that the election day for Lithuanian president and the referendum for the right to keep the Lithuanian citizenship when acquiring the citizenship of the United States and any other member country of NATO and EU is coming on May 12th. I hope all Lithuanian citizens residing in the US will register and will vote.

Sincerely,

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor

Computer Coding for Girls

By Karilė Vaitkutė



Computer coding teachers Rokas Simkonis and Alfreda Kavaliauskaite.

For the first time ever, girls ages 12-14 could come to the Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, Illinois, and learn computer coding. The coding course instructors were Alfreda Kavaliauskaitė and Rokas Simkonis.

Alfreda is a student at DePaul University in Chicago. She is currently getting her master's degree in human-computer interaction. In her words, human-computer interaction is a field of studies where you can combine psychology, design, computer science, and coding and learn how to make the world better by using technology. Alfreda also works as a lab manager at a neuroscience market research company.

Rokas Simkonis also studies and works at the same time. This spring he will be graduating from Lewis University with a degree in computer science. He works as a software engineer for a meal solutions company that delivers pre-packaged groceries and recipes in a single box for people to cook their meals at home. Rokas is also a member of the

Lithuanian City of Chicago Club, an organization that is in part sponsoring the coding classes for girls.

How did they come up with the idea to teach young girls how to code? Alfreda says that she thought coding for girls would be a cool project to implement. She herself loves coding and wishes she would have been introduced to coding earlier in her life than she was. She did not go to school for coding and was introduced to it only a few years out of college. Before she was exposed to it, coding seemed intimidating. However, now she thinks coding is very creative and interesting because one gets to create things and even an entire world. Alfreda wanted to share her skills came up with the idea to teach coding.

Both, Alfreda and Rokas teach as volunteers. The coding course was designed to continue for ten weeks. Rokas said that initially they had 13 open spots and they had more demand than supply. They let 15 girls join the club and some had to bring their own computers. There were



Simona and Ona enjoy computer coding.



Ona is creating a story about friends in space.



Migle shows a fragment of her animated film.



Coding.

even more girls that wanted to come but, regretfully, there was not enough space in the classroom.

According to Rokas, the girls learned the fundamentals of computer science. They learned how to build, what a coding block was, and what were the universal basic principles of data structures. They started learning without looking at the actual code but looking at little blocks and puzzles, something like Lego pieces that have to fit together. This way the teachers got the students into the mindset of what coding is, and what the development is. Little by little, it became a bit more interactive and filled with colors. The students were not graded for their work as Rokas and Alfreda do not believe in grading. They did not want the girls to feel stifled by grades and wanted them to be creative instead.

After the 10-week-long course, some of the students who showed more interest in furthering their coding skills might be able to go to a summer coding camp and

the Lithuanian City of Chicago Club might be able to give them scholarships. If the program continues into the next year, it might expand and be available not only for girls but for boys as well. Rokas and Alfreda are thankful to their advisor Diana Lagler. Diana helped them not only with leadership advice but also donated 13 laptops and provided scholarship funds for the girls who would be willing to continue with the computer coding courses. Without Diana this project would not have been implemented. Both, Alfreda and Rokas, volunteer to teach coding because they both want to give something back to the Lithuanian community. They both graduated from the Lithuanian Saturday schools and the older they get the more they understand that giving back is something that they want to do. Besides, by becoming mentors, they learn themselves so it's a two-way street.

The Lithuanian Youth Center is on the Way to Being Revitalized

By Karilė Vaitkutė



The Mardi Gras Arts and Crafts Fair at the Youth Center in Chicago.

On Saturday, March 2, 2019, the building of the Lithuanian Youth Center in Chicago was bustling with merry activities. The Center worked together with the Saturday School to organize a Margi Gras Fair. The President of the Youth Center Board of Directors, Antanas Rašymas, said that it was not the first time that the Youth Center had an arts and crafts fair. However, previously the Center used to have a springtime arts and crafts fair. This year they joined with the Chicago Lithuanian School and organized a Mardi Gras arts and crafts fair. The Board of Directors is trying to revitalize the Lithuanian Youth Center in Chicago, and the Mardi Gras arts and crafts fair will continue to be organized every year on the Saturday before Užgavėnės (Mardi Gras). The date was chosen not to interfere with the St. Casimir's Fair in Lemont Lithuanian World Center, another very popular crafts fair that takes place every year at the beginning of March.

Rašymas was very satisfied with the results of the very first Mardi Gras Arts and Crafts Fair. There were 24 vendors at 20 tables and close to 40 Chicago Lithuanian Saturday School students participating. All the vendors paid to be in the fair. The children did not have to pay for a table at the fair but they had to do the crafts and bake themselves. All the profit the children made was kept by the children. The school children and all the visitors to the

fair had also celebrated Užgavėnės, the Lithuanian Mardi Gras. There were masks and dances, the fight between Lašininis and Kanapinis and the "burning" of Morė, the symbol of on winter.

The President was very happy that so many people came. Everybody was very happy and the Youth Center promises to be alive and well again. There are other events taking place in this Lithuanian venue. In late April, several Lithuanian documentaries will be shown here. There is also a Friday Dance every month from 7 to 10 p.m. where people can come down, sit back, relax, dance, listen to some music. The Board of Directors is trying to get people back into the center and start using it again because it's a shame that the center is sitting here not being utilized, especially since it is in such close proximity to the downtown Chicago. Many people who live in downtown Chicago are now discovering this center.

In April Rašymas's first year as the President of the Board of Directors of the Youth Center will be completed. He was happy to report that last year the Board also completed a part of the planned renovations - painted the big hall, the downstairs hall, and finished the renovation of the bathrooms. He believes that they are well on their way to bring life back into the center.



Antanas Rašymas, President of the Lithuanian Youth Center Board of Directors.



Participants of the Mardi Gras Arts and Crafts Fair.



Lašininis and Kanapinis, the representatives of winter and spring, are ready to fight in traditional Lithuanian Fat Tuesday celebration.



Fat Tuesday masks made by the Chicago Lithuanian Saturday School students.



Participants of the Mardi Gras Arts and Crafts Fair.

Chicago's Lithuanian National Guard Commemorated Two Important Dates

By Karilė Vaitkutė



The Šaulių Namai Banquet Hall.

On Sunday, March 10, 2019, the National Guard of Lithuania in Exile Vytauto Didžiojo Division commemorated two important dates: the 90th anniversary of the death of Vladas Putvinskis-Putvys, the founder of the Riflemen's Union in Lithuania, and the 65th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in Exile under the name of Lithuanian National Guard in Exile. The event started with the Holy Mass in the Blessed Virgin Mary Nativity Church in Chicago and continued in the Šaulių Namai Banquet Hall.

After the flags of the United States of America, the Republic of Lithuania and the National Guard in Exile were brought in, the participants sang the national

anthems of both countries and honored the deceased members with a minute of silence. The Vytauto Didžiojo Division Commander Linas Marganavičius presented a biographical sketch of the founder of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, Vladas Putvinskis-Pūtvyš.

Afterward, two new members, Deimantas Gilys and Auksuolė Kišonaitė Marciulevičienė, were inducted into the National Guard. Roma Bikulčius, the secretary of the National Guard, read the congratulatory letter from the Commander-in-Chief of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, Gintaras Koryzna, and Putvinskis-Pūtvyš Club President, Stasys Ignatavičius.

The Commander of Lithuanian National Guard in



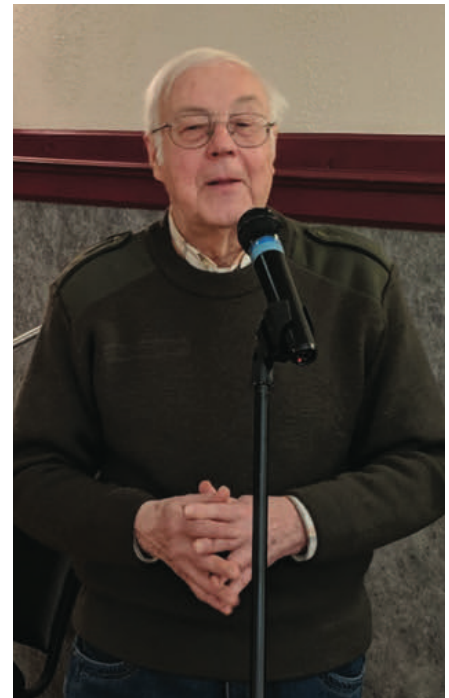
Riflemen bring in the flags.



Roma Bikulčius read the congratulatory letters received from Lithuania.



Flags of the Lithuanian National Guard.



Prof. Antanas Adomėnas congratulated the National Guard in Exile.



Five members of the National Guard in Exile were awarded the Riflemen's Star medals for their work.



Members of the Lithuanian National Guard in Exile. Photo by Regina Butkus.

Exile, Julius Butkus, spoke to the audience and expressed his satisfaction that the National Guard in Exile has been active for 65 years. Congratulations were extended by the guest of the event, Prof. Antanas Adomėnas. A member of the Baltija National Guard Division, Ernestas Lukoševičius, introduced an idea to erect a monument to Lithuania's first president Antanas Smetona in Vilnius due to the fact that Smetona was an honorary member of the Riflemen's Union and 2019 is proclaimed by the Government of Lithuania as the Year of Antanas Smetona. Later on, five members of the National Guard were awarded the Riflemen Star medals for their work.

After the official part of the commemorative event was over, guests had a chance to taste delicious kugelis and sweets with coffee and enjoy the singing of Danguolė Žibkutė-Pažemeckienė and Gilija Krūmaitienė. The host of the Šaulių Namai Banquet Hall, Rasa Marganavičienė, read her poems.

Celebrating the 100th anniversary since the founding of Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania proclaimed the year of 2019 as the Year of the Lithuanian Riflemen. It is wonderful to see that the Lithuanian National Guard in Exile continues to be an integral part of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union.

Žodelis apie žydus

By Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė



The following words were written in 1905, when the author was in her early forties. It was published on the front page of the Vilnius weekly *Lietuvos Ūkininkas* (The Lithuanian Farmer) in its December edition. The ban on writing Lithuanian in the Latin alphabet, which had been in effect from 1864 to 1904, had recently come to an end. A new wave of self-determination and self-expression was in the air. *

Encouraged by Povilas Višinskis, Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė had become active in public life

Times are changing in Lithuania. Folk accustomed to bowing and scraping before others, fearing them, serving them, suddenly feel in charge of their own country.

And, often, they are mocked. Used to subservience and being pushed around, once empowered, these same people start insulting and pushing around others. Lithuanians often make fun of this behavior, saying “there’s nothing cruder in the world than a hick turned gentleman.” or “you can put the finest-looking saddle on a pig, but it’s still a pig, not a horse.”

Sayings like that do hold a grain of truth.

Any human being who has been ridiculed and pushed around by others for a long time naturally becomes resentful and angry. It’s just a fact. And, once empowered, that person usually tries to inflict resentment, hatred, and anger upon someone weaker than himself. All that evil

and started her writing career in 1890. In fact, in 1905, she attended the Great Seimas of Vilnius that resolved to demand wide political autonomy for Lithuania within the Russian Empire.

Although no woman was a signatory to the Lithuanian Act of Independence of February 16, 1918, the groundwork for independence had long been laid by grassroots efforts such as those of Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė to enlighten the general public and to encourage feelings of national self-reliance among Lithuania’s people. She was the founder and chair of the *Žiburėlis* society to provide financial aid to struggling students, one of the editors of the newspaper *Lietuvos Žinios*, and an active member of the women’s movement.

So much would still befall Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė in the second half of her life. In 1914, she would go home for summer vacation and wind up spending all of World War I among the people in the Lithuanian countryside, recording their experiences in a three-volume diary entitled *Karo Meto Dienoraštis*. In 1920, she would chair Lithuania’s First Seimas. In 1926, she would run for president of Lithuania.

“Žodelis apie žydus” [“A Word About the Jews”] lays out some of Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė’s basic principles of civic behavior for an emerging democracy. It bears reading today, over a hundred years later, for the wisdom it imparts.

*For a lovely video capturing this moment in Lithuanian history, focusing on the great literary partnership between Petkevičaitė-Bitė and Lithuanian writer, Žemaitė, go online to “*Graži Prigimties Daina*” (with English subtitles known as “*Coming into One’s Own*”).

Diana Vidutis, Translator

that he once suffered, he will try to transfer onto someone else; it makes no difference onto whom.

We Lithuanians have had plenty of experience suffering all kinds of oppression. Whom are we going transfer it onto now? The point I want to make is that, in this time of our rebirth, we should try not to transfer our oppression onto anybody. We know very well the taste of oppression, the bitterness it breeds in one’s heart. So, as we rise as a people, we should eliminate that tendency in ourselves. Let us rout out that bitterness within us. Let us show ourselves and other nations what human beings we are, that we are truly worthy of the name.

Now that we are in charge of our own country, let us stay true to remaining human!

Let us defend ourselves from all oppressors and aggressors but let us also not bring harm to anyone ourselves!

Let me describe a few situations that will cast a light on that injustice and discrimination that weighs on the Jewish people.

The only Jews allowed to live in large Russian cities like Petersburg, Moscow, etc., are those with university degrees, or those who are very wealthy and can afford to pay high taxes or to buy membership in the so called First Guilds.

I recall a story told by a doctor in Petersburg. Part of his practice was to examine prostitutes, to make sure they would not communicate various diseases to men, as well as women who wanted to become prostitutes, to give them their prostitution licenses.

One day, a lovely young Jewish girl came to see the doctor. It was not so much that she was beautiful as that she was the very image of modesty. She asked the doctor to examine her and give her a prostitution license. The doctor was an honorable man, and he tried to talk the young woman out of choosing this line of "work." But the girl lashed out at him with a few choice phrases, and the doctor gave her the license she had requested.

The doctor later understood that this prostitute remained a modest girl, but for some reason held great store by getting her prostitution license.

The doctor had a daughter of his own who, at that time was studying at a music school. She talked non-stop to her father about her wonderful new friend who played the piano so beautifully, so beautifully that as soon as her fingers touched the keys, the piano sang like the voices of angels...

So, the doctor suggested that his daughter invite her friend home someday, so that he, too, could enjoy her piano playing.

And it happened one day that, as the doctor returned, he heard the most beautiful music coming from his home. Upon entering, the doctor recognized the musician right away: she was that same young Jewish girl who had come to him for a prostitution license. The girl recognized him, too, immediately stopped playing, let out a shriek, and broke into convulsive sobbing.

The doctors understood her unhappy situation. She, having no wealth and no higher education, did not have the right to live in Petersburg. That right she could obtain only by getting a prostitution license. Wanting to study music, she had no other choice but to register as a prostitute.

Here is another example.

A young Jewish girl was very homesick for her family and traveled to visit them, even though she did not have a permit to be in their city. She had to out-trick the police somehow, and thought she had. But while she was visiting, her family heard a strange, loud banging on the front door. Everyone in the household immediately understood



Jews in Vabalninkas market. Photo credit: Facebook page "Lietuva Senose Fotografijose".

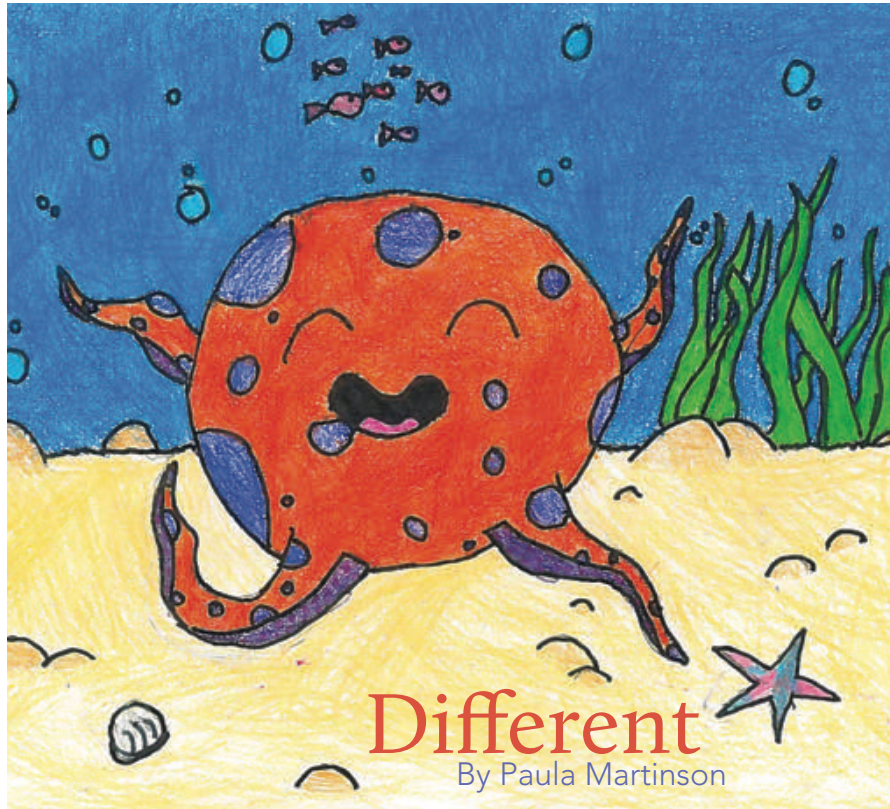
that it was the police coming to look for unfamiliar Jews and to arrest them. So they quickly decided to lay the girl down on the dirt floor, cover her with a sheet, and arrange candles around her as if she were dead. The police came in and, finding a family in mourning, emptied the whole house in their search, but never lifted the sheet to look underneath. Once the police had left, the family rushed to the young girl still lying there, thrilled that they had been able to save her from the police. But when they raised the sheet, she did not get up. It seems, she had died of fright. Never again would the young girl have to fear the police in this world.

These are just a few examples of the problems Jewish people suffer from. Should we Lithuanians, who have endured so much ourselves, add to their misery, even demean them, seeing as they continue to suffer today, and to struggle even harder than we have to? No, as Lithuanians, let us refuse to taint ourselves by beating or fighting Jews or any other people living in our country. If we are separated by language or belief, then let us be united by our shared suffering. Those sufferings afflict some people one way, and others another way. Let us remain human beings, realizing the pain caused to all of us by the old regime.... Let us love one another! The road to real independence is still a long way ahead for us! But in seeking it, in nearing our goal, let us not taint ourselves with anything that degrades or demeans a person.

Published in *Lietuvos Ūkininkas*, December 15 (28), 1905, Nr. 2.

¹ Catherine the Great created the *Pale of Settlement* in Russia in 1791. This was the name given to the western border region of the country, in which Jews were allowed to live. The motivation behind this was to restrict trade between Jews and native Russians. Some Jews were allowed to live, as a concession, 'beyond the pale'.

¹ Merchants in Russia are divided in three classes or guilds, where everyone has its own proper privileges; the lowest class pays sixty; the second three hundred, and the third eight hundred silver rubels, (per annum.) From *Sketches of Jewish Life in Russia*, By the Chief Rabbi Dr. Lillenthal, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* Volume 5, No. 9 Kislev 5608 December 1847.



Octopus drawing by Paula Martinson

I felt the water flow through me and while moving with the current, I gazed into the deep blue. I swam farther ahead of my adopted squid family. I live with squid because my parents tentacled me out of their octopus' garden I was born. I am an octopus and I was born with 4 tentacles instead of 8. The squids found me swimming around without a family when I was a baby. Squid didn't care if I looked different; they accepted me for who I am. They are content and peaceful creatures. Whatever I looked like when I was born doesn't bother them at all. Their attitude makes them my family. I wouldn't survive in the open water because of tentacle shortage. My fewer tentacles make me slower and weaker. I usually get around by riding currents because they push me through the water. It's hard to catch fish and crabs because of my missing tentacles, but I'm getting much better.

As I swam I saw a school of fish out of the corner of my eye. I darted out of the current and headed near the school of fish. I figured I could catch up with my family later. I might not be fast, but I can swim a long way, easily hide and create diversions. I quickly blended in with the coral around me and sneaked up near the fish. I grabbed three before they figured out I was there. The fish looked beautiful as they swam away shimmering in the water. Creatures of the ocean always amazed me. Even if some didn't seem important, all were special.

I worked my way back into the current to catch up with my family. As I was swimming I saw movement in the distance. It looked blurry, but there was definitely something unusual. It was large and white. Was that a shark? I found a large rock and shifted my colors to match it. I leaned in for a closer look. It was a shark. But another object came into view that looked extremely similar, but smaller. What a day to see two sharks! Then I saw smaller colorful creatures. They weren't squid though. They were octopi! The sharks were chasing them. I knew octopi kicked me out and rejected me, but that didn't matter right now. I swam as fast as I could. I pushed the water as hard as I could; super-fast for me. I came within a couple of yards of the sharks so I squeezed between some coral and watched. The sharks were chasing after the octopi and to eat them. Octopus ink blots splattered through the water.

In desperation, I found a sand patch and began to dig. I quickly made a burrow where only an octopus could fit. I carried a few rocks on top of it to disguise my spot. "Over here you overgrown sardines!" I called to the octopi. The sharks turned to find for the escaping victims. The octopi rushed toward the coral, blending into the sand. Soon enough each and every octopus was camouflaged. But nobody could celebrate yet. The angry sharks still lurked nearby. Everyone stayed quiet for several minutes. The sharks eventually gave up and swam away. All the octopi thanked me with gratitude. Then some octopi that looked similar to me hugged me. They were my "parents". But instead of being excited about seeing them, I didn't want them to even get near me. They underestimated me and thought I was weak and now they suddenly wanted me? I had a real family and they were all I needed. Maybe a squid wasn't as talented or graceful as an octopus, but they loved me for who I was from the start. "I have to go, my family at home will worry about me", I said with confidence. Then I left. I returned home to see my brothers and sisters, who swam in delight to see me again.



Paula Martinson

This Is Not My Sky

Book review by Vaida Venskutonytė

Laima Vincė. *This Is Not My Sky* (Tai ne mano dangus): a novel – Vilnius: Alma littera, 2018. 542 pages
This review was published in the Lithuanian literary journal *Metai*, 2019.



The writer, Laima Vincė, first conceived of the idea for her novel, *This Is Not My Sky* (Lithuanian: *Tai ne mano dangus*) when the United States declared war on Iraq. At the time hers was an emotional response, an individual protest against military aggression, which would bring along with it extreme traumatizing in the consciousness of both individuals and society, as well as in the cultural memory of the nations involved in war. While teaching Creative Writing workshops at the University of Southern Maine, Laima Vincė experienced watching her classes shrink as more and more students were sent to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan with Maine's National Guard or with the United States military. She experienced what could be called a metaphysical moment of injustice. She saw in a very direct way how the fragility of a single individual's existence was compromised by the cruelty of what could be expressed as, "the military system." The writer's overwhelming sense of this impending tragedy reflected not only her concerns as an American citizen, but resonated with the tragedy of the Lithuanian nation during World War II and the postwar years. The annihilation of Lithuanian families and the massive deportations to Siberia, the Soviet occupation, and the forced emigration of Lithuanians to the United States, consumed this writer's imagination for fifteen years until all that became the basis of this novel's narrative history and its central theme.

The novel opens with an excerpt from the Gnostic poem, "Thunder, Perfect Mind": "I am the first and the

last./I am the honored one and the scorned one./I am the whore, and the holy one. ... I am the goddess, and I am the one,/Whose God is great." The language of this poem gently, subtly, and somewhat secretively, reveals one of the main themes of this novel—the ambivalent experience of a woman's sense of individuality and her complicated search for identity. Especially significant are the poem's references to whores and holy women, which echo the biblical figures of Mary Magdalene and Holy Mary Mother of God, who make an appearance in the novel. These two contrasting religious figures are connected into one in Maria, the heroine of the novel. A similar duality dominates the work of Lithuanian émigré writer, Birutė Pūkelevičiūtė, in her novel, *Aštuoni Lapai* (Eight Leaves) (1956). In both of these novels women experience the horrors of war: humiliation, rape. However, in both novels the female characters are spiritually inspired by the image of Holy Mary, who shows them that all women carry within them the possibility of motherhood, the seed of redemption through starting a new life.

From her early childhood, Maria, the heroine of *This Is Not My Sky*, is a religious and sincere Catholic. She somewhat naively dreams of marrying and creating a harmonious Catholic family, and then living a safe, even idyllic, life. However, Maria's rosy dream is destined to be shattered from her early adolescence onwards. She is fated to experience the horrors of World War II, and then the postwar anti-Soviet armed resistance and the massive deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia. These events erase even the possibility of a humane, civilized existence. Maria's mother, Nora (full name – Eleonora) agrees to shelter a resistance fighter in her home. They address him familiarly as Uncle Rimās. Maria's mother formally agrees to risk her daughters' lives in exchange for Lithuania's freedom. She promises the leader of the local resistance that if Rimās is arrested or if their house is surrounded by Soviet security forces, that their house will be exploded together with all of them inside of it. Nora is even taught how to handle a pistol, and if necessary, how to shoot herself with it...

This is one of the most difficult dilemmas the heroic Nora must endure, one that is reminiscent of the Biblical story of Abraham, when he is asked by God to sacrifice his son. Nora's drama is saturated with a burning silence. The relentless stress of the situation weighs heavily on this courageous woman's shoulders. She must con-

book review

sciously sacrifice her flesh and blood—her children, who she'd raised alone in the most dire of conditions, and whom she loves with all her heart—while living the entire time with the thought of their deaths hanging over her. In that silence she must overcome her heaviest doubts and not betray herself—beneath the armor of her silence she hides an existential horror.

It is noteworthy that the inspiration for Nora's character is the historic woman, Eleonora Labanauskienė, who sheltered two leaders of the resistance, Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas and Juozas Lukša-Daumantas, in her home for almost a year. Eleonora and her husband, Vincas, just like the protagonists in the novel, consciously agreed to explode themselves if the Soviet army were to surround their home. Other characters in the novel are also inspired by historic truths: the love story of Ona and Bronius is based on the actual love story of the liaison woman Eleonora Rubine and her beloved partisan, poet, artist Bronius. They fought together with General Jonas Žemaitis. Vladas Pilvelis represents the stereotypical middle-aged, wealthy, bachelor engineer—there were many men like him who came out of the displaced persons (DP) camps of the allied territories of Germany and Austria after the war. The characters Žygimantas and Barbara reflect the names of the historic Duke of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and his beloved Barbora Radvilaitė. Yet it is important to take note that these characters similarity to these historic figures is crafted in a subtle way. Certain names have been appropriated, as well as certain important historic events; however, the necessary artistic transformation takes place, as well as an aesthetic transformation. The characters in this novel are endowed with a rich emotional life, complete with dreams, and with necessary detailed biographical facts and background information. Sometimes the text becomes ironic and the characters' motivations for certain sins are exposed. Therefore, this novel is not a documentary novel, nor is it a strictly historical novel. History is used to create a realistic background upon which a rich imaginative narrative unfolds.

The sense of a true historic reality in this fictional novel is created not only by the expert use of a detailed historical backdrop and carefully constructed psychological portraits of the characters, but also by the voice and style of the writing. The author's style is easily accessible and fluent. Metaphors are applied sparsely: "She must carry the freezing temperatures of Eastern Europe around inside of her" or "The color plates were faded and the tones were off, just like the lives of people left behind the Iron Curtain were faded, drained of color, devoid of tone." The author plays dynamically with language. In psychologically charged moments (when the

Russians search the house, when there is the risk of the bomb being detonated, when the teacher interrogates the girls) the author crafts such intense dramatic tension that in the culmination of the scene the reader practically hears an existential scream.

Additionally, every character has his or her own original, unique, manner of speaking that reflects that character's appropriate worldview, timeframe, and social stature. While Žygimantas speaks broken English peppered with flirtatious comments, Milda uses slang and a heavy dose of adolescent irony. Baba speaks only Lithuanian, and uses many archaic words and phrases. Cathy's voice is interesting because her vocabulary and tone reflect back the privileged situation of an only child surrounded by indulgent loving adults. In her childish chatter we hear the intonations of the adults around her. Maria's speech is the most dynamic. As she grows up and matures throughout the novel, we hear her speech mature and her vocabulary expand, gaining more and more depth and insight.

In the Prologue, when Cathy arrives unexpectedly in Maria's home, Maria weaves her a Lithuanian national costume. This act takes on not only the ritual of creating an ethnographic traditional gift for Cathy, but also is heavy with symbolism. The cloth is "woven" together, just like the novel is woven together. There is not one character that appears in this novel that is not somehow connected to the central narrative.

In fact, many of the fates of the characters are woven together in several dramatic narrative threads. For example, Cathy's nanny is a Puerto Rican woman who lives in the same walk-up as Maria's family. Žygimantas starts a love affair with Barbara, the woman who adopted Cathy, his own biological daughter. Milda becomes Cathy's friend. Uncle Rimas's wife meets Maria in America... The characters' lives are twisted together like a net: On their own or separate from each other they could not function or exist. A tight community built on connection is revealed. This novel bears witness to the unique way that the individual cannot exist alone and for himself/herself only. It is not possible to interpret one's life without examining the many threads of connection that tie it to others. Each detail viewed on its own is open to misinterpretation, engenders chaos, or ambiguity.

Therefore, from the first glance the novel's history is a woven textile; however, that textile has no lack of "meaningful" holes. It is not clear why Rimas disappears. The reasons why Cathy is given up for adoption remain murky. Žygimantas's alcoholism, Milda's self-destruction, and the fate of Vanda and Vilma after their painful parting with Maria, remain unresolved. Some holes created by events in the novel are slowly woven back together later,

while others remain in the shadows, behind the theater curtains.

Perhaps the writer is trying to show us how elusive it is to try to understand this world—certain life tragedies will always remain a mystery. One can only learn how to live with them for decades, perhaps even until death. The most dramatic example of this enigma is the separation of the three sisters. The leader of the resistance, Perkūnas, tells Maria she must go live in Poland, but he gives her sisters, Vanda and Vilma, away to a Soviet orphanage. Maria, as the eldest daughter, promised her mother that she would take care of her sisters. But she is forced to break her promise and leave them behind. The scene when they must part ways seems to slow down and enlarge time. Time stands still as Maria must make her choice, as she raises her doubts, as she considers several different outcomes, until finally a stranger comes and calmly calls the two little girls to her side and slowly, calmly, leads them away, as though they were going out into the forest to pick berries... Maria feels a heavy weight on her heart as she watches them disappear into the forest. She wonders if her sisters even understand that they may never see her again. Their parting is reminiscent of the metaphor of the lost paradise of childhood—once you set out on that path that leads away from home there is no way back. Maria never receives any news about her sisters. They never go home... The memory that is seared into Maria's mind—the way the woman calmly walks off into the forest holding her sisters' hands, as though going berry-picking, is a metaphor for the existential loss of loved ones. The characters in this novel never know when they will find themselves in uncharted territory. Anything can happen that will hurl them into an unknown situation without any clear outcome. Their daily lives are subject to being uprooted at any given moment. Today you are in Lithuania, but tomorrow you may find yourself on the other side of the earth...

Existential questions regarding a woman's growth as an individual, her search for identity, her search for self, are always raised at the core of the novel. Every female character bears a symbolic name and has her own unique interpretation of what it means to be a woman. The main protagonist, Maria, based on Carl Jung's archetype theory, embodies the symbolism of womanhood. Maria reflects: "Instead of the power of her beauty, now she had another power, the power of motherhood." For the greater part of her life Maria raises her children, takes care of her home—that is her source of spiritual energy, her wellspring of motivation. However, once her children are grown she is able to hear her own unique inner voice—she longs to know herself, to find her calling. She begins to work, she goes to a local college and earns a

degree in literature, later she moves out of her husband's home and goes to Florida, where she becomes a professional weaver of the Lithuanian national costume. Maria's portrait is one of the most developed, and dynamic, characterizations in the novel's narrative: She grows up from a young, but brave, girl who helped the partisans as a liaison girl, to a naive young woman, to a married woman who falls in love outside of her marriage, to a grown woman with a sense of humor who knows how to defend herself. Ultimately, she becomes an independent artist. The novel consistently documents Maria's growth and evolution as an individual, her maturing mind, her traumas, and finally her release from trauma through healing.

Another interesting character is "the Other Maria"—Uncle Rimas's beloved. She finds Maria in America and wants to talk with her about the past. It is clear that this is not her real name, but a symbolic name that renders her Maria's doppelganger. This woman experiences a romantic, intoxicating love affair with Rytas Vilkas (Uncle Rimas), which is cut short when Rimas returns behind the Iron Curtain on a reconnaissance mission for the American CIA. Despite the tragic end to their romance, this woman experienced what Maria longed to experience and lacked in her life—a fulfilling spiritual love that was required. Perhaps this is the reason why the writer created this mysterious doppelganger, who unexpectedly tracks Maria down in America and shocks her to the point that Maria loses consciousness.

Later, the great beauty, Barbara, inserts herself into Maria's family. Barbara is an aristocratic, sophisticated forty-year-old woman, who because of her husband's impotence decides to adopt a baby. Unexpectedly, at the height of her womanhood, she experiences a blind passion and physical attraction for another man (Žygimantas) and loses all sense of reality over her desire to possess him. She is a hedonistic aristocrat. Barbara and the object of her desire do not match, rather they negate the Lithuanian cultural memory of the legendary love affair between Žygimantas Augustas and Barbora Radvilaitė. The Grand Duke Žygimantas Augustas is prepared to sacrifice everything for Barbora, whom he considers his soul mate. He mourns her death his entire life. However, in Laima Vincė's novel, Žygimantas (who is usually simply called, Ziggy) is a typical Don Juan, who quickly replaces one woman with another. Barbara is ready to give up everything for Žygimantas and follow him to the ends of the earth on a moment's notice, but that does not inspire any feelings of authentic tenderness in him for her. Žygimantas's mother, Baba, represents the archetype of the healer and prophet. This ancient woman is skilled in a number of verbal incantations, magical for-

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mulas, and in the use of healing with herbs, which she stubbornly tries to apply to the family's illnesses. According to tradition, she must pass on her knowledge and her power to the first born child or the last born. She chooses Cathy.

The narrative introduces us to an important bit of folk wisdom: If someone gives a pregnant woman the evil eye, the soul of the child may split into two. Eventually, one of the two must die so that the other may live. The soul that survives leads the other soul back to the crossroads. The cross standing in the crossroads guides the lost soul home. This mystical story helps the reader understand the symbolic meaning behind the characters of the two sisters, Milda and Cathy. The two girls are sisters; however, for certain reasons the younger sister, Cathy, is given away to an American family to raise. The result is that the two sisters experience totally different lives, which form their personalities. Cathy is adored by her adoptive father, Bill, who raises her in a luxurious home. She receives the best education money can buy and becomes a doctoral student at prestigious Columbia University. Meanwhile, her sister Milda experiences poverty, neglect and abuse, her father's alcoholism and her mother's depression. She loses her God Mother, who is her only lifeline, and then loses her mother when she relocates to Florida. This chain of painful life events lead Milda into a life of escapism through drugs and sexual experimentation. Eventually she succumbs to AIDS and dies an early death. Although Cathy's archetype is that of the rescuer and the healer, she cannot prevent her sister from escaping her fate, death. Milda parts with Cathy with these words: "My ruined body, my dying body, is a symbol of occupied Lithuania. ... My body is an occupied country. ... But you Cathy, you're pure. ... You can be a part of the new Lithuania. You can go there and do something good for the people." Milda becomes Cathy's shadow, her antagonist, her double. She symbolizes a Lithuania that has been raped, defiled, humiliated, a Lithuania that has lost its soul. Such a country cannot be healthy and vibrant. The only path left is death and rebirth.

The novel masterfully opens up the complicated concept of psychological trauma. According to Professor Danutė Gailienė, in her book *What They Did To Us* (Ką jie mums padarė, 2008), the most difficult traumas happen in childhood, or they occur over a long period of time. There are two types of trauma: Individual trauma and cultural trauma. Often one masks the other. An individual who has experienced trauma struggles with looping repetitive thoughts and images, and is often haunted with nightmares. In the novel, *This Is Not My Sky*, the reader is exposed to many various traumas: the

loss of loved ones (the tragic death of both Maria and Žygimantas's families in Siberia, Milda's death, the murder of Baba's baby), violence (the Russian soldiers beat and rape Nora in front of her children, Žygimantas hits his children), sexual violence (experienced by Nora, Maria, and Milda). The research of Holocaust scholars reveals that trauma is passed down in families to children and grandchildren.

We see an analogical situation in the novel. Although they live in America, because both Maria and Žygimantas have experienced trauma caused by the Soviet occupation, they raise psychologically wounded children: Milda becomes a drug addict, Tadas is in jail. It were as though this novel collects all its characters into one meaningful plane that represents the entire spectrum of twentieth century cultural trauma experienced by Lithuanians. Most of them suffer and find their own methods of escaping the horrors of their pasts. Žygimantas is paranoid, fearing a Russian invasion of America, which leads him to drown himself in alcoholism. Maria nurtures her depression. Baba shuts herself off from the world in her own mystical realm. Ona isolates herself from the people of her village and meets with her dead lover, Bronius, in her dreams. Maria and Cathy both experience trauma dreams. As a child Cathy has a recurring dream of seeing her barefoot ancestors disappearing into snowdrifts. The present is crippled by the wounds of the past. It is difficult for these people to adapt, to experience any joy in their lives, any meaning. The most positive event in the novel takes place when Maria's daughter Cathy returns to her. Maria's newfound independence and the soothing work of weaving helps her find spiritual peace and to experience post-traumatic growth.

Because this novel encompasses themes that are highly relevant to us as individuals, to our families, to cultural discourse, and raises questions about serious problems in contemporary Lithuania—violence against children, women, sexual violence, depression, the loss of loved ones, identity confusion experienced by Lithuanian émigrés and immigrants, the search for a meaningful life, familial relationships—it is relevant to both men and women, to the entirety of today's society. The novel becomes an odd type of history textbook while also a primer on psychology, while at the same time it functions as an expressive work of literature.

Who am I? What does it mean to be a Lithuanian? What has my nation experienced? Why are our life tragedies cloaked in silence? What does it mean to lose one's home, one's family, one's beloved? The characters in *This Is Not My Sky* seek to find the answers to these questions and to many more.

Užgavėnės

By Regina Juodeikienė

Translated by Aušra Lelis Clifford



On March 2nd, the Lithuanian American Community of Rochester, NY “threw winter out of the yard”. It was an extraordinarily beautiful day. Užgavėnės was held at Kings Bend Park in Pittsford, NY. Gypsies and beggars gathered for the festivities as well as masked school children from the Edward Gervickas Lithuanian Heritage School. And what would Užgavėnės be without the traditional fight between Lašininis (bacon man) and Kanapinis (hemp man)? Gervickas School children Marius Philipone played Kanapinis while Mantas Jankauskis played Lašininis. Fighting with pillows, Kanapinis beat Lašininis to the ground. It was a good laugh for all.

With the sound of a beating drum, everyone went outside chanting “žiema, žiema, bėk iš kiemo!” (winter, winter, get out of the yard!). Once outside, everyone saw the huge “More” (effigy of winter) already placed on the roaring fire. People danced around the burning More until she was gone. Back inside, the 80 people in attendance joined in singing a traditional favorite song “Ant Kalno Mūrai”. It was spectacular!



our community

Užgavėnės is a happy festival with everyone anticipating the start of spring. But this is also a time of Lent and fasting. Because of this, the day before Ash Wednesday people eat richer, fatty foods. At Užgavėnės, the aroma of sauerkraut with bacon and sausages, ham, mushroom soup, pierogis with meat was in the air. It would be remiss of me if I didn't mention that there was a traditional Žemaitija region šiupinys with pigs' feet (hodgepodge soup). And what type of Užgavėnės would we have without blynai (pancakes)? There were more than 5 varieties of blynai for people to sample.

Užgavėnės was a fun day; winter was thrown out and spring is just outside the gate. We are very happy that the Rochester Lithuanian American Community wants to celebrate these holidays and pass the traditions on to our children. We love Lithuania with all our hearts and nobody can take that away from us.

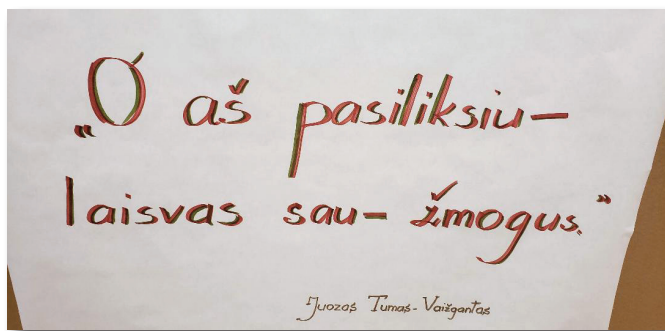




our community

Saulė Lithuanian Saturday School in Atlanta Celebrated Lithuanian Independence Day

Photos by L.Moore, A. Nakutyte



Rimas Vaičaitis' Poetry Celebrated in Long Island, New York

By Renata Petrauskienė



Prof. Rimas Vaičaitis

On February 2nd, Alexandra Kazickas Lithuanian School teachers invited the Lithuanian community from Long Island, NY and all poetry admirers to an evening introducing Rimas Vaičaitis' second poetry collection *Toliai* (Horizons).

Rimas Vaičaitis, Lithuanian diaspora scholar, Columbia University emeritus professor, world-known aeronautics and astronautics engineering specialist, member of the Academy of Science of Lithuania, honorary doctor (Honoris Causa) of Kaunas University of Technology. In 1984 he received a Distinguished Alumnus Award in Aeronautical Engineering from University of Illinois. In 1990 Columbia University gave him a Great Teacher Award. In 2007, the Lithuanian Ministry of Education awarded Prof. Vaicaitis with the first annual award for excellence in academics. Having worked with numbers, formulas, equations, and

theories, Prof Vaičaitis suddenly started feeling the creative bug and discovered poetry. After ending his career as a Columbia University professor, he found a certain emptiness inside, had more free time and his mind kept drifting to his childhood, his youth and his homeland. Nostalgic thoughts settled on a sheet of paper in verse. Dr. Vaičaitis mailed his first poems to his friends, the Lithuanian language teachers, in Šakiai, Lithuania. They already had experience in publishing poetry, and they encouraged Vaičaitis to continue writing.

In 2016, the first collection of poems called *Kryžkelės* (Crossroads) was published. The motives of longing, homeland landscapes continue appearing in the second collection *Toliai* as well. It reached the readers in 2018. The title itself is very meaningful. It indicates something that is so far in the place he was born, but at the same time so close in his heart, in his memories.

The poems invite you to take a walk through the fields from the author's childhood where a "grasshopper is napping holding on to the grass," stroll by his childhood house "protected by green poplars."

Every page is drenched with longing to return to the place of his childhood, his home, the coziest and sweetest place on earth. His poems celebrate people's closeness, friendships and different bends of human spirit. The author invites readers to dream, to imagine and never forget what's real.

The Alexandra Kazickas Lithuanian School teachers portrayed the longing, the beauty of the landscape, people's closeness and the spirit of love by reading Vaičaitis' poems. The reading was complemented by the scenes of Lithuanian landscapes in the background and soft sounds of music. We are happy to have a former Šiauliai Theater actor Kęstutis Jankūnas in our community who shared his talent in reading professor's few humorous poems that added some colorful highlights to the evening.

Professor Rimas Vaičaitis also shared his life story with the audience. It started in Šakiai, Lithuania. In 1960 he arrived in the United States and a few years later he enrolled into the University of Illinois. His academic and teaching career as an aerospace engineering specialist that started in Illinois where he received a Ph.D., continued at Columbia University, New York in 1970. He is now an honorary professor emeritus of Columbia University.

Since 1977 he served as a Guggenheim Aircraft Institute director, in 2000-2006 he was the chairman of the Depart-

our community

ment of Civil Engineering and Engineering Mechanics. He was a consultant at NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) laboratory, where he worked on surface insulation panels for space shuttles, noise reduction in aircraft and hypersonic space planes.

Prof. Vaičaitis has been working together with Lithuanian scientists since 1976. After Lithuania gained its independence, he has presented lectures and led seminars at Vilnius University, the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, VGTU, KTU, and Aleksandras Stulginskis University.

In 1990 he started a scholarship fund for Lithuanian students (PLB Foundation). With his own funds, he provided scholarships to mechanical engineering students at KTU and created the opportunity for fellowships at Columbia University for several young Lithuanian scholars. Thanks to Dr. Vaičaitis, scholarships for young Lithuanian musicians, artists, and other talented people were created with a goal to encourage them to stay in Lithuania.

At the end of the evening we wished Prof. Vaičaitis many creative years to come. Prof. Vaičaitis revealed that he already had a small bundle of new poems, and we can't wait to hear them.



All photos by Jolanta Vilčinskienė.



Alexandra Kazickas Lithuanian School teachers thank Prof. Vaičaitis.

Lithuanian Independence Day Celebrated in Rochester, NY

Written by: Virginija Mockevičienė
Translated by: Algimantas Musteikis



Edward Gervickas, Lithuanian Heritage School.

Lithuanians, by nature, are hardworking, conservative people, but they know how to appreciate their holidays. During celebrations, they invite friends, enjoy camaraderie, sing, dance, and have a great time.

This year's commemoration of 101 years of the Proclamation of Lithuanian Independence (February 16, 1918) started at 10 am, at the Edward Gervickas Lithuanian Heritage School. Students, dressed in traditional costumes, performed folk dances, recited poems, and sang songs. They were assisted by their teachers, also in folk costumes, and school director Aušra Lelytė Clifford. When the students sang the song, "Ant Kalno Mūrai- Fortress on the Hill", the whole audience joined in.

During the celebration, gifts were received from the Second Secretary at Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania to the US, Tadas Kubilius, and from the Director of the New York Maironis Lithuanian School, Rasa Savičiūtė Sprindys. As always, the best gifts for children are books and candy.

Also impressive was the performance by the Los Angeles based men's vocal ensemble Tolimi Aidai (Director Kęstutis Daugirdas). Some of the students had never heard such an enthusiastic rendition of Lithuanian songs. After the concert, all were invited to enjoy refreshments and mingle with the guests.

At 6 pm the Lithuanian Independence Day banquet began. It was held at the Rochester Airport Marriott,



School principal Aušra Lelytė Clifford dancing with students Gabija Jankauskaitė, Joshua Yeataine, Asha Sharma, Kylie Vosylius, Kamryn Vosylius.

where members of the Rochester Lithuanian American Community and special guests gathered in formal attire. The event began with greetings from the Rochester Lithuanian American Community Chairwoman, Skirmantė Juodeikytė Philippone. After the singing of the Lithuanian and American National Anthems, greetings came from NY Honorary Consul, Rimas Chesonis, the Second Secretary at the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania to the US, Tadas Kubilius, and Lithuanian American Community New York State District Chair, Rasa Savičiūtė Sprindys.

Also present at the event were Rasa Mitrulevičienė (LAC National Executive Committee VP Financial Affairs) and Tomas Mitrulevicius (LAC National Executive Committee VP Sports/SALFASS Representative).

Musical entertainment was provided by the LA-based male vocal ensemble Tolimi Aidai. Thankfully they were not delayed in arriving due to snow storms the previous days. The acapella group entertained everyone with a mixture of Lithuanian folk and pop songs. A huge "Ačiū/ Thank you!" to them.

We are grateful to the Lithuanian American Community of Rochester for a truly impressive commemoration and for the chance to be an active community; learning, working, communicating with each other, and always remembering and loving Lithuania.

our community



Tolimi Aidai.



LAC Rochester Chairperson Skirmantė Juodeikytė Philippone (center), Vice-President & Secretary Janice Wisman Raspudic (left) and Treasurer Aušra Lelytė Clifford (right).



Tolimi Aidai, LAC Rochester Board members (Regina Juodeikienė, Aušra Lelytė Clifford, Janice Wisman Raspudic, Skirmantė Juodeikytė Philippone), Honorary Consul Rimas Chesonis, Second Secretary to Embassy of Lithuanian Tadas Kubilius, LAC NY District Chair Rasa Sprindys, LAC VP Finance Rasa Mitrulevičienė, LAC VP Sports Tomas Mitrulevičius.

2019 Lithuanian Independence Commemoration in Colorado



101 years ago, on February 16, 1918, Lithuania proclaimed its independence from Russia and entered the modern list of nations. 29 years ago, on March 11, 1990, Lithuania was the first of the Soviet Republics to declare its departure from the USSR.

On February 23rd, more than 150 Colorado Lithuanians commemorated and celebrated the anniversary and reestablishment of Lithuania's Independence. Joining in the celebration were Vytautas Juozapaitis, a member of Lithuania's Parliament, his wife Eglė, and Mantvydas Bekešius, the Lithuanian Consul General in Chicago. Vytautas and Eglė Juozapaitis, also, being well known opera singers, presented the fabulous gift of an amazing concert program to the Colorado community.

The commemoration program also included performances by the Colorado Lithuanian school, the Colorado "Vyturėliai", and the Lithuanian folk-dance group "Rūta".

On the business side, elections were held for the Lithuanian community board of directors. Everyone was also able to enjoy delicious Lithuanian food and drink, as well as to enjoy the craft table.

Consul General Mantvydas Bekešius was impressed by the two schools in Colorado and at the attendance, as the Colorado Lithuanians are spread far and wide including in the mountains. The enthusiasm and friendliness prompted the consul general to announce a return to Colorado of the consular mission this Fall.

This year's Independence commemoration confirmed that the heart of the Colorado Lithuanians beats in unison. It is excited for future growth. Even though the community is small and far from Lithuania, we can achieve wonderful things.

The parents of the Colorado Lithuanian school organized the 2019 commemoration. The goal was not only to

our community

celebrate Lithuania's birthday, but to also to raise funds for the new Colorado Lithuanian school which is still in its first year. The Kazickas Family Foundation's matching Grant program promised to match what was raised up to \$1000.

The collections included:

- Admission of \$1745
- Craft fair sales of \$82
- Food sales of \$923
- Donations of \$591

The Colorado Lithuanian school would like to Thank the USA Lithuanian Foundation, the Kazickas Family Foundation, Colorado Lithuanian Community and everyone, who helped make the commemoration successful. They also give a big Ačiū (Thank You) to everyone, who donated their time, money and talent.

Colorado Lithuanian School

www.koloradoltmokykla.com

www.facebook.com/KoloradoLituanistineMokykla/



Security

...The U.S. dock landing ship USS Fort McHenry along with members of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit began its northbound voyage to the Black Sea through the Dardanelles Strait. This is the first deployment of U.S. forces since the Nov. 25 attack against three Ukrainian vessels and the capture/imprisonment of 24 Ukrainian crewmembers. The USS Fort McHenry was followed two weeks later by the guided missile destroyer, USS Donald Cook, also through the Dardanelles. Both ships are elements of the U.S. Sixth Fleet based in Naples, Italy.

...The Lithuania Defense Ministry will purchase 200 joint light tactical vehicles from the U.S. for about \$161 million which includes maintenance. Currently, the Lithuanian Armed Forces operate 200 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles and Toyota Land Cruiser vehicles. The purchase will double its capability for mobility and protection of personnel.

...Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė met with Polish President Andrzej Duda in Warsaw to formalize defense along the "Suwalki Gap", a 100 km stretch between Lithuania and Poland that borders Russia's Kaliningrad on the west and Belarus on the east and agreed to exchange radar data. They also discussed the European standard gauge railway, Rail Baltica, and two road projects – Via Baltica which runs through the Suwalki Gap and Via Carpathia which runs north-south from Klaipeda to Thessaloniki, Greece.

...President Grybauskaitė met with German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen at the Radville Training Center in Rukia, northeast of Kaunas, to work on air defenses so that NATO's reinforcements can arrive rapidly by air, sea, and land. The German lead battle group has been in Rukia for two years and comprises troops from Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the Czech Republic, Belgium, and one expert from Iceland. The battle group is assisted by a German tank combat support unit.

...President Grybauskaitė attended the Bucharest 9 Summit which focused on regional security, defense, and deterrence. The Summit included the Secretary General of NATO and the presidents of Estonia, Latvia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Among other topics, she emphasized the need for cybersecurity and cited the newly opened U.S. backed cyber defense center in Kaunas. The Summit is preliminary to a general NATO summit planned for London in December which will celebrate its 70th anniversary.

...U.S. Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, a West Point graduate who served in Germany, visited the NATO troops in Orzysz, Poland which is just southwest of the Suwalki Gap and 45 miles from Kaliningrad. The live-fire demonstration included troops from the U.S., Poland, Britain, Croatia, and Romania.

...U.S. Vice President Michael Pence announced in Warsaw that Poland would buy \$414 million of U.S. mobile rocket launchers.

...A Russian born Lithuanian citizen, Roman Sensei, is facing 8 years in prison for spying for Russia in gathering data from 2015 to December 2017 on Lithuania's Navy, NATO ships and associated cargo, Klaipeda's oil and LNG terminals, and related security. He was caught via a counterintelligence operation carried out by Lithuania's military intelligence.

...Lithuania's State Security Department (VSD) and the Defense Ministry's Second Investigation Department released their annual National Threat Assessment 2019 report with core threats coming from Russia. The report cites Russia's use of surveillance drones over Lithuanian territory and their blocking Russian investment in a Lithuanian company gathering cartographic data. For the first time, the annual Assessment mentions China, as a country with interests contrary to Lithuania's security. As with the U.S., there is concern about dealing with the Chinese telecom giant Huawei which reportedly has links to Chinese intelligence. Klaipeda authorities are planning on building an outer seaport with Chinese investment. Such investment is dependent on Lithuania not supporting the independence of Tibet and Taiwan.

Business

...The central bank of Lithuania, the Bank of Lithuania, will investigate Swedbank of Lithuania, the largest bank in Lithuania as ranked by assets, for any signs of money laundering. The Swedbank group is suspected of laundering \$4.3 billion by 50 clients with Danske Bank in Latvia and Estonia between 2007 and 2015. Danske Bank, Denmark's largest bank, was asked to leave Estonia after laundering \$230 billion at its Tallinn branch and decided to leave Latvia, Lithuania, and Russia.

...The British exit from the European Union, Brexit, can impact Lithuanians living in Britain in that they will not have the same rights as British citizens, may have reduced benefits and may need to move to seek new employment. Businesses involved with import/export will find new trade barriers and tariffs. The traditional com-

current events

mon military and intelligence cooperation with western and eastern Europe will be in doubt. The NATO Summit is scheduled for December in London may clarify the situation. The last annual Summit was held in July 2018 at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels – the five-month delay is noted.

...The Finish company, Supermetrics, has established an office in Vilnius to expand its digital marketing capability to new clients. Founded in Helsinki in 2013, it employs 40 people and serves Warner Brothers, Dyson, BBC, Nestle, and Google. It has personnel who utilize PHP, (Hypertext Preprocessor) - a general-purpose scripting language used on server side web development.

...Blockchain, a large cryptocurrency platform, will open an office in Vilnius to supplement their offices in London, New York, and San Francisco to support their 33 million Wallet accounts in over 160 counties.

...In 2018 more tourists visited Lithuania than live there. Up 11.3% over 2017, a record-breaking 3.6 million visitors spent at least one night versus a population of 2.8 million. Most visitors came from Germany with large numbers from Russia, Poland, Belarus, and Latvia. Spending was largest with guests from Germany, Japan, China, and Israel. Percentage of increases of visitors were recorded for Israel (+27.3%), Japan (+22.3%) and China (+20.6%).

General

...Twenty-six people including 8 Lithuanian judges and 5 lawyers have been detained in a widespread corruption sweep involving bribery, influence trading and abuse of power. One detainee was with the Civil Cases Division of the Supreme Court, the anti-corruption office. The Special Investigation Service (STT) searched the offices, homes, and cars of suspects including the mayor of the southern resort town of Druskininkai. In a Special 2017 Eurobarometer survey, 93% of Lithuanians thought that corruption was widespread, the fifth highest total after Greece, Spain, Cyprus, and Croatia. In contrast, only 21% of Fins believe corruption is widespread.

...Speaking of judges, former Lithuanian Judge Nerina Venckienė still awaits action in Chicago on her possible extradition back to Lithuania. The federal budget impasse has suspended her proceedings.

...A treasure trove of 749 silver coins from the 16th century was discovered last summer during the reconstruction of a cobblestone road in Kaunas and was exhibited for a short time at the Mikalojus Čiurlionis National Museum. The coins are thought to have been secreted in 1567 when Kaunas was hit by a plague and fire. Small coins are denominated in denarii while larger coins are listed as half groats, groats, double groats, and three grout coins.



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April 2019

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

ONGOING

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

Exhibit "For Freedom: Lithuanian American Support for Lithuania's Independence and Recognition"

Balzekas Museum of
Lithuanian Culture
www.balzekasmuseum.org

APRIL

April 13, 2019

Velykos

Catholic Church of St. Ann
4905 Roswell Rd., Marietta,
GA 30062

More info:
www.lietuviaiatlantoje.org

April 24 - May 4, 2019
Lithuanian Documentary Film Festival

All films are with English
subtitles
More info: 312-375-2728

April 24 at 7 p.m.

A. Stonys.
"Moteris ir ledynas"
Chopin Theatre, 1543 W.
Division St., Chicago, IL

April 25 at 7:30 p.m.

E. Belickas.
"Tumo kodeksas"
Ateitis Foundation, 1380
Castlewood Dr., Lemont, IL

April 26 at 7:30 p.m.

A. Lekavičius.
"Spec. Žvėrynas"
Ateitis Foundation, 1380
Castlewood Dr., Lemont, IL

April 27 at 7 p.m.

R. Rakauskaitė.
"Kelionės namo"
Balzekas Museum of
Lithuanian Culture, 6500 S.
Pulaski Rd., Chicago, IL

April 28 at 1 p.m.

M. Survila. "Sengirė"
AMC Woodridge
18,10000 Woodward Ave.,
Woodridge, IL

April 28 at 5 p.m.

R. Kudzmanaitė. "Aš
priglaudžiau prie
žemės širdį"
Chicago Lithuanian Youth
Center, 5620 S. Claremont
Ave., Chicago, IL

May 3 at 7 p.m.

M. Jablonskytė.
"Lituanie, mano laisvė"
A. Marcinkevičiūtė. "Iš kur
tas švytėjimas"
Čiurlionis Art Gallery,
5620 S. Claremont Ave.,
Chicago, IL

May 4 at 7 p.m.

R. Rakauskaitė.
"Kelionės namo"
Ateitis Foundation, 1380
Castlewood Dr., Lemont, IL

MAY

May 12, 2019

at 1 pm

Mother's Day Celebration Children's Computer Graphics Art Exhibition

Presented by: Valdas
Kančiauskas
Detroit Lithuanian Cultural
Center
Divine Providence Parish
25335 West Nine Mile Rd.
Southfield, MI 48033
More information:
vilkai@aol.com

AUGUST

August 4-11, 2019

Lithuanian Education Week

Dainava Camp, Michigan
More info:
www.svietimotaryba.org

Registration for camps at
Neringa is continuing.

Registration forms and any other information may be found at http://neringa.org/en_forms.html

Would you like to work at
Neringa this upcoming
summer?

Counselor application forms
are online at http://neringa.org/en_counselors_forms.html

Counselor applications for
Heritage Children's Camp
will be accepted until April
22, 2019. Applications for
the Lithuanian Speaking
Children's Camp are due by
March 25, 2019.

The Lithuanian
Foundation Inc. is
accepting 2019 grant
applications

The application deadline is April 1, 2019.

The Lithuanian Foundation
provides grants that propa-
gate Lithuanian culture, urg-
ing a better understanding of
our language and promoting
the Lithuanian identity.
<http://www.lithuanianfoundation.org/grants-application-guidelines/>

GOT EVENTS?

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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VOLUME 43 ISSUE 3

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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