

# bridges



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## from the editor

Dear readers,

The month of June is here. It used to be that Joninės or Midsummer was the key celebration of this month in Lithuania. However, it turns out that today almost every day of every month, not only June, can be a celebration, a commemoration or an awareness day. As we used to say in Lithuania, if there is nothing to celebrate on a particular day, we will celebrate Carlson's birthday. Carlson, of course, is a fictional character created by children's writer Astrid Lindgren. It seems that today there would hardly be a day to squeeze in Carlson's birthday. The following is the list of the days in June that you can choose to celebrate or commemorate.

June 1st	International Children's Day and the Beginning of Summer
June 2nd	Father's Day in Lithuania
June 3rd	Sąjūdis Day
June 4th	International Bicycle Day and International Day of Children Victims of Aggression
June 5th	International Environment Protection Day
June 6th	The Russian Language Day
June 7th	International Food Safety Day
June 8th	International Ocean Day and International Day of Knitting in Public
June 9th	Pentecost
June 12th	International Day of Fight Against Child Labor
June 13th	St. Anthony, Hay Cutting, and International Albinism Awareness Day
June 14th	International Blood Donor Day, the Day of Mourning and Hope in Lithuania, International Bloggers Day
June 15th	Alytus City Day, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and the Day of Lithuania's Occupation and Genocide
June 17th	World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought and Iceland's Independence Day
June 20th	World Refugee Day
June 21st	International Yoga Day
June 22nd	Summer Solstice
June 23rd	Public Service Day, International Widows Day, June Uprising in Lithuania Day, International Olympic Day
June 24th	Midsummer
June 25th	International Seamen's Day
June 26th	International Day in Support of Victims of Torture and International Day Against Drug Abuse
June 27th	The Day of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, International Fishermen's Day, and the Day of Micro, Small, and Medium Businesses
June 29th	St. Peter and Paul, Lithuanian Border Guard Day, International Day of the Tropics
June 30th	International Asteroid Day and International Parliamentarism Day

I hope you will have a beautiful June,

Karilė Vaitkutė  
Editor

# The Success of the Lithuanian Documentary Film Festival in Chicago



The opening of the Lithuanian Documentary Film Festival at Chopin Theatre in Chicago. From left: Arvydas Reneckis, Eimantas Belickas, Agnė Marcinkevičiūtė, Consul General Mantvydas Bekešius, Teresa Rožanovska, Ramunė Rakauskaitė, Audrius Stonys, Aistė Stonienė, Audra Januškienė, Andrius Lekavičius, and Mindaugas Survila. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

On April 24, 2019, the Lithuanian Documentary Film Festival opened in Chicago's Chopin Theatre. Throughout the years, there were other Lithuanian film festivals organized in Chicago but at this festival, purely documentary films were shown. In ten days, the audiences were able to enjoy the following films: "The Woman and the Glacier" directed by Audrius Stonys, "The Ancient Woods" by Mindaugas Survila, "The Chodakowski Sisters" by Ramunė Kudzmanaitė, "Lituanie, my Freedom" by Martina Jablonskytė, "The Code of Tumas" by Eimantas Belickas, "The Glow" by Agnė Marcinkevičiūtė, "Delta Zoo" by Andrius Lekavičius, and "Back to the Dreamland" by Ramunė Rakauskaitė. Seven directors and one producer participated. I sat down to talk to the festival organizer Audra Januškienė.

**Karilė Vaitkutė:** How did the idea to have such a festival in Chicago was born?

**Audra Januškienė:** Throughout the years, I have shown films created by my good friend, film director Ramunė Rakauskaitė. Whenever she would have a new film released and would come to the United States, I would organize a screening of that film. However, this year, quite a number of my friends who happen to be filmmakers, made good films in Lithuania, and I thought to myself that I really wanted more people to see them. That is how the idea was born. I just wanted to share the films with my friends and a wider audience.

**K.V.:** One thing is to show films made by friends in your own home to a group of friends. However, another thing is to organize a festival and to show films to a wider audi-

ence in a few different places. It is much harder to accomplish.

**A.J.:** Yes, it was not very easy. However, it felt like I just started the process, gave it an ignition, and then something similar to an explosion happened, and it all started moving forward almost on its own. The process of selecting and showing the films was so fast that I myself did not even have enough time to fully comprehend it. It was only in the very beginning, that I had time to contemplate on the selection of the venues for the films but then the process was so fast and overwhelming that I did not even have time to gasp for air.

**K.V.:** The films were shown in five different venues. How did you choose them?

**A.J.:** If I was a member of the audience I would, perhaps, like the fact that films were shown not in one but a few different venues. However, for me as an organizer, it was hard work. I chose different venues because I wanted to reach a wider audience. I have experience in organizing events for the Lithuanian community. I know that some don't like to travel far, others really like the community centers they are used to. I wanted to accommodate as many people as I could. However, I have to say that I haven't found an ideal venue and, perhaps, it does not even exist. I have a few ideas as far as the venue for the next year's festival, and it would not be one of the centers of the Lithuanian community. Having said that I also have to say that after this year's festival, the World Lithuanian Center promised to think about establishing a room suitable for movie watching. In any case, the opening of the next festival would still definitely be in the city of Chicago. I am a member of the Chicago-Vilnius Sister Cities Committee and we will have to think about the venue together.

**K.V.:** How did you select the films for this festival?

**A.J.:** It all started with a few films made by my friends. However, I needed help in selecting more films, and film director Ramunė Rakauskaitė came to help. She lives in Lithuania and she usually sees all the new releases. Here,



Visiting the Consulate General of Lithuania in Chicago. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.



Mindaugas Survila talks about his film to the audience. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

even if I wanted to, I would not be able to see all the new films. Ramunė's help in selecting the films was great. Of course, we wanted to represent different trends. That is why all the films are very different. We have a poetic documentary, we have a documentary that includes animation, we have several historical documentaries since last year was the year of Lithuania's 100th anniversary. Next year we might have fewer films on historical themes.

**K.V.:** Now that the festival is over, what are your thoughts?

**A.J.:** I have to say that I am really happy. I think that the festival was a success. I now see that I might have had a bigger team working on the festival. However, even though the venues were not very big, they were almost full, and I am very happy to see that people are interested. It gives me a push to continue doing this because I can see that I am not the only one who needs it.



Martina Jablonskytė talks about her film to the audience at the Čiurlionis Art Gallery. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

like to expand the festival into other states. However, my even greater wish is to show Lithuanian documentaries to American audiences, not only the Lithuanian ones. I will have to explore the possibilities of showing Lithuanian films in universities or schools.

In almost ten days, eight Lithuanian documentary films were shown. Seven directors and one producer participated. It would not have been possible without friends, donors, and supporters. The biggest financial support came from a private donor, Daiva and Rolandas Rauduvė. The

**K.V.:** There are Lithuanians in other communities throughout the United States who would love to see Lithuanian films. Are you thinking in the direction of expanding the geography of film showing?

**A.J.:** Even this year there was interest from the Lithuanian communities in Los Angeles, Cleveland, and New York. I just did not have the time to arrange the viewings in those communities. However, next year we would

festival was also supported in part by the Lithuanian Foundation, the Rotary Club, attorney Rimantas Domaniskis, Birutė and Petras Zalatorius, and Dr. Petras Kisielius. Other, non-financial, support came from Arvydas Reneckis, Karilė Vaitkutė, Gintaras Milius, Viktoras Paulauskas, Juozas Vilkas, Viktorija, and Andrius Černišenko. The Draugas newspaper supported us by spreading the information. My biggest and most sincere thank you goes out to all.



The heroes of Ramunė Rakauskaitė's documentary "Back to the Dreamland" after film screening at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture. From left: Dr. Petras Kisielius, Kornelijus Jazbutis, director Ramunė Rakauskaitė, Birutė Zalatorius, Albertas Zalatorius, Hernieta Vepštas, Daina Čyvas, and Teresa Boguta. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

## Back to the Dreamland



Film director Ramunė Rakauskaitė. Photo from personal archives.

The most successful among the eight documentaries shown in this year's Lithuanian Documentary Film Festival in Chicago was "Back to the Dreamland" directed by Ramunė Rakauskaitė. There were three screenings arranged and the audiences seemed to not get enough of it. The overwhelming success was partly due to the subject of the film. It showed Lithuanian Americans who were traveling to visit Lithuania during the Soviet times. Film director Ramunė Rakauskaitė agreed to answer a few questions.

**Karilė Vaitkutė:** How do you feel now that the film was finally shown not only to the general audience but to the heroes featured in your film?

**Ramunė Rakauskaitė:** Before the screening, I felt quite a bit nervous. I felt that the most important screening of this film is the one during which the heroes themselves will be watching it. This is a great responsibility. People who lived through this history might have some reproaches for me because they might think that I did not show something or did not interpret something the way they thought it should be. That is why I felt a little nervous which I have not felt in Lithuania at all. I am pleased to say that the audience here, in the United States, were happy with the film.

**KV:** Why did you decide to undertake this subject matter? I understand that you lived here, in the United States, for a while and you have met many local Lithuanians here, and even made many friends. However, not everyone might see the life of post-World War Two refugees and their attempts to visit Soviet Lithuania as an interesting subject matter. Why was it interesting to you?

**RR:** To tell the truth, the generation of the displaced persons really interested me. They fascinated me. They are people who came here and built Lithuania for themselves here. They are great idealists. That could not be said about the third wave of immigrants. Of course, I don't know much about the first wave of immigrants and, of course, it is not possible to meet them personally now. So the second wave, the generation of displaced persons was very much of interest to me. However, for some time I could not find a way to show them, I could not find a key to unlock their lives. I did not want to just simply tell a story of how they lived here, how they built churches, founded organizations, published newspapers, etc. It would not have been interesting. I also did not want to tell the story of just a few persons, to single out just a few. And then I came across on this subject - trips back to Soviet Lithuania and witnessing the occupied homeland for the first time. I then understood that this could be very interesting, and through this subject, I could tell about the generation of displaced persons in general, tell about their idealism and their patriotism. I also feel now that I somehow can give back to them for all the years I spent in the United States, and can put a stop to all my reflections and experiences on this subject. I felt as if this film would finish off this period of my life.



A scene from "Back to the Dreamland".



A scene from "Back to the Dreamland".



A scene from "Back to the Dreamland".

**KV:** The film premiered in Lithuania and was shown there in several locations. How did the audience meet your film in Lithuania? Especially those viewers who know neither of the Soviet life nor of the lives of displaced persons?

**RR:** Yes, the film has been traveling. After we come back to Lithuania from the United States, it will be shown in different locations again. Most of the audiences, however, were people who have experienced the Soviet life. Having said that I should say that there were some viewers who did not know anything about neither of those two worlds,

neither the Soviet one, not the displaced persons one. It is most interesting that they did really like the film. They really really liked it. And they told me that they understood everything. I don't know if they did but this is what they told me. Even film critics liked this film. This was news to me. And the viewers identified with the heroes of the film. Some told me that even though they did not have any relatives abroad they felt like they were watching their own uncles or aunts or other members of their own families. They felt as if the story was about their families. It is also very interesting that people in Lithuania and in Chicago spoke alike. In both countries, they felt like the story was about their own families even though

they did not have relatives in Soviet Lithuania or in the United States.

Another important thing is that we do not have much information about people who traveled to Soviet Lithuania. There has been a lot shown and written about the deportees to Siberia. We know quite a great deal about them now. However, we basically do not know anything about the trips from the West to the Soviet-occupied homeland. The post-World War Two refugees might have been luckier because they ended up in a richer country. However, their lives were broken as much as the lives of the deportees to Siberia. Their lives were equally so broken, their families were equally so torn apart, their pain was the same. The experiences were the same. So it was a shame that nobody was talking about that. And that is how I came to realize that we need to talk about it. Especially since some of these people are still alive and can tell their story.

**KV:** When you started making it, did you think that this would be a good movie because it would connect people, not set them apart. I think it is very important, especially now when a lot of harsh opposition between various groups of people has surfaced. Did you set off to make a film that would connect us, Lithuanians of different generations, different life experiences, living in different countries?

**RR:** No, it was difficult to foresee that. I just knew my heroes, people whom I love and who fascinate me. I knew their stories and I had a task to tell the audience that these are the people who did not suffer any less.





A scene from "Back to the Dreamland".

**KV:** How did you choose the protagonists of your film?

**RR:** I personally knew many people and I asked many of them to participate in the film. There were others who themselves wanted to participate. However, I also wanted to show people from different walks of life. I wanted them to represent different organizations - scouts, ateitininkai, santariečiai, etc. It was not the goal of the film and it is not mentioned anywhere in the film. However, I really wanted to show very different people. Of course, their life stories were of great interest to me as well. I wanted to show stories that are different from others, trips to Lithuania that were somehow different from the rest.

**KV:** Could you mention a few examples? Was there anything in those stories that you did not know before and which, perhaps, amazed or inspired and surprised you?

**RR:** Some of the protagonist I knew from a long time ago. I thought I knew everything about them. I incorporated their life stories in the screenplay and then, after talking to them more, I found out new details. Also, I did not look into just a person's life story. I looked into the story of their journey back to Lithuania. Those journeys were different. There were basketball players' journeys, children's journeys, etc. However, I could not fit them all in one film. Some people's personal stories were so strong that I could not resist featuring them. Such was the story

of Kornelijus Jazbutis. He was eight years old when he came to the United States. His parents were deported to Siberia, and he came to the United States with his aunt. He lived here as an orphan and in essence, he does feel like an orphan to this day, even though he is an old man now. Strong personal stories were a big factor in selecting what to show in the film. On the other hand, I was also looking for authentic filmed material to illustrate their journeys. Some did take photos and even filmed their visits to Lithuania. It was very interesting to see what they themselves saw in Lithuania and how they interpreted what they saw. So this way several heroes were selected for the film. I could say that they came to be in the movie through their filmed footage. Of course, the footage was very interesting, and the people themselves proved to be very interesting. When I started looking for filmed material it turned out that it was quite a challenge to find any. People were not allowed to film and it was dangerous to do so. Of course, not everyone had cameras at that time either.

**KV:** The authentic historical material you use in the film came from personal archives. However, you found some material elsewhere as well?

**RR:** Since we had to illustrate the wartime and the fleeing from Lithuania, we could not expect people to have such filmed footage. So we used material from the Lithu-

anian State Central Archive and the Lithuanian Research and Studies Center in Chicago. We also bought some archival footage from Italians and Germans. In other words, we purchased archival footage from all over the world. It took us a great deal of time to take care of all the legalities because at first we only bought the rights to show the footage in Lithuania and Europe.

**KV:** Usually, the least known side of making a movie is the technical aspects. Most viewers do not know how long does it take to make a film, how many people work on a particular film, how much does it cost, etc.

**RR:** It is possible that even the heroes of the film thought that it was just the two of us: me, the director, and the cameramen who were making the movie. It's because they would see just the two of us. We would come to them, I would ask questions, the cameraman would film them, and that's that. However, of course, there was a huge production company standing behind us and there were tons of people working on the film. Usually, the viewers find out how many people worked on a film after they see the closing credits. Of course, films in Lithuania are not being made without financial support from the state. This film was one of Lithuania's 100th-anniversary films. It was also supported by the Lithuanian Film Center and the Lithuanian National Television. It took us more than three years to make this film. Of course, at first, I worked alone writing down the ideas. When I found believers in my ideas, the financial support came and the process started. The Lithuanian Film Center alone gave us ninety thousand Euros. We have to have in mind that this is a film for which we had to buy archival footage and in some parts of the world archival footage is not at all cheap.

**KV:** What awaits you and your film in the future? Will you be making more films on Lithuanian Americans?

**RR:** Well, there are so many interesting themes here. People told me that I showed only Lithuanians from Chicago but there are Lithuanians in Boston, and Los Angeles, and elsewhere. They too traveled to Lithuania in the



A scene from "Back to the Dreamland".



A scene from "Back to the Dreamland".

Soviet times. Their stories would be very interesting as well. Of course, it is true. It seems that people would like to see a series of films on this subject. However, of course, nobody will give me financial support to make a film on the same subject matter. Of course, I would be interested, and there are so many interesting themes here. However, my new film will be entitled "Having Come Back from New York". It will be about people who had lived in New York for a long time and came back to live in Lithuania.

**KV:** Is there a date set for the premiere of your new film?

**RR:** No, there isn't. We will start shooting after I come back to Lithuania. I think that perhaps by the end of next year the film will be released. As far as "Back to the Dreamland," it will be available on the Internet, and I will let you know as soon as it becomes available.

**KV:** We will be waiting to see it. Thank you for your work and for this conversation.



Sigita and Audrius. From the private collection of Audrius and Sigita Plioplys.

For over 40 years, Audrius Plioplys has been both a professional artist and a neurologist-neuroscientist.

His artwork is neo-conceptual: a metaphorical investigation of thinking and consciousness. With over 50 individual exhibits and 100 group shows, his works are displayed in museums, universities and major art collections internationally. Recently, the University of Chicago dedicated an atrium to Dr. Audrius Plioplys and his wife, Dr. Sigita Plioplys. Dr. Plioplys graciously agreed to talk about this new exhibit and his art.

**Karilė Vaitkutė:** It is a great honor for the Lithuanian American community that your artworks will be displayed in an atrium dedicated to you and your wife. Was it difficult to choose the works that will be on permanent exhibit in this most prestigious university?

**Audrius Plioplys:** I was approached to exhibit at the Stevanovich Institute on the Formation of Knowledge (SIFK), at the University of Chicago, in the fall of 2018. I had to decide what and where to display. The building itself was newly rebuilt with strong contemporary flavoring. The most challenging area was the three-story, extremely complex architectural space of the atrium. I decided to take on this challenge.

The light sculpture columns found their natural locations and positions. Each of these is 6 feet tall with LED color-changing light systems.

Placement of my envisioned Whirling works was the technical challenge. Each piece is 8 feet tall, 4 feet wide, printed on semi-transparent media, and rotates from the ceiling with an electrical motor at 3 rpm. We did not know if we would be able to get a lift through the entrance doors into the atrium—the only way to reach the ceiling. Also, we did not know if there was electricity available up



Matt Brett is at the top of a 3-story tall lift installing the 8-foot tall piece, Donelaitis. From the private collection of Audrius and Sigita Plioplys.

there. Matt Brett came to the rescue. He works as an art installer and successfully accomplished the task of using the lift at its full extension, finding electricity, and installing these pieces. My artistic vision was realized!

The exhibit opened in October 2018 and proved to be extremely popular. The front of this newly designed building is glass, and through it, my color-changing light columns are visible day and night. These became a virtual trademark of the SIFK, attracting visitor and scholar alike. It is located at 5737 S. University Ave., right across from the main quadrangle.

**KV:** Will your artworks stay permanently installed or will exhibit change?

**AP:** The SIFK's Director, Professor Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer, and Executive Director, Ms. Macol Cerda, asked me to donate the four most visible light columns. They will remain in their current locations on a permanent basis. In gratitude for my donation, they named the atrium after my wife and myself.

The current exhibit, which is quite visually complex, will be up until June 21. The four donated pieces will remain in their current location indefinitely. They will not be changed.

I do want to mention one relevant matter. In the original exhibit, the uppermost Whirling piece was dedicated to celebrating Lithuania's 100-year anniversary of independence from Czarist Russia. It incorporated images of Donelaitis' handwritten text for *The Seasons* (*Metai*), the first literary work in the Lithuanian language. Underlying his words were images of artworks that I created related to the origins of the Lithuanian language and culture. Arvydas Reneckis created a wonderful YouTube video of this installation, links to which can be found on my website: [www.Plioplys.com](http://www.Plioplys.com).

With the year changing to 2019 and the 100-year anniversary over, I felt the Whirling pieces needed to be changed. So, work resumed, and Matt returned. The current Whirling works include the Sybils, ancient-world oracles, the images of which are from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.

**KV:** You have been a professional neurologist. How did art come into your life?

**AP:** When I was growing up in Toronto, Canada, my best friend was Algis Cesekas. He was a few years older than me and was a tremendous troublemaker. For example, at the age of 13, he had obtained a motorcycle and kept it hidden from his parents in a neighbor's garage. Needless to say, it was great fun zooming around with him. One summer, to keep him out of trouble, his parents enrolled him in an art program. When I visited, I saw him start with a blank canvas. Then he gradually added lines. Then colors. Then more colors. After a while, from nothing, a landscape painting! Beauty out of nothing! I was stunned. This was the seed for art which was laid in my heart.

This seed started to grow when I started medical school. I visited art galleries, art museums, and started to paint. Gradually I devoted more and more time to this passion. By the time I was going to graduate, this passion had grown so strong that I felt that I had made a mistake—I should have gone into art, not neurology. My friends convinced me to at least finish medical internship, which

I did at the University hospitals in Madison, Wisconsin. Then, I quit!

I left medicine entirely and moved to the east coast. I studied the works of the masters on display at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. I created novel installation works with light and sound systems. I had exhibits, received positive reviews, and sales took place. This was a very good start.

However, after three years I started to feel guilty. I had all this knowledge of neurology and was not helping anyone. Jesus, in one of his parables, said that you do not put a lit candle under a bushel basket. That is exactly what I was doing.

I then realized that I was making a fundamental error. I had thought that art and medicine are two, incompatible worlds—choose one or the other. I realized that I had made an error. I am quite smart and should be able to broach these two disciplines. So, I returned to neurology at the Mayo Clinic, and have, for 40 years, struggled to combine art with neuroscientific inquiry. Over these decades I have two parallel professional careers: art and neurology.

**KV:** How would you describe your artworks? What meanings are hidden in them? What would you like the viewers to see in your art?

**AP:** Visual art is a form of communication. A few years ago, I had a large-scale installation at the Lubeznik Center for the Arts in Michigan City, Indiana. In their outreach programs to local schools, children are brought in for artistic exposure. These kids, of all backgrounds and ages, immediately comprehended that my work dealt with the mind and the brain. So, my art does directly communicate with young individuals.

Although there are specific themes that I incorporate in each of my artworks (at times these themes are very complex and inter-woven) visual art is intended to be appreciated by the viewer. It is very satisfying to hear viewers describe what they have found in my artworks—things that I had never intended. Gaining someone's attention and engaging their imagination is a hallmark of a successful work of art.

The basic themes that I am investigating in my artwork are the origins of thinking and consciousness. What is it



These four LED color-changing light sculptures, from the Columns of Writing series, will remain on permanent display at the SIFK. Photo by the professional photographer Joe Sterbenc.



Part of the exhibit. Photo by the professional photographer Joe Sterbenc.

that makes us self-aware and aware of others? What is the underlying basis of our societal interactions? Over these decades, the materials and techniques that I have used have varied and have evolved—they should continue to do so.

**KV:** What and/or who influenced your art?

**AP:** Early in my art career, the individuals who influenced me the most were the writers Franz Kafka, Samuel Beckett, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. My art has always been conceptual in nature, and the philosophic content in these authors' works provided much useful material. Nevertheless, my art is visual in nature. I was living on the east coast and frequently visited the National Gallery in Washington, DC, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. I spent a great deal of time studying the compositions and painting techniques of the Renaissance masters. Thus, it is not surprising that in my most recent pieces, *Sybils: Cycles of Memory*, the Whirling pieces at the SIFK, incorporate Michelangelo's portraits from the Sistine Chapel.

In terms of more contemporary artists who have had an influence me are Barnett Newman and Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis.

**KV:** You have had over 50 individual exhibits and 100 group shows, your works are displayed in museums, universities and major art collections around the world. Would you mention some of the most important ones for you?

**AP:** The most important displays of my art are at my friends' homes where I see these pieces beautifully and proudly displayed.

**KV:** What is next for you in your career?

**AP:** My art has always progressed slowly, but inexorably. It will continue to do so. The basic themes will remain the same, but the methods of realizing them will change, hopefully in unpredictable and exciting ways.



Left to right: Dean Darren Reisberg, Ms. Jessica Velazquez, Ms. Macol Cerda, Prof. Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer, Dr. Audrius Plioplys, Dr. Sigita Plioplys. Photo by the professional photographer Joe Sterbenc.



Part of the exhibit. Photo by the professional photographer Joe Sterbenc.

# The Love of Lithuanian Folk Dancing is Alive and Well in Chicago's Oldest and Largest Ensemble

## Chicago area's Grandis ends its 60th anniversary season with a spring concert

By Ramunė Kubilius  
Grandis dancer and occasional correspondent



The Chicago area Lithuanian folk dance ensemble, Grandis, began its season in the fall of 2018 with travel to California by its student group to dance in the Lithuanian Days weekend in Los Angeles. Grandis finished the season of folk dancing and celebrated its 60th anniversary on May 4, 2019 at an annual concert held at Carl Sandburg High School's Center for the Performing Arts (Orland Park, IL), followed by a banquet at the World Lithuanian Center (Lemont, IL).

The May 4th concert repertoire was selected by artistic directors Gintaras Grinkevičius and Dalia Bilaišis DeMuth and taught by them, along with the team of Grandis teachers. It featured a true Lithuanian tapestry, since dancers from pre-school age to adults and veterans performed a variety of dances - familiar Lithuanian folk dances and also eight dances recently created that were being performed for the first time in North America. The theme of the 55th anniversary Grandis concert (described in the July/August, 2014 issue of Bridges) included reference to a "treasure chest" ("skrynia") of dances. The 60th anniversary concert theme was "Duktė viena namie liko" ("The daughter remained home alone"). The theme described the concert's first act scenario that was originally created by choreographer Juozas Lingys and was performed in the concert by Grandis student and youth group dancers. In it, a young lady was left alone at the farmhouse by her parents, while her parents attended a wedding. The daughter became easily distracted from her tasks, when her girlfriends, then her beau and his friends, came to visit (and dance).

Grandis 60th anniversary concert poster created by Vaiva Rimeika.



Grandis Veteran Group. Photo by Andrius Kubilius.



Scenes from "Duktė viena namie liko" (The daughter remained home alone) concert. Photo by Ramunė Kubiliūtė.

The first part of the concert symbolized the courtship and included the familiar "Pas Močiutę Augau", "Sadutė", and „Rezginėlė“.

The second part of the concert incorporated ensemble dancers of all ages, from pre-schoolers to veterans, who all had their chance to shine on the stage, sometimes with several groups ("rateliai") dancing jointly. Grandis dancers premiered dances such as "Aa aa pupa" (choreographed by Vitalija Ivinskis, a Grandis teacher and dancer), a number of polkas ("Akmenukų", "Ažuolyno", "Žiežmarių"), also

"Kviestinis", "Saulė aukso ratuos", and the humorous "Trys mergelės". Interspersed were dances both familiar and newer in the Grandis repertoire – "Gyvataras", "Grandskveras", and "Gyvatukas" to name just three. During the last dance, choreographed to the Vytautas Kernagis song "Mūsų dienos kaip šventė" ("Our Days are Like a Celebration"), all dancers assembled on stage.

The 60th anniversary concert program book was edited by long-time dancer and teacher, Vida Brazaitis. In it, concertgoers not only could familiarize themselves with the program they were to see, listing the names of the dances, and also the creators of the choreography and music. Concert attendees could read a long list of the names of dedicated Grandis teachers and assistants who worked with the dancers the previous year so they could learn the concert dances. The program book contained lists of all who contributed towards making the concert and the banquet afterwards a success. Also included were many anniversary greetings as well photographs taken over the years, a comprehensive list of about 1400 dancers who have danced with the group since 1964, and a few pages headed "In Memoriam", to remember teachers Irena Šilingas and Irena Smieliauskas, the Grandis logo artist, Petras Aleksa, and the dancers who have passed away.

#### Grandis history

The origins of Grandis go back to 1953, when the Lithuanian Scout Association organized a Chicago area dance ensemble and invited Irena Šilingas as the first teacher. The group performed throughout Chicago, and participated in the first Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, held at the International Amphitheater, in 1957. After several busy years of performing, the group disbanded in 1958 due to the failing health of Irena Šilingas. In 1964, a new group was formed under the direction of Irena Smieliauskas, who sought and received permission to again use the name, Grandis (which means "chain" or "link"). The group consisted not only of Chicago area Lithuanian



American scouts, and the Lithuanian school students of Irena Smieliauskas, but soon dancers began inviting their friends to join the group. From 12 dancers, the new Grandis grew over the years to about 200 dancers today (the number grows the years of a North American Lithuanian Folk Dance Festivals), and the group's repertoire includes over 250 dances.

Originally, Grandis members were primarily high school and university students, later growing to include a children's group, and groups for adult and veteran dancers. Irena Smieliauskas was the ensemble's director and administrator until 1995, then Violeta Smieliauskas Fabianovich took over the role from 1995 until 2014 (she remains the honorary ("garbės") director). Since 2014, the directors are Dalia Bilaišis DeMuth and Gintaras Grinkevičius. Many of the teachers grew up dancing in Grandis, and others danced in other groups prior to moving to Chicago. A number of Grandis dancers are second and third generation dancers - their siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents may have danced in Grandis. In the program book, Gintaras Grinkevičius recalled first meeting Grandis members as a Klaipėda University choreography graduate, when he met Grandis ensemble members during their first performance at the Lithuanian Song Festival Dance Day (held in 1994 in Vilnius). 25 years have elapsed and his association continues with the group that he now refers to as a special family. Dalia Bilaišis DeMuth remembered her early years in Grandis as a high school aged dancer (today she is one of the ensemble's directors, while her daughter is a teacher in the youngest children's group). The program book devoted a page to listing dancers who were celebrating anniversaries with Grandis, ranging from a long list of 5-year celebrants, to Alvida Baukus Rukuižis, who celebrated her 30th anniversary of dancing in Grandis. During the final practice on Friday, Grandis honored these dancers with small symbolic gifts.

Over the years, Grandis has performed throughout the Chicago area and the Midwest - at Lithuanian American events, and various ethnic festivals, including the International Folk Festival in Milwaukee, WI. The group has danced at all but the second Dance Festival and also has danced at several North American Song Festivals (unlike the Lithuanian Song Festival week in Lithuania, which also incorporates a Dance Day, the North American Song and Dance Festivals are organized separately). Invitations have also taken Grandis dancers to Canada, Australia, and South America. In 1971, Grandis staged "A Lithuanian Wedding" musical, and performed in Chicago, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., New York, Toronto, and Cleveland, a memorable series of trips and concerts some veteran and former Grandis dancers still remember. A highlight for Grandis and many other Lithuanian folk



Scenes from "Duktė viena namie liko" (The daughter remained home alone) concert. Photo by Ramunė Kubiliūtė.



From left: Grandis directors Gintaras Grinkevičius and Dalia Bilaišis DeMuth, honorary director, Violeta Smieliauskas Fabianovich, Lithuania's Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevičius, and Director of the Department of World Lithuanians in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Marijus Gudynas. Grandis received the "Aukso paukštė" ("Golden Bird") award from the Lithuanian government ministry's "Liaudies kultūros centras" (Lithuanian National Cultural Center). Photo by Ramunė Kubiliūtė.



Grandis Youth Group. Photo by Andrius Kubilius.



Grandis Youth Group. Photo by Andrius Kubilius.



Grandis Youth Group. Photo by Ramunė Kubiliūtė.

dancers is dancing in Lithuania and Grandis travelled there in 1992 to perform in various cities - Vilnius, Kaunas, Marijampolė, Palanga, Telšiai, and Elektrėnai. Since 1994, Grandis has been a part of the cadre of folk dancers honored to participate in Dance Days during Lithuania's Song Festivals.

#### Honors and future plans

After the prologue dances on May 4th, Grandis directors Gintaras Grinkevičius and Dalia Bilaišis DeMuth, as well as honorary director, Violeta Smieliauskas Fabianovich, were honored to receive the "Auksa paukštė" ("Golden Bird") award. The award was created by the Lithuanian government ministry's "Liaudies kultūros centras" (now called Lithuanian National Cultural Center / "Lietuvos Nacionalinis Kultūros centras") in 1999 to recognize Lithuanian

culture activities by outstanding non-professional groups - choirs, dance ensembles, theatrical groups, etc. Grandis was awarded in the category designated for diaspora groups and their directors for their cultural work outside of Lithuania. Before the concert, the award was bestowed by officials from Lithuania - Linas Linkevičius (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania), Marijus Gudynas (Director of the Department of Lithuanians Living Abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and Mantvydas Bekešius (Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago). Also on stage with congratulations and a certificate for Grandis was Arvydas Urbonavičius (president of Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.).

Now that the 2018/2019 season has ended, what awaits Grandis dancers and teachers? During the summer, some dancers will rest and travel, while others will participate and work at various Lithuanian American summer camps as counselors. Director Dalia Bilaišis will be among those who will be teaching Lithuanian folk dancing.

In the fall, Grandis dancers will begin learning the repertoire of the XVI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival, scheduled to take place July 4th weekend in Philadelphia, PA. Hard at work selecting and choreographing the dances and the scenario is the festival's artistic director, Grandis director Gintaras Grinkevičius, and his committee that includes Grandis teachers Tadas Varaneckas, Elena Maurukas, Vitalija Ivinskis, and newly elected Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute chair, Violeta Smieliauskas Fabianovich, as well as committee members who work



Scenes from "Duktė viena namie liko" (The daughter remained home alone) concert. Photo by Ramunė Kubiliūtė.

and/or teach in Cleveland (Aušrinė Širvinskas and Eimantas Žukauskas), Toronto (Romas Janušonis), Lithuania (Vidmantas Mačiulskis), and Chicago (Vytautas Čuplinskas). (Grandis teachers Violeta Smieliauskas-Fabianovich and Vida Brazaitis have had the honor of being the artistic director and co-director respectively of earlier Lithuanian Folk Dance Festivals.)

This summer, the XVI Festival artistic committee will sponsor an intense training week at Camp Dainava (Manchester, MI) for North American folk dancing group teachers and representative couples from each group who will go through the entire repertoire. During the week, the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute (Lietuvių Tautinių Šokių Institutas) will also hold its member meeting. While artistic directors and repertoires of Lithuanian Folk Dance Festivals in North America are the responsibility of the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute, organization of the festivals are a cooperative effort of the Institute with the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. and the Canadian Lithuanian Community. The very large and popular festivals, along with their associated events, require the combined and cooperative efforts of artistic, organizational, and financial committees and many volunteers. Through the years, folk dancing groups have been drawn to participate in the festival not only from North America, but also South America, Europe, Australia, Israel, and of course, Lithuania.

It is anticipated that Grandis will feature some of the XVI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival dances in its Spring 2020 annual concert in Chicago, where festival-bound dancers will be joined on stage by the youngest Grandis dancers who are too young to participate in a dance festival (many may travel to Philadelphia with their families, as spectators). Veteran Grandis dancers like to say "We will dance as long as we are able". Best wishes to Grandis in its 61st year, and beyond, as it continues to work ensuring the continuity and evolution of Lithuanian folk dancing traditions in Chicago and beyond.



Poster from Grandis archive. Photo by Ramunė Kubiliūtė.

More information:

"Grandis": [grandis.vadovai@gmail.com](mailto:grandis.vadovai@gmail.com)

XVI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival:

<https://www.sokiusvente2020.org/welcome>

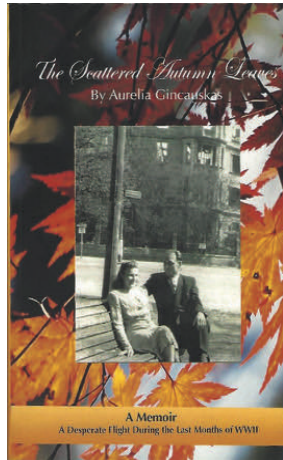
Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute, Inc.

(Lietuvių Tautinių šokių institutas):

<http://www.lttsi.net/about-us.html>

## Conceived During the War, Born in Peace!

By Romualdas Kriauciūnas



Aurelia Gincauskas. *The Scattered Autumn Leaves*. First Edition July 2016. Copyright 2017. Publisher not listed. Paperback, 174 pages. Available at amazon.com.

This book is a memoir, depicting a desperate flight during the last months of WWII. Here is how the back cover “promotional summary” depicts what to expect. “As a child growing up in the Chicago area, the author was exposed to two

cultures. Fragments of stories were told to her about parents’ life in Lithuania before World War II and then their traumatic flight from the advancing Russian army. Before the memories fade away, the author decided to connect these fragments of memory, like pieces of a puzzle, for a picture to emerge. From that picture, a story comes to life about three young individuals’ desperate flight caught in between two armies, the advancing Red Army and the retreating German army during the last months of the war”. These three individuals witnessed awful events and death. They also experienced fear, desperation, and hunger. At times there were brief moments of joy, hope, and even humor.

The author Aurelia Gincauskas is a retired physician who lives with her husband Victor Palciauskas in Walnut Creek, California. In acknowledgments she thanks her mother Michalina for sharing memories, noting that without them the past would have been lost forever. Needless to say, the book is dedicated to her mother. It is also written in memory of the author’s father, Bronius, and uncle, Stasys.

The main portion of this historical novel consists of 23 numbered chapters. Each has a name that goes with it. I believe that listing each chapter will give a good idea for the flow of the events described. Chapter one is called Sensations of Doom. Subsequent chapters’ names: Parents Farm, Time of Reflection, Walk Through the Woods, Decision Made, Flight, The German-Russian Front, The Barn in Prussia, Flight to the Nemunas River, The Nemunas River, Tilsit, Kaliningrad, Vienna, Stockerau, Lovely Room, A New Friend, The Bully, Caught, A Train Full of Soldiers, Ghostly Terrain, Kempten, Life In the D.P. Camp, and The Last Train.

The main characters in the book, as already mentioned, are the authors’ parents and her father’s brother. Much of the book is the dialogue between them. It’s almost as if the author heard and later recalled who said what to whom. Actually, for the duration of the book author already was in her mother’s womb, having been conceived during the war, and born two days after it ended. The book points out that her mother was into her first month of pregnancy when their flight began on October 6, 1944. Nine months later, two days after the war ended, the author was born in the Southern German town of Kempten.

The prologue gives a brief historical background of Lithuania and includes two maps showing the path of the flight. Chapter 1 starts with a statement that “September 5th, 1945, a beautiful autumn day embraced a small city by the lake.” An important typo in the year is depicted. It should have said 1944, a year earlier, not 1945, after the war ended. This may be a good time to mention a bigger typo – the use of the name Kaliningrad. It is mentioned several times in the book, but the correct name prior to 1946 was Königsberg. It’s been like that since 1255 until the Russians renamed it to suit their imperialistic ambitions. In general, the book could have benefitted from more careful editing.

The flight was not a picnic, that’s for sure. At the same time, it was carried out relatively well. Because of connections to the railway system, the author’s father was able to successfully secure train tickets, food and clothing coupons and other “benefits” and they ended up in Vienna. From here another train took them to Kempten, Germany. While there, WWII ended on May 7, 1945. Two days later – on May 9, 1945 – the book’s author was born. The last two chapters describe the life in the D.P. camp from 1945 to 1949 and a subsequent train ride to Bremen. On July 20, 1949, the family took the “last train” to Bremen where they boarded a navy ship heading to Boston. Her uncle immigrated to Australia, and in 1962 he came to Canada. The brothers, Bronius and Stasys, are now deceased. The book also noted that Michalina lives in an assisted care home near her son in Pensacola, Florida. Her favorite song continues to be “The Autumn Leaves Keep Drifting by My Window.”

Thanks to Dr. Aurelia Gincauskas for raking up *The Scattered Autumn Leaves* that captured an important segment of her family’s and her own experience. And best of luck with her new upcoming book, *The Woodpecker Tree*.

## Shorter Name, Higher Aspirations

By Kristina Lapienytė, LRC President - Translated into English by Dr. Indrė Antanaitis-Jacobs



Left to right: LRC volunteer Gediminas Indreika, Arvydas Reneckis, Aida Stonienė, Audrius Stonys, dr. Indrė Antanaitis-Jacobs.  
Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė

For convenience's sake, we have shortened our name from Lithuanian Research and Studies Center (LRSC) to simply Lithuanian Research Center (LRC).

Those who work in archives understand that archival work never ends. And those who have at any point moved from somewhere also understand how costly a move can be. We are glad to report that this spring the Lithuanian Research Center's archives slowly continue being moved to our new location in Lemont while we simultaneously continue our archival work. Our Periodicals and Žilevičius-Kreivėnas Musicology Archives, as well as our D.P. Camp Archives, have already been transported. More than 2,300 titles of newspapers and journals have already been placed onto the shelves in our new building. It also is a good opportunity to review and more effectively organize and catalog our holdings. Dr. Indrė Antanaitis-Jacobs and Gailė Vitas, who are organizing the archives' move to our new location, gratefully thank and appreciate the volunteers who are helping.

Spring is a time of renewal and putting things in order – maybe that is why we have been receiving more and more new archives. The Lithuanian Research Center has a

huge new collection: producer and director of American Lithuanian Television that broadcast in Chicago in 1997-2008, documentary filmmaker Arvydas Reneckis, donated more than 2,000 hours' worth of his own personal and ALTV footage archive, accumulated over 30 years. State of the art equipment was acquired with the support of the Lithuanian Foundation, and this material is now being digitized and inventoried. In time, we plan to make some of the video footage available to view over the internet.

From California, we received clippings regarding the strive for Lithuania's Independence as reflected in the American press. The shipment contains clippings from the San Francisco Chronicle, Los Angeles Times, and The New York Times. The Lithuanian Research Center archives additionally contain information about Lithuania published by the Chicago Tribune in 1990-1991 as well as that published by The New York Times in 1938-1944. We also have much material that still needs to be sorted. If such work sounds interesting to you, please contact us, as we always welcome help! For example, University of Illinois student Mir Hassan recently helped sort some of our clippings about Lithuania in American newspapers.



R to L: Lithuanian Foundation representatives Audronė Pavilčius Karalius, Arvydas Tamulis, and Laima Apanavičienė at the Lithuanian Research Center archives in Lemont. Photo by Kristina Lapienytė



Dr. Robert Vitas and Mirga Girniuvienė at the ALKA archives.

You could even help with our archival work remotely – Al Vaskas, for example, helped write up the early 20th century. Pennsylvania photographs we have, working long distance from Washington.

As always, we get many visitors: documentary filmmaker Audrius Stonys, Professor of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, toured our archives and discussed the possibilities of collaborating with Arvydas Reneckis. Long-time Chair of the Chicago Lithuanian Center (Jaunimo centras) Marytė Utz visited the archives with friends from California – Danute and Tony Mazeikas. Lithuanian Foundation representatives Audronė Pavilčius Karalius, Arvydas Tamulis, and Laima Apanavičienė visited the Lithuanian Research Center in Lemont and took interest in the archives being organized and conserved there.

LRC collaborates with other Lithuanian organizations.



Romualdas Kriaučiūnas' and Elena Tuskenytė's pleasant surprises to the Lithuanian Research Center.



Romualdas Kriaučiūnas' and Elena Tuskenytė's pleasant surprises to the Lithuanian Research Center.

LRC Chairman of the Board Dr. Robert Vitas visited the archives of the Lithuanian Alliance of America (in Lithuanian: SLA or Susivienijimas lietuvių Amerikoje) and discussed collaboration possibilities with Vlado Buožys and Laima Mihailovich. He also visited the American Lithuanian Cultural Archives (in Lithuanian: ALKA or Amerikos lietuvių kultūros archyvas), where Mirga Girniuvienė and he discussed possibilities of collaborating in digitizing Lithuanian press.

We sincerely thank all our friends and supporters who have donated funds, archives, artwork, books, and newspapers. Thank you for your support and good words. It is always a pleasure to receive special attention like the new LRC logo made by our long-time friend and supporter Romualdas Kriaučiūnas, and a beautiful flower bouquet from Elena Tuskenis.

## Monument to Lithuanian partisan leader unveiled in Chicago



Lithuanian National Radio and Television journalists Rūta Kupetytė and Edvardas Kubilius visited Lemont, Illinois during the unveiling of the monument to Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas. Ramanauskas' daughter Auksutė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė participated in the ceremony. Photo by Edvardas Kubilius.

A monument to Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, one of the leaders of Lithuania's anti-Soviet partisan resistance, has been unveiled in Chicago. The monument was designed by sculptor Jonas Jagela and erected in front of the Lithuanian World Center building in Lemont, according to the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The participants at the inauguration included Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius, Auksutė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė, Vanagas' daughter, and Inga Jancevičienė, his granddaughter.

"Today is a special day. There will be a monument to our nation's hero Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas at the very heart of Lithuanianess in the US, the Lithuanian World Center (Lemont, IL). This place is special for Lithuanians," Linkevičius said at the ceremony.

"The memory of Ramanauskas-Vanagas will be properly cherished here. The story of the hero will be passed down from generation to generation, testifying to the heroism, love of and loyalty to his Homeland – Lithuania," he said.

The idea to erect the monument was implemented through joint efforts of the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry and the Lithuanian-American Community.

"The monument is a composition comprising a sign of the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters: a vertical flanked by two horizontal parallels transform into the image of a branched oak. This is to emphasize that the forest hid

Lithuanian partisans for 10 years, while the oak in Lithuania is a symbol of strength and invincibility," the ministry said in a press release.

"The symbol was used widely during the guerilla war. The lower portion of the monument is filled with text in both Lithuanian and English. The national coat of arms of Lithuania, a knight in full armor holding a sword and shield, mounted on horse (also known as Vytis), is placed above the text," it said.

Born in 1918, Ramanauskas-Vanagas joined the armed anti-Soviet resistance in 1945. He was arrested and brutally tortured by the Soviets in 1956 and executed a year later.

The Seimas has recognized Ramanauskas-Vanagas as de facto head of state of post-war Lithuania that was fighting against the Soviet occupation.

Source: BNS



Monument "Partisan's Mother" by Ramojus Mozoliauskas, and the newly-erected monument to partisan leader Adolfas Ramanauskas Vanagas by Jonas Jagela at the World Lithuanian Center in Lemont, Illinois. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė.

## Mother's Day at the Edward Gervickas Lithuanian Heritage School

By Susan Zlotkus-Jenkins

St. Anne's Church Social Hall, Rochester, NY was the location for the annual Motinos Dienos Šventė (Mother's Day Celebration) on Saturday, May 11th hosted by the Edward Gervickas Lithuanian Heritage School and the Lithuanian American Community of Rochester.

The program began with all the children singing "Aš Širdyje Labai Myliu Savo Mamą" (I love my mother with all my heart) that was lead by our new music teacher Živilė Vėbraitė. Živilė, from Vilnius, is a current student at the University of Rochester. She is a young and energetic addition to the school staff.

The children read poems, played the piano, danced and sang. One of our many talented students also performed a beautiful ballet dance.

Special guest, Virginija Rubinski, of Cleveland, Ohio performed a wonderful kanklės concert. She played a few songs that some of us recognized from our dancing days with Lazdynas Dance Ensemble.

Delicious food and desserts were enjoyed by all. Our celebration included about 50 adults and children.

Ačiū to our School Director, Aušra Lelis Clifford and to all of our teachers for helping our children learn the Lithuanian language and culture, but most importantly, to appreciate what it really means to be Lithuanian.

Photos by Susan Zlotkus Jenkins and Janice Raspudic.







## Mother's Day Celebration in Florida

Students of the Saulėtas Krantas Lithuanian Saturday school in Florida celebrated Mother's Day on May 4, 2019. Children sang songs, danced, and had an opportunity to have their pictures taken together with their mothers by a professional photographer. School principal Ingrida Lomborg shared a few photos from the celebration. Photo credit: Arvydas Raciunas.



The school administration organized a free photo session "My Mom and Me." This is one of the photos from the photo session.



Kindergarten students sing to their mothers. The author of the song is music teacher Violeta Leškytė Cucchiara.



Children perform a dance that was choreographed by school teacher Raimondas Balsys.

## Mother's Day in Portland

By Gražina Kazilienė



Students of the Atžalynas Lithuanian Saturday school in Portland celebrated Mother's Day in the welcoming home of the school principal Inga Kozhevnikov and her husband Andrejus. Students recited beautiful poems and sang cheerful songs. They also presented their mothers with Thank You letters that they wrote and placed in wooden boxes, decorated by themselves.

There was a lot of laughter, the mothers were delighted by the blossoms of spring tulips, but most importantly, their hearts were warmed up by their Children's Love, Attention, and Gratitude for everything that the most important persons in their lives - their mothers - gave them.

*"Gentle are Your hands, dear Mother,  
They move sharp stones away from my path.  
It's not the golden Sun that consoles me during  
hard times,  
It's my Mother's Love and consoling words."*

We are very grateful to the Principal of Portland's Lithuanian School, Inga Sadauninkaitė Kozhevnikov and teacher Ernesta Ingelevičiūtė, the organizers of the annual Mother's Day celebration. We thank Inga for the hospitality, abundant refreshments, and a festively-decorated backyard where kids could have fun!

Photo by Andrius Kazilas.

## Mother's Day at Dr. Vincas Kudirka Lithuanian School



On Mother's Day, the students of the Dr. Vincas Kudirka Lithuanian School presented their mothers with gifts. Photo by Lina Benetis.

# End of School Year Celebration at the Aleksandra Kazickas Lithuanian School

By Ginta Genender



End of School Year Celebration at the Aleksandra Kazickas Lithuanian School. Photo by Jolanta Vilčinskienė.

On May 18, 2019, the Aleksandra Kazickas Lithuanian School students ended their school year. This year school had two graduates, Adriana Žukas, and Simona Vadeikaitė. During the end of year ceremony, students, teachers, parents, and friends celebrated the school's accomplishments.

Adriana joined the school in 2006, the very first-year school opened. Simona joined the school in 2007. School's teachers had the honor to watch those two little girls grow into beautiful young ladies and they have no doubt they will go far in their lives.

The teachers were excited to share their students' progress and accomplishments. This year they tested their skills in Lithuanian spelling and grammar together with the Lithuanians all over the world by participating in a drawing and writing contests organized by the Lithuanian Educational Council of USA. Victoria Korsakas won the 3rd place in her age group. She also got an encouragement prize for her essay "Why is Lithuanian Language Important To You?" Nicholas Devoe won the prize for his essay "What Connects Global Lithuanians?"

Rasa Mitruleviciene, President of the Long Island Chapter of the Lithuanian Community, congratulated the graduates and encouraged them to continue fostering

Lithuanian language and culture in their communities. The school's founder and Kazickas Family Foundation's NY office director Neila Baumilienė shared kind regards from the Kazickas family and Lithuanian Consul General in New York, Gitana Skripkaitė. School's previous graduates, Greta, Lukas, and Vesta, came to congratulate their old friends, and Kęstutis Jankūnas who's daughter Smiltė graduated in 2016, came to sing school's song together with the students. He is the author of the special song that appears to become an integral part of school's celebrations.

After proudly sharing their accomplishments and celebrating the graduates, everyone was in for a treat, a musical part of the event. School's student Gabija's grandfather, Zenonas Petravičius, entertained the guests with the Lithuanian accordion music that made everyone feel like in Lithuania for a little while.

School's family says huge THANK YOU to all for another wonderful year at the Aleksandra Kazickas Lithuanian School. Thank You, students, for your energy and laughter, Thank You, teachers, for your inspiration and creativity, Thank You, parents, for your love and dedication, Thank You, friends, for your care and support!

**Security**

...The U.S. and Lithuania have signed a 5-year defense-cooperation agreement covering five broad policy objectives: strengthening cooperation in training, exercises, and exchanges; improved maritime zone awareness; intelligence sharing; cooperation in multinational operations; and cyber defense. Estonia and Latvia are working with the Pentagon to sign similar agreements. The agreement is similar to one the U.S. signed with Poland in September 2018 and enables enhanced surveillance of activity and weapon deployments in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. As part of the agreement, the Lithuanian Defense Ministry will provide all necessary support for the deployment of U.S. forces.

...Special operation forces from 12 nations are planned for Exercise Flaming Sword in June 2019. Up to 420 troops are expected from Canada, Denmark, the U.K., Georgia, the U.S., Latvia, Poland, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine.

...The Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces Lt. General Rajmund Andrzejczak made an official visit to Lithuania and met with Lithuanian Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis and the Chief of Defense Lt. General Jonas Vytautas Žukas and other military officials. He visited the Polish Air Force contingent that has been patrolling Baltic airspace with four F-16 Fighting Falcon fighters based at the Siauliai air base since the beginning of the year.

...Lithuanian Defense Minister Karoblis had an official visit to Ukraine to participate in the Kyiv Security Forum and met with Lithuania troops taking part in training operations in the Desna and Berdychiv training centers.

...Ukraine's president-elect Volodymyr Zelensky thanked Lithuania for helping Ukraine's troops in eastern Ukraine and for providing medical treatment to injured soldiers in Lithuania and asked for continued assistance. He won the runoff election with 73 percent of the vote versus the incumbent Petro Poroshenko, who garnered 24 percent. In turn, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree offering Russian passports to the 3.6 million people living in the Luhansk and Donetsk portions of eastern Ukraine as part of creeping annexation of the former regions of the Soviet Union.

...A major coordinated disinformation cyber-attack hit the Lithuanian Defense Ministry with the intent to discredit Defense Minister Karoblis. Initially, the spearfishing attack was a virus-infected email sent to the President's

Office, Government addresses and Seimas addresses with fake news about an alleged bribe taken by Karoblis followed by an animation video which appeared on YouTube. The Director of the Lithuanian National Cyber Security Center Dr. Rytis Rainy urged citizens to think critically and not give in to manipulation. In January 2018 a similar campaign was launched when the media outlet, tv3.lt, was hacked and emails with malicious code were sent to Lithuanian leaders.

...A Klaipeda court sentenced Romanas Seselis, a Lithuanian sailor-mechanic, to seven years in prison for spying for Russia because he gave classified information regarding the sea terminal and other infrastructure during 2015-17.

...Lithuania's Ambassador to Russia, Remigijus Motuzas, was temporarily recalled from Moscow over threats from a Russian veteran's organization to him and the embassy's staff following the conviction in absentia of 67 Soviet-era officials involved with the January 1991 deaths of 14 Lithuanians during the fight for independence.

**Business**

...The Swiss-based money matchmaking platform, Sonect, has obtained an Electronic Money Institution license from the Bank of Lithuania which will enable customers to deposit, transfer, and withdraw cash at any participating business within the European Economic Area without the need to go through an ATM. Interestingly, Switzerland is not a full member of the EEA and does not abide by some agreements. They plan on adding 20 staff in Lithuania to the 15 employees in Switzerland and 15 elsewhere. In 18 months it has become the largest cash withdrawal network in Switzerland.

...Schmitz Cargobull, the German manufacturer of isothermal trailer, semi-trailer, and bodywork items developed new isothermal plate molding equipment which can triple the production of 10 units per day in Panevėžys, north-central Lithuania. In 2017 revenues increased by over 60% to 121 million euros.

The Danish company, Hjarne Havbrug, plans on employing 65 in its initial effort to farm trout in the Baltic Sea near Klaipeda. The company has 20 such farms in the Baltic and it will cover about 900 square meters and is projected to grow and process 3,000 tons of fish each year.

...The Lithuanian Business Support Agency has granted 235,000 euros to the state-owned company Lietuvos Energijos Gamba working with scientists from the Kaunas University of Technology to install an experimental

## current events

60-kilowatt solar system which will float on the pump storage upper reservoir of the Kruonis hydroelectric plant located 37 km east of Kaunas. They project that at full capacity a 200-250 MW system would triple Lithuania's installed solar power. An explanatory video is available on YouTube.

### General

...The Venice Biennale contemporary art-exhibition is often referred to as the art-world Olympics awarded the Golden Lion for the best National Pavilion in 2019 to Lithuania over a record high 89 other entrants with this year's theme: May You Live in Interesting Times. The Lithuanian Pavilion, entitled Sun & Sea, consisted of an opera about climate change as viewed from above a swim beach where normal activities are altered because of the effects of climate change. The project is the work of theater director Rugilė Barzdžiukaitė, playwright Vaiva Grainytė, composer Lina Lapelytė, and organized by Lucia Pietroiusti. The Biennale is open from May 11 to November 24, 2019.

...At the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius, a memorial plaque to Jonas Noreika, a Lithuanian officer known as "General Storm", was smashed with a sled hammer by Stanislovas Tomas, an unsuccessful candidate for the European Parliament, who self-reported the vandalism. Lithuania's Jewish community has demanded

the removal of the plaque because Noreika as head of Siauliai County during the Nazi occupation signed documents on the establishment of a Jewish ghetto and the disposition of Jewish property. Noreika was involved with anti-Nazi activities and later anti-Soviet activities for which he was arrested in March 1946 and executed a year later. The Office of the Vilnius Mayor indicated that the plaque will be restored and Tomas faces a fine of 30,000 euros.

...Former Lithuanian judge and lawmaker Neringa Venckienė is slated to have her asylum hearing postponed from 2019 to 2022. Still jailed in Chicago and under threat of extradition, there was no explanation of the reason for the delay.

...The Chinese Proficiency Competition "Chinese Bridge" for high school and college students was held in Vilnius with 11 contestants from 5 high schools and 2 universities. The competition included making a speech in Chinese, and a quiz on knowledge of China and Chinese culture plus a talent show. A high school student from Vilnius Jesuits Gymnasium and one from Klaipėda Ažuolyno Gymnasium will compete in China as will two students from Vilnius University will also compete in China. The Chinese Bridge competition was begun by China's Confucius Institute in 2002 and has drawn more than 300,000 foreign students.

bridges

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June 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, Rock-  
ford, 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 Sup-  
port for Lithuania's Inde-  
pendence and Recognition"**  
Balzekas Museum of  
Lithuanian Culture  
www.balzekasmuseum.org

## JUNE

June 28-30, 2019  
**Neringa's 50th Celebration  
at Neringa**  
Please plan to come and  
celebrate Neringa's big  
anniversary!  
The Neringa50 page is live on  
the website:  
[http://neringa.org/en\\_neringa50.html](http://neringa.org/en_neringa50.html)

## JULY

July 21, 2019  
**Lithuanian Summer Festival  
(Putnam, CT)**  
Camp Neringa, Inc. will  
replace the annual Putnam  
Picnic and run the Lithuanian  
Summer Festival.  
We will need a lot of volun-  
teers to help!

Historically, this event has  
relied on close to 100 volun-  
teers, helping with everything  
from moving tables and  
benches into the picnic area,  
to making kugelis, to selling  
meal tickets and everything in  
between.

This year we are asking  
Neringa camper parents,  
alumni and friends to help.  
If you would like to be a part  
of the team, please refer to  
Neringa's website for more  
information or contact Vida  
Strazdis, the chairperson of  
this event: strazdis@comcast.  
net

Let's help to ensure that the  
tradition continues!

## AUGUST

August 4-11, 2019  
**Lithuanian Education Week**  
Dainava Camp, Michigan  
More info:  
[www.svietimotaryba.org](http://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](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](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.

August 25, 2019,  
2 - 4 PM  
**Commemoration of the  
Baltic Way**  
at the Buckingham Fountain  
301 S Columbus Dr.,  
Chicago, IL

## SEPTEMBER

September 7, 2019,  
6 PM  
**Ateitininkų Namai 40th  
Anniversary Banquet**  
1380 Castlewood Drive,  
Lemont, 60439, IL

September 21, 2019,  
7 PM  
**Charity Banquet at the  
Lithuanian Hall in Baltimore**  
851-853 Hollins St, Baltimore,  
MD, 21201

## GOT EVENTS?

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

# bridges

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LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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