

# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$6

**December 2022**

3



3 LITHUANIAN CHORAL ENSEMBLE  
DAINAVA CELEBRATES ITS  
75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

By Karilė Vaitkutė

13



13 Historic Lithuanian Christmas:  
Jašiūnai Manor Honey Cookies and  
Jesuit Grapes

By Rimvydas Laužikas

16



16 Leonardas Šimutis - the man who rallied  
the Lithuanian Americans to the defence  
of Lithuanian independence

By Juozas Skirius

**our community**

26 The Winter Fairy Tale brings  
the real winter to Portland

By Gražina Kazilienė

26



**2 from the editor**

By Karilė Vaitkutė

**current events**

21 Security. Ukraine. Covid-19. Business. General.

29 Creating Chaos Online.  
Disinformation and Subverted Post-Publics  
By Asta Zelenkauskaitė

Front Cover: Traditional Lithuanian American Christmas Tree ornaments.

Back cover: Suktinis Dance Group at the Thanksgiving Day Parade in Chicago.

# bridges

Vol. 46 No. 10 / December 2022

Bridges is the English-language publication of the  
**Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.**  
[lithuanian-american.org/bridges](http://lithuanian-american.org/bridges)

EDITOR  
Karilė Vaitkutė

ART DIRECTOR  
Skaistė Bosas

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, CURRENT EVENTS  
Alan J. Stankus, P.E. (ret)

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER  
Tomas Petroliūnas

#### Editorial Office

139 Willow Blvd., Willow Springs, IL 60480  
[kariledalia@yahoo.com](mailto:kariledalia@yahoo.com)

#### Subscriber Services and Advertising

[spauda@javlb.org](mailto:spauda@javlb.org)

#### Facebook

[facebook.com/BridgesLithuanianAmericanMagazine](https://facebook.com/BridgesLithuanianAmericanMagazine)



Our thanks to  
LITHUANIAN FOUNDATION  
for its support of this magazine.  
[www.lithuanianfoundation.org](http://www.lithuanianfoundation.org)

LAC, INC. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD  
14911 127th Street, Lemont, IL 60439  
[finansai@javlb.org](mailto:finansai@javlb.org)

All statements and opinions, including product claims, are those of the organization/advertiser making those statements or claims. The publisher does not adopt, or put forth, any such statement or claim as his own, and any such statement or claim does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the publisher.

BRIDGES (ISSN: 87508028) is published 10 times per year (Jan/Feb and Jul/Aug combined) by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. SUBSCRIPTIONS: For subscription questions or address changes, write to [spauda@javlb.org](mailto:spauda@javlb.org) or LAC/Bridges, 6812 Meadowcrest Drive, Downers Grove, IL 60516-3523. Subscription rates are: US: \$50 per year or \$95 for two years.; International: \$60 plus postage per year payable in advance in US funds. COPYRIGHT: ©2022 by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of the publication may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher. PRINTING: Printed by Printing Center USA, Great Falls, MT.

## from the editor

Dear Reader,

Christmas is the perfect time of year to celebrate family, joy, and coming together. It is a time to be merry and indulge in plenty of food and drink. It is also the time of year when we give gifts and send out heartfelt holiday greetings. It is a wonderful way to spread Christmas cheer and remind the ones you love that you're thinking of them, whether you'll see them this holiday or just have them in your heart during the holidays.

Ever wondered what the history of the greeting "a merry Christmas and a happy New Year" is? The greeting is recorded from the early 18th century. However, the history of the carol itself is unclear. Its origin probably lies in the English tradition when wealthy people of the community gave Christmas treats to the carolers on Christmas Eve, such as "figgy pudding" which was very much like modern-day Christmas puddings. In the West Country of England, "figgy pudding" referred to a raisin or plum pudding, not necessarily one containing figs.

Lithuanian Christmas customs are very much about socializing and being together. On the second day of Christmas, it was essential to leave the house and greet others, as people believed that their wishes on that day would come true. People tried to go as far as possible outside their village because if you gave your wishes to people who you did not know, the more chances there were that the wishes would come true. Lithuanians also believed that their deceased ancestors were coming back on this day to say hello and see how their loved ones lived. However, the living would not be able to recognize them. By the way, traditionally, only men would walk around and greet people. It was one of the main highlights of Christmas. Women would stay home, receive the greeters, and treat them to food.

Between Christmas and New Year, the evenings were still considered to be holy, and no hard work was allowed, neither spinning nor weaving, because the ancestors were not yet gone, so one should try not to scare them away, not to anger them. Therefore, everyone spent the evenings playing games and having a fun time. Young people had a chance to get to know each other and show their affection.



Wishing you  
a peaceful  
winter  
holiday,

Karilė Vaitkutė  
Editor



# LITHUANIAN CHORAL ENSEMBLE DAINAVA CELEBRATES ITS 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

## Highlights of the ensemble's history

Karile Vaitkutė

Part II

### DAINAVA'S NEW PATHS

After the death of Dainava's leader and conductor Stepas Sodeika, there were fears that Dainava would fall apart, but it did not happen. It did not happen for several reasons. First of all, to paraphrase an invocation by the priest A. Statis at one of the Dainava's banquets, perhaps the ensemble did not fall apart because "Lithuanians need songs because songs contain the grief of the injustices throughout centuries, they contain the mourning of the way-side crosses and the grieving Christ who weeps piteously in the valleys of our motherland, and they contain the longing for freedom". It did not fall apart because Stepas Sodeika took care of the ensemble's prosperity and continuity by enlisting helpers. One of them was Algis Šimkus, who was not a newcomer to the Dainava ensemble. Algis Šimkus was interested in choral music both in Lithuania and in Germany. Before he left for America, he worked with Jeronimas Kačinskas, who at that time was the director of the famous Augsburg Lithuanian camp choir. In America, Algis Šimkus directed the St. Francis Parish Choir in Lawrence, Massachusetts for seven years and gave many church music concerts. In 1957, when



Algis Šimkus



Dainava performs in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC, 1966



Dainava members in 1966

Dainava staged *Iševiai* (Emigrants), Algis Šimkus played the organ. He, the son of Stasys Šimkus, the author of the songs in *Iševiai*, was born in Pennsylvania, at the time when his father was in the USA, raising funds for Lithuania. While living in the USA, Stasys Šimkus learned a lot about Lithuanian Americans, and later, when he returned to Lithuania, he wrote a lively piece *Išėvis* (Emigrant), which was performed in Kaunas. Algis and his father came to Lithuania from the USA and lived there until they left for the West after the Second World War. Algis Šimkus began to contribute more seriously to Dainava in 1959, when the ensemble's leader, Stepas

Sodeika, became ill. In January 1959, Algis Šimkus conducted Dainava at a concert in Chicago, which included excerpts from Stasys Šimkus's opera Pagirėnai, Karnavičius's Gražina, and Vladas Jakubėnas's Mano pasaulis (My World). The soloists of this concert were D. Stankai-



Dainava performs Julius Gaidelis's cantata Kovotojai (The Fighters) with the Symphony Orchestra at the Chicago Civic Opera, 1968

tytė, S. Valiukienė, A. Brazis, and V. Šalna. S. Šimkus composed Pagirėnai back in 1939, and the opera was staged at the Lithuanian State Theatre. Dainava performed Mano Pasaulis by V. Jakubėnas at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Šimkus continued to work with the ensemble, sharing the conductor's baton with Stepas Sodeika until his death. Šimkus was interested in more than music. Back in Kaunas, he graduated from the Faculty of Law of Vytautas Magnus University, and while living in the USA, he obtained a master's degree in sociology from Harvard University. In Chicago, he got a job at the Admiral Co. Publishing House.

In January 1965, Petras Armonas, a classmate of Stepas Sodeika and a fellow student of the Klaipėda Conservatoire, came from California to lead Dainava. After graduating in cello and pedagogy, Petras Armonas played for two years in the Kaunas State Opera Orchestra, then taught music in Šiauliai gymnasium and led the choir. When the Klaipėda Conservatoire moved to Šiauliai, he taught cello at the Conservatoire and later worked as a school inspector. He also staged several operettas in Šiauliai. During the war, Armonas played in the Salzburg Mozarteum Symphony Orchestra, later in the



Dainava at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, DC in 1966





Dainava performs Sidabrinė Diena (Silver Day) in 1972

Munich Symphony Orchestra, furthered his musical knowledge at the Handel Conservatory, directed the choirs of the Ravensburg and Kempten DP camps, and played in a German string quartet in Kempten. In America, Armonas served as an organist in Rochester, New York, and later played in the Santa Barbara Symphony Orchestra and a string quartet in California. Upon his arrival in Chicago, Armonas took Stepas Sodeika's place at the organ of the Church of the Holy Cross, and at the same time he took over the conductor's baton of Dainava. His first work in this ensemble was the musical ballad Čičinskas by Algis Šimkus (stage design by the famous painter Viktoras Petravičius). However, in this production, Armonas was



The audience enjoying the Sidabrinė Diena operetta in 1972

LIETUVIŲ MENO ANSAMBLIS  
**DAINAVA**  
 mūsų savo veiklos 25-ųjų metų sukakojį ir stato  
**operetę**  
**SIDABRINĖ DIENA**  
 SU SIMFONINIŲ ORKESTRU  
 Dirigentas — PETRAS ARMONAS  
 Libretas — ANATOLIUS KAIŠIS    Muzika — ERCHTAUS BUDŽINSKIS




**Solistai**  
 NALIA RYŠKUNČIENĖ, RITA MAŠIENĖ, MARIJONA ŠTIKONAITĖ  
 RANDA AŠKUNČIENĖ, ALGIS ŠIMKUS,  
 VYTAUTAS KAIŠIS, JULIUS AŠKUNČIUS, ASTASAS GELAGIUS - solistai  
 Balladė — ŽITA KEVALAITYTĖ - VIŠOCKIENĖ  
 Deklamacija — JURGIS RIBICKIUS  
 Solis chorovadovė — LEONARDA ŠKADINSKĖ  
 Chorodirektorius — ALFONSAUS GREKAS  
 Akompaniatorius — MARIJA MONDEIKAITĖ - RUTĖ  
**MANKOS AUKŠT. MOKYKLOS AUDITORIJA**  
 California ir 67-os gatvių kampas  
 1971 m. gruodžio 11 d., 8 val. vakaro (keltadainė)  
 1971 m. gruodžio 12 d., 2:30 val. po pietų (saknadinė)  
**BILETAI**  
 "MUSIKANTŲ", 2211 West 69th Street, Tel. 89 6-4282  
 "K. A. T. N. O. S.", 89, 97, 99, 101, 103  
 Toliau gyvenamųjų kvartalų gatvėse, paverstose parkais, šalia šio teatro, išvystyti šaltai ir  
 šilumai šildymo BUKAVYŲ, 3311 So. Forest Ave., Chicago, IL, 60618  
 LITVAIŠIAS Buletėnis, 1971 m. lapkričio mėn. 27 d.

The ad inviting to attend the Sidabrinė Diena operetta

that a family? And singers used to go on holidays together, celebrating the end of the season together in summer resorts on Lake Michigan.

Twenty years have passed in a flash. The ensemble leaders decide to revive Nemunas žydi by Stepas Sodeika and Gasparas Velička for the

ensemble's twentieth anniversary. It was a favorite in Germany, and in America, it will be fun to see it again for a new generation of audiences, and at the same time, it will be a tribute to the leaders of the ensemble who have passed into eternity.

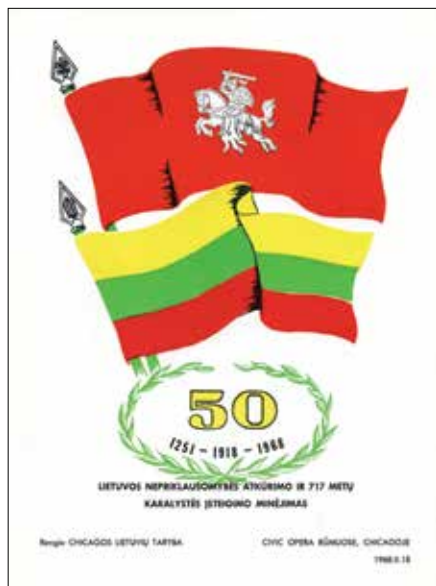
And next year Dainava would have a serious task - to sing the Juozas Naujalis Mass at the dedication ceremony of the Šiluva chapel and to take part in the Lithuanian Religious Congress to be held in the US capital. As a fellow countryman said, it was a "grandiose undertaking" and, of course, a serious challenge for the choir and its new director. In the summer of 1966, about 15 000 Lithuanians, including 130 singers and their assistants, came to the US capital. Let's look back over our shoulders and maybe we will see the choir members of the Dainava ensemble curiously looking around the rooms of the Lithuanian Embassy and listening to the stories told by the then-temporary charge d'affaires, Juozas Kajeckas. In the embassy of a country that no longer exists on the world map. It was 1966! Free Lithuania no longer exists! And yet! What did the



Dainava members in 1972



The Third Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival program cover, 1968



The 50th Anniversary of Lithuania's Independence, February 16, 1968

hearts of the people of Dainava feel when they stood on Lithuanian soil (because the territory of the embassy is Lithuanian)? Lithuania, which no longer exists, but which is alive in the heart of every Lithuanian, both those who sing and those who listen to the song. What was Petras Armonas, the leader of the "Dainava" ensemble, thinking as he walked around the Embassy, when both his wife and daughter remained behind the Iron Curtain in occupied Lithuania, unable to get out into the free world to meet their husband and father? How much heartache can a man's heart hold? And how much determination to endure, to persevere, to not lose hope? The mass "Vulnerum Christi"

by J. Naujalis sounded majestically sung by the joint choir. The consecration of the Šiluva Chapel in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the most important Roman Catholic Church in the United States, was magnificent. There, among eighty other national chapels, the Lithuanian Mary of Šiluva is among the Austrians, Chinese, Cubans, Czechs, Filipinos, French, Germans, Hungarians, Indians, Irish, Italians, Poles, Slovaks, Vietnamese, and others. Let the world see, let everyone who visits the chapel know that Lithuania is alive, has been, and will be free. Glory to Dainava for being invited to sing at this great celebration.

There was no time to rest after the great concert and journey. The Dainava singers are again singing in "every day" concerts, masses, and events. And a year later, again a huge and responsible performance. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of February 16th - Julius Gaidelis's can-





Aloyzas Jurgutis (second from the right) after *Kūlgrinda* performance, 1977



*Pamario pasaka* (Seaside Tale), 1976

tata Kovotojai (The Fighters) with the Symphony Orchestra at the Chicago Civic Opera Theatre! The February 16th commemoration was organized by the Lithuanian-American Council, just like every year, but in 1968 it was special!

Before we knew it, *Dainava* was celebrating its 25th anniversary. On this occasion, the *Dainava* singers sang, danced, and performed Bronius Budriūnas' operetta "Silver Day", featuring soloists A. Grigas, D. Kučėnienė, M. Momkienė, V. Radys, R. Mastienė, A. Gelažius, J. Savrimas, and J. Šalnienė. The libretto was written by Anatolijus Kairys, the stage design was created by Jurgis Daugvila. The performance was directed by Zita Kėvalaitytė-Visockienė and the choir was conducted by Petras Armonas. Later on, the ensemble of 60 choir members toured several Lithuanian communities with this performance. By the way, it must be said that the financial success of *Dainava* depended not only on the sale of tickets to concerts and performances. The ensemble has always been and still is grateful to various sponsors and patrons, the most deserving of whom are probably Irena and Dr. Leonas Kriaučeliūnas. Not only have they donated countless sums to the ensemble, but they have also entertained the singers and friends of the ensemble in their homes.

The commemoration of February 16th, 1972 was special. It took place in the magnificent Auditorium Theatre in downtown Chicago. Aldona Stempužienė and Gina Čapkauskienė sang at the concert. In the same year, *Dainava* took part in a folk dance festival in Chicago. This



Audronė Simonaitytė, 1974



The Fourth Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival program cover, 1972



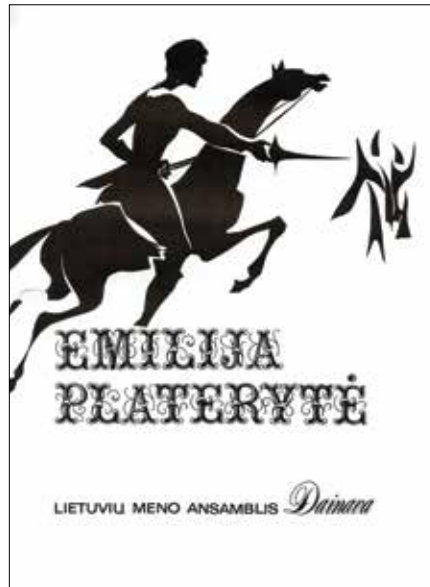
Aloyzas Jurgutis, 1975



celebration was also special because of the presence of Patricia Nixon, wife of the then US President Richard Nixon. She gave a speech of welcome to the participants and the 12 000 spectators.

"GIVE ME FREEDOM,  
GIVE ME THE SUN..."

At the 1975 February 16th commemoration concert, Chicago Lithuanians met the new members of the ensemble - conductor Audronė Simonaitytė and concertmaster Aloyzas Jurgutis. Both musicians came from occupied Lithuania. They were already acquainted in Vilnius, as Audronė studied at the Vilnius Conservatoire and Aloyzas taught there. Audronė came to the USA, where her parents lived, and studied at Roosevelt University in Chicago. Aloyzas's "arrival" was much more complicated. Over the last thirty years, we have gotten used to going to Lithuania and back to the USA. We have



Emilija Pliaterytė program cover, 1979



A scene from Emilija Pliaterytė, 1979

flown back and forth on various occasions and have probably forgotten (and the younger ones don't even know) what closed borders and



A scene from Emilija Pliaterytė, 1979



Dainava performs at the Lithuanian Independence Day festivities, 1985

the Iron Curtain meant. But during the Soviet occupation, breaking through the Iron Curtain into the free Western world was not only difficult but could cost the life of a freedom-hungry fugitive. Thus, Aloyzas Jurgutis, who came to help Dainava in 1975, had escaped from the "Soviet paradise" just a year earlier. How did people escape across the border in those days? The same way as in all times - at night, in secret, in ditches, in forests, creeping underground... Aloyzas Jurgutis went on a tourist trip to Yugoslavia, and from there, separated from the group of tourists, he fled to Italy and applied for political asylum. A few months later, he arrived in the USA from Italy. His wife Marija and 10-year-old daughter Daina remained in Lithuania. If we look behind the scenes, we will see that their arrival in the USA to join their husband and father was fighting for not one, not two, but many years. The dismembered Jurgutis family is yet another victim of the Soviet system, of closed borders.

But let us go back to 1975. After Audronė Simonaitytė, the leader of Dainava, had started a family with Andrius Gaižiūnas and left Chicago, Aloyzas Jurgutis became the conductor and director of the ensemble. Immersed in the activities of leading Dainava, the composer composed five musical works in five years – Pamario pasaka (A Seaside Tale), Kūlgrinda, Emilija Pliaterytė, Čičinskas, and Vilniaus pilies pasaka (The Legend of Vilnius

Castle). All of these works are linked to Lithuanian customs and folklore and Lithuanian history. In occupied Lithuania, it was not possible to produce such works. Jurgutis himself said in an interview in 1977: "First of all, an artist here [in the USA] is not put into the obligatory framework in which he has to work in present-day Lithuania and the whole Soviet Union. There, the artist is most annoyed and tormented by the tribute to the Party and the occupier that everyone must pay. Here, the artist is always free to choose the subject of his work and to work on it." Thus, Aloyzas Jurgutis in Chicago was free to choose the themes of his work, to create works that Dainava was happy to perform for Lithuanian-American audiences.

In 1976, Pamario pasaka was staged to a libretto by Danutė Brazytė-Bindokienė. In the same year, Dainava celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. In that year, the press summarized the ensemble's activities and counted 200 concerts and nine musical productions. During the thirty years of the ensemble's existence, Dainava was conducted by Bronius Jonušas, Stepas Sodeika, Algirdas Šimkus, Petras Armonas, Audronė Simonaitytė, and Aloyzas Jurgutis. Vladas Adomavičius, Jonas Adomaitis, Alfonsas Gečas, Jeronimas Ignatonis, Kęstutis Jauniškis, Faustas Strolia, Petras Vacbergas, Alvydas Vasaitis, and Emilija Pakštaitė were the assistant conductors. The per-



performances were directed by Antanas Škėma, Gasparas Velička, Antanas Sprindys, Alfonsas Brinka, Algis Dikinis, Algirdas Kiaulėnas, Antanas Rūkas, Kazys Veselka and Zita Kėvalaitytė-Visockienė. Set and costume design was by Kostas Jezerskis, Juozas Kaminskas, Liudas Vilimas, Povilas Kaupas, Adomas Varnas, Jonas Tričys, Algirdas Kurauskas, Jonas Strungys, Viktoras Petravičius, and Jurgis Daugvila. The folk dances were led by Stefanija Radzevičiūtė, Ringailė Jonynaitė-Gustaitienė, Juozas Žygas, Liuda Valiukaitė, P. Giedrienė, L. Grigaliūnaitė, Aldona Valeišaitė, Irena Eidrigėvičiūtė-Sprindienė, Algirdas Paškevičius, Izolda Ralienė, Faustas Strolia and Nijolė Pupienė. The band was led by Jonas Adomaitis and Balys Pakštas. Kęstutis Miklašėvičius was the administrator of the ensemble. So many names! But these are only some of the people who have contributed to the ensemble. Those who worked and spared no expense to make Lithuanian songs resound, to spread Lithuanian culture, and to keep Lithuanian history alive. Aleksas Smilgevičius-Smilga, the then chairman of the ensemble, who sang in the ensemble for all thirty years, calculated that half a million hours of work were spent

rehearsing and singing, that there were 1,000 rehearsals and 8,800 performances, and that seventeen thousand five hundred miles were traveled in the USA and Canada during the tours. The choir has had a total of 400 singers over 30 years, but only three have sung for the entire 30 years: Elena Krasauskienė, Albinas Stočkus, and Aleksas Smilgevičius-Smilga.

All the years of Dainava's existence were accompanied by songs that constantly expressed the desire for freedom. The motto of the 1978 US-Canada Song Festival was also a line from a poem by P. Lember: "The winds of the world are carrying our complaints from all over the world: give us freedom, give us sunshine, and let us return to our homes". The celebration took place in Toronto, Canada. The Maple Leaf Gardens Arena in Toronto, Canada, hosted 54 choirs from different countries, a brass band, a symphony orchestra, an orchestra of Lithuanian folk instruments, and about 16 000 spectators. Among the conductors of the festival was Aloyzas Jurgutis, director of Dainava. The festival featured the music of J. Naujalis, K. V. Banaitis, J. Zdanius, V. Jakubėnas, J. Dambrauskas, A. Mikulskis, J. Karosas, S. Sodeika,



Dainava members advertise The Lithuanian Wedding Traditions show, 1985

J. Bertulis, M. Petrauskas, B. Budriūnas, J. Gaidelis, J. Žilevičius, B. Jonušas, S. Šimkus.

After a few more years and successful productions of Aloyzas Jurgutis' musical works on the history of Lithuania, the year 1982 came when the composer had to say goodbye to Dainava and leave for Los Angeles. Like a real family, the Dainava residents gave him a farewell party, thanked him for his six years of beautiful work with the ensemble, and wished him luck in his future life and work. "Dainava" needed to find a new leader and be reborn once again.

In 1983, the 6th Lithuanian Song Festival of the USA and Canada took place in Chicago. Of course, Dainava took part in it too. In the same year, we also had to sing at the commemorative concert - the 50th anniversary of the flight of Darius and Girėnas in Chicago. The following year saw the February 16th concert, the 20th anniversary of the death of Stepas Sodeika, and the New Year's concert, but for Dainava, already used to larger productions, single concerts conducted by invited musicians were no longer enough. It was necessary to find a new permanent conductor - a leader who would firmly set the future direction of the ensemble. The Dainava Board, chaired at the time by Mėta Gabalienė, was enga-

ged in the search for such a leader. Of course, there was no time for a nap, because, even though they had lost their conductor, the Dainava singers did not even think of parting ways. Singing in the ensemble was their way of life. Especially since some of the choir members did not have families of their own, so the ensemble was like a family to them.

While the search for a new conductor was underway, Dainava started to produce a folklore montage "Lithuanian Wedding". In the words of Danguolė Ilginytė, who was vice-chair and secretary of the ensemble at the time, "the Americans wanted something more fun and invited us to perform". So, with a substantial donation of \$3,200 (currently almost \$8,000) from the Illinois Arts Council, \$1,000 from the Illinois Arts Council, \$1,000 from the regular patrons of Dainava, Irena and Leonas Kriaučeliūnas, and many other donors, the singers performed, danced and sang at a Lithuanian wedding in the Morton School auditorium and the Chodle auditorium in Cicero. Incidentally, the Morton School auditorium proved to be so suitable that the annual Chicago Lithuanian opera productions have been held there ever since. In this way, the Americans were introduced to Lithuanian customs, even though they may have been a mino-



Dainava members participate in a parade and advertise The Lithuanian Wedding Traditions show, 1985





The Lithuanian Wedding Day show, 1986

rity of the audience. "The script for Lithuanian Wedding was written by Danutė Brazytė-Bindokienė, the editing was directed by Liucija Buivydaitytė-Ambrosini, and the singers and dancers were led by Rasa Šoliūnaitė-Poskočimienė, who also brought her dance ensemble, Spindulis, to the performance. "Lithuanian Wedding" was a success. The audience turned out in large numbers and was pleased to have spent \$20 or \$25 for a ticket. The word about the performance spread in the Lithuanian press. This lively folkloric montage was performed in 1986 for the Chicago Lithuanians at the Maria School auditorium and later toured to Cleveland and Toronto.

Perhaps encouraged by the success of Lithuanian Weddings, in 1988 the Dainava singers staged a folklore weave, Lithuanian Mardi Gras, and in 1990 the third play on folk customs Kai papartis žydi (When the Fern Blossoms). During these concerts, Dainava also discovered its new director, Darius Polikaitis. According to Danguolė Ilginytė, during the time of Aloyzas Jurgutis, the ensemble used to put on big productions - plays, but under the leadership of Darius Polikaitis, the choir turned back to concerts.

*To be continued.*



Kai papartis žydi (When the Fern Blossoms) program cover, 1990

# Historic Lithuanian Christmas: Jašiūnai Manor Honey Cookies and Jesuit Grapes

Rimvydas Laužikas

*As we approach Christmas, the biggest celebration of the year in the Christian world, we start talking about the customs, superstitions, and spells of this holiday, as well as the closely related Christmas Eve. We also remember the festive dishes. Today, let us try to travel back in time and look at how this festive period appears in the history of Lithuanian gastronomy. Let's turn to the sources of Lithuanian gastronomic history, visit the clergy, the nobility, and a 19th-century farmer's house. What were the Lithuanian Christmas Eve and Christmas Day like in the past?*

## Christmas Eve table and dishes

Magdalena z Nałęcz-Gorskich Komorowska, the grandmother of the former Polish President Bronisław Komorowski, describes the Christmas Eve celebration of her childhood at Šaukėnai Manor in Žemaitija at the beginning of the 20th century: "On December 24, we would have a dry fast - no milk, no meat, and no lunch. On that day, we had herring fried in oil, buns with poppy seeds, and dumplings with onions. Such dishes were new to us, let alone the prospect of a Christmas tree in the evening. Walking down the corridor from the children's room, I would see that unforgettable sight: an oval table, spread with a white tablecloth down to the ground, laid for twenty people, shining with silver and crystal goblets. On the table, there were napkins and green glasses for white wine. On both ends of the table, there were tall candelabras with seven lit candles each, cotton-decorated trees with burning candles at each



end, and a heavy silver tray in the middle with honey cookies and dried fruit. On the tray of dried fruit, my father also would put the treats he brought from Mėmel [Klaipėda]. Standing in the corners of the room, there were bunches of grain stalks, and nice-smelling hay was placed under the tablecloth. The Christmas Eve dinner was somewhat reminiscent of the ancient family feast at the manger where Jesus was born. In our house, on



Christmas Eve, cold fish with mayonnaise was served first, followed by beet soup with dumplings ("ears"), hot carp fried in oil, other types of fish with a grey sauce, as well as *kūčiukai* (Christmas Eve biscuits) with poppy seeds and *kūčia* (peas and wheat with honey), compotes, refreshing almond milk jellies, and finally, dried fruits, which were usually brought to the living room. Well, along with the fish, good wine was served as well as kisel, apple *gira* [fermented non-alcoholic drink], and refreshing almond drink."

The recollections of a public figure, book smuggler, and ethnographer Mikalojus Katkus are about the Christmas Eve dishes in a farmer's house in the Kėdainiai area in the second half of the 19th century. They are also very vivid and detailed: "On Christmas Eve, we would have a dry fast. Nobody knew what the women busy with kitchen work ate on that day. Maybe they didn't eat anything. The men were given fat-free beet soup for breakfast. The soup would be almost transparent, and you could see pieces of beetroot on the bottom of your bowl. Nobody would call the men for lunch, and they would not come themselves either. Those who come to the house by mistake would get

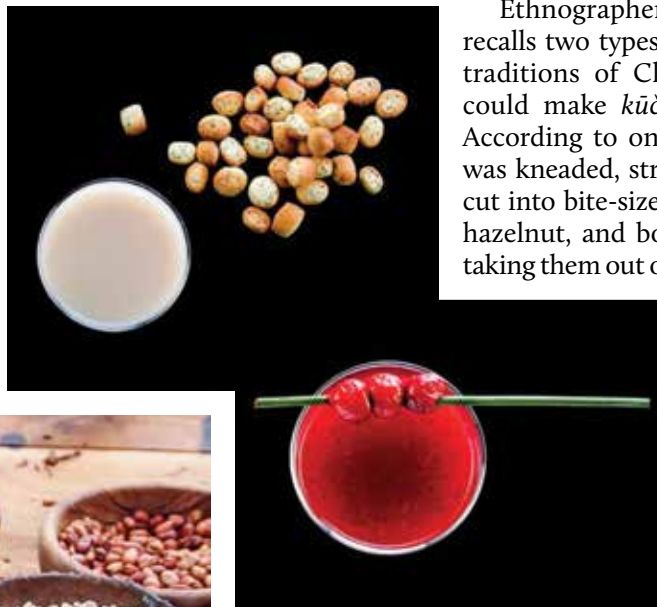


a piece of wheat bread. They were roasting the goose and pork hams, baking wheat and barley bread, and making pork head cheese for Christmas, but when they needed to taste those dishes in order to adjust the spices, they would spit it out after tasting. It would be a sin to swallow something cooked with meat or milk during fasting time. The table was set in the evening: a white tablecloth was put over it, with a bundle of hay under the tablecloth at the end of the table. A bay candle was placed in the middle of the table. On the table, there was a bowl of fat-free beet soup with mushrooms and herring. When Christmas Eve started, everyone would take their places at the table, and while still standing, would whisper the Our Father prayer. The head of the household would break and share the Christmas wafer. The remaining Christmas wafer was broken into pieces and put into the beet soup. After two bowls of soup, you would not get any more. The beet soup was replaced with two plates of herring soaked in beet soup, pieces of beets, and porcini mushrooms. Next came a cold meal: poppy milk sweetened with sugar or honey and Christmas Eve biscuits that were placed in the poppy seed milk.”

*Kūčia, kūčiukai, and Christmas treats*

The name *Kūčios* is derived from a special, ritualistic meal called *kūčia*. The word itself has been known in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania since the 11th and 12th centuries, and derives from the Greek word 'kukkia', meaning beans. It is yet another cultural and culinary borrowing from Byzantine culture. If you would like to try this dish, for a traditional *kūčia* you will need a cup of soaked cooked wheat grains, half a cup of soaked cooked whole peas, half a cup of ground poppy seeds, and three tablespoons of honey. Mix the cooked wheat and peas with the ground poppy seeds and honey. Eat with poppy seed milk.

Ethnographer Mikalojus Katkus recalls two types of *kūčiukai* and the traditions of Christmas Day: “You could make *kūčiukai* in two ways. According to one recipe, the dough was kneaded, stretched in long rolls, cut into bite-size pieces, the size of a hazelnut, and boiled in water. After taking them out of the water and cooling them, they were put in poppy seed milk. According to the second recipe, *kūčiukai* were made from dough with yeast and then baked in the oven instead of boiling.



And this is what was written in the diary of the 18th century Jesuit College clergy in Vilnius: "The Christmas Eve lunch was held following the order of the day, but no mead was given. The four usual dishes, namely poppy seed milk, fish in yellow sauce, rice, and fried fish, were given for lunch. Christmas Eve dinner was at five o'clock. It included fish and dried grapes with almonds and a glass of mead."



If we were looking for Christmas recipes related to Vilnius University, we would have to go to Jašiūnai. In the first half of the 19th century documents of this estate, which belonged to the Balinskis family, we find an interesting recipe for honey cake: "Make some heavily sweetened water, dissolve at least one pound of honey in one gallon of water. Then add enough rye flour to the water to make dough that does not stick to your hands. Knead well and roll out thinly. Place the cakes in the oven to dry out thoroughly and then crumble. This would be the flour used to make the honey cake at Jašiūnai Manor. Then add the crushed dried orange peel, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and various other spices to your taste to the melted honey. The honey should be cooked with these spices until it darkens and starts to thicken. Then remove the honey and spices from the heat and add the flour, a little at a time, stirring well. When the dough has become thick, it should be quickly poured into a shallow dish before it becomes cold and then, when it has set, it should be cut. It is advisable to keep the knife you will be using under cold water, otherwise it will become sticky."



### Christmas Day party and Christmas tree

Christmas morning used to start early at Vilnius Jesuit College: "We would have Christmas Eve dinner at five o'clock. It was served with fish and dried grapes with almonds and a glass of mead. On the day of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would get up half an hour after midnight. At one o'clock in the morning, we would begin the Dawn Service, sing the hymns, and read the Mass at the high altar. At the end of our six Masses, a parish Mass was celebrated at dawn at the high altar, followed by a sermon in Lithuanian".

Magdalena z Nałecz-Gorskich Komorowska from Šaukėnai remembers the festivities in Žemaitija as follows:

"After Christmas Eve, the table was not cleared. The ladies would tidy up something by the Christmas tree, and eventually, the living room door would open wide. It wasn't the presents that brought us the greatest joy, but the Christmas tree in the middle of the room, shining with lights. After singing Christmas hymns and enjoying the tree, the lamps, tea, and poppy seed cake would be brought back into the living room, and we would open the presents. We spent all the holidays at home and didn't go anywhere else. On the first or second day of the holidays, we would light the tree for the servants, who would also receive presents. Finally, there was also a Christmas tree for the children of the peasants in the servants' building, and each child received a present."

The musicologist Jadvyga Čiurlionytė, Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis's sister, describes the Christmas tree, its decorations, and the festive Christmas morning at her home in Druskininkai at the beginning of the 20th century this way: "The Christmas tree was the most important. I remember I used to crawl under it and look at every single thing. There were cookies in the shape of all sorts of animals and birds, glazed with glitter and tied to the tree branches with colored thread. There were marzipan strawberries, pears, and apples (those were the tastiest). There were glass balls and toys of all colors: trumpets, bells, mushrooms with red caps and white dots, houses on a chicken's leg - you can't name them



all. On the top of the tree, there was a big silver star and an angel with white wings in the middle. On the first day of Christmas, everyone gets up quite late because they went to the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. Only my father went to church early and my mother worked in the kitchen. Around ten o'clock in the morning, we would smell coffee and other delicious things. For breakfast, there were potato sausages, head cheese, and coffee with poppy seed cake followed by talk and laughter."

Source: [bernardinai.lt](http://bernardinai.lt)



# Leonardas Šimutis - the man who rallied the Lithuanian Americans to the defence of Lithuanian independence

Professor Juozas Skirius  
Senior Researcher at the Institute of Lithuanian Diaspora  
Vytautas Magnus University (VMU)

On November 6th, we commemorated the 130th anniversary of the birth of Leonardas Šimutis (1892-1975). This prominent Lithuanian-American public figure is a truly colorful personality whose diverse activities and achievements could not be covered even in the thickest book. In these times, when the aggressor is once again encroaching on the independence of Lithuania and other countries, it is worth remembering historical personalities who actively fought for freedom, democracy, and, human lives.

Leonardas Šimutis, a Lithuanian-American public figure, poet, publicist, politician and statesman, was born into a large family of eight children in the village of Šerikiai, in Šilalė parish, Tauragė county. In 1913, he came to

the United States and immediately became involved in the activities of Catholic organizations of Lithuanian immigrants. He also started his communication and law studies at the Universities of Chicago, DePaul and Loyola, and then later, he also studied sociology at the University of Fordham in New York. His main job, in which he earned his daily bread for him and his family, was the Lithuanian American press. For a while he worked on the editorial boards of the newspaper "Katalikas" and the magazine "Vytis", and from 1918 to 1926 he edited the weekly "Garsas".



Leonardas Šimutis

In 1927, he was entrusted with the largest Catholic daily newspaper "Draugas", where he worked as editor until 1952, and later, until 1968, he was one of the members of the editorial board. Thanks to him, the world has seen thousands of articles on issues of diaspora culture, Lithuanian identity, politics, and especially the liberation of occupied Lithuania. A great merit of Leonardas Šimutis is the publication of a large number of memoirs in the press. It is worth noting that he also wrote poems, librettos for operettas, stage pictures, and even feuilletons. Some of his poems have been set to music. Leonardas Šimutis has even been called the "Maironis of Diaspora". However, his extensive social and political activities have somewhat muted his poetic output.



Leonardas Šimutis's family in 1925. From the left: siblings Stanislovas, Juzė, Feliksas, Pranas, and Petras. Sitting are parents, Placida and Jonas

## Organizing support for the restoration of independent Lithuania

Public and political work were the most prominent areas of Šimutis' activity. When the First World War broke out, he did not hesitate to volunteer to help the victims of the war in Lithuania, as well as to organize support for the restoration of the independent Lithuanian state. In March 1918, the General Lithuanian American Congress in New York, which brought together the patriotic Catholic and nationalist forces of the diaspora, elected Šimutis, still a relatively young man, as its first secretary. The Congress voted in favor of Lithuanian independence.

In the same year, Leonardas, as a member of the Catholic Council of Lithuanian-Americans, and a joint Lithuanian delegation visited US President Woodrow Wilson, demanding independence for Lithuania. In addition, as

Secretary of the Catholic National Foundation, he led a drive to save Lithuania, during which the Foundation managed to raise \$350,000 for Lithuania in 1918-1919 (in today's money - more than ten million US dollars).



Leonardas Šimutis in 1913

In the 1920s, Šimutis, like others, traveled around the Lithuanian American communities, distributed

bonds issued by the Lithuanian government - the Lithuanian Freedom Loan, and gave speeches urging immigrants to financially support the budget of the young Lithuanian state. By 1923, the diaspora had managed to raise almost \$2 million (more than \$60 million in today's US dollars) for Lithuania. This money was the first solid currency of the young state and the basis for covering the cost of its own money, the litas.

Pope's medal for services to Catholic society

In 1926, Leonardas Šimutis was elected as a representative to the Third Lithuanian Parliament, the second representative of the Diaspora in the Parliament, after Julius Kaupas, who was elected to the Constituent Parliament. This undoubtedly demonstrates the authority of Šimutis not only among the diaspora, but also in Lithuania. However, the military coup in Lithuania forced him and his family to return to the United States, where Leonardas continued to engage in a wide range of public activities in large Catholic organizations: he served as the Central Secretary of the Federation of Lithuanian Roman Catholics of America for 20 years, and as the Chairman of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Association of America for 38 years.

In 1945 and 1951, he was elected one of the directors of the board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. This influential organization, founded by the U.S. bishops, sought to unite and organize U.S. Catholics in the cause of religious and moral education and social welfare. Šimutis was also instrumental in the creation of the

212,00

**SVARBU!**

**Naujienu iš Lietuvos**

---

KALBES LIETUVOS SEIMO ATSTOVAS  
P. LEONARDAS ŠIMUTIS.

---

**Pirmadieny, Kovo 28 Dieną**

**Karalienės Ang. Par. Salėje**

So. 4 ir Roebing Str., Brooklyn, N. Y.

7:30 val. vakare

---

p. L. Šimutis tik ką atvykęs iš Lietuvos ir kaip senas Amerikos lietuvių darbuotojas turės mumis daug ką naujo papasakoti apie pastarųjų laikų įvykius Lietuvoje. Ateikite visi, nesigailėsite.

Rengėjai.



p. Leonardas Šimutis.

1926 m.

Leonardas Šimutis, member of Lithuanian Parliament, in America, c 1926-1927





Leonardas Šimutis's naturalization papers



Leonardas Šimutis in the Draugas newspaper picnic in 1913

Catholic Knights of Lithuania Organization, which united the youth of the Lithuanian diaspora. In recognition of his contribution, the Knights of Lithuania awarded Leonardas their medal in 1934. It should be mentioned that this organization is still alive and well today. For his services to Catholic society, Pope Pius XII awarded Leonardas Šimutis the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal, and in 1937, President of Lithuania Antanas Smetona honored him with the Order of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Gediminas, third degree.

In 1935, as one of the Lithuanian-American delegates and the head of the delegation, Šimutis took part in the first Lithuanian World Congress in Kaunas. He was active in the congress meetings, gave speeches at the events, and finally put his impressions in notes, which were published many years later (as well as his collection of poems), by his son - composer, Prof. Leonardas Šimutis, Jr.

### Seeking compromises in the divided Lithuanian-American community

However, the most prominent activity of this public and political figure was reflected in the Lithuanian-American Council (LAC), a political organization of immigrants that is still active today. Šimutis was instrumental in the creation of the LAC in 1940-1941 and served as its chairman for the longest period of time, until 1965. It is a very important fact for the Lithuanian diaspora that this organization united all the patriotic and mainstream Lithuanian-American party currents (Catholics, Nationalists, and Socialists) for one very noble purpose: to help Lithuania regain its independence. Truth to be told, some Lithuanian nationalists, annoyed that some of the LAC members did not recognize the arrival of the Lithuanian

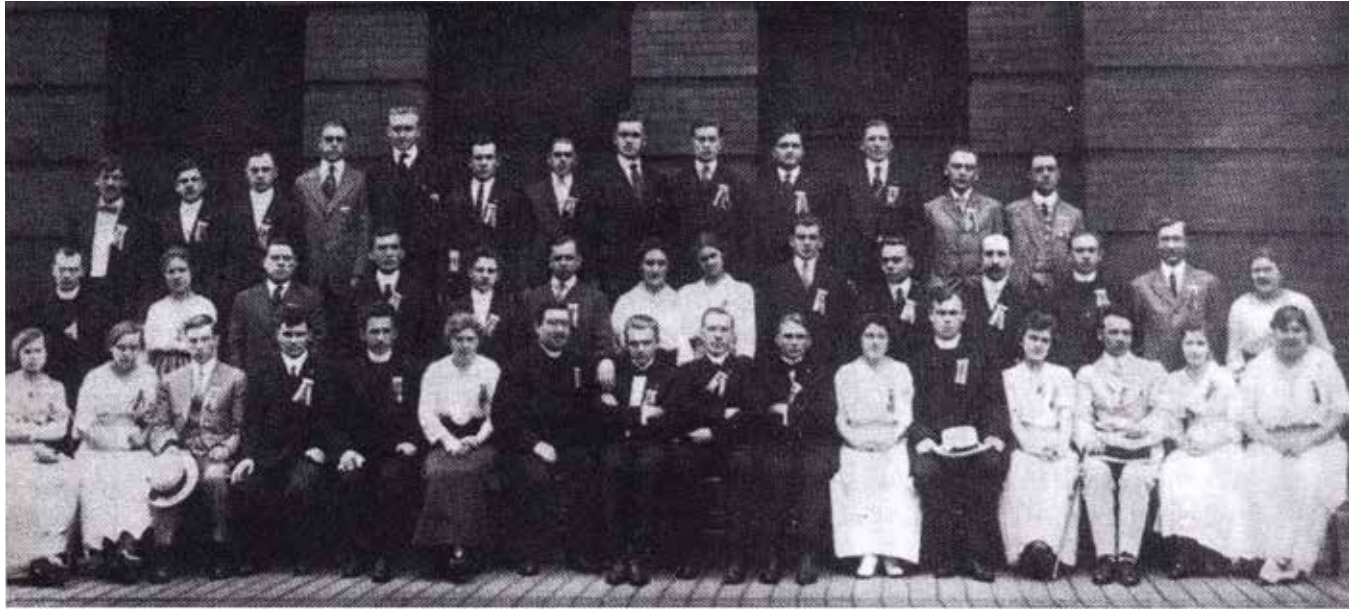


The Draugas newspaper editors and staff in 1939

President Antanas Smetona, temporarily withdrew from the LAC and acted separately.

The fact that Leonardas Šimutis was elected chairman of such a joint organization shows the obvious recognition of his authority and political weight, not only among the diaspora, but also in American society. One of his most important traits as a politician is the constant search for compromise in the divided Lithuanian-American community, and the search for unity in common Lithuanian activities.

The LAC was led by an Executive Committee, which consisted of a chairman - Leonardas Šimutis, editor of the daily newspaper "Draugas", who was later joined by the nationalist lawyer Antanas Olis, a secretary - Dr. Pijus Grigaitis, a socialist, editor of the daily newspaper "Naujienos", and a treasurer - Mikas Vaidyla, the editor of the daily newspaper "Sandara". These members of the Executive Committee went to Washington, DC, asking the USA



Leonardas Šimutis as a delegate to the Knights of Lithuania Second Congress, July 1-2, 1915, Chicago

to condemn the Bolshevik occupation and not to recognize Lithuania's incorporation into the communist USSR.

All of this was widely reported in the US English-language press, reminding the US government and the public of the Lithuanian people's aspirations to regain independence.

Addressing US Presidents in regards to Lithuania's independence

The LAC strongly supported and assisted the 1953 Commission of Congressman Charles J. Kersten in gathering material on the criminal activities of the communist USSR in occupied Lithuania, as well as in Latvia and Estonia, and the genocide being committed there. The Commission drafted HR 346, which was unanimously adopted by Congress. The resolutions and recommendations were submitted to the US Government, the United Nations and the US Congress.

Leonardas Šimutis organized and led Lithuanian delegations to these US Presidents: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy. In 1964, he personally met and spoke with President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House. In addition, Leonardas has made numerous visits to US Secretaries of State and other senior officials, not to mention extensive contacts with US Senators and Congressmen.



Donation to help liberate Lithuania



Leonardas Šimutis and delegation meet President Franklin Roosevelt





President John F. Kennedy meets with members of the Lithuanian American Council and Lithuanian-American Community, February 16, 1962. President John F. Kennedy stands with Representative Daniel Flood of Pennsylvania (fifth from right) and members of the Lithuanian American Council and Lithuanian-American Community organizations. Visitors include: Leonard Šimutis, President of Lithuanian American Council; Jonas Jasaitis, President of a chapter of Lithuanian-American Community; Vytautas Abraitis; Valdas Adamkavičius; Reverend J. Baljunas; Eugene Bartkus; Stasys Barzdukas; Stephen Bredes, Jr.; Zigmas Dailidka; Paul P. Dargis; Stasys Gegužis; Dr. Pius Grigaitis; John J. Grigalus; Algimantas Kezelis; Mary Kiziz; William T. Kvetkas; Algirdas Nasvytis; Anthony Rudis; Jackus Sanda; Michael Vaidyla; Anthony Varnas. Seventeen of the visitors are pictured here. Oval Office, White House, Washington, D.C.

Leonardas Šimutis was entrusted with the chairmanship of the first four Lithuanian-American General Congresses, where the most important resolutions on the issue of the liberation of Lithuania were adopted. He was also one of the first founders and one of the directors of the General Lithuanian American Relief Fund (BALF) in 1943-1944. The Fund was mainly instrumental in providing material support to Lithuanian refugees (Displaced Persons) who fled the "red flood" in Europe in 1944, and later, when possible, to the Lithuanian poor and Lithuanian exiles in Siberia. In summary, it can be said that Leonardas Šimutis, without demanding additional compensation, worked in those places and on those issues that seemed important and necessary for Lithuania and Lithuanians.

### Seeking to free Lithuania from the Bolshevik yoke

During his extensive activity, Šimutis accumulated a large personal archive, which was kept and managed after his death by his eldest son Leonardas Jr. This collection of documents was later transferred to the Lithuanian Studies and Research Center in Chicago. It is a very important material for the study of the history of Lithua-

nian-Americans, especially of the Catholic emigre movement of the 20th century.

The extraordinary legacy of the public figure and politician is his diary, written every year from 1936 until his death, which consists of 40 books of thick calendar notes. This diary is unique in that Leonardas Šimutis meticulously filled it in on a daily basis, and as a result, it records events and factual material that are largely unreported in official documents or in the Lithuanian-American press. It is even a kind of chronicle of Lithuanian-American activities, which is and will be of great importance to scholars.

In addition, while he was still alive, in 1971, he published his 500-page study-memoir "Lithuanian American Council: 30 Years of the fight for Lithuania's Freedom, 1940-1970". This book describes in considerable detail the efforts of Lithuanian-Americans to mobilize and act together to win independence for their old homeland and free it from the Bolshevik yoke. The memoirs are richly documented, illustrated with authentic photographs, and the results and achievements of the LAC activities are consistently discussed. The author of the memoirs relied not only on his extensive archive, but also on his diary.

Remembering this prominent figure of the 20th century Lithuanian diaspora in the USA, one can only hope that today Lithuanian Americans and Lithuanians in other countries are not only closely following what is going on in Eastern Europe and Ukraine, but also mobilizing the already necessary political and economic support. The example of Leonardas Šimutis and other diaspora leaders can be a guiding star for all Lithuanians abroad.



Leonardas Šimutis at the Draugas newspaper headquarters

# current events

## Security

With the state of emergency limited to zones bordering Russia (Kaliningrad) and Belarus, the Parliament has applied a temporary ban on Russian and Belarusian TV and radio broadcasts that could reach all of Lithuania. The ban is scheduled to last until October 16, 2024.



Unlike Latvia, which indicated that it would not issue humanitarian visas to Russians seeking to avoid the new draft, Lithuania said it would assess each application individually and coordinate its response with its regional partners and the European Union. During one day in September, eighteen Russians were denied entry at Lithuanian checkpoints with Kaliningrad and Belarus.

Seventy-five percent of all 6-12 grade students (~110,000) choose Russian as their second foreign language. A Russian language textbook that portrays Russia as an attractive democratic state and invites Lithuanian high-school students to visit Crimea has been withdrawn from circulation and will not be used for teaching.

Almost 100 Belarusians attempt daily to illegally enter Lithuania. Recently Lithuania completed a fence and razor wire barrier along its 502 km border with Belarus to stem the migrant flow and accused Belarus' armed and uniformed border guards of entering Lithuania to tamper with the barrier. It said the provocations were dangerous. Lithuania has accused Belarus of directing migrants from Africa and the Middle East via Minsk to Lithuania and Poland.

President Gitanas Nausėda said he would give preference to subsidizing electricity and gas bills over increasing the defense budget to 3% of GDP (NATO recommends 2%; Lithuania currently spends 2.5%). Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė said that the subsidies might cost the state between 500 million and 1 billion euros next year versus 570 million this year.

Behind closed doors, the Vilnius District Court found a former counterintelligence officer guilty of the loss of top-secret information, abuse of office, embezzlement, and falsification of documents. Vytautas Kavaliauskas was employed by the Second Investigation Department (SID) of the Defense Ministry; he was convicted of four crimes over six years. The SID is responsible for intelligence and counterintelligence in the areas of defense, politico-military, military-economic, military-technical, and information security within the National Defense System and its diplomatic institutions. He was sentenced to prison for three years and eight months





and will have to pay 888,000 euros to the SID.

The Lithuanian Ministry of Defense's Materiel Agency has agreed to purchase MK2 and Bolide guided missiles for RBS-70 anti-aircraft systems from the Swedish company, SAAB Dynamics AB, for 45 million euros. The MK2 has a range of 7 km and a maximum altitude of 4 km and is used by many NATO countries; the Bolide is an improved version of the MK2 with a new engine and is faster and more maneuverable with enhanced range and altitude parameters.

The Russian charge d'affaires to Lithuania, Sergey Ryabokon, was expelled from Lithuania for his comments minimizing the "Bloody Sunday" events during Lithuania's fight for independence in 1991. In return, Russia expelled the Lithuanian charge d'affaires. Months ago, Lithuania expelled the Russian Ambassador following the discovery of Russian crimes against humanity in Bucha, Ukraine.

The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry issued a recommendation that Lithuanian citizens should leave Russia and not travel to Russia following the announcement of a partial military mobilization. There is concern that Lithuanian citizens may face detention and persecution.

The Lithuanian Defense Ministry announced plans to accelerate the formation of the active military reserve, assign each reservist to a specific military unit, and purchase weapons for the reserve brigade. The goal is to have an active reserve of 36,000 troops and by 2025, have an active reserve of 120,000.

The 2023 Defense Budget was projected to be 3% of GDP, but with high inflation, that number has been reduced to 1.77 billion euros or 2.52% of GDP, which is still over the NATO recommendation of 2%.

Lithuania has joined the German-led European Sky Shield Initiative to develop a unified ground-based air defense capability through coordinated joint acquisitions. Joining Germany and Lithuania are Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom. Notable omissions are Turkey, Poland, Italy, and Greece.

A Lithuanian lawyer, Mantas Danielius, has been under arrest for over two months under suspicion of spying for Belarus. He solicited work from Belarusian opposition groups such as Our House and Dapamoga but in

turn, passed the information on to the Belarusian KGB and compromised several people who acted as couriers for political prisoners in Belarus who then had to seek asylum in Lithuania.

## Ukraine

President Nausėda, in New York for the UN General Assembly, met with U.S. President Joe Biden and discussed their mutual interest in supporting Ukraine. With the war in Ukraine moving into its eighth month, Russia announced a partial mobilization of 300,000 reservists. In response, Lithuania has raised the alert level of its rapid response force and will convene a meeting of the State Defense Council.

Oleksiy Arestovych, an advisor to the Ukrainian President's office, said that 300,000 Ukrainian troops are fighting the Russian invasion. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the Belarusian opposition leader, who currently lives in Vilnius, said there are Belarusians who have joined the Ukrainians in fighting the Russians to save Europe from Russian aggression.

A Vilnius-based non-government organization, Blue/Yellow, was presented with the European Parliament's European Citizen's Prize for its support of Ukraine. Since 2014 when Russia occupied Crimea, Blue/Yellow has sent over \$30 million in non-lethal supplies through Lithuania and Poland to Ukraine's troops and volunteers. The supplies included medicines, clothing, helmets, and bulletproof vests. The organization was founded and is headed by Swedish special operations soldier and filmmaker Jonas Ohman, who has been awarded Lithuanian citizenship. For details see [www.blue-yellow.lt](http://www.blue-yellow.lt).



## current events

The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) said that more than 1,303,000 Russian citizens have entered the European Union since the beginning of the Ukrainian invasion on February 24. Many have residence permits or visas, and some have dual citizenship. Frontex also said that 1,273,000 Russian citizens have returned to Russia via its land borders. In one week since Russia announced the mobilization, 30,000 Russians have entered Finland.

In mid-September, the Baltic Nations said they would not grant asylum to Russians fleeing military mobilization, and the Baltic Nations and Poland would not issue Schengen visas for Russians.

The Lithuanian Ministry of Defense will provide 2 million euros for winter clothing for 25,000 Ukrainian soldiers and 10,000 sets of winter uniforms.

Radio Free Europe reported that Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda called for the European Union to sanction Belarus for being fully involved with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

LTG Cargo, the freight subsidiary of state-owned Lithuanian Railways, reported it carried 23.6 million tons of freight, a 37% decrease in traffic during the first nine months of 2022 due to sanctions against Russia and Belarus and high energy costs, which reduced fertilizer production.

Almost 13,000 Ukrainian children are registered in Lithuanian schools. The Education, Science, and Sports Minister said Lithuanian schools could accept 26,000 more Ukrainian students, including 3,000 in kindergarten.

## Covid-19

During one day in September, Lithuania recorded 1,707 new Covid-19 cases, of which 1,249 were primary, 447 were secondary, and 11 were tertiary; no deaths were recorded. Currently, there are 162 hospitalized Covid-19 patients and 12 in the ICU. Almost 70% of the population has received one corona virus vaccine dose.

Lithuania's 95-year-old former President Valdas Adamkus has tested positive for Covid-19 and is being treated at home. He will miss a ceremony where he was to be presented with the regalia of an honorary citizen of Vilnius. There are 122 patients hospitalized with Covid-19, with

13 in the ICU. One person contracted the virus four times. The 14-day infection rate has moved down to 234.7 cases per 100,000 people, with the 7-day percentage of positive tests down to 24.4 %.

## Business

Ignitis Renewable, the green energy division of the state-owned Ignitis Grupė, said it had purchased all of the shares of a Latvian company developing a 200-megawatt wind and solar project. The total investment is estimated at 270 million euros.

High electricity costs have caused a Klaipėda-based cardboard producer, Gregeo Klaipėda, to suspend production for about two weeks.

During his visit to New York for the UN General Assembly, President Nausėda met with Steve Collis, President, CEO, and Chairman of the Board of AmerisourceBergen, which is celebrating its fifth anniversary in Lithuania. Three years ago, it opened a shared services center and has 300 employees. The company plans to add 400 more jobs in the next few years. Mr. Collis commented, "Lithuania is well-known for its multilingual talent market." In 2012 it acquired World Courier, a specialized logistics services company that played an essential role in distributing the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against COVID-19. The vaccine requires storage distribution at between -90C and -60C (-130F and -76F).



During his visit to New York, President Nausėda met with the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank, to discuss the U.S. investors' interest in offshore wind parks in the Baltic Sea. In September 2023, Lithuania is planning an



auction to select the developer of a 700-megawatt wind farm 30-40 km off the coast. This project will generate about 25% of Lithuania's current energy demand. The project is expected to be completed in 2028.

President Nausėda met with Peter L. Scher, Vice Chairman of JP Morgan Chase, and presented Lithuania's financial technology, IT, science and business cooperation, and position as a leader in the fintech sector, which matches JP Morgan Chase's plans to develop retail digital banking services in continental Europe.

On a year-to-year comparison, Lithuania's GDP grew by 2.6% to 16.1 billion euros but contracted 0.5% in the second quarter versus the first quarter.

The Dutch software development company, Blis Digital, has acquired the Lithuanian development company, HIPER, founded by entrepreneur Adriaan Hoogduijn, who has lived in Lithuania for six years and established six companies in that time. Blis Digital focuses on providing a minimum viable product (MVP) used to validate a customer's needs without the bells and whistles of a final product.



Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė paid an official visit to Japan to enhance mutual research and manufacturing. She met with the head of the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development and the head



of Hitachi and discussed strategic infrastructure projects where Hitachi is known as a major rail system integrator.

Hungary's Wizz Air, which owns a fleet of 350 aircraft, has contracted with FL Technics, a Lithuanian maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) company to provide this essential service. FL Technics is part of the Avia Solutions Group. AviaAM Leasing, another division of Avia Solutions Group, announced that it was purchasing 6 Boeing 777-300ER passenger aircraft and will convert them into lower-emission freighters by 2026.

A team of Taiwanese food safety experts spent two weeks examining three Lithuanian beef packers. The experts represented Taiwan's Food and Drug Administration and the Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine.



## General

The Value-Added Tax will be reduced to zero on heating fuels for two winters. The Finance Ministry estimates that the state will lose 54 million euros in the 2022-23 heating season and 57 million euros in the 2023-24 season.

Intending to reduce energy consumption by 20 %, the Lithuanian Energy Ministry announced a multi-prong energy savings plan which includes lowering indoor temperatures to 19C (66F) and raising air-conditioning to 27C (81F), and turning off hot water in public buildings. It also recommends workers work from home on Fridays and Mondays, to allow lowering heating in buildings to 17C (63F) for four days in a row. The plan also calls for lowering the speed limit from October until May to 110km/hr. (68 m/hr.).

## current events

Preliminary estimates from Statistics Lithuania put annual inflation in Lithuania at 21.1%, with prices for housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, food, non-alcoholic beverages, transport, and services leading the rise in prices. The monthly increases have slowed (early in 2022, inflation was 2%/month; 0.8% in July; 0.6% in August) from weakening consumer spending due to high price growth not being matched by income growth.

The 27 member countries in the European Union recorded a 13% decrease in car crash deaths between 2011 and 2021. Lithuania recorded a 50% decrease and has been awarded the European Transport Safety Coun-



cil (ETSC) Road Safety Performance Index Award. The ETSC panel lauded Lithuania for key factors in making the award: four hundred speed cameras, a national road safety program, zero-tolerance blood alcohol concentration for new and professional drivers and 0.4 g/l for everyone else, an alcohol-interlock program for people who drink and drive, and an in-depth investigation of every deadly vehicle crash to determine the cause(s).

Statistics Lithuania shows preliminary inflation figures for October 2022 at a 22% annual rate with an expected 18.3 % for all of 2022, and inflation is expected to slow to 8.4% for 2023. Inflation is driven by an increase in the cost of food, non-alcoholic drinks, housing, water, electricity, gas, oil, and transportation.

In 2023 the Lithuanian gov-



ernment plans on borrowing 6.7 billion euros which will increase the debt to a total of 30.2 billion euros, or 43% of GDP. Almost two billion euros will be used to repay the country's debt.

Since 2008, the sale of alcoholic beverages has been banned in Seimas buildings. To help retain a caterer, the Seimas board has rescinded this ban and will allow the sale of beverages up to a maximum of 15% alcohol. The Seimas board rejected a member's proposal to do sobriety checks on members of Seimas.

Go Vilnius, the capital's Tourism and Business Development Agency, has created an advertising campaign "Belated Birthday Greetings," highlighting humor to attract foreigners to Vilnius' 700th birthday. The humor is to remind those who may have forgotten about the birthday. The campaign has a website,





# The Winter Fairy Tale brings the real winter to Portland

Gražina Kazilienė

On Saturday, December 3rd, the children of the Portland Lithuanian Community, their parents, and other members of the community gathered for the traditional and much anticipated Christmas party, which the students of the Portland Atžalynas Lithuanian Saturday School have been preparing for so long and with much love. A Christmas tree decorated with handmade straw toys and festively decorated tables and hall were waiting for them.

Thank you to all the volunteers who took the time to come in the evening and prepare for the upcoming Christmas event. For several years in a row, they have been led by Milana Korotejev.

Giedrė Babarskienė, the chairwoman of the Community Board, warmly welcomed everyone. The children's program was presented by Ernesta Ingelevičiūtė-Bolstad, the Director of the Lithuanian Language School, and then, it was time for the Winter Fairy Tale, a play with characters from fairy tales about winter: Snow Queen (Koviltė), Winter (Sofiaj), Fairy (Emily), Snow Storm (Daina), Wind (Rokas), Icicle (Noah), Elves (Domantas and Jogaila), Christmas Tree (Skirmantė), Bunny (Mantas), and Snowflake (Liepa).

The play transported us to a wonderful winter fairy tale world, where the Snow Queen reigns. Sometimes, she is angry, sometimes - wrathful, and sometimes - vindictive. However, all of her spells dissipate like fog and are



unable to overcome the friendship and love of the good dwarves, bunnies, icicles, fairies, and snowflakes, who want to be together, help each other, have fun, and not leave anybody alone, forgotten or abandoned.

The children's songs and poems about the Christmas spirit and the fact that in fairy tales, Good often triumphs

## our community

over Evil, reminded us that during this Advent period, we should be more patient, more attentive, more forgiving, and kinder to each other. We should cleanse our souls, free ourselves from all evil thoughts, look up to the sky more often, enjoy the snowflakes falling softly from the sky, and dream of the true miracle when, once in a lifetime, at Christmas, all troubles are forgotten. That is what was sung about in the children's song "Snowflake Music" by poet Antanas Mačernis.



That evening we heard many beautiful songs about winter: "Winter" (Music and lyrics by O. Pučinskienė), "Icicle" (Music by R. Budinavičienė, lyrics by M. Vainilaitis), "Ice Flowers" (Music by A. Kubiliūnas, lyrics by Justinas Marcinkevičius), "Christmas Tree" (Music by L. Paukštyte, lyrics by P. Juodelė), "Santa Claus" (Music by R. Bočkienė, lyrics by Z. Gaižauskaitė), "Christmas in the Woods" (Music and lyrics by Inga Šeduikienė), "The Winter's Tale" (Music by M. Vaitkevičius, lyrics by V. Barauskas), "The Snow Girl's Song" (Music and lyrics by Gražina Strickienė).

At the end of the performance, the children danced in a circle with Santa Claus himself, who came with a big bag of presents. It was so much fun for everyone, including the wonderful staff of the Atžalynas Lithuanian Language School: the principal Ernesta Ingelevičiūtė-Bolstad and the teachers Laima Kazlauskaitė-Meurer and Kristina Kupčiūnienė. The audience applauded the little actors and singers and thanked the teachers and the children's parents, who also contributed to the success of this performance.

At the end of the evening, as always, a plentiful Christmas Eve and Christmas Day buffet awaited the audience: herring, fried fish, colorful vegetable medleys, toasted



bread, homemade cheese, and eye-catching sweets. It was delicious! Thank you, our lovely hostesses!

It was lovely to see everyone, to chat and sing together the Christmas carols "Silent Night the Voice Caught," "Sleep Today," "Silent Night," and others, led by Vilius Žalpis.

The winter holidays bring much joy to our hearts. At this time, everyone tries to go back home to the family table. What a joyful celebration and communion of love! So let us spread goodness and bring hope to the world through our deeds of love.

Christmas is coming to envelop us in its radiant goodness and peace so that we may feel stronger and happier. The Board of the Portland Lithuanian Community wishes that the warmth of the coming Christmas touch your hearts and bring new and wonderful colors to your lives.





Suktinis Lithuanian Folk Dance Group Performs in the Thanksgiving Day Parade in Chicago



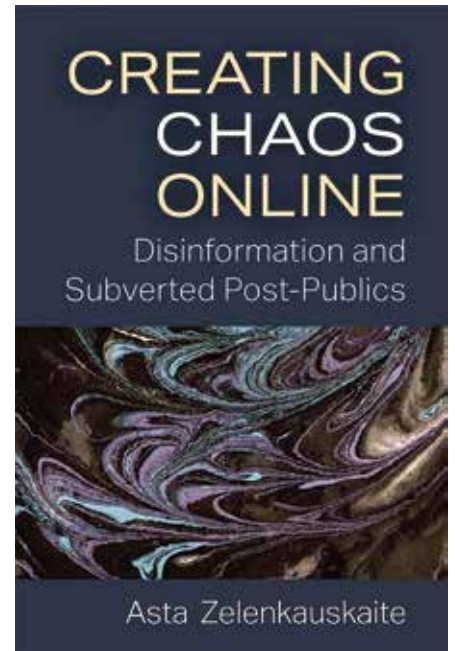
Gediminas Lithuanian School Students are Getting Ready for Christmas Art Show

# Creating Chaos Online.

## Disinformation and Subverted Post-Publics

By Asta Zelenkauskaitė

With the prevalence of disinformation geared to instill doubt rather than clarity, *Creating Chaos Online* unmasks disinformation when it attempts to pass as deliberation in the public sphere and distorts the democratic processes. Asta Zelenkauskaitė finds that repeated tropes justifying Russian trolling were found to circulate across not only all analyzed media platforms' comments but also across two analyzed sociopolitical contexts suggesting the orchestrated efforts behind messaging. Through a dystopian vision of publics that are expected to navigate in the sea of uncertain both authentic and orchestrated content, pushed by human and nonhuman actors, *Creating Chaos Online* offers a concept of post-publics. The idea of post-publics is reflected within the continuum of treatment of public, counter public, and anti-public. This book argues that affect-instilled arguments used in public deliberation in times of uncertainty, along with whataboutism constitute a playbook for chaos online.



*Asta Zelenkauskaitė is Associate Professor of Communication at Drexel University where she is part of the Center for Science, Technology & Society. Dr. Zelenkauskaitė holds an affiliation with Vilnius Tech University (Lithuania).*

PRAISE / AWARDS

"This is a comprehensive analysis of Russian trolling and disinformation. Zelenkauskaitė explains the aims, scope, strategy, tactics, rhetoric, policies, and mechanics of Russian trolling in the most exhaustive, comprehensive, and empirically-rooted treatment of this subject that I have seen." — Janis Chakars, Neumann University

"This book skillfully walks the thin line between falling through the rabbit hole of 'dark participation' sites, and zooming out to unpack and analyze it; taming the chaos for us, while letting us have a taste of it at the same time." — Carmel Vaisman, Tel Aviv University

bridges

## SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Please check all that apply:

- New     Renewal
- Gift     Donation

**Mail to:**

LAC, Inc./BRIDGES Subscriptions  
6812 Meadowcrest Drive  
Downers Grove, IL 60516

Order online with PayPal at [javlb.org](http://javlb.org)

Make check payable to: Lithuanian American Community. Please mark "Bridges" on the Memo line.

**Please send:**

- 1 year electronic (10 issues via email) \$30
- 1 year print (10 issues by mail) \$50
- 2 years print (20 issues by mail) \$95

Your Name (please print)

Gift Subscription Name (please print)

Your Email

Gift Subscription Email

Your Address

Apt. No.

Gift Subscription Address

Apt. No.

City

State

Zip

City

State

Zip

December 2022





Lithuanian Christmas Tree at the Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, MA



Lithuanian Christmas Tree at the Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Atlanta, GA



Lithuanian Christmas Tree at the O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, IL



**Lietuvių Opera Čikagoje**  
kvičia Jus į

12/31  
7:00pm

**NAUJAMETINĖ VAKARĄ**

*Stebuklinga  
Grafo  
naktis  
pilyje*



Naujametinę nuotaiką kurs Čikagos Lietuvių Operos  
daininkai, solistai bei šokėjai.

Visą vakarą Jums gros ir dainuos  
šauniausia, linksmiausia, charizmatiškiausia  
Lietuvos atlikėjų grupė

**LIETUVAIČIAI**

Gardžiais patiekalais pasirūpins „Grand Dukes“ restoranas. Veiks baras.	Vakaras vyks PLC R.Banio šeimos Pokylių salėje 14911 127th St. Lemont, IL 60439	Aprangos kodas: puošnus, žėrintis, vakarinis. Bilieto kaina: \$180 (vidurnaktinio šampanas įskačiuotas)
---	---	---

Veiks vaikų kambarys \$20 vaikui: vaisės - pica ir gaivūs gėrimai.

Bilietus galite įsigyti paskambinę:  
708-252-5211 Dianai arba 708-250-4284 Ingai

# bridges

VOLUME 46

ISSUE 10

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

