

# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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July/August 2016



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**Cover:** Backstage smiles at the XV North American Lithuanian Dance Festival. Photo: Sandra Scedrina

**Back cover:** Feeling a sense of accomplishment at the end of the festival. Photo: Kazys Razgaitis

from the editor

## The Art of the Dance

On my last visit to Lithuania, my cousin asked me if I'd be interested in attending the ballet in Vilnius. Just days later, seated a few rows from the stage, I found myself every bit as mesmerized by the movements of the dancers as I had when I watched my first performance when I was a little girl.

It struck me then that I had never outgrown my fascination with dance.

I'm not sure how it started, but it started early. One of my most prized possessions was a jewelry box with a ballerina that popped up and pirouetted to Swan Lake when the lid was opened. Little ballerinas held the candles on my birthday cakes for many years. I had ballet coloring books, a record album of musical selections from popular ballets, books about the lives of famous ballerinas. When I was in second grade, I began to take ballet lessons. And after four years of classes, I had not been in one production.

All that effort, it seemed, proved nothing except that I was singularly ungraceful.

My love of dance didn't end when I became an adult, but it did morph into appreciation rather than participation, and broadened to other styles. For some years, I still went religiously to see the Nutcracker every Christmas while I also devoured classic song and dance films of the 1930s and 1940s. I even suffered through the atrociously scripted and woodenly acted movie *White Nights* just for the brilliant dance sequences by Mikhail Baryshnikov and Gregory Hines.

Inspired by Hines and other dancers both classical and contemporary, I signed up for tap lessons. I envisioned myself hoofing it old style like legends Ann Miller and Gene Kelly. Sadly, my lack of coordination caught up with me. After a third "beginners" class in which 90 percent of the dancers clearly had previous tap experience, and I still could not brush-pank-step-heel, I hung up my Capezios in tears.

About 10 years later, perhaps forgetting the tap fiasco, I bid on and won tango lessons during a silent auction at our local arts league. I went down twice in the first class, done in by the required leather-soled shoes that allow one to glide a little too easily, but still felt I would get the hang of it with a little persistence. The lessons, however, were cut tragically short, this time when my other half took a tumble down the stairs one Sunday morning on the way to class. At least that injury didn't take place at my hands (or feet).

But then it happened—I found my niche. One night at English-speaking family camp at Camp Neringa, I was whisked from the sidelines during a particularly raucous number by one of the Lithuanian-speaking staff. I had no time to protest that I didn't know the song or the steps—and I didn't have to. Caught in the moment, I found I could easily follow his lead and soon was swinging and stomping my way around the floor without injuring myself, my partner or any adjacent dancer.

Until this year, I indulged my new-found love of Lithuanian folk dancing only at community events, so I was thrilled to attend (as a spectator) my very first Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival in Baltimore in July. And I'm excited that we're bringing you this issue with special coverage of the festival, including photos and a comprehensive history of the event. If you were there, I hope you enjoy this look back; if you weren't, I hope it inspires you to participate in the future.

Wishing you a spring in your step,

Teresė Vekteris, Editor

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## Sharing the Joy

Thank you for the last two issues of Bridges. They surely have improved with each issue. I especially liked Rimas Domanskis' article regarding our heritage [May 2016].

We lived in New Mexico when our children were small and had no Lithuanian friends for them to play with, other than visiting our folks on the East Coast in the summer. However, we had books which we bought from the Chicago Lithuanian schools and had our own Šeštadieninė Mokykla [Saturday School]. They learned to speak Lithuanian fluently, to write and about Lithuanian history and literature. I believe that we are exceptionally lucky to be able to pick the best of the Lithuanian culture and the American to be better people.

Thank you for publishing your Bridges and sharing the joy of having a Lithuanian heritage.

Respectfully,  
Liuda Avizonis, via email

## A Big Role to Play

It is a thrill to receive the Bridges, June 2016 issue. Outstanding! The photography, articles and the layout—superb! One can imagine the amount of care, the hours put in by the small but exemplary staff to make such happen.

In the past, I had visited the Lithuanian Consulates in Manhattan (420 5th Ave.) and in Chicago (Ontario St., now in new offices). There are tables with magazines in the waiting rooms. Bridges should be among them.

Can you keep it up with so many issues per year? Hope you can. Bridges has a big role to play.

Sincerely,  
John Vazbys  
Mahwah, N.J.

PS: I am attaching a \$30 check as a donation.

**Editor's response:** *Letters like your make the effort worth it. We very much appreciate your donation, as well as all of the generous donations made by our readers. Because our subscription price just barely covers printing and postage, every contribution helps.*

## Current and Informative

I would like to compliment Bridges' staff for producing a fabulous magazine. The articles are current and very informative with the focus on Lithuanian history, culture, national cuisine, sports and current events. I like how social/economic issues are discussed and how religious aid and the Lithuanian diaspora are helping/supporting those in need.

Sincerely,  
Carol A. Luschas, via email

## What I Envisioned

WOW!!! The addition of partisan photos really adds punch to the articles [Memories Can't Fade Away, May 2016].

Back in the mid seventies I was in two Krašto Valdybas [Lithuanian American Community National Boards] headed by my buddies Juozas Gaila and Algimantas Gečys—that is when we "created" Bridges. And I must say, finally, with your arrival it has become the type of magazine that I had envisioned back then. You will receive news from our community in the future, as well as new subscriptions.

Rimas A. Chesonis  
Hon. Consul of the  
Republic of Lithuania  
Webster, N.Y.

**Editor's response:** *We can't think of a better compliment than to know that we're fulfilling the vision of our founders! Thank you!*

## Priceless Essays

I really liked the essay contest on the Partisans [May 2016]. Getting the young Lithuanians involved is priceless.

Joanne Antanavage, via email

## May in July

Just got my May issue [on July 10]. (Hahaha.)

Great article by Rimas Domanskis. After a super-Lithuanian week in Baltimore, I really appreciated his words. Many dancers do not speak the language but they love the culture. We in Madison are lucky to have a community made up of all 3 bangos [waves] who work together in harmony and friendship to keep that culture alive.

The cooking section made me cry. Jana Motivans is a great writer!

The Alytus [student] essays are terrific. They write better than Americans of the same age. Everything you print is wonderful.

Nijolė Etwiler, via email

**Editor's response:** *Thank you for your good humor about our chronic lateness. We laugh, too, to keep from crying.*

## We Love Feedback!

We welcome letters and feedback from our readers. Please address correspondence to: Editor, Bridges Lithuanian-American News Journal, 6125 McCallum St., Philadelphia, PA 19144, or email bridges.terese@gmail.com. Letters may be edited for space or clarity.

# current events

... Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius met with the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who was visiting Lithuanian sites including the Hill of Crosses. Via Parolin, Butkevičius extended an invitation to Pope Francis to visit Lithuania in 2018, the centenary of the restored statehood after World War I.

... The Lithuanian Crime Police Bureau led Europol, Kaunas police, Vilnius police and the Lithuania Forensic Research Center in busting two printing operations making counterfeit 50-euro notes. One shop produced low-quality "paper" but the other had sophisticated laser equipment that reproduced the security holograms. Almost 3.5 million fake euros were confiscated and three Lithuanians were arrested.

... Several hundred people gathered in Vasingtono aikštė (Washington Square) in Vilnius on July 23 to commemorate the 76th anniversary of U.S. Secretary of State Sumner Welles' diplomatic statement refusing to recognize the Soviet Union's annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in 1940. The Welles Declaration allowed Lithuania to maintain an independent diplomatic presence in Washington, D.C., during the 50 years of Soviet rule.

## Around the World

... Regarding Brexit, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė says that a "huge gap between the British people and the country's politicians has emerged." Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas

Butkevičius said, "In my opinion, a situation has started forming lately when the European Commission in certain cases even ordered which laws and which decisions on the national level parliaments and governments should adopt. That I think was one of the biggest governance mistakes." For example, the European Commission recently warned Lithuania for blocking the free broadcast of Russian TV channels whose editorial view differed from Lithuanian government positions. The Lithuanian Radio and Television has recently removed the requirement that the Russian broadcasts be only as a paid service.

... Litvaks—Lithuanian Jews or relatives of Jews that "left" Lithuania between 1919 and 1940—are now eligible for dual citizenship. A recent amendment to the citizenship law makes it easier to prove that they "left" rather than needing prove that they "fled." For example, South Africa has a Lithuanian diaspora of about 80,000 and many desire a European Union passport in addition to their South African passport to ease travel, buy property and take advantage of educational opportunities in Europe.

... The Eurovision Song Contest was won by Ukrainian Jamala, who sang the politically charged "1944" about Stalin's forced deportation of Crimean Tatars during World War II. The Russian candidate came in third. Negative Russian sentiment may result in their boycotting the next contest because of Eurovision allowing a political song.

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## August Anniversaries



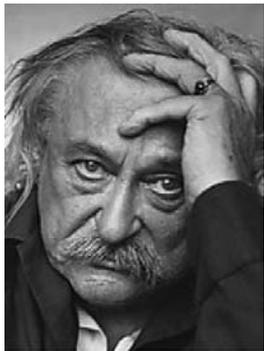
### 130 years ago

**August 21 1886**

Birth of Povilas Lukšys, the first Lithuanian army soldier to die for Lithuanian independence.

A soldier in the Imperial Russian Army during World War I, Lukšys was one of the first volunteers in the newly established Lithuanian army that was established in November 1918, several months after the republic declared its independence.

In November 1918, the Bolsheviks attacked Lithuania from the east trying to prevent its independence and to spread the global proletarian revolution. By December, they had taken Vilnius and Šiauliai. On February 8, 1919, during a reconnaissance mission, Lukšys was killed in a firefight near the village of Taučiūnai, in the Kėdainiai region. A monument commemorating his death was built there in 1929.



### 125 years ago

**August 22, 1891**

Birth of Jacques Lipchitz, one of the world's premier cubist sculptors, in Druskininkai, Lithuania. Born Chaim Yakov Lipchitz, he changed his name to Jacques after he move to Paris in 1909 as a teenager. There he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julian, and befriended Picasso and Modigliani, who influenced his development as an artist.

He produced his first Cubist sculptures in 1913, had his first solo exhibition in 1920 and won a gold medal for his Prometheus sculpture at the 1937 Paris World Exposition.

After the German occupation of France in 1940, Lipchitz fled for the U.S., settling in New York State. He received numerous important public commissions in the U.S. and Israel throughout his career. Much of Lipchitz's late life was spent in Italy. He died on May 16, 1973, in Capri.

### 85 years ago

**August 5, 1931**

Official opening of the Žaliakalnis funicular railway in Kaunas, the first funicular in Lithuania. It climbs 466 feet up from behind the Vytautas the Great War Museum to the Basilica of the Resurrection.

### 25 years ago

**August 5, 1991**

Lithuania introduced a new temporary currency, the talonas, to replace the Russian ruble.

**August 19-21, 1991**

During the 1991 Soviet coup d'état attempt, also known as the August Putsch or August Coup, Soviet military troops took over several communications and other government facilities in Vilnius and other cities, but returned to their barracks when the coup failed.

The August Coup was an unsuccessful attempt by members of the Soviet Union's government to take control of the country from Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev. The coup leaders were hard-line members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union who opposed Gorbachev's reform program and the new union treaty that he had negotiated decentralizing much of the government's power to the republics. Although the coup collapsed in only two days, the event destabilized the Soviet Union and contributed to its dissolution. In addition to placing tanks in Red Square prepared to attack the barricaded Soviet parliament building, tanks were also deployed throughout the Baltics. On August 19, Lithuania's head of state Vytautas Landsbergis encourages people to engage in passive resistance. As the coup collapsed, Soviet troops pulled out of Lithuania on August 21.

The Lithuanian government banned the Communist Party and ordered confiscation of its property. Following the failed coup, Lithuania received widespread international recognition and was admitted to the United Nations on September 17, 1991.

**August 23 1991**

Monuments to Lenin were dismantled in Klaipėda and Vilnius. Photo: Vytautas Daraškevičius, from the exhibition "To Freedom."



**August 26, 1991**

Lithuanian Customs began issuing Lithuanian visas.

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