

# bridges



november 2011

L I T H U A N I A N   A M E R I C A N   N E W S   J O U R N A L

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*\*FRONT COVER:* Cousins Valerie Etwiler and Zoe Etwiler enjoy a moment in front of the Madison, Wisconsin State House. They are the granddaughters of Nijole Etwiler who is the Director of the dance group, Žaibas - Madison, Wisconsin.

## Congratulations to Ramutė Zukas

*On September 25 Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister Audronis Azubalis attended the Lithuanian Mass at Annunciation Church in Williamsburg (New York).*

*Monsignor Joseph Calise, administrator of the parish's Lithuanian community, welcomed the Foreign Affairs Minister during Mass and at a reception that followed.*

*Mr. Azubalis bestowed the Medal of Honor on parishioner Ramute Zukas for her work and dedication to the Lithuanian American Community. Ms. Zukas has fought long and hard against the closing of Our Lady of Vilnius Church in New York City.*

*Bridges congratulates Ramute on this well deserved honor.*

**\* BACK COVER:**

**The 14th  
Lithuanian  
Folk Dance Festival is  
coming to Boston on  
July 1, 2012**

*Come experience this celebration of  
Lithuanian dance and culture!*

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## XIV LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL BOSTON, JULY 1, 2012

### MEET THE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

Planning the XIV Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival is a job of monumental proportions undertaken by a group of dedicated individuals committed to fostering the love and appreciation of Lithuanian folk dancing in young and old alike. If you have had the privilege of witnessing a festival in the past, you already know what a splendid demonstration of Lithuanian pride the festival really is. If you are planning to attend your first festival in Boston next year, you will be treated to a superbly executed festival with every detail perfected.

Perhaps the most daunting job in planning the festival is that of artistic director. The XIV Folk Dance Festival is astoundingly fortunate to have two creative and dynamic artistic directors in the persons of Vida Brazaitytė from Chicago, Illinois and Romas Jonusonis from Toronto, Canada. These two talented individuals have already been meeting for over a year and have designed a dance program that will enthrall each of us. Their vision will produce a spectacle of music and dance that will be long remembered. Start making plans to come to the XIV Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival in Boston next July. More information is available at the festival website:

**www.sokiusvente2012.org or  
www.lithuanianfolkdancefestival.org.**  
You may email any questions to  
**info@sokiusvente2012.org or call 781-784-8491.**

In the meantime, please read further to get acquainted with the festival's artistic directors.



**Vida Brazaitis -  
Artistic Director**

Vida has been involved with the Chicago Lithuanian Folk Dance Ensemble, Grandis, as dancer and/or ensemble teacher since 1985 and has participated in the VI - XIII Folk Dance Festivals in North America and the folk dance festivals in Lithuania in 1994, 2003 and 2007. She is also a member of

the Board of the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute.

Lithuanian folk dancing is Vida's greatest passion in life. For "Grandis" 40th anniversary program she wrote: "Dance is a celebration of the human spirit, an

art that transcends the boundaries of language, age, and culture. Folk dancing is a form of social dancing that has become part of the customs and traditions of a people... In this great nation that we call a melting pot – where people from many lands have come together and formed a unified culture – the Lithuanian community has preserved old traditions and the Lithuanian language of its heritage." Preserving and promoting the rich history and heritage of the Lithuanian people through the medium of dance has become Vida's mission. She takes tremendous pride in seeing a simple dance write-up become a folk art masterpiece of extraordinary beauty.

Although Vida's passion is folk dancing, she also devotes time to the Lithuanian Scout Association, the Lithuanian-American Community, Lemont, IL chapter, Lithuanian language school, and Vydunas Youth Fund.

As artistic director, Vida is responsible for preparing the festival's program, dance descriptions, music recordings and the training of dance teachers.



**Romas Jonusonis –  
Artistic director**

Romas graduated from the Academy of Music of Lithuania with a masters degree in choreography. He works with one of North America's largest Lithuanian folk dance ensembles, Toronto's "Gintaras", which has over 100 dancers in four age groups.

Romas is an active member in the Lithuanian community in Toronto. For six years he was president of the Association of Lithuanian Immigrants from the Suvalkai Region, organizing the Lithuanian pavilion at the multi cultural festival "Carassauga". Romas has been a long time member on the board of directors for Lithuanian Martyrs' Church and also sings in the church choir.

As artistic director Romas is responsible for preparing the festival's program, dance descriptions, music recordings and the training of dance teachers.

*Submitted by Gloria Adomkaitis, Member,  
XIV Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival Organizing Committee*

## XIV LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL BOSTON, JULY 1, 2012

*One in a series of articles introducing folk dance groups that will be participating in the festival.*

### **Meet Žaibas - Madison, Wisconsin**

\*\*\*\*\*

A little fish in a little pond. That's Žaibas Lithuanian Dancers in Madison, Wisconsin, a city that counts probably no more than 100 Lithuanians. And yet, Žaibas has managed to survive for 20 years, and is looking forward to participating in its 6<sup>th</sup> Šokių Šventė, in Boston, 2012.

Žaibas (Lightning) was founded in 1991 by Vida Kazlauskaitė Stark, and premiered at the 1992 Šokių Šventė in Chicago. That was a heady moment for many of us. Some of our members had danced in their youth, but for most of us it was the first time that we had participated in a Šokių Šventė as more than spectators. It was the impetus to keep going for years after, performing annually in Madison's International Festival and other local events.

Under the leadership of Asta Sepetytė, our vadovė (director) for 11 years, we danced in Chicago, Toronto, and even Chiba, Japan. A few of us marched in Dainų Šventė parades in Vilnius, and after Asta's retirement, under my directorship, we danced in the 2008 Šokių Šventė in Los Angeles, and the 2009 South American Šokių Šventė in Berisso, Argentina.

Most of our dancers are Lithuanian in one way or another. Many of us are "dipukai" (Displaced Persons) or children of "dipukus". Some are grandchildren of the first wave of Lithuanians in the early 1900's, and several are recent, third-wave immigrants. The few non-Lithuanians in our group have been spouses or significant others. Among our dancers we count the



*St. Clare Meadows*

grandson of a president of Lithuania and the granddaughter of the U.S. consul to Lithuania. Our audiences, on the other hand, are mostly American, so our programs serve as an introduction to our rich Lithuanian culture.

Through the years we have incorporated our children into our programs, but it wasn't until 2009 that we created Žaibutis (Little Lightning) a separate dance group of children ages 6-10. Most of them come from Baraboo, Wisconsin, pop. 11,000, which numbers 2 Lithuanian families, and so more than half of them are non-Lithuanian but they enjoy the dancing and the opportunity to perform on a stage. One of their performances has had over 10,000 hits on YouTube, and two of the girls appeared on the posters and brochures advertising the 2010 Madison International Festival.

Unlike Lithuanian dance groups in larger cities, we have no center, parish, camp or club in which to meet or practice, and funding is scarce, but we have assistance from Madison Vilnius Sister Cities, Inc. and the support of the small but enthusiastic Lithuanian community in Madison. For this we are exceedingly grateful.

To learn more about Žaibas, please see our website at <http://madisonvilnius.org/zaibas/index.html>

Or catch us on youtube.com; just type in "zaibas dancers" or "zaibas madison" and you'll see several of our dances. And be sure to look for us in Boston in 2012.

***Iki pasimatymo!***

*Nijole Semenaitė Etwiler*



*2011 Folk Fest*

# A Lithuanian Champion

*Eugenija Misevičius*



*Lithuanian Povilas Vaitonis  
Canadian Chess Champion.*



*Povilas Vaitonis preferred a good  
game with a friend rather than  
tournament competition.*

At the end of this summer everyone in Lithuania was living and breathing basketball. The Men's Basketball European Championship of 2011 that was held in Lithuania was an extraordinary event for our nation as it was held in our country for the first time in 72 years. The entire country and Lithuanians living abroad hoped for our national team to win it all - or at least win a bronze medal. To everyone's disappointment Lithuania was defeated by Macedonia in the quarter finals and was left with a final fifth place. But there is no need for tears, I think our basketball players did everything they could and even fifth place is a good achievement for such a small nation. Let's hope the Lithuanian National Team will make it to the 2012 Olympics! There are many great basketball players in Lithuania and quite a few are well known abroad, some earn their living in the prestigious NBA basketball league.

Probably everyone in the USA knows who Arvydas Sabonis is. I am happy to break the news to you if you didn't hear it yet, that this Lithuanian legend was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame (Springfield, MA) on August 11 of this year.

It is also my pleasure to let you know that there is one more Lithuanian who was granted a similar honor – Povilas Vaitonis, who on July 9<sup>th</sup> was inducted into the Canadian Chess Hall of Fame. The ceremony took place at the convention centre in the Yonge Room of the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel in Toronto which is located on the city's waterfront. The event was attended by approximately 60-65 people. Also in attendance was the Lithuanian Ambassador to Canada, Ginte Damusis, and a grandmaster from Lithuania, Eduardas Rosenthalis, who was there to compete in the Canadian Open Chess Championship. David Cohen, the founder and president of the Canadian

Chess Hall of Fame, presented Magdalena Vaitonis, the wife of late Povilas Vaitonis, with the induction plaque.

Let me tell you about the Lithuanian chess master Povilas Vaitonis. He was born on August 15, 1911 in Lithuania, in the small village of Uzpaliai. Povilas' father, a well educated farmer, taught Povilas to play chess at the age of five. He began to distinguish himself in chess on a national level when he entered the University of Kaunas in 1930 to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Humanities and Classical Literature. In 1934 Povilas began his law studies at the University of Vilnius. While a law student, he won his first Lithuanian Chess Championship in 1934. He held the Lithuanian Chess title again in 1937 and 1938. Later Povilas also competed as a member of the Lithuanian team at several Olympiads. Povilas Vaitonis was a tall, handsome, athletic man who also played basketball, soccer, tennis, badminton and pole vaulting. He played goalie for Lithuania's national soccer team and was Lithuania's pole vaulting champion three times.

From 1940 to 1944 Povilas worked in the capital city of Vilnius as a Manager at the City's Electric Power Station. In 1944 he fled the country to escape from Soviet totalitarianism and the fascism of the Nazis. In chess, they have something called a "gambit": a strategy whereby you sacrifice material for positional advantage. That's what happened to Povilas in real life. He made a choice to give up everything – a good job, his country, and even worse, his family and friends. He found an abandoned, but leaky row boat at the shore of the Baltic Sea and used it to chase down a departing vessel with other refugees. When his row boat sank, he swam the rest of the way under a hail of bullets. Since then Vaitonis never saw his parents or

country again. When he finally reached the boat he met Magdalena Martinkus, fell in love with her and later built a beautiful family. Together they raised six children: five girls and one boy.

In 1949, Povilas and his family moved to Canada where he started to work as a farm laborer in Hamilton. But soon after his management learned that he spoke excellent English, as well as four other languages, he was promoted to an office job. He studied to become a Cost Accountant and held this position at the Bell Thread Company in Hamilton for twenty one years. His last position before retirement was as the Manager of Talka, the Lithuanian Credit Union in Hamilton. Meanwhile his wife Magdalena was a very successful real estate agent for thirty five years. She started her career at the age of forty three.

Povilas Vaitonis was the Canadian chess champion twice in the 1950s. He won numerous other championships. But Povilas had no real love of tournament play, saying that he much preferred to have a good game with a friend. In his tournament play, he gained a reputation as a gentleman for his friendly manners and sportsmanship. Never having studied chess theory, he relied on intuition, brinksmanship and finesse. His play was fox like, agile, and he had a gift for the unexpected. But he always remained modest about his abilities and achievements and often attributed his wins to "Lady Luck".

Even though Povilas never went back to Lithuania, he never forgot his heritage and was an active member of the Lithuanian community in Canada. He played a major role in helping his fellow Lithuanian refugees establish themselves in their new homeland. He helped to raise funds to build the first Hamilton Lithuanian Church and Community Centre and was instrumental in establishing several Lithuanian organizations, including a Sports Club and the Credit Union.

Povilas Vaitonis was a philosophical man with a deeply ironic and subtle sense of humor. He used to complain that people rarely laughed at his jokes because he had such a serious demeanor that they couldn't be certain he was joking. Povilas was a life-long student of chess. He passed away in 1983. Appropriately, his grave stone bears a carving of the Queen chess piece, the game's most powerful player, and an inscription of Descartes' famous assertion, "Cogito, ergo sum", which translated reads, "I think, therefore, I am."

*Eugenija Misevicius is a graduate of the University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT. She serves as the secretary of the Lithuanian Journalist Association. Eugenija freelances as a court interpreter. She belongs to the Lithuanian Sports Club of Connecticut and enjoys participating in amateur sports such as martial arts. She and her husband, Laurynas, participate in many Lithuanian events.*

*\* Photos from Vaitonis family albums*



*Povilas Vaitonis' family at his induction into the Hall of Fame from left: Nijolė, Rūta, Algis, Magdalena, David Cohen (chief organizer for the Canadian Chess Championship who organized the induction of Vaitonis into the Canadian Chess Hall of Fame), Danutė and Vida.*



*Povilas and his family in Lithuania circa the 1920's.*



*Vaitonis family in 1968. Front row, left to right: Rūta, Algis. Back row: Danutė, Nijolė, Magdalena, Povilas, Vida and Gina.*

# Calendar of Events for November- December 2011

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

## NOVEMBER

### Nov. 5-6, 2011 - Mugė Lithuanian Festival

Lithuanian Music Hall  
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.,  
Phila., PA

Time each day 12 to 6  
Lithuanian food, music,  
vendors & much more.

### Nov. 6, 2011 Lithuanian Fall Picnic in Phoenix

Beer Garden opens at 11am  
Picnic & Food begin at 1 pm  
South Mountain Pavilion,  
Tumbleweed Park  
745 E. Germann Rd.,  
Chandler, AZ 85286  
Details to follow as the  
date approaches!  
<http://www.lithaz.org>

### Nov. 15, 2011 - 7-9 pm Amber Roots

Lithuanian Heritage Club -  
Joanne Poset will give a  
presentation on her ancestor,  
St. Barbara Umieštuskas &  
the old church in Zagare.  
Lithuanian Music Hall,  
2715 E. Allegheny Ave.,  
Phila. PA.

Use side door to Culture  
Center downstairs hall.  
Refreshments will be served.  
For info:

call Millie 610-497-5469  
[milliemarks@aol.com](mailto:milliemarks@aol.com)

Sponsor: Amber Roots  
Lithuanian Heritage Club.

## DECEMBER

### Dec. 3, 2011 - 8 pm BENEFIT FOR NERINGA AT

### LITHUANIAN EMBASSY in DC

Out of concern for Neringa's  
misfortune, His Excellency  
Z. Pavilionis is graciously  
opening the doors of the  
Lithuanian embassy in  
Washington, DC for a Neringa  
benefit evening. We invite  
Neringa supporters both far &  
wide to come to the embassy  
on Saturday, Dec. 3. Current  
camper & rising pianist  
Darius Shubert will perform &  
camp fun will be had by all.  
More details to follow.

**Dec. 3, 2011 - 2:00 - 3:30 pm**  
**Lithuanian Extravaganza**  
Seattle Public Library,  
Central Branch, 1000 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.,  
performances by our  
Lithuanian musicians,  
singers & dancers.  
[http://seattle.lietuviu-  
bedruomene.org/events.htm](http://seattle.lietuviu-bedruomene.org/events.htm)

**Dec. 13, 2011 - 7-9 pm**  
**Annual Kūčios**  
Lithuanian Music Hall,  
2715 Allegheny Ave., Phila., PA  
Please bring a meatless dish,  
Lithuanian if possible. No fee is  
charged. Use side door to  
Culture Center to downstairs.  
For info:

Call Millie 610-497 5469  
[milliemarks@aol.com](mailto:milliemarks@aol.com)  
Sponsor: Amber Roots Club,  
Lithuanian Heritage Club

**Dec. 17, 2011 - 3:00 pm**  
**Christmas Social -**  
Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall  
1151 S. Galena St.  
(just west of Mississippi & Havana)

Denver, CO 80247  
For info.:contact  
CO-LAC Board Members.

**Dec. 17, 2011 - 4-10 pm**  
**"Kalėdų Vakaras"-**  
Christmas Party -Davis Hall at  
Wyandotte County Lake,  
91 St & Leavenworth Rd.  
Kansas City, KS  
Info.:[http://www.kclith.  
org/eventCalendar.html](http://www.kclith.org/eventCalendar.html)

**Dec. 17, 2011 - 3:00 pm**  
**Christmas Social**  
Fraternal Order of Eagles Hall  
1151 S. Galena St.  
(just west of Mississippi & Havana)  
Denver, CO 80247  
For info:  
CO-LAC Board Members.

**Dec. 17, 2011**  
**Kūčios ir Kalėdinė Eglutė**  
Lithuanian Christmas Eve Meal  
& Children's program.  
Latvian Hall  
[http://portlandlithuanians.com/p  
ages/renginiai-events](http://portlandlithuanians.com/pages/renginiai-events)

**Dec. 18, 2011.**  
**Kūčios & Maironis School**  
**Christmas Program -**  
Mass 10 am  
Annunciation Church,  
259 N. 5<sup>th</sup> St., Brooklyn  
(**Kalėdų Senelis** is  
rumored to be coming!)  
follows at Mt. Carmel Hall,  
N. 8<sup>th</sup> St. at Havemeyer St.  
Sponsors:  
The Annunciation Parish,  
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Association & Maironis School  
<http://www.nyapreiskimo.com>

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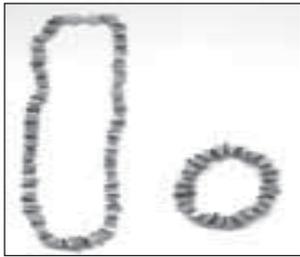
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"Instrukcija" - \$ 20



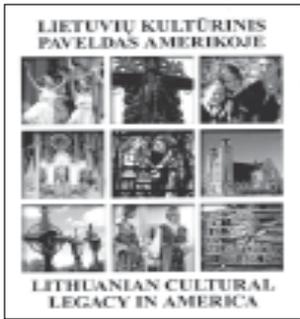
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Pieva" - \$ 20



23 - Exploring Lithuania & Exploring Vilnius  
(2 set DVD with 3 hour total viewing time) - \$ 45.



13 - DVD of 13th Folk  
Dance Festival at Galen  
Center of USC \$20.00



14 - Cultural Legacy Book  
(hardcover, 224 pages) \$45



17 - Car license plate  
holder \$12



18 - LT sticker  
(4" x 9" approx) - \$ 4.

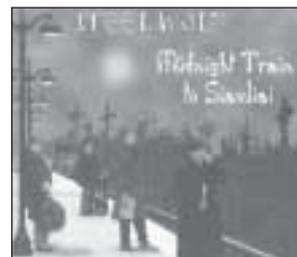
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23	Exploring Lithuania & Exploring Vilnius (2 set DVD with 3 hr. total viewing time)		45	
13	DVD of 13th Folk Dance Festival at Galen Center, USC		20	
14	Cultural Legacy Book (hardcover, 224 pages)		45	
17	Car license plate holder		12	
18	L T sticker (4" x 9" approx)		4	
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7	CD by Vaivora (ethnocultural music)		20	
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25	First Lithuanians in Texas, 116 p.		25	
28	Café Emigrant DVD		25	
15	BRIDGES subscription (10 issues per year)		20	
31	Christmas Hymns CD by Exultate, Rita Kliorys, Director		15	
19	Lietuva decal (1" x 2.5")		3	
			(add shipping) \$6.95	
<b>TOTAL</b>				

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27 - CD by Exultate / Rita Kliorys, director - \$ 15



30 - CD by Steel Wolf \$ 20



7 - CD by Vaivora (ethno-cultural music) - \$ 20



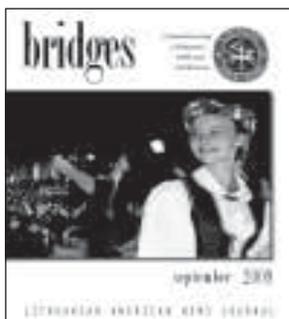
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28 - Café Emigrant DVD \$ 25



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*Meet Žaibas, Lithuanian Dancers  
Madison, Wisconsin*

*The 14th Lithuanian Folk Dance  
Festival is coming to Boston, MA  
July 1, 2012*