

THE 6TH BALTHERNET CONFERENCE IS COMING! CALL FOR PAPERS OPEN UNTIL JUNE 30!

2021 marks 15 years since the first conference focused on the archives of Baltic people abroad. This took place in 2006 at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu and led to the official establishment of the NGO Baltic Heritage Network in 2008.

2021 is the year for BaltHerNet's regular conference, but due to the pandemic we have decided to host it online and not in Vilnius, as was originally planned. The 6th BaltHerNet conference "No Topic Conference" will take place September 15th-16th on Zoom. We have adjusted the event schedule to adapt as much as possible to everyone's time zones. Sessions will take place according to Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian time from 9pm-midnight. It is also possible to participate with a pre-recorded presentation. Similarly, the conference recording can be viewed at a later time.

The last year has changed the world quite drastically. We would like to discuss this at the conference:

- In what position has the pandemic situated memory institutions and communities of Baltic people abroad, including their archives groups, and what could we take from this experience?
- Have the pandemic restrictions changed the priorities of memory institutions/communities and if so, how?
- What new ways of working and new methods have been used?
- How have existing digital and online resources assisted in managing this new situation?
- What new digital and online solutions have been created?
- Has the use of archives collections of Baltic people abroad changed? If so, how?
- How has the pandemic affected collection work?
- What types of innovative solutions have (historical) cultural programmers developed?

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The Baltic Heritage Newsletter is distributed quarterly, on-line. The next deadline for submissions is 15 August 2021. Please send all related enquiries and submissions to Piret Noorhani: piretnoorhani@gmail.com

The Non-Profit Association Baltic Heritage Network was founded in Tartu on January 11, 2008. NPA BaltHerNet was established to foster cooperation between national and private archives, museums, libraries, and institutions of research, public associations and organizations collecting and studying the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora. It aims to facilitate the preservation and research of the historically valuable cultural property of the Baltic diaspora, as well as to ensure accessibility of these materials to the public.

NPA BaltHerNet is also committed to the organising of conferences, seminars and workshops, and to developing and administrating the electronic information website Baltic Heritage Network, a multilingual electronic gateway for information on the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora.

www.balther.net

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- Has the audience of events changed? If so, how?
- How have the restrictions affected exposition work?
- More generally, how has the pandemic affected the lives and livelihood of diaspora communities?

Please submit your presentation propositions by June 30th to piretnoorhani@gmail.com.

The conference will be in English. The length of presentations is 20 minutes.

Conference registration starting May 1st to September 10th at the website: balthet.net. Participation in the conference is free. All those interested across the globe are welcome!

WINNERS ANNOUNCED FOR VEMU'S TRANSLATION COMPETITION

On Sunday May 2nd, VEMU (the Museum of Estonians Abroad), the Estonian Literature Centre, and the Estonian Writers' Union hosted the final event of their Translation Competition. During this approximately 90 minute Zoom event, organizers and participants from many disparate time zones honoured all of the hard work and inspiration that went into this competition.

Commemoration was due because of how the competition connects to a much larger endeavour of continuing to translate Estonian literature into English. Back in January, the competition was announced, with an open call made to all enthusiasts of the Estonian language, particularly those living outside of Estonia. The hope was that, through examining submissions, the jury might be able to identify promising translators for the future of Estonian-English translation. As Ilvi Liive, Director of the Estonian Literary Centre, expressed during the event, "We have some translators, but it's never enough."

Thus, participants had until the 31st of March to translate two texts: Jürgen

Rooste's "Astrid Lindgreni surm" ("The Death of Astrid Lindgren") and Mehis Heinsaar's "Rändaja õnn" (translated as "Wandering Bliss" by the first place winner).

The afternoon of the results announcement began with a warm welcome from Piret Noorhane, Chief Archivist of VEMU, and Jaan Meri, President of the Estonian Studies Centre and Tartu College.

Noorhane had carried the idea for several years before it came to life. Though educated as a literary scholar at the University of Tartu, she described how she "had drifted away from literature, my first love" after working predominately with history as an archivist and museum worker. VEMU delivers programming totalling between 40 and 70 cultural and educational events per year, but Noorhane felt that "more should be done for Estonian literature." And so she went to Tallinn in January 2019 to meet with Tiit Aleksejev, the Chairman of the Estonian Writer's Union, and Kerti Tergem from the Estonian Literary Centre, who is a translator herself. Their discussion culminated in the competition.

Together, Kerti Tergem and Ilvi Liive helped choose the texts for the competition, fitting in with their mandate as an organization. As Tergem explained, the Estonian Literature Centre is what is "making Estonian literature travel." They work closely with foreign publishers and support translators in their professional growth, with activities and resources that include seminars and their website, estlit.ee.

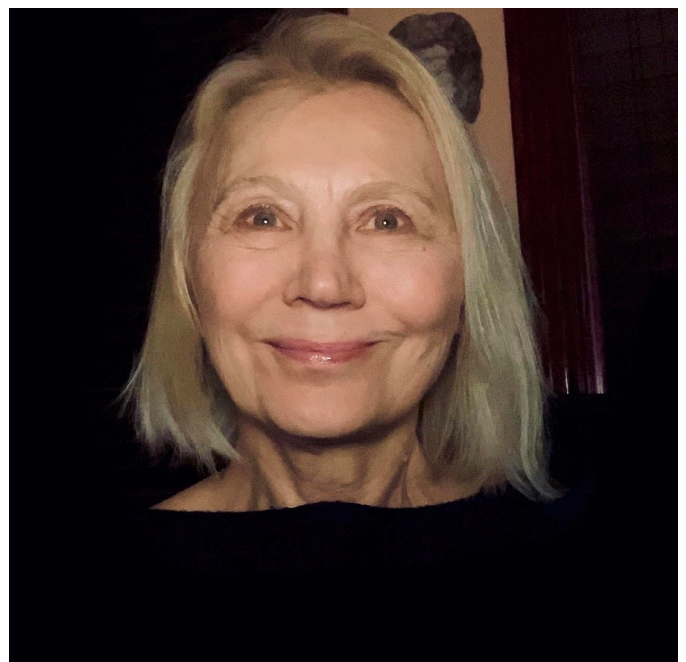
Leading the Translation Contest's jury was Susan Harris, who is the Editorial Director of Words Without Borders, an online magazine that is self-described as "[expanding] cultural understanding through the translation, publication, and

promotion of the finest contemporary international literature." Another member of the jury was Sandra Kasturi, an award-winning poet, author, and freelance editor who was born in Estonia and currently lives in Toronto. Tiina Ets, who is based in the United States, was also a member of the jury. Her clients as a translator and interpreter have included the US Department of State and the White House.

The sentiment that literature is the most challenging of all texts to translate was echoed across the jury, and the two stories chosen were testament to that, steeped in poetic detail and idiomatic expressions that threatened to make translations to English clunky and difficult to read. "The Death of Astrid Lindgren" was about a cynical journalist reporting on the death of a beloved children's book author. "Wandering Bliss" was a disturbing description of joy as it passes fleetingly from one person to another. Reviewing the work of 26 people from nine countries, the jury ultimately selected the following winners:

In third place was Ellen Valter, well known to Toronto Estonians for her community leadership and wide range of talents, and Tony Allen. Allen is not of Estonian heritage, but is a writer and considers himself "an ardent Estophile", having learned the language when he lived in Estonia for a couple of years.

Second place was awarded to Pearu Unga and Talvi Maimets. Unga, who

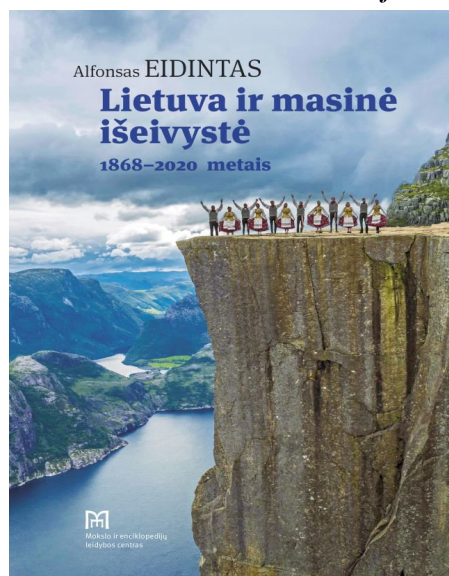


works at a hotel in Scotland, won favour with his translation of “The Death of Astrid Lindgren”; while Maimets’ phrasing in the same story was memorable for the judges. Recently retired as a family doctor, Maimets enjoyed the creativity of the experience.

The winner of first place was Tiina Otema, from Toronto. Harris commended Otema for her “deft phrasing and lovely word choices, [that] captured the ethereal sense of the narrative.” When her translations were read aloud, it exemplified the highest goal of translated fiction. That is, as judge Tiina Ets said, “a translation should not sound like a translation.”

Sometimes, in order to make a translation smooth, more radical changes need to be made to the way things are expressed. Indeed, the title of the second short story, “Rändaja õnn”, varied significantly. Susan Harris communicated how the variation in the way this title was translated made the judging experience fascinating. Variations of the title, of which there were about 18, included “The Hitchhiker’s Spirit” and “Roaming Rapture.” Sandra Kasturi was also amazed by the variations she read through. She maintains that translating Estonian into English, with each language possessing such drastically different roots, sentence structure, and more is “not just translation but interpretation.”

The winner of the competition will be published in the Estonian Literary Magazine and receive the chance to go to the translators’ seminar held by the Estonian Literature Centre in June



2022. Second and third place winners are to receive one book of their choosing from Apollo or Rahvaraamat bookstores in Estonia.

Translation is a thoroughly creative undertaking, and based on the enthusiasm shown by all in this event, we can expect many sensitively-crafted translations of Estonian literature for readers in English in the years to come.

Vincent Tectsov

First published in Eesti Elu/Estonian Life

THE NEW BOOK ABOUT LITHUANIA’S MASS EMIGRATION

The new book discusses the mass waves of Lithuanian emigration in 1868–2020, their emergence and the public reaction to them. The author of the book, prof. Alfonsas Eidintas, raises a series of important questions: How do the emigration centers affect the current emigration; What is the impact of the emigration on the homeland; How does it affect the nation; Is emigration useful or damaging to nation’s and state’s development?

The book distinguishes two periods of Lithuanian mass emigration: from 1868 to 1915 and

Immigrants helped the United States become an industrialized country. Many of them worked on railroads.

Photo: Science and Encyclopedia Publishing Center

from 1990 to 2020. Prof. Eidintas does not doubt that both of them have been extremely significant for the life of the Lithuanian nation and the state.

The first wave of mass emigration significantly reduced the number of Lithuanians in Lithuania. Emigration to America was economically, politically and culturally the most significant in the life of the Lithuanian nation. First of all, Lithuanian colonies were established in America, which became a magnet for new emigrants. Mass exodus from Lithuania was not viewed ambiguously. Although it weakened Lithuanian nation, Lithuanians in the United States, mobilized by their own organizations,



Lithuanian and Polish meat shop in America.

Photo: Science and Encyclopedia Publishing Center

helped culturally and economically to achieve the nation's aspirations. Prof. Eidintas notes that not only cultural and economic but also political support was received and constantly expected from Lithuanian colonies in the US.

The second wave of mass emigration from Lithuania which took place after the year of 1990, shocked the society in its scale and numbers—there had never been such a large exodus from Lithuania before. A need to re-evaluate the circumstances and formation of Lithuanian colonies and, most importantly, to highlight the impact of the old emigration on Lithuanian society has risen. Nowadays, new Lithuanian emigration centers have emerged in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Norway, and partly Germany.

Prof. Eidintas observes that today we can rejoice in our increased opportunities and each person's choice of where to work and live, but at the same time, such a large emigration creates huge problems for Lithuania. The author fears that emigration will lead to the disappearance of Lithuanians not only in the world, but also in Lithuania and that there will be no Lithuanian-speaking people left. According to him, the problems caused by migration directly have an effect on the survival of the Lithuanian nation.

BIRUTĖ GALDIKAS—ONE OF NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC'S TRAILBLAZING WOMEN

Birutė Galdikas, the Canadian-Lithuanian scientist, came to the attention of National Geographic as one of the twenty women pioneers, who had been almost forgotten today. In the article "These 20 women were trailblazing explorers—why did history forget them?" celebrating March as Women's History Month, National Geographic introduces Birutė Galdikas (born 1946), one of the female scientists dubbed Trimates, who has researched orangutans since the 1970s. Believing women to possess more patience and perception than men, paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey supported three young female scientists to live among the great apes. With funding from National Geographic, he helped set



Birutė Galdikas's almost 50-year study of wild orangutans in Indonesia revealed their social lives and habits.

Photo: Rodney Brindamour / National Geographic

up field stations for Jane Goodall to study chimpanzees in Tanzania, Dian Fossey to live with mountain gorillas in Rwanda, and Galdikas to observe orangutans in Indonesian Borneo. The three women went on to complete groundbreaking research.

When Galdikas first entered Tanjung Puting National Reserve in 1971, orangutans were thought to be difficult—if not impossible—to study. More solitary than other primates, they roamed over large areas of dense tree canopy. But before long, Galdikas could spot them

in the wild and even get close enough to interact with them. She transformed her home into a "halfway house" for animals transitioning out of captivity and raised the orphans almost as her own children, according to a 1975 cover story that she wrote for National Geographic.

During the first four years of research and nearly 7,000 hours of observation, Galdikas made major discoveries about orangutans in the wild—gathering details about their diets, travel patterns, and relationships. Crucially, she raised an alarm over the deforestation that was

fueling the rapid loss of their habitats. Nearly 50 years later Galdikas is still in the field, making her work one of the longest continuous studies of a single species ever conducted.

The entire article can be read [here](#).

THE LITHUANIAN DIASPORA ART MUSEUM IN VILNIUS



The new Lithuanian Diaspora Art Museum in Vilnius.

Photo: Lithuanian National Museum of Art

The branch of the Lithuanian National Museum of Art which has been operated as the Vytautas Kasiulis Art Museum has been transformed into the Lithuanian Diaspora Art Museum. In order to form a new identity of the museum and to acquaint visitors with the contribution of Lithuanian artists who have lived and created abroad, an extensive program has been prepared.

In May-June, the museum will open two exhibitions of Lithuanian diaspora artists: "Unknown Juozapas Jurkūnas (Jur Jurkun)" and "Vaclavas Ratas: Beyond the Equator." In November-December, the museum will host a personal exhibition "Antanas Mončys: Faces and Spirits" dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Antanas Mončys and an exhibition "Between Expectations and Opportunities" reflecting the works of women artists in interwar Vilnius. On October 27, the Lithuanian National Museum of Art and the Lithuanian Cultural Research Institute will organize an interdisciplinary conference "Migration: Concepts and Experiences" at the National Gallery of Art. In May 2022, the museum will host an extensive exposition dedicated to the art of the Lithuanian diaspora.

Battle of Oswego May 6th 1814

FIRST FOOTPRINTS IN CANADA: GRAND DUCHY LITHUANIANS IN THE WAR OF 1812

In 1964, Dr. Kostas Jurgėla, wrote a history of Lithuanian immigration to America, "Lietuviai Amerikoje Prieš Masinę Imigraciją ir Tautinį Atgimimą". Although written from an American perspective, it included an interesting story of Grand Duchy Lithuanian soldiers who fought for the British in the War of 1812 (the war in North America between Britain and the United States, 1812-1814) recruited from prison ships after they had fought for the French in the Napoleonic War and had been captured. As told by Jurgėla, the British had placed them in two Swiss regiments (de Watteville and de Meuron) which had been contracted to fight on the British side. The de Watteville fought first in Egypt and Europe against Napoleon, the de Meurons in India. Both regiments then went to North America, finishing their service in 1815. The soldiers were assumed to have settled after the war in Canada, possibly in the Rideau or St Francis river valleys. Some may have participated in an armed guard for the Red River colony, created by Thomas Douglas, Earl of Selkirk and located near where Winnipeg is today. The soldiers were identified from records created by the British War Office using primarily the place of birth as their names could not be used, having been recorded using French, German or Polish equivalents.

This research was used again in the 1967 book "Lithuanians in Canada". Here the story finished with one intriguing sentence: "Most of the survivors of the 1813-1815 campaign settled in Canada and were assimilated". If this actually happened, these men would have been the first Lithuanians to settle



in Canada. It was to be both a Lithuanian and a Canadian story as these men would have participated in three major events in Canadian history: the War of 1812 against the United States, early settlement of eastern Canada in the Rideau valley and possibly the building of the Rideau Canal, and early western Canadian settlement via the Red River Colony. It was important to re-examine the story, to see if the details could be confirmed and to identify by name the very first Lithuanians who came to Canada. How did these men move from Lithuania, come to fight for Napoleon, then the British in a Swiss regiment, then come to live in Canada?

Digitization and increased access to primary records meant that it was possible to expand the story with more information about individual soldiers and what happened to them. The research quickly focussed down to one regiment, the de Watteville, where all the Lithuanian soldiers have been found. The story of these soldiers is one of great courage and endurance. They took advantage of some opportunities and passed on others. Some died in the wars and are buried where they died in Spain, Italy and on Canadian soil. Many returned to Europe to take up life after the war there.

The ending of the story is quite different from what has been presented previously and, in the end, just a single man was found to have stayed and farmed in Canada, although by 1821, he most likely migrated to the United States, ending the Lithuanian presence in Canada for the next few decades.

Peg Perry

DOCUMENTARY SERIES "HOPE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC"

The Lithuanian National Broadcaster, the Lithuanian National Radio and Television, has created a series of



documentaries “Viltis abipus Atlanto” (Hope on Both Sides of the Atlantic) which narrate stories of famous American-Lithuanians and Lithuanian cultural phenomena in the US. Three films are dedicated to the first wave of economic emigrants from Lithuania and its three descendants, doctor Aldona Šliūpaitė, collector and journalist Aleksandras Mykolas Račkus, and Stanley Balzekas Jr., the founder of the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in Chicago. Other series present the second wave of political refugees, American-Lithuanian poet Kazys Bradūnas and the American-Lithuanian activist Juozas Polikaitis. The other two documentaries are dedicated to the oldest and longest-running Lithuanian newspaper Draugas and the Lithuanian neighborhood in Chicago, Marquette Park.

All series were directed by Justinas Lingys; screenwriters: Audronė Kosciuškienė and Aušra Kalinauskienė.

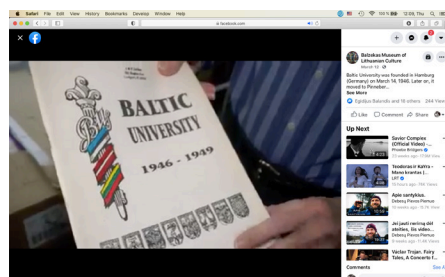
The series can be viewed online [here in Lithuanian only](#).

NEW HOME OF THE BALTIC UNIVERSITY ARCHIVE

Baltic University was founded in Hamburg, Germany, on March 14, 1946. Later on, it moved to Pinneberg and functioned there until October 1949. Pranas Jurkus was a student at the Baltic University. He never forgot his first Alma Mater. Throughout his life, Jurkus was collecting material about the University professors and students and was instrumental in arranging the commemorations of the University anniversaries. In March of 2021, he donated the Baltic University archive

to the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in Chicago, USA, where it will be available to the researchers.

[In the video](#), Pranas Jurkus tells the story of Baltic University and his life-long attachment to it in Lithuanian.



BATUN DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF LATVIA

In 2019 the National Archives of Latvia received the BATUN Archive, which had accumulated in New York from the beginnings of the organization in 1965 to the early 2000s. The memorandum on the transfer of archival documents was signed by the ambassadors of all three Baltic States to the United Nations and the representatives of BATUN. The main aim of this BATUN documentary heritage was to introduce the historical contribution made by BATUN in its efforts to introduce the situation in the occupied Baltic States as it relates to international law to the UN and its member states in New York and Geneva. The BATUN Archive is stored at the National Archives of Latvia, at the State Archive of Latvia (Bezdelīgu Street 1a, Riga) under the designation LNA LVA F.2944 (Baltiešu aicinājums Apvienotām Nācijām (BATUN) / ASV/), and soon will be available for every

The series presents Draugas—the oldest and longest-running Lithuanian newspaper.

visitor of the National Archive of Latvia. The last systematization and description works are currently underway.

BATUN (Baltic Appeal to the United Nations) was an international non-governmental organization in the United States of America, created in 1966 by exiled Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. The main purpose of BATUN was to inform the members of the United Nations about the violations of the rights of the Baltic nations and Soviet colonialism of the occupied Baltic States. BATUN lobbied the governments of UN Member States through their diplomats in New York and Geneva from 1966 to 1991. BATUN during its 25-year effort to lobby on behalf of the Baltic States, also organized large public rallies at the UN headquarters in New York, worldwide actions and demonstrations that focused attention on the Baltic States.

During the research of the BATUN documents, it was concluded that BATUN's efforts to get the issue of the Baltic States on the UN agenda, or otherwise to influence the decisions



BATUN organized Baltic demonstration near the UN building in New York, US, 1969. Photo: R. Kiseiluis. Source: LNA LVA F.2944.



BATUN representative Jutta Ristsoo with Latvian dissident Olafs Brūvers at the UN Commission on Human Rights building in Geneva, 1970s. Source: LNA LVA F.2944.



of the UN member states, were unsuccessful. Only in a few cases have references been made to the Baltic issue, which mostly concerned human rights violations against Baltic dissidents and the aggressive geopolitics of the USSR in general. BATUN actions can be divided into 4 important stages, which influenced the nature of BATUN work and the main results – 1) attempts to have the Baltic States discussed in the UN Decolonization Committee 2) protection of human rights and lobbying of delegates at the annual sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva 3) European Parliament resolution on the Baltic issue adopted in 1983 and lobbying of European foreign ministries 4) collaboration with the independence movements of the Baltic States after 1989. The direct impact of BATUN's activities was established only after the restoration of the independence of the Baltic States, in cooperation with the governments of the Baltic States.

The National Archives of Latvia, based on BATUN documents, has created a new virtual exhibition "BATUN. For the Freedom and Independence of the Baltic Nations". This virtual exhibition, through the prism of documents stored in the State Archives of Latvia, reflects

the activities of BATUN from 1965 until the early 1990s and describes its role in the political processes related to human rights, the independence of the Baltic States, and their ultimate membership in the United Nations. Link to the exhibition in English version - <http://www.archiv.org.lv/batun/>

JANIS KALNIŅŠ COMPOSER

The Latvian-Canadian composer Jānis Kalniņš was born in 1904 in Pärnu, Estonia of Latvian parents. His father, Alfrēds, was an established composer, renowned for the first Latvian opera, *Baņuta* in 1920. While this might seem late in operative terms, remember that Latvia only became a republic in 1918. Jānis Kalniņš, composer and conductor, studied composition at the Latvian Conservatoire (1920–1924), and was conductor at the National Theatre (1923–1933) and the Latvian National Opera (1933–1944). In 1944 he arrived in Lübeck, Germany, as a refugee, and in 1949 went on to Canada. For 20 years he worked as lecturer in music at Fredericton Teachers College of Music in New Brunswick and as symphony orchestra conductor, later as organist and choir conductor. In 1981 Kalniņš

was awarded an honorary doctorate by Mount Allison University in New Brunswick for his contribution to regional musical development. His output of chamber music and orchestral music, particularly after 1940, was considerable, and included 5 symphonies and several cantatas. He generally avoided Romanticism in developing his style, leaning more towards classical objectivity and unadorned structural simplicity. Jānis is most remembered for his two operas, *Hamlets*, and *Ugunī* (In the Fire). Kalniņš also wrote *Hamlets* in 1936 and the work enjoyed tremendous success at the Latvian National Opera, both critical and popular, and was remounted in 1943, boasting over 54 performances until World War II interrupted its success. In 1935, having finished composing *Hamlets*, Jānis wrote on the title page of the score: "Dedicated to my beloved father". Michail Chekov, who at the time was directing a *Hamlet* at the National Theatre, inspired J. Kalniņš to compose his opera based on Shakespeare's play. The composer wrote the libretto himself, in Latvian, adapted from the English. After the opening on February 17, 1936, the local newspaper *Rīts* (Morning) reported: "Our noble opera house has not enjoyed such a brilliant première in a long time, nor has a Latvian composer been hailed with such applause and ovations, nor has a première experienced such an enthusiastic and responsive audience as yesterday, when the young, new Latvian composer Jānis Kalniņš conducted his own opera *Hamlets* for the first time." The remount was scheduled for 1943.

Jānis fled the Soviet advance and in 1948 ended up in Fredericton, New Brunswick, where he lived until his death in 2000. He was buried in his homeland, where a memorial concert was held July 2001 as part of the Latvian Song and Dance Festival. The opera was not performed during the Soviet regime; it was remounted in 2004, when it was performed in plein air with the Bauska castle ruins serving as a set.

The Latvian National Opera and Ballet has scheduled a full production for January 2022. Covid precautions will reign supreme, with a best case scenario of live audiences limited to 500 per



Some of the participants of a Baltic conference, February 12-13, 1966 in New York when BATUN was formed. Photo: V.Mazelis. Source: LNA LVA F.2944



performance. The company will rehearse two orchestras to substitute players in case of illness. It will be double cast. Rehearsals for orchestra and ensembles are scheduled to begin in June, fingers crossed, culminating in a recording of Hamlets. The Latvian National Opera Fund in Canada, presided by Anita Gaide, has sponsored Gunta Dreifelds from Toronto to produce surtitles for both live and digital performances. The opera will be sung in Latvian; titles will be offered in English, French and German. In the

worse case scenario, the live production will be rescheduled, but a digital version will be offered through the EU platform Arte and others. Donations in support of this production in Rīga are gratefully accepted. Please send cheques payable to LNOFK (Latvian National Opera Fund Canada) to 239 Mill Rd., Toronto, ON, M9C 1Y3. Tax receipts will be issued for any amount over \$20.

Gunta Dreifelds

Sources: Wikipedia, LNOČ newsletter, Imic, musicabaltica

VEMU'S SPRING SEASON ONLINE EVENTS

For the last year, Toronto has had to live with restrictions for so long that it is now being called North America's lockdown capital. No other city on this continent has been in lockdown for as long as Toronto has. VEMU found a new rhythm last year and started offering online programming. In this spirit, we continued this past spring season: from January to May there were 24 different events.

March 3rd, Dr. Peeter Põldre gave his second Coronavirus-themed lecture, this time primarily sharing information about vaccines and giving his prediction on what 2021 may look like. Unfortunately, his predictions were not optimistic. We will likely have to continue our online programming into the fall season or best-case scenario in a hybrid format.

On March 11th and 18th, those interested in learning beginner watercolour techniques had the opportunity to do so in Enda Bardell's workshops. The Estonian artist living in Vancouver had already led a similar workshop in 2020 organized by the Society of Estonian Artists in Toronto (EKKT) for their members. The Estonian Foundation of Canada had supported the development of instructional videos. Elva Palo, the chairwoman of EKKT, generously gave her permission for us to use these videos. 10 people participated in this workshop over Zoom from all over





Northern Birch Online Concert Series

Memories of Home

Erik Kreem

May 13th, 8PM



TARTU

ESTONIAN STUDIES CENTRE
TARTU UNIVERSITY



Canada and even one participant from Sweden.

On Mother Tongue Day, March 14th, we watched Enn Lillemetsa's documentary "Betti Alver. Ilmauks on irvakil" (2020). The screening was followed by a discussion with literary scholar Sirje Kiin.

The series "Cooking with..." continued with Toronto St. Peter's Congregation Pastor and Dean of the North American Estonian Lutheran Church (EELK) Mart Salumäe. On March 17th we prepared foods for fasting and on April 28th we prepared post-Easter dishes. The gastronome pastor cooked and shared background information along with charming stories about the dishes that were prepared.

April 11th, we watched a feature film

about Estonian start-up life called "Chasing Unicorns" (2019). Eric Morrison, recognized Canadian journalist and one of the leaders of the IT conference Latitude 44 organized by VEMU in 2019, led the discussion with film director Rain Rannu.

April 21st, VEMU's Estonian language book club held their spring meeting. The discussion was about Ilmar Külvet's play "Sild üle mere" (Bridge Over the Sea) and novel "Kes oskab lugeda hieroglüüfe" (Who Can Read Hieroglyphs). One of the members of the book club had even seen the play on stage.

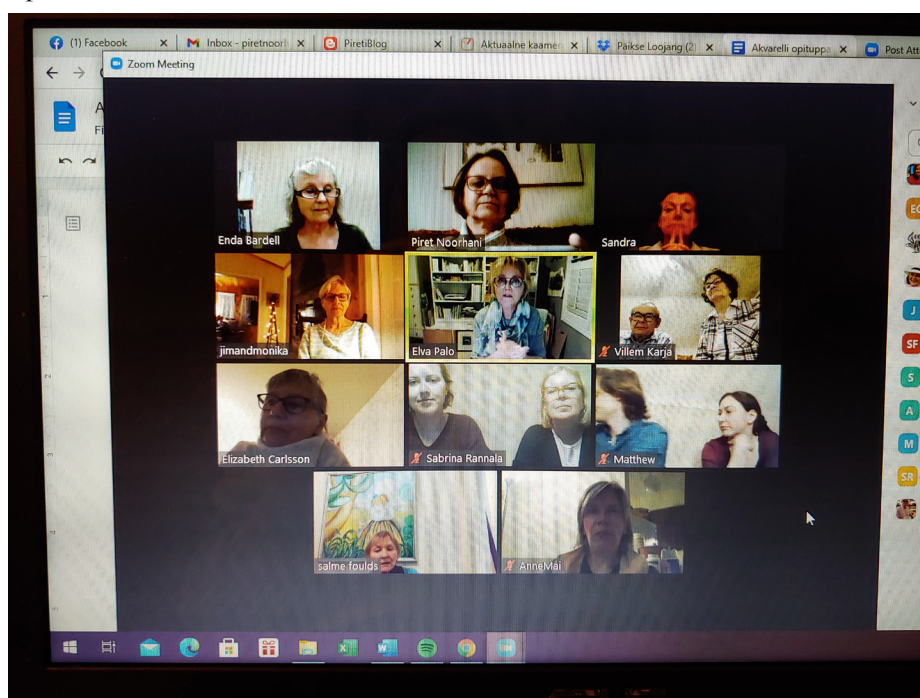
April 23rd, VEMU's 9th Fundraising Dinner took place and it was dedicated to 30 years since the restoration of the Republic of Estonia's independence.

May 2nd, the conclusion of VEMU's translation competition took place over Zoom.

May 5th, we watched an intriguing documentary from the ETV series Eesti lood" (Estonian Stories) - "Homme saabub paradiis" (For Tomorrow Paradise Arrives, 2020). Estonia, where citizens still remember food stamps and scarcity of food, has now caught up with the developed world where wasting food has unfortunately, become the norm. During the discussion with film director Anna Hints and Kerly Ilves, champion of sustainable food use, many painful topics were discussed and attempts were made to find solutions to these problems.

VEMU celebrated International Museum Day from May 14th-18th with a game, which allowed participants to peek into VEMU's collections. The simple card game, based on paying attention to finding two cards with matching shapes using the lowest number of clicks, turned out to be quite popular. We hope that this message also reached everyone: VEMU is ready to accept archival material and publications from Canadian Estonians.

On May 26th, the conference "Peggasuse seggadusest: Arno Vihailemm 110" took place in collaboration with the Estonian Literary Museum to commemorate the life and work of a talented artist and poet. Presentations were done by Janika Kronberg, Loone Ots, Marin Laak, Joosep Susi from Estonia, Piret Noorhane from Toronto, and Helga



and Enn Nõu from Stockholm. The Estonian Music Week online concert series “Memories of Home” continued with three concerts. On March 25th, Toronto Latvian Linda Kronbergs and young Toronto Estonians Helmi and Merike Hess along with Roland Campbell performed. Popular songs among Estonian and Latvian youth were sung. Long-time member of BaltHerNet and good friend in Riga, Ruta Karma helped pick out the songs. On April 15th, we introduced Estonian classical guitar virtuoso Roman Smirnov, who is now living in Toronto. On May 13th, Erik Kreem, the young pianist and composer born and raised in the Toronto Estonian community, performed. The concert series was supported by the Estonian Studies Centre, Northern Birch Credit Union and Heinsoo Insurance.

“AS A PEOPLE, WE ARE STRONG!”

VEMU’S VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER WAS A GREAT SUCCESS

The Coronavirus has pestered the world for over a year. Last year, VEMU’s fundraising dinner was cancelled. However, this year it took place once again, this time virtually. We are building a new home for VEMU together and in order to do so everyone’s help is appreciated. The evening was extensive, both old and new archival material was displayed and there were interesting facts shared about VEMU’s activities on slides throughout the evening. 93 guests registered for the event.

Participants in Toronto were able to order a delicious meal to go along with the interesting and spirited program. Catering was taken care of by Ülle Veltmann and Linda Karuks. Guests attending from farther away had to create their own celebratory meals.

What were we all to wear on this festive virtual evening? Jaan Meri, the President of Tartu College and Estonian Studies Centre also faced this important question and with the help of his “fashion consultant”, his wife Ana, was able to playfully solve this problem. Festively dressed (as his “fashion consultant” says stylish, elegant, and masculine – just like James Bond!), Jaan Meri gave the opening remarks. He gave an overview of the last year. It was a difficult time for Tartu College, but luckily there was only one COVID case.

Jaan Meri believes the three highlights of the year were a dense cultural program (thanks to Piret Noorhane and her team), the transfer of the Estonian Art Centre collection and funds to VEMU, and progress in the construction plans for the museum building. Jaan Meri wished everyone a great evening and expressed hope that next year we will all meet at Tartu College again.

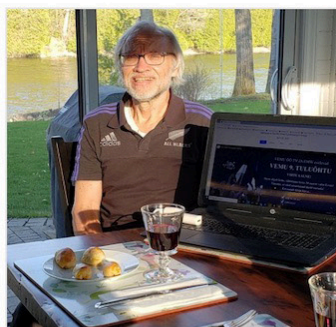
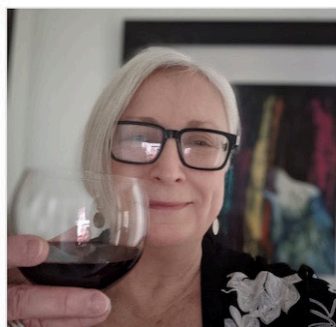
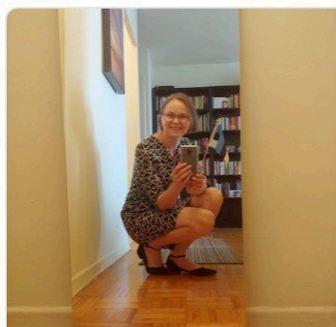
Piret Noorhane gave a more detailed overview of VEMU’s activities for the past year. Although the fundraising dinner was cancelled, the year was a period of learning. Activities were moved online and as a result, audiences grew larger. A total of 20 events took

place virtually, which can be viewed on the VEMU YouTube channel at any time! School lore and pandemic lore collection campaigns are continuing.

Piret Noorhane also discussed the construction plans for the new building. Fundraising dinner participants had a chance to take a peek into the “future” – it was clear from the models that the new centre will be very modern and exciting. There are opportunities for many various activities.

Many memories were shared during the evening from the time 30 years ago when it became clear the “the world is turning irreversibly to the West” (Piret Noorhane’s words). Piret too, recalled that time in her life – September 26, 1987, when an article appeared in the paper about a self-sufficient Estonia (Isemajandav Eesti). This was followed by heritage days, Tartu Music Days, where Alo Mattisen’s five patriotic songs were heard for the first time, and night song festivals (öölaulupeod), etc.

Exciting archival materials from VEMU’s archives, recorded by the deceased cameraman Edgar Väär, were shared on the fundraising evening. First, was Mart Laar’s speech in the University of Toronto hall on February 25, 1989. Mart Laar spoke emotionally about how the world is literally burning beneath our feet (hinting at phosphorite mining) and that we no longer have anywhere to go. There have been attempts to suppress us, but we will no longer back down. Throughout his speech there



could be heard a heartfelt and beautiful cry for freedom.

Archival images of June 14, 1989 portraying the demonstration by Baltic people in Toronto in remembrance of the victims of the Soviet deportations were also heartfelt. Thousands of people marched in downtown Toronto, speeches were given and music was played.

University of Tartu Professor Marju Lauristin, gave an interview with Professor Andres Kasekamp from the University of Toronto. Marju Lauristin spoke about achieving independence and behind-the-scenes adventures that took place during that time.

Today's young people think that Estonians sang themselves to freedom. This is just a beautiful image. According to Marju Lauristin, in reality, many years of tense work and scrambling were behind this. It was not easy to separate from Moscow and it was difficult to imagine the actual moment when freedom would be achieved. Slowly the preparations began, but there was a power struggle with Moscow, the military moved into the Baltic and actions had to be taken quickly.

No one could have imagined that independence would be restored so quickly. However, it could have turned out quite differently. What happened in Estonia affected the rest of the Soviet Union. Estonians abroad played a large role in the restoration of the Republic of Estonia's independence, as well as later in the development of the nation – materials in the U.S. Library of Congress were of assistance during arguments with Gorbachev in Moscow.

How could the events in Estonia assist other countries today fighting for independence? Marju Lauristin emphasized that being prepared is everything. Hard work has to be done to ensure that the democratic structure is strong and that the people would participate. The economy also must be considered. It was easier for Estonia since we still remembered our experience in the former republic. However, by only singing in the streets and leading processions, a democratic country cannot be built.

Marju Lauristin's presentation was followed with more exciting archival material from the time of the restoration of independence. The removal of Lenin's statue was shown. Additionally, clips of Marju Lauristin, Lennart Meri, Laas Leivat, and a gathering in Toronto for Black Ribbon Day in 1991.

Laas Leivat recalled these complicated and exciting times from the perspective of being in Canada. In his opinion, it all began at the 1987 Hirvepark meeting where the disclosure of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and secret protocols was demanded. The press in Canada and around the world were closely following what was taking place in Estonia.

The Canadian Estonian community actively participated – there were over 7000 in Canada who participated in the Citizen Committee movement and everyone agreed that the republic must be restored. Laas Leivat believes that at that time the selfless support of local Canadian politicians was essential. People from Canada went to Estonia to help develop the country – for example, Peeter Mehisto who organized a translation centre in Estonia.

Laas Leivat remembers the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia in February 1989 well. Mart Laar, Alo Mattiisen and Ivo Linna all performed that day. We saw an archival film of Ivo Linna and Alo Mattiisen arriving, their performance, and interviews for Canadian television. According to Alo Mattiisen, there was a large breakthrough in the relations between Estonians abroad and homeland Estonians at this time. More and more Estonians abroad began to understand that Estonia needed support and those living there were not communists at all. It was understood that a free Estonia was possible!

During their interview at VEMU's fundraising dinner, the "heroes of the Singing Revolution," Ivo Linna and Antti Kammiste, recall this important time as full of very special moments that most musicians, even superstars, don't ever have a chance to experience. Alo Mattiisen's songs had a brave message and the summer of the singing revolution with multiple performances was incredible, one-of-a-kind. For moments like this you possibly have to

wait one thousand years!

Presently, even if life in Estonia might feel a bit complicated, but according to the musicians, freedom and democracy need to be learned. We have only had them for 30 years. Both musicians agreed that, if need be, the Estonian people will do what needs to be done. As a people, we are strong!

Ivo Linna and Antti Kammiste performed a short concert at the end of the evening. Many well-known songs were sung, including Alo Mattiisen's songs from the time of Estonia's national awakening, Singing Revolution.

There were many fun moments throughout VEMU's fundraising evening, but serious topics were also discussed. From all of the performers of the evening, one important idea stood out – although we all have different opinions and interests, we are connected by one common love – this is our Estonia. During difficult times, Estonians can pull themselves together and suppress all differences to move forward as one. Yes, during the current challenging times, it is good to remember, watch old film clips about the time when everything began to change. The time when people's eyes were bright and the world definitively turned toward the West.

Lea Kreinin

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NEW BLOG FOCUSES ON LIFE STORIES OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST TRANSPORT

Ann Tünder-Smith has started a blog to focus on the life stories of the Baltic passengers of Australia's First Transport

This ship brought the first refugees to Australia after World War II. All had been nationals of the three Baltic states.

Bookmark it on your web browser so that you can keep up as new life stories are posted.

Blog: <https://firsttransport.blogspot.com>

Web: <http://fifthfleet.net> and <http://bonegillasbeginnings.com/>

Facebook: General Stuart Heintzelman/First Transport

Ann Tünder-Smith