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www.balther.net



DEAR FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES AND READERS,

The world is in a state of restlessness and despair. For two years we've been working and acting in accordance with Covid restrictions, we've lost friends and family and have been worried about their wellbeing. Just when hopes were high that the pandemic may be coming to an end, Russia created the current political crisis, the likes of which hasn't been seen since the end of the Cold War. It has now escalated to a full-fledged war, an attempt to take over Ukraine during which Putin has shown his true ruthless nature, targeting not only the Ukrainian forces but also innocent civilians. The atrocities that we are shown in the news daily from Ukraine are incomprehensible, but it is all real and happening right now in the heart of Europe. President Putin is no longer stopping at his wish to rewrite history; he now took forceful strides towards changing state borders, towards shaking the order of the world to the core, and to destroying democratic values.

Every one of us who deals with researching and preserving history carries the responsibility of making sure the voice of truth rings out loudly and clearly in the present and in the future. How can we accomplish that? By doing what we do day to day: documenting what's taking place, collecting and organizing the information we've gathered, digitalizing and publishing. In this way, we cover our backs and see to it that the truth rises and falsehood is diminished. We tell our story to everyone, the story of the Baltic countries and of their diaspora communities as well as those of other Eastern European states and spread them throughout the world. This is our way of supporting Ukraine in its fight for freedom and standing with its people because this is a unified fight for us all. Slava Ukraini!

In hopes of a brighter and more positive future,

Piret Noorhani
Editor-in-Chief

EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT! BaltHerNet's 10th Summer School "THE SEA AND ISLANDS" IS TAKING PLACE IN HIIUMAA 28.06.-01.07.2022

The Baltic Heritage Network family hasn't been able to gather for the last two years due to COVID-19. We were hopeful that summer 2022 would bring a long-awaited change: this year BaltHerNet's 10th summer school was planned to take place in Hiiumaa, Estonia. We must hope that the security situation in Europe will improve and that the summer school can take place.

The summer school will begin with a gathering in Tallinn on June 28th. From there a pre-booked bus will take the participants to Suuremõisa in Hiiumaa where lectures and workshops will take place until June 30th. Accommodations are located at Suuremõisa in the Hiiumaa Vocational School student residence. We will visit the Hiiumaa Museum and Pühalepa church. On July 1st there will be a tour of the island led by the Hiiumaa Museum Research Director, Helgi Põllo. The summer school participants will be returned to Tallinn by bus the same evening.

Why Hiiumaa? There are a number of Estonians abroad who originated from the Estonia islands and coasts. For this reason, we chose Hiiumaa as our summer school location this time with the topic of the sea and islands.

We would like to inspire communities of Estonians abroad to collect more materials associated with different Estonian regions from which diaspora Estonians originate. The topic of the Great Escape of 1944 is also tied to the sea. We would like to get an overview of what materials associated with this topic have already been collected at community archives and museums or institutions located in the countries diaspora Estonians have settled in, whether and how accessible these materials are, whether and how they are used, and where there are gaps that need to be filled etc.

In addition to Estonians abroad, we also invite representatives of Estonian memory institutions who are associated with these topics to attend the summer school. The Hiiumaa Museum, one of our primary partners in organizing the summer school, has done a great job collecting and researching historical resources on Estonians living abroad who have origins in Hiiumaa. We hope to become more acquainted with this material during summer school. We will also have the opportunity to analyze different patterns of collaboration between professional memory institutions, Estonian communities abroad, and individuals using the Hiiumaa Museum as an example. If your museum has interesting presenters or topics to contribute to the summer school, please contact piretnoorhani@gmail.com.



BY SUPPORTING THE NGO BALTIC HERITAGE NETWORK, YOU ARE SUPPORTING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF BALTIC PEOPLE ABROAD!

Your donation to the NGO Baltic Heritage Network supports:

- + *the preservation of the cultural heritage of Baltic people abroad*
- + *the ability to make this material accessible through the portal baltther.net*
- + *training of volunteers dedicated to preserving their own heritage and providing consulting services to community archives*
- + *the implementation of educational programs (seminars, summer schools, day trips, conferences)*
- + *creating awareness and popularizing the field*

The success of our organization relies on the dedicated work of our volunteers; however, the implementation of a successful program requires financial resources. We have received these resources through the Estonian Compatriot's Program and member fees. Your help is crucial in our efforts to perform our tasks and to reach larger audiences and organizations.

We welcome both one-time and ongoing donations. Any amount makes a difference!

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 administering the electronic information website Baltic Heritage Network, a multilingual electronic gateway for information on the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora.

The summer school also offers a cultural program including music and films. This is a place to meet colleagues, exchange information, learn from one another, and generate new ideas. Participation in summer school requires a fee (the participation fee and registration for the summer school will be announced at the end of March). Visit balther.net for more information.

The NGO Baltic Heritage Network summer schools are meant for Estonians living abroad and employees of Estonian memory institutions who work with collecting, preserving, researching and promoting Estonian diaspora heritage. The summer school includes lectures, workshops, practical studies, discussions and debates. Specialists from various Estonian memory institutions share their knowledge on archiving, library sciences, and museology.

CONGRATULATIONS TO JOLANTA BUDRIŪNIENĖ—DOCTOR OF HUMANITIES!

As the year 2021 ended, the staff of the Department of Documentary Heritage at the Martynas Mažvydas National

Library of Lithuania congratulated the head of the department, Jolanta Budriūnienė, on successfully defending her PhD thesis at Vytautas Magnus University and becoming the doctor of humanities.

For many years, Budriūnienė has been interested in the Lithuanian diaspora press and has actively contributed to the National Library of Lithuania diaspora collection. The topic of Budriūnienė's thesis, "Communication Strategies in the English-Language Lithuanian American Press (1950-1990)" has been also related to the Lithuanian diaspora. In her dissertation, Budriūnienė researches the English-language Lithuanian American cultural press of 1950-1990, published by Manyland Books, Lithuanian Library Press, Inc. and the Lithuanian quarterly journal *Lituanus*, which main mission at that time was to represent the country and Lithuanian American community, to draw world's attention to the occupation of Lithuania, and to show the potential of the country and its people, as well as the aspiration to restore Lithuania's independence. According to Budriūnienė, this type of press sought to define the individual and communal image of a Lithuanian, to represent the uniqueness of the then occupied Lithuania, at the same time looking for points of contact with the representatives of other ethnic communities. The information in English provided an opportunity for the Lithuanian community to perform on an equal footing in the social field of multiethnic America, to create cultural and symbolic value, and be noticed, appreciated and compared to other ethnic communities.

HIGH RECOGNITION FOR PIRET NOORHANI

Congratulations to the President of Baltic Heritage Network and VEMU chief archivist Piret Noorhani, awarded the Order of the White Star IV Class by



the President of the Republic of Estonia Alar Karis on Estonian Independence Day! The award was also presented to several individuals who helped keep Estonian culture alive in diaspora communities, among them Mart Nurk, who advocated for the preservation of the Estonian House in Stockholm for decades; long-time member of the board of the New York Estonian Educational Society Peeter Teedla; president of the Estonian Students' Fund in USA Mari-Anne Teedla; and Tõnu Loorpärg, who acted in the name of preserving Estonian culture in New Zealand and was a long-time honorary consul.

THE LITHUANIAN WORLD UNIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM AT VMU

On the upcoming occasion of the 100th anniversary of the University of Lithuania, the Lithuanian World University Symposium will take place at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas on 27-29 October 2022. The organizers invite the Lithuanian and global Lithuanian science and art community to discuss the significance of the tradition of the University of Lithuania for our country and the Lithuanian diaspora. The symposium will also discuss how university studies, science and art have been affected by the recent global pandemic and what the response to it in Lithuania and the world could be.

The University of Lithuania, founded in 1922, became the trailblazer of the Vytautas Magnus University, which, after the closure of the University in 1950, continued to exist in one form or another in other Lithuanian institutions of higher education and in the academic gatherings of the Lithuanian diaspora. The "University of Exile" existed among



Dr. Jolanta Budriūnienė
Photo: Valda Budreckaitė

the Lithuanian diaspora through the activities of the student organizations that were active at VMU and were re-established in the emigration, through the activities of the departed professors and former students, and through the World Lithuanian Symposiums. In 1989, during one of them, an idea of re-establishment of the Vytautas Magnus University was raised. After a plenary session dedicated to the restoration of VMU, 41 foreign members of the VMU Senate were elected.

The 2022 Symposium and its inaugural events will emphasize the importance of the shared wisdom of Lithuanians around the world, and in light of recent events and the upcoming 100th anniversary of the University of Lithuania, will invite discussion on themes that give meaning to freedom and its forms. The event will be held live at VMU and remotely on the Zoom platform. The event will also be available on the VMU Youtube channel. The full event program and registration will be announced in April.

The program of the symposium includes the following plenary sessions:

Opening Session—Freedom and Its Forms

Who Carries the Flame in the Darkness: The Tradition of the University of Lithuania in Lithuania and Diaspora

The Reality of Education in the Time of Virtual Reality

Can One Thrive in Unpredictability?



VYTAUTO
DIDŽIOJO
UNIVERSITETAS
MCMXXII

AN EXHIBITION BY THE LITHUANIAN MUSEUM-ARCHIVES OF CANADA

If there was a collection of documents that were surrounded by intrigue, the Gyls collection fits the bill. That is how a virtual exhibition „Long Journey Home: Great Discovery” by the Lithuanian Museum-Archives of Canada (LMAC) starts.

The collection of bilateral treaties



negotiated during Lithuania's independence in 1918-1940 is the object of the new exhibition. The collection was first sent to the Lithuanian Embassy in Sweden for safekeeping in 1939. WWII was looming and the diplomatic Head of the Mission in Sweden, Minister Vytautas Gyls received a number of boxes containing documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lithuania. From this point on, multiple twists and turns surround the documents. There was speculation about the actual content of the boxes, no clear evidence that the documents were transported to Canada when Gyls and his wife Vanda immigrated to Canada. Subsequent attempts to verify their existence and value failed, and finally, the conclusion was reached that the documents were lost or never reached Canada and their fate would remain a mystery.

All of this changed with one phone call to the LMAC in the spring of 2021 and a conversation with Canadian citizen Charles Hopkins. It became obvious for the first time that the documents had reached Canada after all, and through the efforts of Gyls neighbour, Charles Hopkins, were saved from destruction.

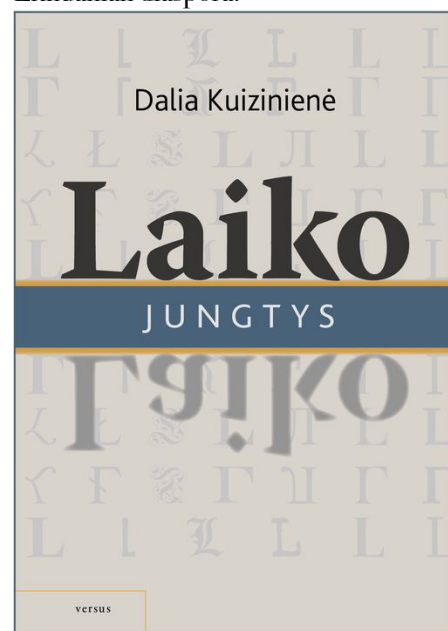
The exhibition is available in Lithuanian and English and can be viewed here: <https://www.lithuanianheritage.ca/gyls-virtual-exhibition/>

TWO BOOKS ON LITHUANIAN DIASPORA IN THE US

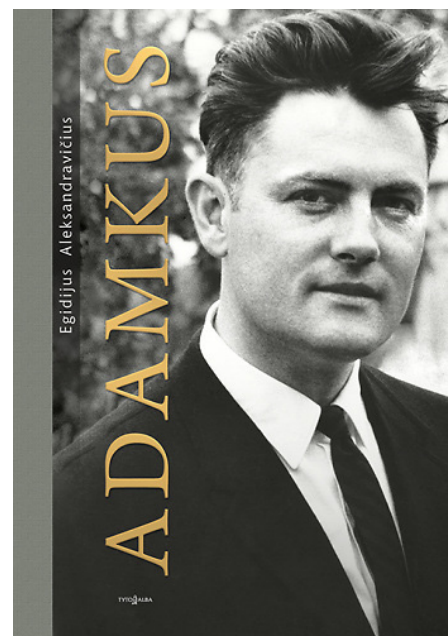
The interviews and articles published in the book *Laiko jungtys* (Versus, 2021) cover a period of more than thirty years. The signs of time are fragmentary, perhaps incomplete, but many of the interviews have retained their authenticity and have become a document of a dynamic period. The collection of the interviews concerns the

cultural field of the Lithuanian diaspora and the circumstances of its vitality.

The author of the book has been fortunate to get to know, communicate and collaborate with many diaspora writers, literary critics and cultural personalities, who became the protagonists of her new book. This book, in its own way, connects the past, the present, highlighting parallels and differences between Lithuania and the Lithuanian diaspora.



A book by Egidijus Aleksandravičius, *Adamkus* (Tyto Alba, 2021) is the result of years of communication with the President and extensive research in Lithuania and the USA. The bibliography of President Valdas Adamkus is wide and varied; however, up until now, we did not have a comprehensive biography of him. In



his new book, prof. Aleksandravičius tells the incredibly interesting story of Adamkus' life and the post-war Lithuanian diaspora.

"This is the first comprehensive biography about a man who has already entered the history of Lithuania as the most popular politician of the newly restored Republic of March 11th, who has been active for almost eight decades," prof. Aleksandravičius has noted. "There are also unanswered questions in the book that should be clarified by historians and scholars in the future. I have tried to show that Adamkus is a man who deserves a complete biography, even if he never would have been the President of Lithuania."

PHOTO EXHIBITION "PORTRAIT OF A (WORKING) MOTHER"

In December, the National Library of Lithuania hosted a photo exhibition "Portrait of a (Working) Mother" by Marina Cavazza and Eglė Kačkutė. The exhibition and the accompanying events invited visitors to look at the issues of migration, career and motherhood/parenthood.

The exhibition consists of twenty-seven photographs—professional portraits of expatriate mothers and fathers from their everyday lives—and short interviews with them. The interviews focus on the problems faced by women and men, professional migrant workers,



Photo: National Library of Lithuania / Vygaudas Juozaitis

and the solutions to them. Using the visual language and sensitive and personal texts, the exhibition considers whether women and men have equal rights to career and childcare in the 21st century, when, by whom, what and for whom sacrifices are being made? How do women's and men's priorities change when they have children, and do culture, society and organizations support individual choices?

The topic was further developed in a discussion organized at the library. The participants were: Prof. Dalia Leinartė, historian, member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Dr Ieva Bisigirskaitė, gender studies specialist; Dr Giedrė Blažytė, a sociologist of migration and researcher at the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences; photographer Marina Cavazza; translator Jordana Gonzales Kruz; Dr Eglė Kačkutė, literary scholar, associate professor at the Department of French Philology at Vilnius University and D.

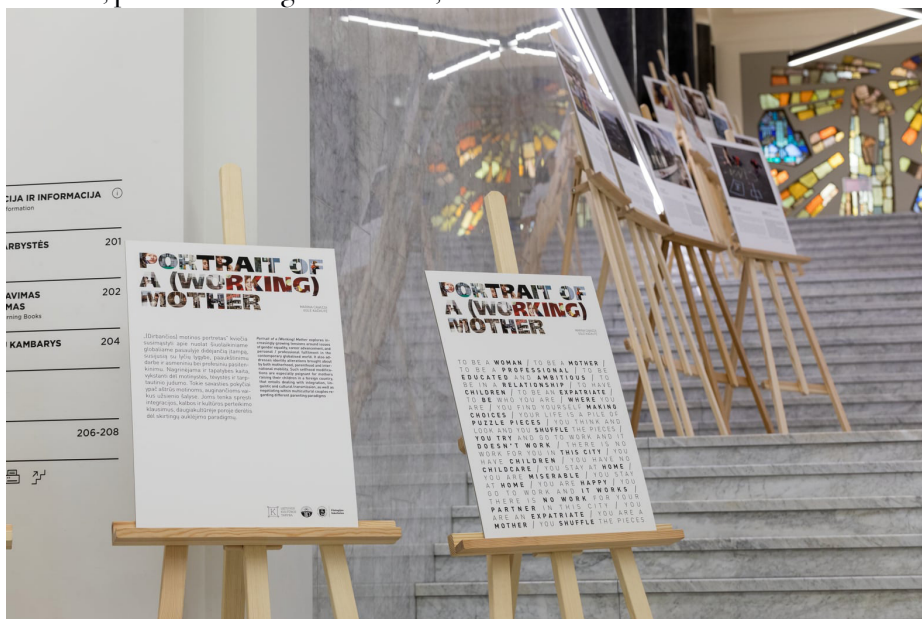


Photo: National Library of Lithuania / Vygaudas Juozaitis

Giancarlo Russo, mathematician, head of the research team at the Life Sciences Centre at Vilnius University.

SCHOOL LORE COMPETITION FOR CANADIAN ESTONIANS CONCLUDES WITH PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The Estonian Museum Canada (VEMU) of Toronto, in collaboration with the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu, organized a campaign to collect the school lore of the Estonian diaspora community in Canada throughout 2021. Submissions for the campaign were welcomed from both current students as well as individuals who had either worked in education or previously attended an educational institution. The campaign honoured the memory of the former director of the Estonian Supplementary Schools in Toronto, Edgar Marten, who passed away in 2020.

The project was centred around collecting general folklore that pertained to five major topics of interest: 1) jokes and anecdotes; 2) fears, beliefs, and predictions; 3) celebrations and important holidays or dates; 4) free time and friends; and 5) games and pastimes. Other interesting material, such as descriptions of guide and scout activities and camp experiences, was gathered as well and helps to further document the school-related and educational experiences of Estonians in Canada.

Information relating to children's and youth heritage has been collected in Estonia since the 1920s. Materials documenting educational heritage have been gathered nationally in Estonia in three separate cases to date: in 1992, 2007, and 2018. Based on earlier collection campaigns, a plentitude of research and informative material meant for consumption by the general public has been published but information regarding Estonians abroad has been very hard to find to date. The aforementioned project was the first sizeable campaign to collect the school lore of diaspora Estonians and their educational experiences, therefore providing valuable comparative material to the existing Estonian counterpart.

A photo from Hille Viires' personal collection. Many Estonians living in Canada have varying experiences with Estonian schools abroad; this picture, depicting students deep in the throes of playing, is taken in 1952 at the Estonian school in Stockholm.

Valuable interviews were conducted mainly with Estonians in the local Toronto community but some from the Montreal area were also included; a grand total of 18 interviews or over 20 hours of audiovisual footage was the result. This is a great resource for further studies and research that will take place in the future. Thanks to the campaign an invaluable collection of photos, written correspondences, documented personal school-related memoirs, published material and much more was also contributed.

Six written submissions were gathered from students of the Estonian Supplementary Schools in Toronto; a big thank you to both teacher Kai Kiilaspea for her words of encouragement and the young writers for their thoughts and recollections. We'd also like to thank director Monika Roose – Kolga and the parents for helping find willing interviewees. Posts made on the school's blog were also researched and recorded. The results of the campaign showed that different approaches have to be taken for individuals living in Estonia versus Estonians living abroad. It became apparent during the project that the



A letter to the elf, written by Kaili Maimets and given to the archives of VEMU thanks to her mother Talvi.



web-based questionnaire which worked well in Estonia was, for a multitude of reasons, not appropriate for the Canadian context and had to be altered; the main reason being that it's not a format people here are used to. Instead of collecting answers through a text-based format, July 2021 saw a switch to interviews that took place and were recorded via online meeting platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Skype. In the end, this change of format ended up being very beneficial to the project and valuable material was collected. The great thing about conducting interviews was the direct line of contact between interviewer and interviewee; it also gave a chance to use the so-called "snowball effect" to find future participants.

To help conduct interviews, we looked to interviewers from younger generations: young adults Kati Kiilaspea and Kaisa Kasekamp, who were knowledgeable about the local lifestyle, talked with Estonian-Canadian students and on the Estonian side we had help from Pille Triin Voolaid. Interviewees were divided into three age groups: 1) current students; 2) younger and middle-aged individuals who are former students or current teachers and are of working age; and 3) currently retired former students and/or teachers who still support Estonian-Canadian school life. Valuable memoirs and descriptive materials paint a multi-faceted picture in the long-term perspective, starting from the childhood of the post-war generation and carrying through to today's youth and their school-related culture. Estonians in Estonia are time and time again thoroughly moved by a unique miracle of sorts – the fact that

for over 70 years, the Estonian diaspora community in Canada has managed to thrive and continues to do so thanks to the strong internal desire to be an Estonian, no matter how far they are from the homeland. The various supplementary schools have played a truly valuable role in this longevity and this was summed up well by one of the respondents: "Our school is basically a basis for the growth of Estonian culture, for keeping the Estonian spirit alive. It's also where lasting friendships with fellow Estonians can begin to grow and flourish, friendships that truly last forever. These are the two most important aspects and they pave the path for language, reading, writing, grammar, etc to follow." The same gratitude for keeping Estonian culture alive was expressed by individuals associated with the guide and scout movement.

A goal of the project is definitely the desire to draw attention to and pinpoint the heritage and youth culture of Estonians abroad, something that hasn't been highlighted to a great degree in Estonia as of yet. This would allow for further research and analysis and therefore a comparison of school life in Estonia and of diaspora Estonians, in the past and present. Based on the materials gathered during the course of the campaign, a publication and exhibit are planned for the future to showcase the findings to a larger audience; it would be displayed both in Estonia and Canada. The aforementioned themes and topics will also be touched upon at a permanent exhibit in the future new home of VEMU.

All materials collected over the course of the project will be preserved

according to the ethical standards within the scientific archive EFITA of the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum and in VEMU.

The campaign has officially ended but individuals who missed out and wish to participate can still do so; further information about the campaign as well as the questionnaire in both English and Estonian can be accessed through www.folklore.ee/kp. The organizers of this project can also be contacted by those wishing to be interviewed or to submit further archival materials that pertain to topics discussed in the campaign.

The main organizers of the Estonian-Canadian collection campaign for educational heritage were Piret Voolaid; Senior Researcher of the Department of Folkloristics at the Estonian Literary Museum and the Executive Manager of the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies, and Piret Noorhani; Chief Archivist of VEMU in Toronto. Johanna Helin, a former employee of VEMU, also helped out in the early phases of the project.

The project was made possible through the sponsorship of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (Program for Global Estonians, 2021–2024) and through the European Regional Development Fund (Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies).

A very special thanks on behalf of the organizers goes to everyone who was willing to be interviewed, who shared with us their memories, experiences, and materials. We hope that once COVID restrictions allow for it, we can congratulate you all personally.

Peeter Einola

Maie Ilves

Stephen Jenkins

Andres Kasekamp

Joona Kasekamp

Kaisa Kasekamp

Erika Ülle Kessa

Kati Kiilaspea

Ingrid Kütt

Talvi Maimets

Elin Kaia Marley

Marianne Melrose

Emma Nipernado

Laura Nipernado

Sophie Oder-Evelyn

Liisa Osso

Mall Puhm

Elle Rosenberg

Felix Laas-Tamm

Reet Marten-Sehr

Ene Timmusk

Karl Tirel

Vello Tõu

Imbi Uukkivi

Silvi Verder

Hille Viies

Piret Voolaid, Piret Noorhani

STUDY ON SOCIAL REMITTANCES OF TRANSNATIONAL (RE) MIGRANTS TO CENTRAL, EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

People who emigrated after the 1990s and have higher education are bringing back to Lithuania the democratic and civic values of the western world. High culture of professional communication, intolerance of corruption, sensitivity to the marginalized, tolerance of sexual minorities, and a more favourable attitude towards refugees—these are the changes that they bring to their closest circles. This had been the conclusion of a qualitative study conducted by researchers from Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) and the Institute for Social Innovation, together with colleagues in Croatia, Poland and the United Kingdom. The main topic of the study was “social remittances”: knowledge, experiences, social skills, norms, values, social capital and other social and cultural resources that have an impact on the growth of well-being in societies of (re) migrants.

*Lithuanian
professionals in
Berlin.*

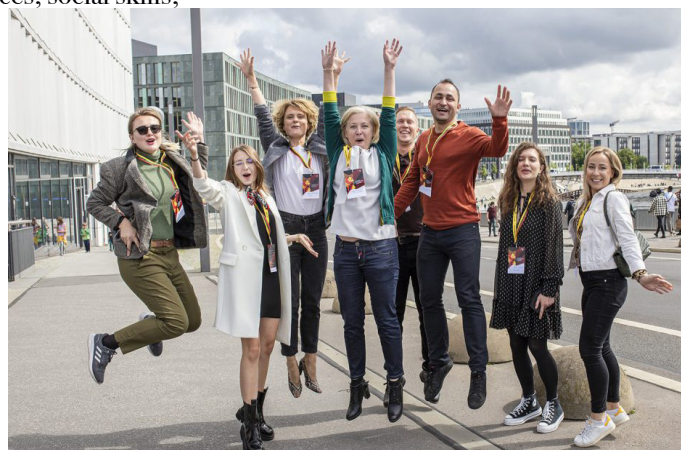
Photo: Pilietybe.lt

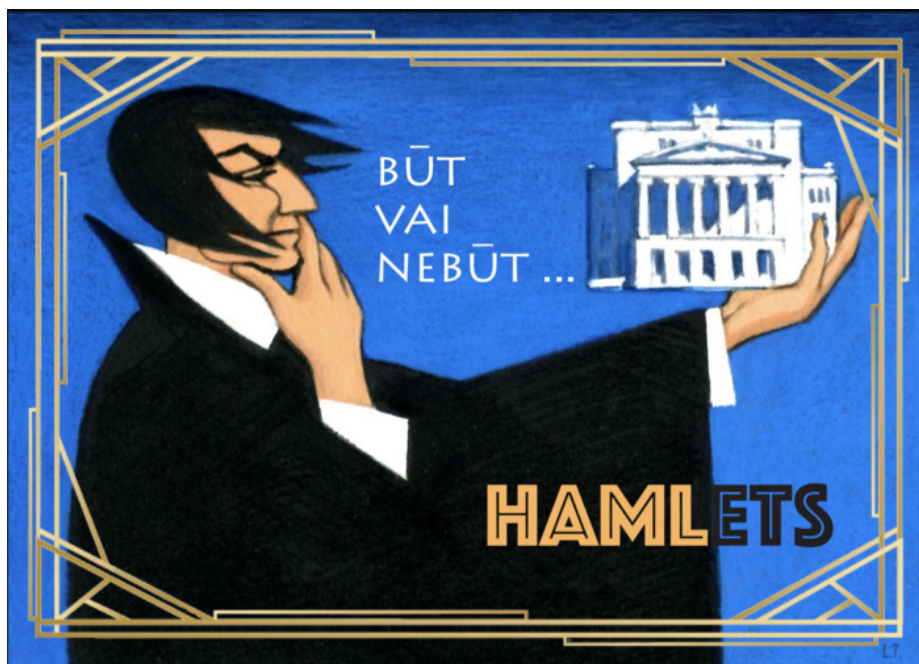
According to Dr Vytis Čiubrinskas, Head of the Centre for Social Anthropology at VMU, who led the research, social remittances among Lithuanians living abroad have been very pronounced. Lithuanians, who live abroad or return from abroad, have a strong desire to act for the benefit of Lithuania. This does not necessarily manifest itself on a large scale or in obvious actions, such as setting up companies or organizations. However, they do take active steps and spread what they have brought with them from their experience abroad: self-confidence, democratic values, tolerance, sensitivity to exclusion and human rights, and an anti-corruption attitude.

The study also has revealed that (re) migrants are also receiving: by actively sharing their experiences, knowledge and attitudes, they are given back confirmation of their status and identity, as well as a sense of self-worth.

The study also explored the influence of media and social media on the return of (re)migrants. The results have shown that, in general, Lithuanian media tend to cover stories of returnees more positively and thus have a positive impact on people's desire to return. However, the biggest impact has been made by real return stories heard directly from other people. In this context, social networks play an important role, serving as a platform for face-to-face contact, practical advice and support.

The study also has shown that both the decision to migrate and the decision to return are influenced by complex personal, family and career circumstances. It concludes that more and more people would





return to Lithuania if there was a clear commitment and measures on a national level to ensure a successful and comprehensive reintegration, and even if they decide to leave again, to allow them to be involved in the life of the country.

The detailed findings of the study “Social Remittances of (Re)migrants for the Society’s Well-being: Challenges and Experiences in a Comparative Perspective (The Cases of Lithuania, Poland and Croatia)” will be presented in a book, *Returning – Remitting – Receiving: Social Remittances of Transnational (Re)migrants to Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe*, to be published in 2022.

JANIS KALNIŅŠ OPERA HAMLETS AT THE LNOB

Jānis Kalniņš’ opera *Hamlets* first opened in Latvia on February 17, 1936, to great acclaim. Because of the Soviet, then Nazi, and then the second Soviet occupation, the opera never crossed its national borders into Europe and the New World. Nonetheless, it enjoyed more than 55 performances during



the various occupations, until it was banned in the Latvian SSR. Renowned conductors Erich Kleiber and Leo Blech were enthusiastic about Kalniņš’ opera and wanted to have it produced in Europe, but World War II put an end to their efforts. The new production of *Hamlets*, which opened on January 13, 2022, at the Latvian National Opera and Ballet (LNOB) during the COVID-19 pandemic had a lot to live up to, and it did so brilliantly.

One might wonder how a 21st-century contemporary take on a 20th-century opera in a 19th-century opera house would sit, and I can reply only with superlatives. The LNOB house is a traditional horseshoe shape, small by North American standards, with barely 1000 seats, but beautiful beyond compare. It was refurbished twice: once after a fire destroyed large sections of the building in the late 1800s; and again in the 1990s, when it got a cosmetic facelift and updated technology. I had worked at the LNOB in the early 2000s putting in a surtitles system, which was sponsored by the Latvian National Opera Guild in the USA, the same guild that, in honour of its 30th anniversary, has sponsored this production of *Hamlets*.

All this to say that I had been in the opera house before, had even worked there, but this production was special. As I sat in the house during final rehearsals, every once in a while I’d get a disconnect, a feeling that something was unusual about this picture. Was

I hearing a world-class opera with evocative sets and gorgeous costumes, sung in Latvian? I felt I had come full circle from 1983, when I was a fly on the wall in the booth of Toronto’s O’Keefe Centre, as it was then called when surtitles were first introduced to the world with Richard Strauss’s *Elektra*. It is worth noting that surtitles will celebrate their 40th anniversary next January 21, 2023. Working on *Hamlets* was a highlight of my 39-year career in surtitles.

All aspects of this Latvian *Hamlets* served to showcase Jānis Kalniņš’ music. Andris Eglītis, the set designer, had painted nine expressive drops that truly are works of art. I emphasize painted because he could easily have used projections or digital manipulation. Consider the difference between live music and recorded music: we like recorded music, but we love live music. I could feel Eglītis’ gobs of paint viscerally. Kristine Pasternaks’ costumes kept to a generally muted grey-white palette, except for the top of Act II, where the chorus was dressed in Shakespeare-like costumes, but in neon turquoise and lime green. And they danced the tango. It was magnificent!

The director, Kristine Wuss, was born in Potsdam after World War II to a Latvian mother and a German father. She spent her summers in Jūrmala and speaks Latvian well, albeit accented, as do most of us in the diaspora. Wuss very cleverly weaved period details from 1930s Latvia into her direction, details non-Latvians wouldn’t necessarily catch, but which served the production and the plot. However, I wouldn’t call this production uniquely Latvian, because it is a universal story that has broad appeal. Wuss told the story in a uniquely Wuss way, which enhanced the understanding and enjoyment of the opera for all.

Ultimately, the star of this production was the music itself, at times reminiscent of Prokofiev, at times jazzy. Considered an avant-garde piece in 1936, *Hamlets* has stood the test of time and still sounds fresh in 2022. But I will let the musicians comment further on that topic, since my expertise lies elsewhere. Sponsored by the Latvian National Opera Fund of Canada, I



TO 70 YEARS OF ESTONIAN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY



ESTONIAN ARCHIVES IN AUSTRALIA
EESTI ARHIIV AUSTRALIAS

was responsible for the surtitles in four languages: Latvian, English, French and German. Not all four are shown at once – Latvian and English are projected above the stage during the live performance, whereas French and German are available on an app downloaded to your mobile telephone.

The good news is that the opera will eventually be available on a digital platform, at least in Europe, and we hope to make it available in North America too. An even greater hope is that the world will see this new Hamlets enter the operatic canon and be produced by opera houses around the globe.

Gunta Dreifelds

EAA 70

The Archive has served the Estonian community for 70 years by being the repository for the history of Estonian activity and achievement in Australia. It hosts visitors from all states of Australia and from overseas. The number of both local and overseas enquiries grows each year as descendants of the post-war immigrants research their family histories.

Dr Hugo Salasoo did a commendable

job in collecting firstly material about activities in Australia and later activities worldwide. The Archive held books by Estonian authors, about Estonia and in Estonian. He collected scientific papers by Estonian scientists from all over the world, newsletters and newspapers.

Since the start of 2000, the emphasis has been placed again on material by Estonians in Australia and the international collection has been sent to various memory institutions in Estonia. The Archive is about to move into new premises in the Sydney Estonia House and will continue to be the centre for information about Estonians in Australia.

The Archive has continued to grow and thrive due to the enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers. We have a proud tradition of long service. Dr Hugo Salasoo was the honorary archivist for the first 40 years. Eili Annuk has been a volunteer in the Archive for 40 years and continues her work today in maintaining the online In memoriam database which is constantly used by people researching their family history. Maie Barrow has been the archivist for 27 years and Reet Simmul was the assistant archivist for

26 years. Together they have organised exhibitions and lectures to introduce Estonian history and culture to the Estonian and Australian communities. Taimi Nurm, Valler Lipping, Ivo Kauniste are long term members of the volunteer Archives family. Kristi Barrow has joined us to provide us with all the modern media platforms that are so necessary in these times. Most volunteers remain with the Archive until they can no longer climb the stairs to the Archive rooms. The Archive is regarded as the premier ethnic archive in Australia and is often called upon to advise other ethnic communities on how to preserve their history. We are proud of our achievements. The latest achievement was early in 2021 when our oral history collection was inscribed into the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register.

A MUSEUM REIMAGINED: THE NEW FACE OF VEMU

Followers of VEMU may have already noticed through social media and via other channels that our public image has been recently refreshed. In collaboration with Estonian design firm Velvet, we underwent an exciting rebranding process throughout 2021; this was an important stepping stone towards realizing VEMU's new home. We are preparing for a stronger and rejuvenated fundraising campaign for this purpose and in order to do that, an in depth look at who we are, what we would like to achieve and how we want to appear to the world was necessary.

We turned to Velvet thanks to our close colleagues from Estonia. Velvet has worked on projects such as designing the Estonian National Museum's visual identity and on one of the museum's most praised and esteemed exhibits "Echo of the Urals".

Numerous meetings throughout the past year culminated in the unveiling and presentation of VEMU's new look via a web seminar this February titled "Looks Matter." The centric point of the seminar was, in fact, a presentation by Velvet's creative director Kristian Kirsfeldt which not only introduced the fresh brand but also handled the topic of branding in general.

Looks Matter: Branding a New Museum

January 26th, 7pm (EST)

In partnership with Velvet Design Agency

VEMU Estonian
Museum
Canada



One of the more complicated tasks involved in the process was to see through to an acceptable conclusion the discussions, which had lasted years, regarding VEMU's name. There were those who were not satisfied with the museum's Estonian title "Väliseesti Muuseum" and others who doubted whether the acronym VEMU, derived from the Estonian name, would be acceptable as a brand name as it would be foreign to Canadians. Some also didn't think a translation of the museum's current name to English, "Museum of Estonians Abroad," would suffice. We sent out various questionnaires and organized several discussions, an analysis of the results led to the final decision to keep both the Estonian version of the museum's name as well as the acronym VEMU. Both iterations of the names were launched by the author of the idea for the museum, Elmar Tampõld, and they have become a regular part of our community's vocabulary. It was also determined that VEMU as a short form may in fact not be detrimental within the multicultural context of Canada due to its slightly exotic nature, instead it would intrigue and create a heightened interest. What did change, however, was the museum's name in English: it is now known as Estonian Museum Canada.

Decisions regarding VEMU's name couldn't be delayed any longer since one

of the most crucial components of an institution's visual identity is the logo. As per Velvet's design, the new logo is clean, simple, modern and also features a slight allusion to fonts traditionally used in Estonia.

After discussing wording pertaining to the museum's goals, visions and values, messages directed at different target groups were created. Throughout current activities and those planned for our new home, VEMU keeps in mind various generations of Canadian Estonians – those who are involved and in touch with Estonian culture and the local community as well as those who have strayed from it but would like to reconnect. Our target groups include not only Estonians in Estonia and those living in other diaspora communities, but also those who don't have a drop of Estonian blood and know nothing of the country or its people: Canadians and visitors with a multitude of cultural backgrounds. The new VEMU building that will be located in Toronto, along with a permanent exhibit and programs, should become a cultural draw for all. The future museum will promote and showcase the universal experience of immigration through an Estonian viewpoint.

Drawing from all of the previously mentioned themes, the various components of the museum's new visual identity were created: the shorelines

of Estonia and Canada as well as the cornflower and maple leaf, important cultural symbols of both countries respectively, together form the North Star. Both design themes represent the current and historical reality of Canadian Estonians where these two worlds, the old and the new home, were forged into one.

The search for images that help convey the ideas presented within the messages was an exciting and creative process all on its own. They were chosen from both the near and distant past, from archives and from current times. Our CVI photo collection was also further completed by professional and current materials as well as those depicting VEMU and Canadian Estonian culture thanks to several photoshoots during the aforementioned process.

The entire rebranding package, the CVI or Corporate Visual Identity Manual, has been completed and is currently in use by VEMU employees. We've received a great amount of good feedback related to our new and refreshed image. We hope that this will aid in generating more interest towards VEMU and that through this we will gain new supporters in addition to the existing ones. Our collaboration with Velvet continues: we're in the process of planning the permanent exhibit that will be a part of VEMU's new home along with our inspiring partners. Exciting years await us!

RESTARTING VEMU'S 2022 ONLINE CULTURAL PROGRAM

As the world struggles with the new variant of COVID-19, Omicron, the Estonian Museum Canada (VEMU) opened its 2022 cultural program online, this being the current norm due to the pandemic.

On January 12th, Katariina Sofia Päts and Joosep Heinsalu, visiting students from the University of Tartu, held a lecture discussing current hot topics in higher education from a student's perspective in Estonia.

A couple of weeks later on January 26th, VEMU's refreshed image was launched via a seminar called Looks Matter: Branding a New Museum. VEMU undertook an exciting renewal process of its brand throughout 2021 in cooperation with partners from the Estonian design agency Velvet. The seminar presented the results and experiences gained from our joint collaborative efforts. In addition to introducing the new visual identity of VEMU, we discussed the topic in broader terms so that other organizations could gain new insights into the benefits of brand rejuvenation. Creative director Kristian Kirsfeldt and producer-sales strategist Ottomar Tamm of Velvet spoke at the seminar along with designer Jaan Kittask (Toronto),

Ellen Valter from KESKUS (Toronto), and Piret Noorhane from VEMU. Sebastian Buccioni acted as moderator for the discussion.

January 30th featured the screening of an Estonian feature film *Self Made Cameraman* ("Johannes Pääsukeste tõeline elu," 2019) which was followed by a discussion with director Hardi Volmer. Johannes Pääsuke (1892-1918) is well known to many Estonians. VEMU displayed a travelling exhibition of this pioneer of Estonian photography and film history at Tartu College in 2012 and we have also shown Pääsuke's films made for the Estonian National Museum which recorded the everyday life of Estonians. An opportunity to learn about the author of these photos and films was presented through the movie "Self Made Cameraman", which fictionally depicts Pääsuke's 1913 film and photographic travels to Setomaa as a correspondent of the Estonian National Museum.

On February 12th, in cooperation with St. Peter's Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Toronto, VEMU hosted a virtual conference celebrating 475 years of Estonian liturgical music as well as the 30th anniversary of their song and prayer book. The contribution of Estonians abroad to the Estonian liturgical canon was also discussed. Opening remarks were made by Rev.

Mart Salumäe and Piret Noorhane, greetings were conveyed by Archbishop Urmas Viilma and former secretary of the EELK Songbook Committee Jaak Salumäe. Rev. Salumäe gave a quick review of the 475-year history of Estonian liturgical music. Bishop Tiit Salumäe gave an overview of the activities of the EELK Songbook Committee and the publication of songbooks in Estonia. Pastor Gustav Piir and Assessor Provost Marko Tiitus also spoke about the Songbook Committee with Tiitus touching upon the current state of compiling a new songbook in 2022. A recording from VEMU's archives of Roman Toi's presentation on the University of Tartu's anniversary in 1995 was screened, where Dr Toi recalled how the songbook was compiled.

Dr Peeter Põldre gave the third lecture in his COVID-19 series, *The Omicron Tsunami and Beyond*, on February 16th. As in his previous lectures, Dr Põldre once again provided an excellent overview of the current state of the pandemic in Canada and globally. Whether his prophecies will come true will be revealed in the future.

The film screening planned for Sunday, February 27th, featuring *Where the Heart Is* ("Talve", 2019) was cancelled due to the rally held at the same time in Toronto in support of Ukraine. It

Film Screening

Self Made Cameraman

"Johannes Pääsukeste tõeline elu" (2019, 90 min)

Followed by discussion with director
Hardi Volmer (in Estonian)

January 30th, at 2 pm (EST)

In Estonian with English subtitles

Watch on the **VEMU YouTube channel**

VEMU

Estonian
Museum
Canada



is the last chapter in a series of movies based on the beloved stories of Estonian author Oskar Luts. The year is 1942 and after the Reds retreat, the German regime has taken over Estonia. Despite the change of power, the Estonian people's desires and spirit remain the same - they love, celebrate, quarrel and reconcile. The film was released exactly 50 years after the premiere of *Spring* ("Kevade", 1969), giving the Luts saga a dignified and bright ending.

VISITING VEMU

Due to the current state of the world, Estonian Museum Canada (VEMU) archives hasn't had a single visitor from Estonia but, lo and behold, all of a sudden we had four! Keep on reading to find out who these guests were and their reasons for visiting.

Near the end of 2021, Katariina Sofia Päts and Joosep Heinsalu from the University of Tartu arrived in Toronto. Katariina Sofia is in her second year of doing her master's degree in history at the University of Tartu and is also head of the student body. Her studies include research on how diaspora Estonians supported the fight for the freeing of Estonia from the Soviet occupation in the years 1985-1991. Due to the abundance of material on this subject in VEMU's collection, it was a necessity for her to visit. Katariina also conducted interviews with Estonians in the local community which will help further complete VEMU's archives. She was already familiar with VEMU due to a project in 2021 where she, along with fellow student Anete Leht worked remotely describing the Estonian Heritage Society's video collection which is part of the museum. We kickstarted this project in collaboration with the University of Tartu's Institute of History and Archaeology professor of Archival Studies Aigi Rahi-Tamm. Joosep Heinsalu is a master's candidate for the University of Tartu's Institute of Educational Studies. He searched VEMU's archives for historical educational materials, focusing on the work of the former director of the Tartu Teacher's Seminar, Juhan Tork. Joosep's interviews conducted with local Estonians will also contribute to VEMU's collection. Katariina and Joosep both belong to the



University of Tartu's Senate as student representatives and as such very fittingly presented an informative online lecture, during their time here, on the lives of university students and the state of higher education in current Estonia.

For a month in January and February, Lea Teedema and Astri Schönfelder from the Estonian National Archives were here working with VEMU's archives. This was the third stage of a long-term collaborative project between two heritage institutes. Archivists from the National Archives come to VEMU to help quicken the process of getting our document archives in order; professionals work efficiently and get the job done in a more timely manner. Recently, work on the Estonian Central Council in Canada archives has resumed and the personal archival material of Elmar Tampöld, Elmar Järvesoo, Laine Pant, and Juta Ilves has also continued to be sorted. The project is sponsored by VEMU as well as the Estonian National Archives and by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research through the Global Estonian Program (previously Compatriots Program).



THE MOTUZA BROTHERS FILMS ARRIVED IN LITHUANIA

The Lithuanian Central State Archives received a shipment of valuable films from Chicago. The Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture has handed over to the Archives for digitization of the Motuza brothers' films. Famous Lithuanian-American filmmakers, the pioneers of Lithuanian colour documentary filmmaking brothers Kazimieras and Mečys Motuza, captured life in pre-war Lithuania on 16 mm Kodak colour film: villages and towns, their architecture, monuments, festivals and people. According to the Lithuanian Central State Archives, all films will be scanned and made available to the patrons.



Photo: Lithuanian Central State Archives.