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## SUMMER ARRIVES DIFFERENTLY THIS YEAR

The war instigated by Russia targeting Ukraine has already lasted over three months. Whereas towards the beginning there was a seemingly strong and united reaction to the war amongst the international community (with some expected exceptions), some differing opinions have now emerged. How and for what length of time will the desire and bravery of leaders of Western countries to help support Ukraine in their fight for freedom last? Politicians and diplomats from the Baltic countries have done a tremendous job of this on the international front, and the Baltic countries and peoples have supported Ukraine with great vigour. But how long will our voices be heard? We have to hope for the best and wish for our leaders to continue to be smart and strong. And of course, we all have to take on small or any tasks that benefit Ukraine and keep up our support, we can't let ourselves tire in this fight!

However, summer is quickly approaching despite the war.

BaltHerNet's summer school is also on the horizon and potential participants are still affected by the war — those who are coming from farther are unsure of whether it's currently truly safe to travel to Estonia. We really hope that in one way or another we can still go on with the summer school because we haven't been able to meet with our friendly, hardworking BaltHerNet family and come together in a long while. These gatherings are necessary to exchange thoughts and ideas and keep our spirits high — to learn something new.

**Piret Noorhane**  
Editor-in-Chief

## VEMU BROUGHT THE UKRAINIAN FRONTLINE PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION TO CANADA

On May 6th, a photography exhibit documenting the current war in Ukraine was opened at VEMU (Estonian Museum Canada), where it will be available for viewing until the end of July. The exhibit could also be seen at Toronto's City Hall from May 7th-13th and from the end of May through June at the Cotton Factory in Hamilton. The exhibit made it to Toronto thanks to the collaborative efforts of curator Kateryna Radchenko in Ukraine and Temur Khvingia from the Okapi Gallery in Tallinn, where it was opened on March 9th. Present at the opening of the exhibit at VEMU and Toronto's City Hall were several leaders from Canadian Eastern European organizations, politicians, diplomats, and media representatives. The exhibition at City Hall was visited by over 50,000 individuals and people have already expressed interest in it on the west coast of Canada and Alberta.

On the morning of February 24th, Russia began its full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. Though the Russian government has been calling it a "special demilitarization operation", it is in fact a real war taking place in the middle of Europe, the largest conflict in Europe since the Second World War. Russian troops launched missile strikes targeting various peaceful Ukrainian cities, as well

as the temporarily occupied Donbas and Crimea, and the northeastern region. Military objects are being targeted, as well as peaceful homes, orphanages, and kindergartens. The nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhya, the biggest in Europe, was attacked. To date, this war has already lasted over three months. Throughout these months, we have not only experienced and seen the unbelievable bravery and extraordinary defensive capabilities of the Ukrainian people and their soldiers, but we have also seen the Putin regime's horrific war crimes directed at innocent civilians. Over 5 million people have escaped Ukraine and more than 30,000 of them have made their way to Estonia.

"Ukrainian photographers are bravely doing their job in the Ukrainian cities during the war. Now they are not only professional journalists and photographers – they are citizens who capture their beloved places ruined by Russian troops and bombs as well as people standing fearlessly for their land, homes, and families. What's more – Ukrainians are fighting now for peace in the whole of Europe," says Kateryna Radchenko, director and curator of the International Festival of Contemporary Photography Odesa Photo Days, who is actively seeking opportunities to reflect the local situation in the international cultural arena. "Photography is a powerful tool and media, to tell the truth about what is going on in the centre of Europe now," Radchenko says.



Photo by Paul Kiilaspea ©2022

## 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 balthernet*
- + *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.





Photo by Paul Kilaspea ©2022

Odesa Photo Days Festival is a Ukraine-based international festival and educational platform. It pushes forward Ukrainian photography and connects artists, curators and researchers from different parts of the world: Western Europe, the USA, Eastern Europe, and Central and Northeast Asia. The eighth edition of the Festival was scheduled to take place in Odesa on 19-22 May 2022. Russia's military invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February, however, has changed everything. Now Radchenko and the festival team are working to spread the word about the situation in Ukraine and support Ukrainian documentary photographers and photography-based artists affected by war.

The photographs show crushed municipal and civil buildings, vehicles, and bridges; soldiers and ordinary citizens with all kinds of weapons and Molotov cocktails; carrying the deceased and rescuing domestic animals; rolling suitcases on ruined streets, fire, and smoke in snowy trenches. These photographs were taken by known local photographers Yurko Dyanchychyn, Serhiy Hudak, Mikhail Palinchak, Oleg Petrasjuk, Alina Smutko, Yana Sidash, Sergei Ylyashenko, Mstyslav Chernov, Sergey Korovayny, Volodymyr Petrov, Pavel Dorogoy, Viacheslav Ratynski, Oleksandr Ratushniak.

In addition to the Ukrainian photographers, the exhibition also

features fresh shots from the front line by their Estonian counterpart Dmitry Kotjuh. Then photographer for the Järva Teataja, Kotjuh's work was recognized in 2015 as the best Estonian press photo by the Estonian Newspaper Association, and last year he was awarded the 5th Class Order of the White Star – an Estonian State Decoration. At the moment Kotjuh is working in the ranks of the publication of Postimees media.

Estonian Museum Canada/VEMU wishes to thank partners: the Odesa Photo Days Festival in Ukraine, the Okapi Gallery in Tallinn, the Central and Eastern European Council and Cotton Factory in Hamilton. Financial

support for the project was provided by VEMU and Cotton Factory.

VEMU created t-shirts in support of Ukraine, the proceeds of which, along with donations from visitors to the exhibit, will go to the Charity Foundation East-SOS, which has been helping war victims since 2014. Now they are working not only with Donetsk and Luhansk regions but with all of Ukraine. They buy and distribute humanitarian aid to those who are affected by the shelling of their settlements.

### VEMU 'S 10TH FUNDRAISER WAS DEDICATED TO THE FUTURE OF THE MUSEUM

Fundraisers are not just about raising money. It's an opportunity to celebrate the year's achievements with cherished supporters and, in this case, share some exciting news about future plans. Here is my recap of the 2022 annual VEMU fundraiser.

The VEMU fundraiser has taken place yearly since 2010 and went online during the pandemic. This year the fundraiser not only supported VEMU but also Ukraine. Each year has a theme and this year guest speakers Alar Kongats and Kristian Kirsfeldt spoke about the upcoming project to build the Estonian Museum Canada. No VEMU fundraiser is complete without tasty food and wonderful music, but I'll get to that in a moment.





Chief Archivist Piret Noorhani kicked off the evening with a year-in-review. Although COVID-19 presented many challenges, VEMU continued to offer strong programming throughout 21/22. VEMU clocked thousands of views online and even managed to off some in-person events via Estonian Music Week. Another major achievement was the rebranding process to “Estonian Museum Canada / VEMU”. As we learned, it’s not just about slapping on a new coat of paint, it’s about reconnecting with VEMU’s mission and taking a step towards a vision for the future, that is, building the Estonian Museum Canada.

For those that say these events aren’t about the food, they haven’t tasted food from the Ukrainian caterers Baby Point Lounge. Their Ukrainian classics were not only satisfying but were part of our focus on the country. Our fundraiser raised an additional \$225 toward the cause through the sale of our Estonian-Ukrainian solidarity t-shirts. On display were the devastating photos of the exhibit Ukrainian Frontline Photography. We continue to try to do our small part to bring attention to the war and its effect.

Our first guest speaker of the evening was ambassador Toomas Lukk. Ambassador Lukk shared his enthusiasm for the new museum project and the importance of the endeavour. He then bestowed the Medal of Honour of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Piret

Noorhani for her contribution to the promotion of Estonian interests in the world.

Next, we heard from architect Alar Kongats who shared with us the latest designs for VEMU’s new home, so fresh that many on the VEMU team had not even seen them yet. One of the most striking updates was the window facade inspired by the turrets of the walls of Tallinn. The half-turrets turn inward creating a welcoming alcove to look out over the Bloor Street corridor. Although Kongats refers to his contribution as just the shell, it already exudes character and creativity.

Next, Kristian Kirsfeldt, Creative Director at Velvet Design Agency, brought us up to speed on the planning interior of the new museum. The planning involves a permanent but evolving exhibit telling the story of the Estonian diaspora. Although it’s very early in the process Kristjan took us through the inspiration gathering, which looks to put VEMU on a level playing field with Canada’s top museums. It is clear, even at this early stage, that the museum will provide an engaging world-class experience.

For my part, I selected two young musicians to perform. As I shared in my introduction, it’s particularly exciting to hear music from these rising stars in the community. Supporting artists with opportunities as they grow is an important facet of what VEMU does

through Estonian Music Week. And every time these artists take to the stage they’ve reached a new level in the musical journey and we, the organizers and audience, are rewarded for all their hard work. Saturday’s performance by Erik Kreem was no exception. He dazzled us with new repertoire like his accordion duet “Breathing”, and the Canadian composer Francois Morel’s Two Studies of Sonority. Erik was joined by his colleague at U of T, Finnish accordion player Matti Pulkki. Matti blazed through J.S. Bach’s famous Toccata in D minor with breathtaking virtuosity. The duo closed the night with a special appearance of Erik on accordion performing Arvo Pärt’s arrangement of Ukuaru Valss. I couldn’t think of a sweeter note to conclude the evening on.

Another THANK YOU to all our wonderful supporters - without you, VEMU could not do all the important work we do. We are especially thankful to those who were not able to attend the event in person but still sent their financial support for the occasion. Aitäh! We look forward to taking these important steps toward building VEMU’s future together.

**Sebastian Buccioni**

*Sebastian Buccioni is the Executive and Artistic Director for Estonian Music Week and the Development Manager for Estonian Museum Canada / VEMU*

## EXHIBITION DEDICATED TO THE FRENCH WRITER ROMAIN GARY

On March 23, an exhibition “Romain Gary: The Return to Vilnius” (French: Romain Gary: un retour à Vilnius) was opened at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

The French writer Romain Gary (born Roman Kacew) has been an important part of the multicultural history of Vilnius. The exhibition showcased the significance of Vilnius in his life, the links with Lithuania and its capital and the experiences he had here, which had been captured in his novels.

Although the young Gary lived in Vilnius with his mother for only a few years, they were significant in the future writer’s life. He grew up





*The exhibition is dedicated to Romain Gary.*

*Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/ National Library of Lithuania*

in a multilingual environment where Lithuanian, Russian, Polish and Yiddish were spoken. Vilnius was a city of the Vilna Gaon and Stephen Batory University and a city that lived through the national liberation movement at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. All this became the soil that nourished the work of Gary, the greatest mystifier of all time. His childhood memories influenced Gary in such a way that he became a true European and remained one.

Jean Ren  Bourrel, a specialist in Francophone literature and culture, was present at the opening of the exhibition. He was also one of the patrons of this exhibition, who kindly lent important artefacts and collectables. According to the guest, Gary will always remain a phenomenon in Vilnius.

The exhibition included some of Gary's first publications, original editions of his most important works revealing the writer's talent, documents and exhibits reflecting his activities and ideas as a humanist and a dedicated fighter for freedom. Special attention was drawn to Gary's relationship with two people who, according to the writer himself, guided and essentially shaped his later life: Andr  Malraux, France's first Minister of Culture, and General Charles de Gaulle. The panorama of early 20th-century Vilnius was also presented in the exhibition: the

buildings, the expanding street network, the socio-cultural life, and the press of the time.

With this exhibition, Gary returned to Vilnius not only as a writer but also as a fighter for a united European spirit. The event was accompanied by the news that the exhibition was featured in one of France's most important daily newspapers, *Le Figaro*.

### ESTOCast: A NEW PODCAST FOR ALL THINGS ESTONIAN

Are you a regular consumer of Estonian media and news but find that your busy schedule limits the amount of time you can sit down and read at home? Maybe you're trying to maximize the time you spend in transit, cooking, or doing chores. If you're on the go and still want to connect with the latest in Estonian culture, you should really start listening to Estocast.

Estocast is a podcast presented by and created by team members from VEMU (Estonian Museum Canada), its project Estonian Music Week, and *Eesti Elu* / Estonian Life newspaper. All good podcasts need a focused theme, and luckily for us, these organizations have overlapping interests and activities. Knowing how much we have in common and seeing how podcasting as a medium is only growing more and more, we decided to embark on this multimedia endeavour together.

Each episode of the podcast takes a different approach, focusing on a new person or theme that exemplifies all of the exciting things Estonians are getting up to in Canada, Estonia, and elsewhere in the world.

To date, two episodes have come out. The first is an Estonian-language interview with VEMU's Chief Archivist Piret Noorh ni, conducted by host Kati Kiilaspea. In this episode, "Intervjuu raamatukoiga" ("An Interview With a Bookworm"), Noorh ni propounds her point-of-view about books and libraries and speaks in-depth about the VEMU archival collection in Toronto.

The second episode is an English-language interview (conducted by host Vincent Teetsov) with Ruslan and Terje Trochynskyi, the lead singer/ trombonist and manager respectively, of the band *Svjata Vatra*. Ruslan, who grew up in Ukraine and tells the story of his early years as a musician, his transition to Estonia. They both speak about the extraordinary success of the *Slava Ukraini* benefit concert, during which many high profile Estonian musicians played and raised almost 700,000 Euros.

The Estocast podcast is driven largely by a conversational or interview format, but there is also the potential, in the future, of episodes that dive deep into research and facts surrounding one specific topic or current event. Episodes will diversify your contact with Estonian culture through discussions of books, music, art, history, science, food, and more. Listeners in Estonia will be privy to the Estonian way of life abroad.

If you ever wanted to kick back and learn the Estonian language through osmosis, this is also the perfect program for you. For every English-language episode, there will be an Estonian-language episode, with familiar, clear conversational Estonian to pick up on as well as niche vocabulary to get acquainted with. Surround yourself with spoken Estonian no matter how far away you live from Estonia! Depending on what you prefer, language-wise, look for an indication of the spoken language in the description of each episode.



EstoCast episodes will come out every two weeks, with key links, transcriptions, and show notes featured by each organization on social media in the weeks in between. Follow Estonian Museum Canada on Facebook and Estonian Music Week and Eesti Elu newspaper on Instagram and Facebook to access these resources.

Listening to EstoCast is easy. Visit our podcast website at <https://estocast.buzzsprout.com>, click “more” to see all of the streaming sites where EstoCast is hosted, and then either play the episodes online or download them to your smartphone or other devices for later.

On May 25th an Estonian-language interview with literary scholar Tiina Kirss came out, and then on June 8th, an English-language interview with the electro-folk band Etnosfäär. While you’re on our podcast’s page on one of these streaming platforms, make sure to hit the “follow” button so that you don’t miss out on all of these fascinating conversations!

Vincent Tectsov



*The newest book on Lithuanian culture in the diaspora.*

*Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis / National Library of Lithuania.*

## THE PRESENTATION OF THE BOOK ON LITHUANIAN CULTURE IN DIASPORA

On May 5, the presentation of the book “Laiko jungtys” [Links of Time] (Vilnius, 2021) by Dalia Kuiziniene took place at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania.

The latest book by Prof. Kuiziniene, which consists of two parts, contains interviews and articles spanning a period of more than thirty years. The first part includes interviews with diaspora writers, publishers and journalists from



*At the presentation of the book. From the left: moderator Dr Dalia Cidzikaitė, the author of the book, and journalist Birutė Garbaravičienė.*

*Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis / National Library of Lithuania.*

1992 to 2005 when they first arrived in Lithuania after the restoration of Lithuania’s independence. These are interviews with the figures of the older generation of Lithuanian diaspora, writers Jurgis Jankus, Kazimieras Barėnas, Birutė Pūkelevičiūtė and Vytautas Volertas, literary critics Birutė Cipliauskaitė, Rimvydas Šilbajoris and Bronius Vaškelis, and the publisher Gintautas Vėžys. The second part of the book consists of interviews with Lithuanian writers, academics and artists currently living and working outside Lithuania: Birutė Putrius, prof. Violeta Kelertienė, prof. Algirdas Avižienis, Lina Ever, Jolita Herlyn and Almyra Weigel.

The author of the book says that she tried to connect the past and the present, highlighting parallels and differences and that the conversations presented in the book are a kind of sign of a bygone time that “spotlights not only the Lithuanian diaspora but also our post-Soviet life.”

## THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT FOR ESTONIAN MUSIC WEEK

Estonian Music Week (EMW), which has risen to become VEMU’s largest cultural event over the past 4 years, has had an eventful few months with lots of exciting things in store for the near future as well. As we all know, the pandemic brought the world to a screeching halt, including a hard hit to the music industry with live concerts and

events being cancelled and repeatedly pushed forward. With most of the restrictions being lifted in February and March, we were finally able to get back to organizing and planning live concerts, something that we had all been missing for 2 years. The turnout and atmosphere at our first concert after the pandemic showed just how much people had been craving to get back to experiencing culture first-hand, the overwhelming feeling of joy at being able to hear live music again was tangible amongst the audience.

That first concert we organized was the famed piano virtuoso Kristjan Randalu, who we were able to have come here in April. Along with local Canadian legendary saxophonist Mike Murley, he brought a night of contemporary and abstract jazz to an audience that was positively starved for live music; after the concert, many could be heard mentioning that the music had been food for the soul and even healing. It took place at the historical Heliconian Club in downtown Toronto which added to the feeling of the concert as a whole, amplifying Randalu’s hark back to his Estonian roots in several songs but bringing that into the here and now, into the modern. The night was very much a success, it gave the EMW team a chance to see the future in a more positive and brighter light and helped breathe new life and energy into our endeavours.

Beginning at the end of March and throughout April, in collaboration with



VEMU (Estonian Museum Canada), we organized and ran an exclusive sampling and live remix workshop featuring local professional Estonian-Canadian DJ and turntablist Erik Laar as the instructor. The idea was to not only get youth and young adults interested in music and culture at large but more so to enhance their connection to their Estonian roots through the exploration of our music and culture. 6 lucky participants were able to take a trip down to the VEMU archives, peruse the collection of vinyl records and pick out what sounded interesting to them. Four intensive and intimate classes at Erik's studio Off Centre DJ School followed the archival trip, where the participants learned to use the digital audio station Ableton Live to create live remixes using samples from the records they had picked. The group had great energy, where support for each other and kindness ran strongly throughout, with everyone bringing their own unique passion and viewpoint of music to the workshop. The recent final performance featured participants performing a 60-90 second live remix of their compositions that exercised creative expression and improvisation on the spot. The workshop was a complete success and both instructor and students mentioned being interested in possible similar future endeavours that would dive more in depth into the nuances of Ableton and sound manipulation. Stay tuned for the video of the final performance coming soon! The project was supported by

the Integration Foundation / Estonian Culture Ministry.

Finally, EMW's creative director Sebastian Buccioni travelled to Estonia at the beginning of May to promote the festival at Tallinn Music Week and forge new connections that will contribute to our future plans as well as help us expand and further our reach to new audiences. Local Canadian artist with Finnish roots, Estyr, was along as an artist ambassador to showcase just what EMW can bring to the table in terms of musicianship and talent. Before travelling to Estonia, Sebastian also spent time at the Jazzahead Festival in Bremen, Germany where new useful connections were also made.

Very shortly, we're presenting the renowned Estonian choir Collegium Musicale conducted by Endrik Üksvārav

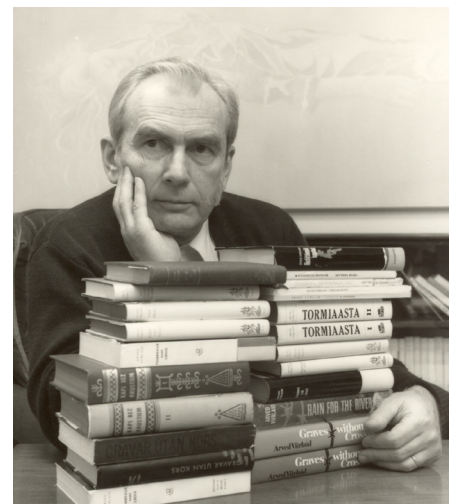


in a series of three concerts in Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa at the end of May and the beginning of June. Get excited, we have a lot of thrilling events and concerts coming up in the future; stay tuned on our social media or via our website ([estonianmusicweek.ca](http://estonianmusicweek.ca)) for more content and announcements!

Kati Kiillaspea

## VEMU ESTABLISHES A LITERARY AWARD IN THE NAME OF ARVED VIIRLAID

VEMU (Estonian Museum Canada), located in Toronto, has announced a literary award in the name of the Canadian-Estonian writer Arved Viirleid in honour of his 100th birthday. It will be handed out biennially on Viirleid's birthdate, April 11th, to an outstanding fictional written work that contains



themes relating to Estonia and captures as well as conveys the essence of the country and its culture.

Not in keeping with this timeline, the first recipient will be announced and the award is given out at the end of this year at a conference during the Kreutzwald Days at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu. To be eligible for the award, the written work must have been published between January 2021 and August 2022. The deadline for nominating a candidate is August 31, 2022.

Candidates can be nominated by organizations and individuals, including members of the jury. To apply, a letter stating the reason why the work deserves to receive the award along with the nominated work or a copy of it must be submitted to VEMU.



The recipient of the award will be determined by the jury, which includes these individuals: Tiina Kirss, Janika Kronberg, Sirje Olesk, Kaja Telmet, and Jaan Undusk. The award is sponsored by VEMU in the amount of 1500 euros.

## VISTING VEMU



The world has started to open up again after the pandemic. After a long hiatus, VEMU was once again able to welcome guests from Estonia.

Our partners from design agency Velvet, Kristian Kirsfeldt, Anne Määrmann and Kristi Prinzmann, spent a week in Toronto in May with the goal of familiarizing themselves with the local Estonian community, Tartu College, VEMU, and other places that are important to our diaspora group. They visited several museums and surveyed the cityscape to better understand the cultural environment within which VEMU's future permanent exhibit will exist, for which the preparations have already begun. The team also paid a visit to architect Alar Kongats' bureau, where the plans for VEMU's new building were looked over and a discussion regarding how to fit all of the museum's functions into the space took place. The end of their week-long visit featured participation at VEMU's annual fundraising evening which was also dedicated to VEMU's future, the new building, and its interior design this time around.



In May, we also had Krislin Kämärä, a consultant who is involved with VEMU's future permanent exhibit as a team member, visit VEMU. Krislin has been a longtime employee at the Estonian Maritime Museum which is located partly at the Seaplane Harbour in Tallinn, and currently is a freelance curator who helps create various exhibits both in Estonia and abroad.

The end of May brought long-awaited visitors and helpers from the Estonian National Museum (ENM). ENM's Deputy Director-Chief Treasurer Riina Reinvelt had already become familiar with VEMU's collections from various earlier visits; this time her focus is organizing Tommy Tomson's expansive photo collection. Kadri Vissel, who manages ENM's collections, is working with VEMU's artefacts. Both of the aforementioned collections need to be organized so that they can be properly utilized in the creation of the permanent exhibit.

## VEMU'S EVENTS FROM MARCH TO MAY 2022

The pandemic as well as Russia's military invasion of Ukraine left their mark on VEMU's 2022 spring program. Most of the events continued to take place online due to restrictions brought



on by Covid. There were events that had to be pushed to a future date so we could go and support Ukraine along with fellow Torontonians at rallies or that just weren't appropriate during these dark and serious times. At the same time, new events were added to the program that wasn't originally planned, but due to the political state of the world were important and relevant.

On March 6th we watched the movie "Sandra Gets A Job" (2021, Kopli Cinema Company). The film was followed by a discussion with the

Emakeelepäev  
"Sõna võtad siita maalt, tõise tõisesta ilmasta"

Lüüet, muusikat ja mõtteid eestlaseks olemisest jagavad:  
Kaja Weeks (USA), Kaja Telmet (Kanada), Janika Oras (Eesti),  
Triinu Viilukas ja Madli Oras (Austria)

Pühapäeval, 13. märtsil kell 13:00 EST  
Eesti keeles, Zoomis  
Meeting ID: 846 6524 6537

Info: vemu.ca, piretnoorhani@gmail.com

VEMU Estonian Maritime Museum Canada

director Kaupo Kruusiauk. "Sandra Gets A Job" is a psychological drama about a young Doctor of Physics, Sandra, who unexpectedly loses her job in an interest research group. Getting a new job seems simple at first glance, but after a few failures, Sandra feels herself sinking more and more into unemployment. Every new attempt to find a job is increasingly humiliating. In addition, she must hide her failure, at least from her successful parents who also work in the world of science.

On March 13 we celebrated the Estonian Language Day - "Sõna võtad siita maalt, tõise tõisesta ilmasta". The endeavour was kickstarted by an English poetry compilation by Kaja Weeks titled "Mouth Quill" published in the US in 2020. Growing up in a family of refugees and the search for identity as an Estonian who lives abroad have taken her on a journey to the very basis and the oldest layer of our language and culture, "regilaul" or "runosong." As a musician and music teacher herself, who uses music as a form of therapy for disabled children, Kaja has a good understanding and feeling for song as well as song traditions and what importance they hold in shaping an individual's identity and in maintaining mental health. In a paradoxical way, Kaja's English poetry has been fueled by the Estonian language. Why? How? Topics including those and what it's like to be an Estonian abroad were discussed at the event by Kaja Weeks, Kaja Telmet and Inga Eichenbaum (Canada), Janika Oras (Estonia), and Triinu Viilukas and Madli Oras (Austria). Poetry was read, runosongs were sung. The afternoon



ended with the viewing of a new runosong in support of Ukraine performed by Mari Kalkun and Anna Hints on February 26th at a rally at Freedom Square in Tallinn.

The screening of the feature film "Where the Heart Is" (Talve, 2019, Taska Film, Kassikuld, Apollo Film Productions, director Ergo Kuld) was rescheduled several times due to the light-hearted nature of the film not being appropriate with the war having just begun. The film was finally viewed but the post-film discussion with screenwriter Martin Alguus was cancelled. The film has to do with the final part in author Oskar Luts' Paunvere-centric series of books upon which the aforementioned and other films have been based.

In March and April, VEMU helped spread the news about a series of web lectures by an Estonian guest professor from abroad at the University of Tartu, Jaan Valsiner. The creation of a guest professor program for Estonians abroad was born from the idea to invite well-known academics and professors with an Estonian background to come to teach at the University of Tartu for at least one semester. Jaan Valsiner is one of the leading cultural psychologists in the world, has worked at Clark University among others and is currently the Professor of Cultural Psychology at Aalborg University in Denmark. He was the second Estonian guest professor from abroad at the University of Tartu. During the 2020-2021 school year, the same role was filled by David Ilmar Lepasaar from Berkeley University in California.

The current professor of the Chair of the Estonian Studies at the University of Toronto, Andres Kasekamp, presented a lecture on April 13th titled "The War in Ukraine and Estonia" about the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its effects on Estonia. This was the first lecture at VEMU in two years which took place in-person at Tartu College. The relevance and importance of the topic at hand were clearly shown by the fact that the discussion with participants lasted for nearly three hours.

The first in-person workshop after Covid restrictions were lifted took place on April 30th, where Ene Timmusk taught how to knit patterned animals. The stuffed animals were made using a book by Anu

Raud, Anu Kotli, and Kotomi Hayashi and by utilizing traditional Estonian glove patterns. Among the participants were people who had been knitting for a long time as well as those who were new to the craft.

On May 15th a virtual artist talk by Britta Benno took place. The Estonian printmaker visited Canada in 2021 and spent a month in Hamilton working at the Cotton Factory on several art pieces for her exhibition that was held in Tartu in January of this year. The Society of Estonian Artists in Toronto and VEMU co-hosted the virtual talk and pictorial presentation of her art exhibition at Tartu Art House.

### DIASPORA RESEARCHERS' SEMINAR AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LITHUANIA



*Dr Darius Kučinskas shared his discoveries in researching the first publishers of Lithuanian pianola records.*

*Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/National Library of Lithuania*

After a two-year break, diaspora researchers gathered on May 5 for the 7th Diaspora Researchers' Seminar organized by the National Library of Lithuania. Twelve researchers and scholars working in the field of diaspora gave presentations.

Musicologist Dr Darius Kučinskas shared his discoveries in researching the first publishers of Lithuanian pianola records. Pianola records or rolls, of which about 300 have been published, are a unique material of Lithuanian discography. In his presentation, Dr Kučinskas talked about the first publishers of the Lithuanian pianola records in the United States of America: Augustas Antpusaitis, Jonas Žemaitis, Vincas Nickus and others, as well as their contribution to the early Lithuanian musical tradition in the USA.



*Viktor Bilotas presented his project carried out in Moscow and St. Petersburg archives.*

*Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/National Library of Lithuania*

Viktor Bilotas, a PhD student at Vytautas Magnus University, presented his project whose aim was to locate and digitize archival documents of Lithuanian war refugees and Lithuanian students in Tsarist Russia housed in Moscow and St. Petersburg archives. Symbolically, the last shipment of the project's material reached Lithuania on February 24, the day Russia launched its war against Ukraine. Among the documents found in Russia and brought to Lithuania are the archives of such important Lithuanian political figures as Petras Vileišis, Stanislovas Narutavičius, Jonas Vileišis, Antanas Smetona, Steponas Kairys and Jokūbas Šernas.

Dr Ramūnas Čičelis, a lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University, spoke about the little-known correspondence between Jonas Mekas, famous Lithuanian American filmmaker, artist and creator, and Antanas Naujokaitis, Lithuanian journalist and editor. In his presentation, "Correspondence between Jonas Mekas and Antanas Naujokaitis: A Story of Friendship and Collegiality," Čičelis shared his findings on 270 surviving letters written between 1997 and 2004, which will soon be published as a book.

Dr Akvilė Šimėnienė, a lecturer at Mykolas Romeris University, shared the challenges of preparing a collection of literary criticism in Lithuanian by Lithuanian American professor Birutė Cipliauskaitė, a renowned Spanish scholar and literary critic. The collection was published in 2020 by the Lithuanian Institute of Literature and Folklore.

Dr Kristina Jakaitė-Bulbukienė, a lecturer at Vilnius University, presented a project she and one of her students had implemented some time ago. One of



*Twelve researchers and scholars working in the field of diaspora gave presentations.*

*Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/National Library of Lithuania*

the main objectives of their project was aimed at motivating teachers working in Lithuanian language schools abroad. Ninety-two respondents were asked why they teach, sacrificing their time and often their own money, as well as why they decided to teach at a Lithuanian language school and what teaching in such a school means to them.

Dr Eglė Gudavičienė, also a lecturer at Vilnius University, spoke about how migration and the Lithuanian language are presented in Lithuanian media. She talked about a study carried out in 2019-2020, which analyzed over 650 articles containing the keywords “migration” and “Lithuanian language” in popular Lithuanian online media such as Delfi.lt, 15min.lt and LRT.lt.

After the break, Augustas Alekna, who currently studies for a Master’s degree at Lund University, joined the seminar from Sweden. In a presentation “What does it mean to be a Lithuanian Catholic in Protestant Sweden?” he presented his recent ethnographic research on Lithuanian Catholic immigrants in Sweden and their efforts to maintain and continue to practice their Catholicism.

A PhD student at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle and Vytautas Magnus University, Akvilė Kabašinskaitė, spoke on a topic that is particularly relevant today: how did France react to Lithuania’s struggle for independence in the 1990s, and how is it being repeated now that Russia has invaded Ukraine?

Dr Monika Šipelytė, who currently works on her postdoc, also joined virtually from France, where she

has been collecting material on the Lithuanian lawyer and public figure Juozas Gabrys-Paršaitis. The Lithuanian greatly contributed to Lithuania’s struggle for independence at the beginning of the 20th century. In February 1911, he founded and headed the Lithuanian Information Bureau in Paris, funded by Lithuanian-Americans, and in July of the same year, he presented a memorandum as a representative of Lithuania at the Congress of Enslaved Peoples in London and gave lectures on Lithuania’s historic past. In 1912, he took part in the founding of the League of Nations in Paris and acted as its secretary. He contributed material on Lithuania to the organization’s publication *Les Annales des Nationalités*, published in 1913 and 1915-1918.

*Diaspora researchers gathered at the National Library of Lithuania after a two-year break.*

*Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/National Library of Lithuania*



Ignas Stanevičius, a PhD student at Vilnius University, who is currently working on a thesis on the Lithuanian Catholic clergy in exile (1944-1990), talked about Lithuanian Catholic activities in the USA, highlighting the tension felt by some Lithuanian Catholic priests between pastoral challenges and social mission.

Dr. Ina Ėmužienė of the National Museum of Lithuania presented a paper on the origins of Lithuanian American radio: from the first words to radio empires, in which she talked about the first successful efforts of Lithuanians in the USA to introduce a Lithuanian word on the radio.

The seminar was closed by the director of the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art, Dr Juozapas Blažiūnas, who presented the latest collections of documents and archives that have arrived at the archives in the last couple of years. These include collections and archives of dancer Elena Namajuškaitė (Latvia/Lithuania), artist Petras Kiaulėnas (USA/Lithuania), artist Mstislavas Dobužinskis (the Czech Republic/France/Lithuania), sculptor Vincas Jomantas (Australia), journalist Vytautas Kazakevičius (Lithuania), artist Eva Kuba (Australia), architect Jonas Mulokas (USA/Lithuania), artist Vidmantas Valatka (former husband of Marija Gimbutienė’s daughter) and artist Nijolė Mockus Šivickas (Lithuania).