

# bridges



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

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*The arrested were taken from their homes to railroad stations and loaded into freight cars, 50-60 persons to a car. Men were separated from their wives and in many instances children from their mothers. The people, locked in the cars lacking air and without food and water, had to wait several days until all the arrested were entrained. The long journey into the depths of Russia killed many of the weak and sick. Lithuanian deportees were transported to northern Russia, western and eastern Siberia, Kazakhstan, and the Soviet Far East. Most of the deportees were confined in forced labor camps. Such torture chambers that rode the rails are now on exhibit in Lithuania.*



*This mural dedicated to the memory of the deportees is a shrine in St. Andrew's Lithuanian Church in Philadelphia, PA. It shows the train tracks that led thousands of innocent Lithuanians to a painful national holocaust and the doors to eternal life. According to data collected by the Lithuanian Red Cross, 34,260 persons were deported during the "black days of June." Statistics on age groups and professions have been provided from a list of 20,974 persons. Age groups were divided as follows: Infants to age 4 - 1,626; children 4-10 years - 2,165; 10-18 years old - 2,587; 18-30 - 3,986; 30 to 50 - 7,778; 50 to 70 - 1,681; over 70 - 427; 724 were of undetermined age. The largest groups comprised elementary and secondary school students - 6,378; farmers - 3,389; housewives numbered 1,865; teachers - 1,098.*

*Fr. Peter Burkauskas, Philadelphia, PA*



*Dalia Skrinškaite-Viskontienė*

# *Celebration of Song - Our Oral Heritage*

By Gabija Petrauskas

*The 9th North American Lithuanian Song Festival will take place July 2-4th weekend, 2010 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. 1200 voice choir main concert, Sunday, July 4th at 2pm, Hershey Centre, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Website for information and tickets:*

***www.dainusvente.org OR www.lithuaniansongfest.org***

Community in Toronto. Just over a hundred people of all ages are directly involved in organizing and hosting the 9th North American Lithuanian Song Festival in Toronto, Canada. Their work began four years ago when the 8th Festival in Chicago, Illinois ended and the “torch” was handed over, as in a relay, to the Principal Music and Artistic Director, Dalia Skrinškaite-Viskontienė and Organizing Committee Co-Chairs, Paulius and Rasa Kurai of Toronto. Four years of planning will be over “in the blink of an eye” in three days this July. Friday, July 2nd features a special concert at 8:30pm at the International Centre by one of Lithuania’s leading contemporary music performers – Marijonas Mikutavicius. Saturday, July 3rd features the Festival Choir’s dress rehearsal at the Hershey Centre from 8:30am until 5:00pm and an evening Street Party at the Toronto Airport Marriott Hotel from 7pm on. Sunday, July 4th is the highlight of the Song Festival – the Festival Concert at the Hershey Centre starting at 2pm. The evening celebration Gala - “Melodies of the Forest”, held at the International Centre beginning at 7pm will bring closure to this special weekend. We promise an exciting and joy-filled weekend to all who participate and invite you to join us in this celebration of song – our oral heritage!!

### **MASTERPIECE OF ORAL HISTORY:**

In 2003, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed the traditional Song and Dance Festivals of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as “**masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity**”. Truly something we can be very proud of! The very first Lithuanian song festival was organized in 1924 in Lithuania and the tradition has

continued approximately every 5 years for the past 86 years. Following the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union following World War II, the tradition continued within occupied Lithuania. In 1956 the tradition was mirrored outside of Lithuania with the first North American Lithuanian Song/Dance Festival produced outside of Lithuania, held in Chicago, Illinois. This was the first of 8 festivals produced outside of Lithuania over the past 54 years. All took place in Chicago, except in 1978 the Festival was held in Toronto, Ontario Canada. So.... after 32 years, the 9th North American Lithuanian Song Festival returns to Toronto.

### **FESTIVAL THEME:**

“**I am the Song**” is the theme of the 9th North American Lithuanian Song Festival selected by the Festival’s Principal Artistic Director, Dalia Skrinškaite-Viskontienė. It is the title of a song from the original works for children’s voices by Toronto composer, Jonas Govedas. It embodies the spirit of this festival as a celebration of song. Every aspect of our lives is expressed through song – our joy, our sorrow, our memories, our pain, our contemplations and our prayers. The cyclical nature of life whether it be the cycle of a lifetime, of a year or of a day is symbolically embodied in the logo created for this festival by Toronto graphic artist Snaige Sileika. It features the sun – bright and spreading light on the one side, and dark, contemplative and restful on the other side. These cycles will be reflected in the scenario written by Laimute Kisielienė of Lithuania and Dalia Viskontienė for this song festival. Dalia feels that the symbol of the sun conveys the reality of our lives: “We settled in different continents, seeking ‘safe harbour’ from various storms of life and have managed to stay “alive” as Lithuanians. For us to come together for events like these is essential to keeping ourselves alive as Lithuanians. We come together in a meeting of the heart and of the soul and we replenish

ourselves through the warmth and comfort of each other (of the sun) to endure and create anew as we once again return to our homes across the various continents.” It is as if the strand of sunlight continues to warm us and to unite us with Lithuania, with each other and with our heritage.

#### **4-PART CONCERT SCENARIO:**

Our heritage will come alive once again at this festival, melding our proud pagan past with our present and strengthen us for the future. The first part of the concert leads off with the song – **Let’s greet the Morning Sun on Wings of Song** (an original work written especially for this song festival). Morning – symbolizes birth, new beginnings and new chances and Song born from the cradle of Lithuania leads us throughout our lives. Krivių Krivaitis – the high priest of pagan Lithuania, represents a voice from our distant past. His main function was to tender to the sacred flame and ensure it never goes out. Krivis stems from the Lithuanian word “krūva” - collective or coming into a group. So he calls us all to join in the celebrations of the festival and to never let the sacred eternal flame of our cultural heritage die. As a sign of his high rank in the community he wore a wreath of oak leaves. He was tended to by Vaidilutės - young women who committed themselves to his service and the preservation of the sacred flame. Typically they dressed in white which in Lithuanian tradition represents beauty, harmony and light. Their heads were adorned by wreaths of flowers from the fields. The festival will open by observing some of the sacred rituals associated with lighting of the sacred flame.

The second part of the concert is focused on daytime with the lead-in song:

**I need song like earth needs sun.** It celebrates youth warmed by a sun that helps it grow and mature. In ancient Lithuania, the Sun was worshipped, offerings were made to her and she was called Mother (motulė, motinėle). It represents warmth, light and life.

The third part focuses on evening and the setting sun – **There Beyond the Star is Evening Peace.** At the end of our day, our sun leaves us in darkness as it hurries across the continents to bring a new day and new light to Lithuania. As evening sets the songs become contemplative, nostalgic. We remember songs sung to us in childhood, songs we grew up with. The richness of this nostalgic moment will be experienced most fully if we, in the audience, bring with us memories from our past that still strike a chord in our soul to reaffirm who we are.

The conclusion of the concert will reaffirm **I am the Song!** (Daina ir Aš tas pats esu). And that being Lithuanian

is a conscious decision of the person regardless of which continent he finds himself in. **Not the Earth but the Person** (Ne Žemė bet Žmogus).

#### **ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL ARTISTIC DIRECTOR – Dalia Skrinskaitė-VISKONTIENĖ:**

Dalia is a professional teacher, choirmaster, church organist, performer, soloist and effective leader. Born in Kaunas, Lithuania, she left following the Second World War, with her parents at a very young age and lived as a displaced person in various refugee camps until the family settled in Canada. Her ties to Lithuania have always continued to be strong. As she developed professionally, she intensified her professional links with musicians and composers in Lithuania. To this day Dalia maintains a very strong bond with her Lithuanian heritage and is keenly aware of its contribution to the formation of her spiritual/creative side, primarily through music and song. Song has a place in everyone’s life, at all stages of life. Perhaps, then, it’s not surprising that she chose as the logo for the 9th Lithuanian Song Festival the phrase - “I am the Song” since it reflects her own life so closely.

Over 48 choirs representing 1200 singers have already registered to sing in the Festival Choir. They are coming to Toronto from Kansas City, Seattle, San Francisco, Pusk in Poland, from Lithuania, Australia, Europe and from across Canada. “This Song Festival belongs to every person who heard the call to come and sing, who generously donated their free time and their hard earned money to join us in song and to give joy through song!”, says Dalia. “My most sincere thanks, admiration and love belong to them.” She adds that for people involved in choral work, it is essential to share the joy of music and to give it as a gift to one another – a gift that never ends! She says: “This is the key motivator for me – sharing the joy! I look forward to standing in front of the 1200 voice Festival Chorus. Although we will have come from very disparate corners of the world, we will perform as a unit and give you the gift of song.”

We look forward to seeing you at the 9th Lithuanian Song Festival in Toronto, Ontario Canada, July 2-4th, 2010. Please visit the website for more detailed information regarding the events, hotel reservations, ticket purchases and maps.



## HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY ABOUT FATHER

Once our teacher of English told us to write an essay about one's father. I happily sat down with an empty sheet of paper in front of me, as I considered it to be an easy job. But then I started thinking of what to start with? My father's name? Well, his first name was Juozas and the family name was one of the most common in Lithuania – Kazlauskas. Or maybe I should start my essay with description of his appearance – his face, eyes, posture, his gait? He had blue eyes, shining with wisdom, tolerance, experience, gained during long years of life. How much do I know about his life? His personality? A famous Russian poet Jevtushenko wrote: *"I pro otsa rodnovo svoevo my znaja vsio, neznajem nichevo"* ("And about our father, we, knowing everything, don't know anything at all").

Maybe, let's start from the very beginning? A very good place to start.... My father was born (now) more than 100 years ago in the Muoriškiai village, in the northern Lithuania (now Biržai district) by the border with Latvia. The border was the river Nemunėlis. On one bank there was my father's native village, and on the other one – Latvia. "You could even hear Latvian dogs barking" – I remember my father, telling me about his native place. I liked my father to put me to sleep and tell tales about his childhood. I closed my eyes and tried to see him, a small boy, pasturing cows in the light of the rising sun, all wet with morning dew and shivering from cold; the only warmth for his bare feet were the "cow cakes"... He liked climbing up a tree and preaching for the cows as he wanted to become a priest... I close my eyes and see my father in a big overcrowded train, going to Russia. His family was trying to escape the First World War. My father shepherded their cow in wide steppe and the milk was bitter as the cow fed on the wormwood growing there. (It seems that now I could feel the taste of this bitter milk on the end of my tongue). The family was big, the journey to Russia and perhaps the life there was so difficult that my father's sisters died. Through all the long years of his life he kept their names in his memory. Out of 9 children only 4 came back to Lithuania together with their parents - my grandparents.

Again I close my eyes and feel father's hands tucking me in the bed. I see him as a young priest in a black robe,



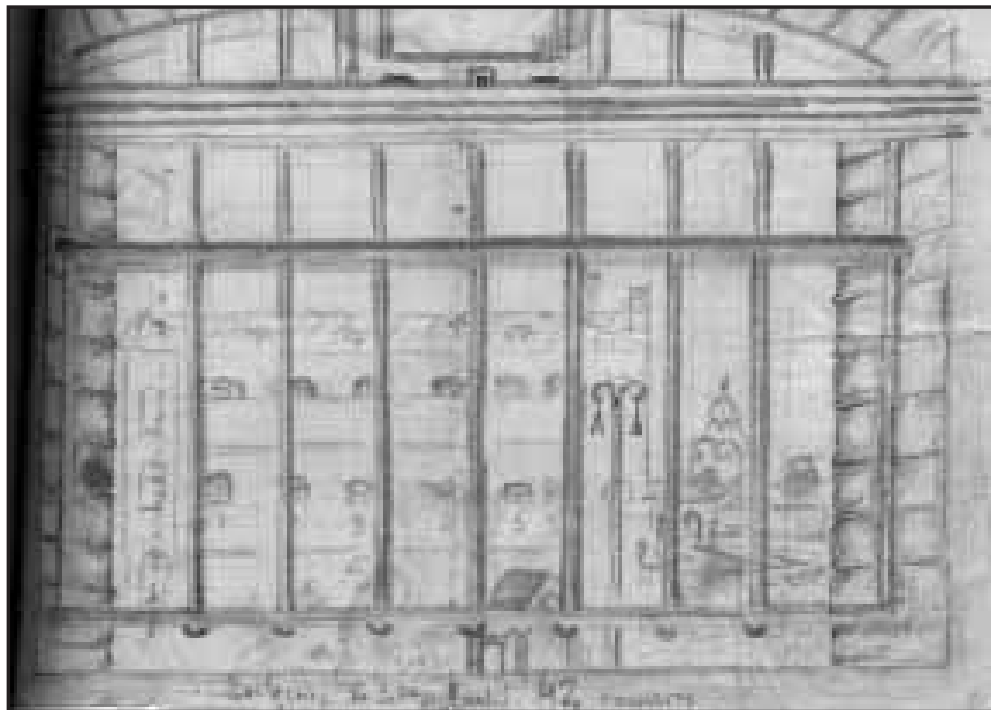
Juozas Kazlauskas

with white collar. Well, he wanted to reach his dream, but later on he understood that perhaps he was too honest or too much interested in the world in order to become a traditional priest. The young seminary students had practice in village parishes and the main problem for my father was to listen to confessions. "How could I, a young boy, dare to teach an old man and even scold him for his everyday sins. I, who knew nothing about life?" Being honest with himself my father dared to perform an unusually brave action for those times – he took back his documents and quitted his studies (after 6 years of studying, can you imagine?) and withdrew from the seminary. He

never became a priest, but he always remembered his friends. Later on he served in Lithuanian army, studied in the University, and travelled all over the Europe. I remember him telling me how high and nice was Kioln's cathedral and when after many years I had a chance to visit it I felt my father standing besides me...

While studying in the university, he met my mother.... Again I close my eyes and see him in the turmoil of the Second World War. What angels saved him from the hands of the Nazis from the ward in Gestapo basement? (In Soviet times there was the famous prison of Security Service). It happened in 1943. My father was still studying at the university and working in the economic department of the main railroad office. He gained German officials' confidence and helped many friends with tickets and other documents. But once one of his friends was caught and so my father was also arrested by the Nazis. 56 years later I got father's diaries and found his drawings of the ward in the basement, where he spent some terrible months. The width of the cell was 7 feet, the length – 12.5. The doors were about 2.3 feet thick with a small window. At night he could hear people crying and shooting... some time he spent with some Polish people and for them he drew on the wall of the cell the picture of the Dawn Gate Madonna (the most sacred place in Vilnius). Nobody knows, maybe it was Madonna, who helped him to survive and to get out, but she didn't help the Poles, who were executed...

The post war period was one of the most terrible and bloodiest in Lithuania's history. All the nation was affected. My father, as many Lithuanians, was in the forest



Diary drawing from his cell window

and again he was lucky to survive in one big battle with the Soviet army.

Later on he got a job in land measuring and became a land – surveyor. Mostly he had to measure forests. Very many times he was in dangerous situations when only one wrong word or wrong glance could cost a life.

As a good and trusted worker he was selected to go and measure forests in Udmurtia ( the north west of Russia). In my mind's eye I see him standing on a hill and looking at a thick endless forests spreading below. His job was to measure the land, make exact drawings, maps and other documentation of that huge green massive. The job seemed impossible for him. And still he managed to do it very well. My father fell in love with forests for the rest of his life. Though he had to spend his life in a town and work as an economist in the factory, I remember how happy he was to plant trees in the yard of our house. For each child he planted an apple tree, and for me and my mother he planted two birch trees. At the back of the yard, by the street, he planted two chestnut trees. They were small and I was small at that time as well. One of them had a top bud which reminded me of a candy and I ... simply bit it off and swallowed it. Of course, my parents were worried but everything was o.k. with me. Later on, my father looking at the big and wonderfully blossoming chestnut trees, always reminded me: “Look! This one is a little bit smaller. That is because you bit off its top!”

Father was full of good humour and he never offended anybody. He liked going for a long walk together with me to the outskirts of the town. Walking together father tried to teach me the names of trees, birds, crops or simply, how

to find one's way, how to go round puddles and not to get wet or muddy. Sometimes I was too small to understand the philosophy of his words, but then it seemed to me, that the sun was shining more brightly, the birds were singing more happily and the grass was smelling more freshly...

Was my father happy? In a way he was, I think. He was always searching for the answers to the main questions of life. He had his lifelong hobby – Esperanto language. He succeeded in visiting many nice places of the world. He loved and was loved and respected by us and his friends, and yet I don't remember him speaking about love. My father had a long, long life of 92 years, he saw Lithuania regaining its independence. He issued several books



Drawing from his diary of the inside of his cell

of poetry, translations and about the Esperanto language. He gave life to 4 daughters (one died being 7 years old). And he gave the best present to me – even now I can close my eyes and feel the warmth of his hands, tucking me in the bed.

I don't remember if my essay about father was a success (now I would write it as it is written above). I hope it was. But now I can surely give a piece of advice for those who have to write such essays in English: Just sit down and start writing. With Love and Understanding. The right words will come up themselves. And don't care too much about English grammar rules. The Grammar of Love is understood worldwide!

*Laima Pacevičienė*  
Laima Pacevičienė is an English teacher in the Molėtai district of Lithuania. She enjoys writing in her spare time and is a contributor to Bridges.



*Photo Album of Lithuanian  
Spring Flowers*  
*Photos by Julie Skurdenis, Bronxville, NY*



# Calendar of Events for June and July/August 2010

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

## June

**June 5, 2010** - 8am-2pm  
**Spring Fling**-Featuring indoor & outdoor activities, crafts, vendors, flea market, food, raffles, children's activities, bake sale, books sale & much more!  
3603 Mc Roberts Road  
Pittsburgh, PA.  
For info. or to register for space please visit [www. Osfprov.org](http://www.Osfprov.org) call 412-885-7232.  
Sponsor: Sisters of St Francis of the Providence of God.

**June 5-6, 2010**  
**TALKA WORK WEEKE**-Please plan to come help prepare the Neringa campsite for the summer during the annual. Talka work weekend. Kindly inform [regina@neringa.org](mailto:regina@neringa.org) 978-582-5592-plan to attend.

**June 10,11,12 & 17,18,19**  
**Annual Bazaar**-St.George Church  
Salmon & Venango Streets

Philadelphia, PA  
Fun & Games! Lithuanian Kitchen-Kitchen opens at 6pm  
Stands & games open at 7pm

**June 15, 2010** - 7pm  
Amber Roots will hold a Jonines Evening of Music and Literature dedicated to Mr. Bronius Krokys.  
Lithuanian Music Hall  
2715 East Allegheny Ave.  
Phila. PA.

Culture Center, please use the left side door to gain access to the downstairs. Refreshments will be served. All are welcome. For info call Millie Helt at 610-497-5469 or [milliemarks@aol.com](mailto:milliemarks@aol.com)

**JUNE 26, 2010** - 1:00 pm  
**Jonines in the Rocky Mountains** with the Latvian Community (If you want to travel to Meadow Creek Reservoir from Fraser together, we'll be meeting at the Fraser Safeway parking lot & will be leaving at 12:30) Location:

Meadow Creek Reservoir (the campsite's coordinates are 40.056376 - 105.752056)  
Info: Romas Zableckas or Gintautas Sutkus - Sponsor: [www.coloradolithuanians.org](http://www.coloradolithuanians.org)

## July

**July 2-4, 2010**  
**IX Lithuanian Song Festival**  
Toronto, Canada  
[www.lithuaniansongfest.org](http://www.lithuaniansongfest.org)

**July 2-4, 2010**  
We are offering the possibility of a **BILINGUAL INTRODUCTION TO NERINGA** camp for families, to be facilitated by Sr. Igne Marijosius. Pending interest, families who have always wondered about Neringa will have a chance to become acquainted with her spirit, mission & beautiful landscape. Please see [www.neringa.org](http://www.neringa.org) if interested in this possibility.

**July 25, 2010**  
**Annual Putnam Picnic & Neringa** campers will perform as has

been the tradition in the past. [www.neringa.org](http://www.neringa.org)

## August

**August 1-14, 2010**  
**Camp Neringa Heritage Children's Camp in English** (7-16 yr-olds)  
[www.neringa.com](http://www.neringa.com)

**August 5-8, 2010:**  
Knights of Lithuania  
**97th National Convention**  
Binghamton, NY  
Hosted by Council 72  
[www.knightsoflithuania.com](http://www.knightsoflithuania.com)

**August 14-21, 2010**  
**Camp Neringa Continuation of Heritage Children's Camp in English** (for ages 13-16)  
[www.neringa.org](http://www.neringa.org)

**August 15-16, 2010**  
**96th Consecutive "Lithuanian Days"**  
Schuylkill County is fast approaching!!!  
Saturday (14th) 12:30 to 5pm,  
Sunday(15th)12:30 to 4:30pm.  
Food, dances, history, & the celebration of all things Lithuanian  
Schuylkill Mall, Frackville, PA

Sponsor: Knights of Lithuania – Council 144

**August 28, 2010:**  
**European Festival 2010**  
Time: 10:00am - 10:00pm  
Admission: Free  
Location: Civic Green Park  
9370 Ridgeline Blvd.,  
Highlands Ranch CO 80129  
[www.coloradolithuanians.org](http://www.coloradolithuanians.org)

**August 29, 2010**  
**Annual Picnic** – Lithuanian American Club of Northern New Jersey 1:30 - 5 pm (Food served at 2:30 pm)  
Hedden Park (Covered Pavilion) Rain or Shine  
Randolph, New Jersey  
**"Potluck Picnic"** Bring your own culinary specialties! \$5.00 admission should be accompanied by a covered dish to serve 6-8, \$15.00 per person if you do not bring a dish. Must know in advance what you will bring. Call Susan Savaiko (973) 328-2850. Children under 12 years are free.



## Lithuanian-American Community

CONTACT INFORMATION:  
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[WWW.LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN.ORG](http://WWW.LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN.ORG)

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