

# Baltic Fund News

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## Baltic Fund News

Spring 2001

### Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis Visits the University of Washington

On November 16-17, 2000, the University of Washington Press celebrated the publication of its newest book, a landmark in Baltic history: Lithuania, Independent Again, by Vytautas Landsbergis. "I urge you to read Dr. Landsbergis' book," said Professor Dan Waugh upon introducing the former Lithuanian President's speech. "This is a story of substantial courage in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds. Some of Lithuania's heroes lost their lives in the brutal attacks by Soviet special forces in 1991, but the policy of measured, peaceful response avoided greater bloodshed and the kind of provocation that might have led to a full-scale military intervention."



*Panel, "Lithuania and the End of the Soviet Union": Herbert Ellison, Violeta Kelertas, Vytautas Landsbergis, Stephen Hanson.*



*Book Signing at the UW Press. Vytautas Landsbergis and Gražina Landsbergienė (seated), Michael Duckworth, Acquisitions Editor; Naomi Pascal, Editor-in-Chief; Pat Soden, Director; Mary Anderson, Marketing Manager.*

"Our distinguished speaker, Dr. Vytautas Landsbergis, indeed is from a lineage of heroes not only of Lithuania but of the broader battle for human values in the twentieth century." concluded Waugh.

In his public lecture on November 16, Dr. Landsbergis looked to the future: "The new millennium... promises no immediate changes, but promises hard work indeed. Lithuania will work on her future and that of the whole of Europe. We will go on insisting that our national goals are not separate from common goals of democracy, as it is stated in our four-lateral US-Baltic Charter signed by four Presidents in 1998."

On the following morning, Stephen Hanson, Chair of Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies, convened a panel to discuss "Lithuania and the End of the Soviet Union." UW Professor Herbert Ellison opened the discussion with an analysis of Lithuania's role in the shift of power from the Soviet government to that of the Russian Federation.

Violeta Kelertas, Chair of Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois, added an eyewitness account of Vytautas Landsbergis and the Lithuanian independence movement. "Perhaps it was his skill at chess; perhaps it was the family history that his autobiography reveals; perhaps it was the knowledge of music and the subtleties it requires, or all of these things combined with a kind of charisma that he then had-- that told him when to stand firm, when to lick his collective wounds and try again, when to balance on the abyss, when to push forward without hesitation, when to look the monster in the eye without blinking. But it is historical fact that his leadership brought to fruition the goal that in early 1988 still seemed an impossible one."

The texts of these two days' lectures and discussions may be read on the UW Baltic Program's website. Other events on campus included a tour of the UW Library's Baltic collection; a formal luncheon with faculty; an hour-long

interview on KUOW Public Radio; and a meeting with Robin McCabe, Chair of the Music Department (including an impromptu piano performance of the Lithuanian national composer Mikalojus Ciurlionis' works).

### **Seventh Year of Baltic Studies at UW**

The cherry trees are blooming on campus as students walk to classes in Spring Quarter 2001. Five students each are studying Estonian and Lithuanian language this year, and eight are enrolled in Basic Latvian. An additional group of six students are studying Latvian language at an advanced level. Classes are taught by three instructors: Teaching Assistants Kristin Kuutma and Anastasija Bitiukova, and Lecturer Guntis Smidchens. During the Winter Quarter, Smidchens also taught a course in English surveying the masterpieces of Baltic literature, music and art. In the Spring Quarter, he will teach a survey of Baltic history.

The Baltic Program congratulated another graduate in March this year. Steve Grosse successfully defended his M.A. thesis in the Russian and East European Studies Program, titled "Remembered History in Baltic National Consciousness: How it Shapes Baltic Security Perspectives." Thanks to Latvian courses at the University of Washington, Grosse was able to make ample use of Latvian-language publications and television broadcasts in his research.

Three students have recently returned from exchanges to the Baltic: Doctoral student Jura Avizienis spent a year in Vilnius, researching the memoirs of Lithuanians deported to Siberia. She is currently teaching in the University of Washington's Comparative Literature Department. During the Autumn semester, undergraduates Marita Graube and Janis Elksnitis enrolled at the University of Latvia in Riga and studied Latvian history, culture and language. Elksnitis wrote back to Seattle from Riga, "I would really recommend this program.... The classes are informative and interesting and the living situation is really fun." Graube also enjoyed academics as well as extracurricular activities: In her free time, she practiced and competed with the local "Ultimate Frisbee" team, and took piano lessons at the Vitols Music Academy.

Students also gave lectures at the University of Washington: Jura Avizienis (Comparative Literature) discussed the Lithuanian author Ri...ardas Gavelis and his short stories on February 9. In March, Aaron Eglitis (Scandinavian Area Studies) gave a report about the Conference, "The Baltic States: The Next Ten Years," which recently took place in Washington DC.

A series of guest lecturers and events complemented the Baltic language courses. In November, Professor Vlad Kaczynski convened an international workshop on "Ports, Marine Transportation and Economic Integration in the Baltic Region." Presenters included Zofia Sawiczewska (University of Gdansk, Poland), Nathaniel Trumbull (University of Washington), Gerard Mahy (Belgian Development Agency), and Anatoli Alop (Estonian Maritime

Academy, Tallinn). Alop spoke about "The Maritime Industry of the Baltic States and the Eastward Expansion of the European Union: Charting Possible Developments." Former President of Lithuania Vytautas Landsbergis was invited to give a response to the papers.



*On a snowy day in February, Ulo Valk (Tartu University, Visiting Professor at University of California-Berkeley) gave a guest lecture about "Estonian Folklore Today."*

Karlis Streips (University of Latvia) is a popular radio and television journalist in Latvia. He gave two guest lectures on November 30 and December 1, 2000: "Shaking off the Post-Soviet Hangover: Latvia's Mass Media Ten Years after the Revolution," and "The Rising Rainbow: Emergence of a Gay Community Where There Was None Before (Latvia)."

Two guest lecturers spoke about minorities in the Baltic countries: In October, Geoffrey Gooch (Linköping University, Sweden) discussed "Environmental management and Ethnic Conflicts on The New European Border: The Baltic States and Russia." And in January, David D. Laitin (Stanford University) gave a lecture about "Transition to Independence and Commitments to Minorities." Laitin is author of *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (1998).

Other visitors to the University of Washington this year include Professor Tennis Grass, who is on a Fulbright Exchange to the USA. Grass is Director of the Glass Art Department at the Latvian Art Academy in Rīga. He is doing research on developments in American art after World War II, a topic forbidden at the Latvian Art Academy during the period of Soviet rule. He spent the first six months of his exchange in New York, and is now in Seattle for three months.

In September, a delegation of Latvian government officials visited the University of Washington as part of a regional tour hosted by the World Affairs Council. Gunta Kaulina (Ministry of Finance), Andris Linins (Ministry of Economics), Edgars Zalans (Deputy, Saeima) and Guntis Belskis (Liepāja Special Economic Zone) met with representatives of the Jackson School of International Studies to learn about the various programs offered to students studying Latvia.

## **UW Students Host Baltic Weekend**

The Association of Latvian University Students was established in Spring of 2000, with the goal of promoting Latvian language, culture and historical studies at the University of Washington. In its first year of activities, the Association has quickly become host to a broad variety of lively events: an autumn dance, a New Year's Eve party, a city-wide competition in the Latvian card game "Zolite," and arts and crafts activities in the Seattle Latvian School.

The group's most recent event, the "Baltic Youth Weekend," took place over the Presidents Day Holiday weekend. About forty students gathered at a camp in Shelton, Washington, for three days of fun and education.

UW Baltic program instructors lectured about their current research: Jura Avizienis (Lithuanian memoirs of Siberian deportees), Anastasija Bitiukova (overview of the Baltic economies), Kristin Kuutma (cultural revival movement of the Setu minority in Estonia), and Guntis Smidchens (popularity of folklore in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). Other invited speakers were glo Valk (university students and folklore in Estonia), Julija Gelazis (Lithuanian folk music) and Atis Freimanis (history of Latvian rock and roll music outside of Latvia). The students watched a videotaped British television interview of the President of Latvia, learned folk dances and songs, and competed in football and snow-sculpture.



*Balancing the budget at the Baltic Youth Weekend, Shelton, Washington. In the center are Marlana Otlane, President and Marisa Hougardy, Vice President, Association of Latvian University Students.*

For event and membership updates, visit the [A.L.U.S. website](#)

## **News from the UW Library**

Michael Biggins, Director of the University of Washington Library's Slavic and East European Section, reports that exchanges with libraries in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania continue to grow and develop.

As part of its book exchange program with major libraries in the Baltic and elsewhere in Europe, the UW Library's Slavic and East European Section recently sent the Mañvydas National Library in Vilnius a complete set of The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (2nd edition, 2001), a definitive and costly 10-volume reference work covering all aspects of musicology. The head of the Mañvydas Library's music department characterized the New Grove Dictionary as "amazing material," and its receipt by the Library as "a great event in the musical life of Lithuania."

The success of the New Grove Dictionary is one of the more striking examples of the ways in which the UW Library has been able to assist its Baltic partners--whether in Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia--while also strengthening its own book and periodical collections in support of the UW Baltic Studies and REECAS Programs.



*Tour of the UW Library: Vytautas Landsbergis, Grazina Landsbergiene, Lijana Holmes (Cataloging Department), Michael Biggins (Slavic and East European Librarian).*

*It is a pleasure to note that the [UW Library](#) has seven books by former Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis. In the UW Library stacks, students can also find books by Lithuanian Presidents Brazauskas and Adamkus, Estonian President Meri, and Latvian Presidents Ulmanis and Vike-Freiberga. The library hopes to eventually collect all of the books written or edited by these leading Latvian politicians.*

### **Latvian Folk Music in the Classroom**

A surprise snowstorm on February 16, 2001, blocked Seattle streets and highways, halting public transportation and leaving many students stranded on their way to the University that morning. Five out of eight Latvian language students made it to class, however, and they were rewarded for their efforts by a special meeting with a Latvian folk music group from Minneapolis, Lini.





*Latvian folk music group Lini with students from the Elementary Latvian Language class.*

Accordianist Zinta Pone and singers Gunta Pone and Amanda Jatniece (along with her four-month-old daughter Laima) entertained the class with traditional music and songs, encouraging the students to sing along, too. The group regularly travels to Latvia to learn songs, dances and music from friends and musicians. Lini has recorded two CDs.

On the following Sunday, the group performed at the Baltic Youth Weekend organized in Shelton by the UW Association of Latvian University Students.

### **Basketball: Huskies vs. Latvians**

On November 8, 2000, the UW women's basketball team opened its preseason with an exhibition game against the Latvian club team from Rīga, RTU Clondica. The Huskies (who in Spring 2001 are headed for the NCAA Championships) showed depth and relentless energy in a victory over the Latvian team, 98-84. A reporter from the Seattle Post-Intelligencer was puzzled to see in the grandstands a contingent of fans cheering for the Latvian team. Students from the UW's Association of Latvian University Students explained, "During the regular season we're Huskies fans, but tonight we wanted to let the Latvian players know that they have friends here in Seattle!"

### **A Home for Lithuanians in America**

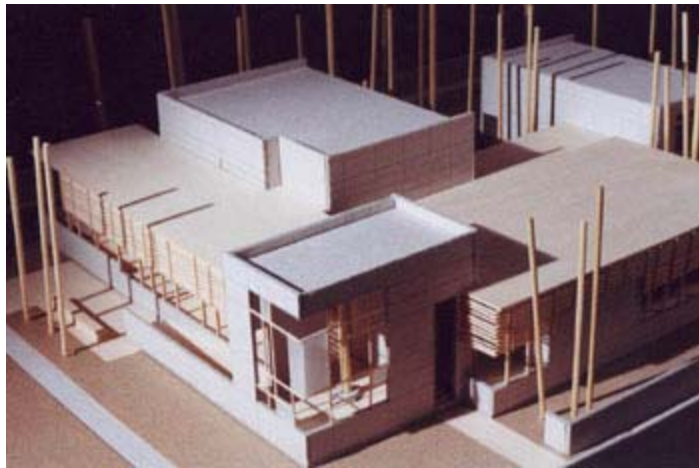
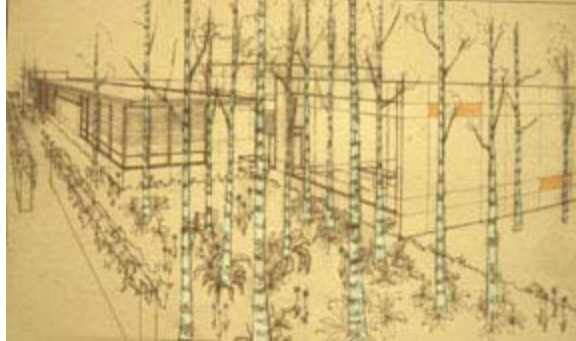
In March 2001, Lisa Diane Sidlauskas was awarded the M.A. degree by the UW Architecture Department. Her Master's Thesis project was a design for a Lithuanian community center in her hometown of Springfield, Illinois. Sidlauskas writes:

*"On December 31, 1971, St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church closed its doors to its congregation.... With its closing, many of the traditions and social activities were lost to the community."*

*"Today, approximately 175 members belong to the Lithuanian - American club in Springfield. However, their social activities occur in borrowed space. This thesis explores the possibility of returning the land that was once St. Vincent's back to the community. By reclaiming place and serving the needs of the*

*community, a new focus for identity is established for this community of Lithuanian - Americans and their descendents. A place is created that is once again their own."*

Nestled in a grove of birch trees, the center as envisioned by Sidlauskas would have various meeting rooms, a café for socializing, and a library for genealogical research.

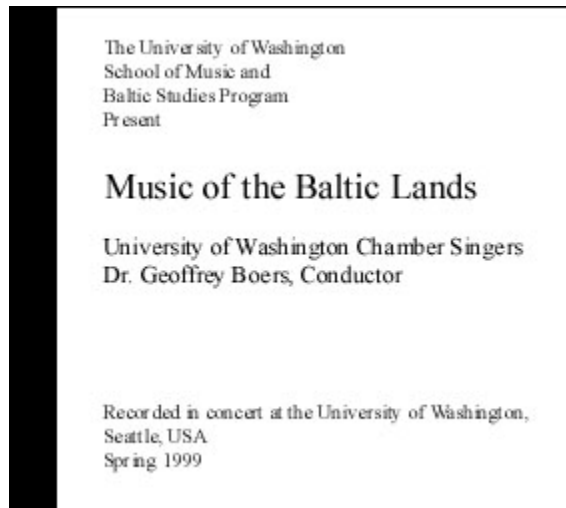


### **"Music of the Baltic Lands" CD**

The University of Washington Chamber Singers traveled to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in June of 2000. The intensive ten-day tour included concerts in six cities, meetings with host choirs, tours of historical sites and a general introduction to musical life in the Baltic countries today. For this Baltic tour, the choir prepared a program of the newest, most recent American music—all of it composed in the past decade. "We wanted to share with them the most beautiful songs of our culture," explained Choir Director Geoffrey Boers.

But the beginnings of the Baltic Tour 2000 reach back about three years. It was the choir's encounter with Baltic choral music in 1997 which inspired this journey to meet Baltic singers and choirs. This CD is a memento of the UW Chamber Singers' first encounters with Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian music, 1997-1999.





Recorded live in concerts on May 7 and June 1, 1999, the songs were part of a program of North European music which the choir performed at its end-of-the-year concert that year. The Chamber Singers published "Music of the Baltic Lands" in preparation for their trip to the Baltic in June 2000. They gave the disk as a gift to host choirs in Vilnius, Klaipeda, Liepaja, Riga, Tartu and Tallinn.

### **"Amber Road" Auction 2000**

"Follow the Amber Road... to the Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington"-This is the name of an event that keeps attracting growing numbers of Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians and friends in the Seattle area. The third auction was held at the Seattle Latvian Center on October 21, 2000. A total of \$50,000 was raised to support the University of Washington's Baltic Studies Endowed Fund.

Dean David C. Hodge (College of Arts and Sciences) wrote to Anne Hannibal, this year's Auction Coordinator: "I am sincerely grateful for your effort on behalf of the Amber Road Auction. Please thank, on my behalf, all the members of the Committee who contributed their time and resources to make the event so successful."

The lists of volunteers and donors on this page testify that the University of Washington and its Baltic Studies Program have a strong community of friends and supporters.



*Presenting the check to the University of Washington: Geni Orrico (Auction Committee), Paul Raidna (Treasurer, Auction Committee), Stephen Hanson (Director, Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies), Dean Michael Halleran, Anne Hannibal (Auction Committee Coordinator), Lotta Gavel Adams (Acting Chair, Scandinavian Studies), Daniel Waugh (History; Founder of the Baltic Studies Program), Guntis Smidchens (Scandinavian Studies), Irena Blekys (Auction Committee), Andris Rogainis (Auction Committee)*

### **Amber Road 2000 Auction Volunteers:**

**Auction Committee:** Auction Coordinator Anne Hannibal. Committee members: Velta Benson, Irena Blekys, Monika Hannibal, Geni Orrico, Paul Orrico, Vaira Pelekis-Christopher, Zaiga Phillips, Paul Raidna, Andris Rogainis, Inara Rogainis, Janne Sepp, Kalev Sepp, Guntis Smidchens, Anne Totoraitis.

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