

Baltic Fund News

Summer 1999

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Chamber Singers Baltic Connections

On May 6, 1999, the thirty-six member University of Washington Chamber Singers concluded a concert of Nordic and Baltic music with the well-known Latvian folk song, "Blow, wind," with an unusual twist: They sang the introductory stanza in Lithuanian, and the conclusion in Estonian. The choir is planning a tour of the Baltic lands in June of 2000, and their audience showed its firm support for this goal: The fundraising concert in Kane Hall earned about \$4,000 to defray the costs of the tour.

Estonian conductor **Hirvo Surva** conducting at the UW Chamber Singers rehearsal, April 29, 1999.



The concert was the first in a series of growing contacts with choirs in the Baltic. Earlier in the Spring Quarter, leading Estonian conductor Hirvo Surva rehearsed with the Singers and conducted a song at the opening of a Scandinavian conference. On September 11 this year, the university will host a Seattle performance of the "Estonia" Society Chamber Singers from Tallinn, and on October 26, our guests will be the Latvian choir, "Konvents," from Riga. These choirs will in turn host the Chamber Singers when they travel to Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn in June of 2000. UW Chamber Singers Director Geoffrey Boers noted in an interview that the March 6 concert was the beginning of a musical exploration into "a whole new world" of sounds and performers. The excitement of discovery was tangible as the choir performed a magical Estonian Midsummer song by Veljo Tormis, the stormy Latvian "Songs of the Sea" by Pauls Dambis, and the intensely romantic "Vilnius Mosaic" by Lithuanian composers Tomas Leiburis and Leonidas Abaris. After this encounter with Baltic music, the inevitable next step, says Boers, is to meet in person the singers who "represent some of the finest choral singing in the world." The Chamber Singers Baltic tour is currently planned between the coming Spring and Summer Quarters, on June 8-18, 2000.

The Fifth Year of Baltic Studies in Seattle

It seems like only yesterday when a group of faculty met in 1993 at the University of Washington to plan what was to become the Baltic Studies Program. Few could imagine then that the first five years of the program would see a hundred American students taking courses in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian language. A growing community of graduate and undergraduate students is traveling to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and writing research papers, masters theses and dissertations that bring knowledge of the Baltic to their American peers.



Anne Tuominen, Estonian language student, Ph.D., 1999 (Third from left, with her husband and parents.)

Spring of 1999 saw the first dissertation by a Baltic Program student:

In April, **Anne Tuominen** defended her dissertation, "Estonian Tourism Professionals: A case study in post-Soviet transition to capitalism," based on field research conducted in Estonia.

Three graduate students completed Masters degrees:

Kristin Kuutma, Estonian language Teaching Assistant, completed the M.A. in Scandinavian Area Studies. She will continue to teach Estonian in Autumn 1999, and begin work toward the doctorate in Scandinavian literature.

Kathrine Young organized an exhibit about Baltic amber at the Nordic Heritage Museum, fulfilling the requirements for the M.A. in Museology. She is currently Director of the Metropolitan Police Museum in Seattle. **Vizma Schulmeisters** submitted her research on care for the elderly in Latvia, to receive the Masters in Social Work. In March of 1999, she presented her work in Orlando, Florida, at the American Society on Aging conference.

Meghan MacKrell graduated with a B.A. in Scandinavian Area Studies, specializing in Estonia and Finland. Her undergraduate thesis, "Estonian and Finnish in an Accelerated World," was a comparative historical study of written language in Finland and Estonia, from the earliest known books to the modern world of the Internet. MacKrell received a scholarship from the Finlandia Foundation which will help her continue graduate studies in Finno-Ugric languages and cultures at Indiana University. **Bryn Purcell**

returned from Latvia, where she studied at the "Semester in Riga" program sponsored by the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, and completed the B.A. in Scandinavian Area Studies with Latvian specialization.

Jessica Beyer and **Abigail Hurd** completed their Task Force research papers on the Baltic States and NATO enlargement, to receive the Bachelor's Degree in International Studies. Hurd received a stipend from the UW, the Latvian Association in Washington State, the Lithuanian-American Community and the Seattle Estonian Society, to travel to the JBANC Conference on NATO Enlargement held in Washington DC in March of 1999.

Four UW students have recently received Fulbright Fellowships for long term research in the Baltic. In Spring 1999, two graduate students returned from Estonia: **Robert Smurr**, doctoral student in History, studied the history of the environmental movement in Estonia. He presented a report on his exchange to Estonia and travels in Central Asia in a February 10 lecture and slide presentation, "From the Bogs of Estonia to the Peaks of Kyrgyzstan." A second Fulbrighter, **Daniel Ryan**, studied archival documents of witchcraft in the 19th-century Estonian countryside. Ryan completed the M.A. in Russian and East European Studies, and in fall 1999 will begin doctoral studies in History at the University of California at Los Angeles.

The upcoming year will see two more Fulbright exchanges: Doctoral student **Jura Avizienis**, Lithuanian Teaching Assistant at the UW from 1996 to 1999, will travel to Vilnius, Lithuania, to continue her research about the memoirs of Siberian deportees. **Zane Elksnitis** (B.A., Scandinavian Area Studies, 1998) will travel to Latgale, the eastern region of Latvia, where she will study Latgalian language and culture.

Two undergraduate students are also traveling to Latvia in 1999: During the Summer Quarter, **Sonja Olson** has received a Fritz Grant to study Latvian voluntary health organizations, and **Marlena Otlans** will take part in the "Semester in Riga" program sponsored by the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire.



Baltic language instructors, 1998-1999: **Jura Avezienis** (Lithuanian),

Guntis Šmidchens (Latvian), **Kristin Kuutma** (Estonian)

Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian have all been taught at the University of Washington since the program's founding in 1994. In September 1998, the three languages were assigned standardized course numbers in the UW curriculum (ESTO 101,102,103; LATV 101,102,103, and LITH 101,102,103). Other courses taught in English introduce students to the history and culture of the Baltic region.

Several scholarly conferences were organized by the University of Washington during the 1998-1999 academic year. The Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study took place April 29 to May 1, bringing together about 325 North European specialists from North America and Europe. This, the largest conference in the Society's ninety years, featured three paper panels devoted to Baltic topics. Among the conference events was a concert of Nordic and Baltic choral music and an exhibit about World War II in North Europe.

The Fifth Annual Regional Conference on Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies on April 10 included a panel on "The Baltic Nations and National Identity" with four papers by UW graduate students. Baltic program students also presented their research at the "19th-Century Studies" conference on May 13-14, and the Undergraduate Research Symposium on May 7.

Course offerings in academic year 1998-1999 were enhanced by two concert-lectures about Baltic music.



On October 22, Lithuanian pianist **Rokas Zubovas** spoke about "Mikalojus Konstantinas Ciurlionis: A path toward soundscapes," featuring piano compositions and slides of paintings by the premier Lithuanian artist.

On November 4, Lithuanian and Finnish musicians **Julija Gelazis** and **Cathy Cushing** lectured about the *kankles* or *kantele*, an ancient instrument which developed differently in two countries on



the eastern Baltic Sea.



On February 12, US Air Force Major General **Tiiu Kera** visited the UW campus with a lecture and slide presentation, "Between NATO and a Hard Place: Experiences of the First US Defense Attaché in the Baltics." Kera is currently Chief of Staff for Operations at the National Security Agency at Fort Meade, Maryland. Also on February 12, **Norman Wolfe**, retired US Air Force Staff Judge Advocate and US AID representative in Vilnius during 1993-1994, spoke about "The Business

Environment in Lithuania."

Upcoming Events, 1999-2000

September 11, 1999: "Estonia" Society Chamber Singers from Tallinn, hosted by the UW Chamber Singers. 7:30 pm, University Temple United Methodist Church, 1415 NE 43rd St.

September 27-December 16: Autumn Quarter. Language courses: ESTO 101 (M-F 9:30-10:20), LATV 101 (M-F 11:30-12:20), LITH 101 (M-F 8:30-9:20). Courses taught in English, with Baltic content: SCAND 326 "Scandinavia in World Affairs," SCAND 334 "Immigrant and Ethnic Folklore," SCAND 340 "Finno-Ugric Epic," SCAND 427 "Scandinavian Women Writers."

October 16: "Baltica" folk music evening, Latvian Center, 11710-3rd Ave NE, 7:00 pm. See and hear the best Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian folk fiddlers and accordionists on the continent. Organized by "Follow the Amber Road" Auction Committee.

November 30 to December 3: Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, to be held in Seattle. For information about numerous WTO-related activities at the University of Washington, visit the website, <http://www.washington.edu/wto/>

January 3 to March 17, 2000: Winter Quarter. Language courses: ESTO 102, LATV 102, LITH 102; courses with Baltic content: SCAND 345 YA, "Baltic Cultures," SCAND 381 "History of Scandinavia since 1720"

March 27 to June 19, 2000: Spring Quarter. Language courses: ESTO 103, LATV 103, LITH 103; course with Baltic content: SCAND 344 "Baltic States and Scandinavia"

June 8-18, 2000: UW Chamber Singers tour to Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn.

Commemorating the Victims of Stalinism

On March 31, the University of Washington held a lecture to remember the events which took place in the Baltic fifty years ago. In last two weeks of March of 1949, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania lost about 3 percent of their native populations, as tens of thousands were arrested and deported to Siberia. The total number of Baltic deportees in the Soviet period was greater than 500,000.

Professor Daniel Waugh, a founder of the Baltic Program, welcomed the students, faculty and community members present, and stressed the importance of commemorations such as this one: Importance for those directly affected because they or their families or acquaintances were involved, and the importance for those for whom the events are unknown or forgotten. "Some find it convenient to forget or pretend that such events never happened. Some are ignorant or simply couldn't care. Given the short attention span and ignorance of history on the part of too many Americans, it is important to keep reminding them of what Stalinism and Nazism meant. I think the events of our own time underscore how important this is. While one may debate what exactly is the best response to situations such as we are seeing in Kosovo today, it is at least certain a retreat into isolationism and indifference is not a morally acceptable option."

A commemorative address was given by Jura Avizienis, doctoral student in Comparative Literature, approached the memoirs written by Siberian deportees as critical documents of human history. Dalia Grinkeviciute, survivor of deportation, once wrote, "I breathe easier knowing that I -- as much as my strength, intelligence, and abilities allowed me -- built a kind of monument for the victims of the North. The world learned about the thousands of nameless victims of torture buried in the icy graves. This cannot be destroyed or erased. It is now history." The full text of Avizienis' commemorative address may be read on the "Lectures and Events" page of the Baltic Program's website.

A week later, on April 8, a preview of the remarkable PBS documentary, *Stolen Years*, was shown in the UW Henry Art Gallery Auditorium. The film by Jennifer Law Young, Bruce Young and Vladimir Klimenko portrayed the Stalin terror as viewed through the eyes of eleven survivors. Production costs were financed in part by a grant from the Henry M. Jackson Foundation. A panel discussion following the film included Semyon Vilenski, one of the

survivors featured in the documentary.

In the audience was Vytautas Švagzdys, Lithuanian survivor of the Norilsk labor camp, currently residing in Seattle. He stood when he spoke to the panel which had created this film: "I spent the best years of my life in Norilsk. Back then, I could never have imagined that I would witness the day when a film would be made about my experiences, and that it would happen here in Seattle. I wish to express my sincerest thanks to you!"

Steene and Strindberg in Latvia

UW Scandinavian Department Professor Emeritus Birgitta Steene traveled to Riga in January 1999 for a two-day conference honoring Swedish author August Strindberg's 150th birthday. She presented a paper about Alf Sjöberg's film adaptation of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, which was awarded the grand prize at Cannes Film Festival in 1951. "Riga is such a beautiful city," remarked Steene, as she recalled meetings with Latvian fans of Strindberg, walks in the park, corner cafes and, of course, the "Swedish Gate" built by King Carl XII in 1698.

Landsbergis autobiography to be published by UW Press

Among the upcoming publications by the University of Washington Press is *Lithuania: Independent Again*, an English translation of the political autobiography by Vytautas Landsbergis (*Luzis prie Baltijos*, Vilnius: Vaga, 1997). The book will be available on sale in late 1999 or early 2000. For information, contact the UW Press Order Department, uwpor@u.washington.edu, tel. 1(800)441-4115.

News from the UW Library

Several recent donations of Lithuanian books have dramatically increased UW holdings in Lithuanian art, language, literature and history. While the UW Library maintains an active exchange of new books with the National Library of Lithuania, older books such as these would be either very expensive or difficult, if not impossible to acquire in any other way. **Professor Violeta Kelertas** (Chicago), **Magdalena Stankunas** (Chicago), **Professor Antanas Musteikis** (Buffalo, NY) and **Antanas and Aldona Minelga** (Olympia, WA) gave a total of about 1,000 books.

Progress in the Latvian collection has also been significant. Book by book, shelf by shelf, the 12,000-volume Latvian Studies Center collection is passing

through the cataloging offices and into the stacks. Although the LSC collection contains most of the Latvian books published from World War II to the early 1990s, donors such as **Dagmara Lejnieks** (Menlo Park, CA) have helped fill gaps.

Exchanges with libraries in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are bringing many major Baltic publications to Seattle. In Latvian literature, for example, recent acquisitions include the five-volume *Works* by Arija Elksne (1996) or nine volumes of *Works* by Imants Ziedonis (1996). In Lithuanian history, we find the seminal collections of Soviet-era documents published in the 1990s by the State Publishing Center, the Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Studies Center, and the Society of Political Prisoners and Deportees. In Estonian politics, there are books such as *Return to the Western World*, edited by Marju Lauristin et al. (1997), *Constructing post-communism: a study in the Estonian social problems discourse*, by Mikko Lagerpetz (Turku, Finland:1996), and *Elections in Estonia during the transition period*, by Tiina Raitviir (1996).

These are but a few examples of Baltic books found in the UW Library stacks. Thanks to the Internet, anybody may visit the [UW Library Catalog](#) and explore the Baltic collection, by opening.

The UW Library website also includes information about borrowing books. Any visitor to the library may use most materials inside the library free of charge. Book borrowing privileges are available to UW alumni and all Federal and State employees. Most other persons can purchase a library card for reasonable fees. One may also go to any local library which offers Interlibrary Loan (for example, the Seattle Public Library and many other municipal libraries) and order books they have found in the UW Library catalog.

2000 UW Annual Fund Campaign begins

In September 1999, many supporters of the University of Washington Baltic Studies Program will be receiving letters from the UW Annual Fund asking for their support. The Annual Fund is an "umbrella fund" which includes gifts directed to any UW school, college or program. Donors may designate the program or programs which they choose to support. Please remember the Baltic Studies Program, and designate your Annual Fund gift to the [Baltic Program Fund](#).

In the past, most donors have mailed donations directly to the Department of Scandinavian Studies. With this new campaign, donations sent to the University of Washington's Office of Development will be processed by that office, saving the Scandinavian Department administrative costs. Donors who prefer to mail donations directly to the Scandinavian Department may, of course, continue to do so.

"Following the Amber Road" ... to the UW Baltic Studies Endowed Fund

On October 17, 1998, under the dynamic leadership of Amanda Floan (MA, UW Russian and East European Studies program, 1995), a committee of about thirty friends of the UW organized the second auction to support Baltic Studies at the UW. The event, boosted by a matching grant from the Lithuanian Foundation, netted over \$50,000, nearly doubling the success of the 1997 auction which yielded \$30,000. Items to be auctioned off were donated by individuals and businesses in the Seattle area. Most popular among the items up for bidding was jewelry made of Baltic amber, advertised in the auction motto, "Follow the Amber Road". Weekend getaways, sports tickets and catering services also brought in high bids, as did a map of Lithuania printed in 1630 and a chess set hand carved by Baltic program founder Professor Tom DuBois.

"I want to ensure that future students at the UW have the opportunity for Baltic Studies that I didn't have when I was a student," summarized Floan, "and that's why it's so important to give this program a solid financial foundation. I'm grateful to all of the donors, organizers and bidders who made this event a success."

Look for information about the next "Follow the Amber Road" auction, planned to take place in 2000. In the meantime, the auction committee is organizing an evening of Baltic folk music on October 16, 1999, at the Latvian Center. Come and enjoy performances by the best Baltic fiddlers and accordionists in the USA, and celebrate the wealth of Baltic cultures!

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Send comments or questions to: uwscand@u.washington.edu