



History of Exchange

Vilnius, Lithuania Chicago's Sister City Since 1993

Chair: Stanley Balzekas

1993

July

Focus: Signing Agreement

Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Honorable Vytautas Jasulaitis, Mayor of Vilnius, signed a friendship city agreement at the Chicago Cultural Center. Mr. Stanley Balzekas, founder and director of the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, was named Chair of the Chicago-Vilnius Sister City Committee.

Focus: Arts & Culture

A delegation consisting of the Mayor of Vilnius, the President of the Vilnius City Council, the Chief City Architect and the Deputy of City Council met with City of Chicago Departments of International Trade Services, Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development.

1994

Focus: Business

Vilnius Committee Chair Stanley Balzekas led a business and investment delegation to Vilnius.

1995

Focus: Government

Director of Protocol for the City of Chicago, Rosalie Clark, visited Vilnius with a special message of congratulations to newly elected Mayor Alis Vidunas from Mayor Richard M. Daley.

1996

Focus: Business

Mayor and Mrs. Alis Vidunas visited Chicago in honor of the opening of the Chicago-Vilnius Trade Center. Mayor Vidunas met with Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Vilnius Committee, which planned his itinerary.

1997

Focus: Music

The Vilnius String Quartet performed at the Chicago Cultural Center in Preston Bradley Hall.

Focus: Music

Pianist Muza Rubackyte performed in the Lithuanian Youth Center in Chicago.

1998

Focus: Arts & Culture

Contemporary Lithuanian textile art was exhibited at the Chicago Cultural Center.

1999

Focus: Culture

The Vilnius Committee hosted the Lithuanian Minister of Culture hosted in Chicago.

2000

Focus: Culture

The Vilnius Committee planned a concert of the Vilnius String Quartet at the Chicago Cultural Center as a part of a weeklong festival celebrating the life and work of Lithuanian composer and artist Makalojus Konstantinas Ciurlionis on the 125th Anniversary of his birth.

2001

Focus: Culture

The photography exhibition Discover Chicago was on display in Vilnius as a part of the Chicago Festival.

2002

September 7-14

Focus: Economic

The Vilnius Committee organized the visit of a trade mission from Lithuania in Chicago.

October

Focus: Culture

A group of jazz musicians traveled to Vilnius to play at a festival.

2003

October 25-28

Focus: Government

The Mayor of Vilnius visited Chicago and held several meetings, including a courtesy call with Mayor Daley. During his stay in Chicago, Mayor Arturas Zuokas was presented with the Man of the Year Award from the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture at a banquet in his honor.

2004

June 30-July 3

Focus: Arts & Culture

The Vilnius Committee assisted with the 12th Annual Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival held at Daley Plaza and at the Allstate Arena in Rosemont, IL.

2005

April 26

Focus: Culture

Working in collaboration with The Chicago Public Library, The Consulate General of Israel to the Midwest, the Vilnius and Petach Tikva Committees hosted the Chicago premiere of Ponar, a documentary film by Racheli Schwartz at Harold Washington Library's Cindy Pritzker Auditorium. "Ponar" is the amazing, true story of the 1943 song competition held in the Vilna Ghetto (Vilnius, Lithuania), told sixty years later through the eyes of the contest winner and Holocaust survivor.

2006

March 12

Focus: Culture

The Vilnius Committee partnered with The Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania to host the screening of the film, "A Land of Glass," at the Gene Siskel Film Center as part of the 9th Annual European Film Festival. At the reception prior to the film screening, the director, Janina Lapinskaite, and Professor Nakas of Roosevelt University gave a brief presentation on Lithuanian film to an audience of around 200 people.

2007

November 12

Focus: Music

The Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago, in collaboration with the International House at the University of Chicago and the Vilnius Committee, presented a multimedia collaboration between Gabrielius Alekna (piano), Kestutis Stanciauskas (Bass, Composer, Director) and Nora Ausriene (Ceramicist, Curator) at the International House at the University of Chicago. This project pursues a singular artistic vision committed to expanding the range, context and exploration of the synthesis of Classical, Jazz, World Jazz, The Visual Arts and Lithuanian Folk Song traditions.

2008

November 17

Focus: Music

The Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago, in collaboration with the International House at the University of Chicago and the Vilnius Committee, presented a multimedia collaboration between Gabrielius Alekna (piano), Kestutis Stanciauskas (Bass, Composer, Director) and Nora Ausriene (Ceramicist, Curator). This project pursued a singular artistic vision committed to expanding the range, context and exploration of the synthesis of Classical, Jazz, World Jazz, The Visual Arts and Lithuanian Folk Song traditions.

2009

February

Focus: Culture

The Vilnius Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International and the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture invited guests to the Shrove Tuesday celebration (Lithuania's Mardi Gras) at the Balzekas Museum on Saturday, February 21, 2009. Shrove Tuesday celebrated the end of winter. It also marked the last day before Lent and seven weeks before Easter.

March

Focus: Ceremonial

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lithuania presented the Star of Lithuania's Millennium Award to the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture for the preservation of Lithuanian culture and history, and promotion of Lithuanian folk art in the United States. Vilnius Committee Chair, Stanley Balzekas, created the museum in 1966 and presides as president of Board of Directors.

March 28

Focus: Culture

The Vilnius Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International, in partnership with the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, invited guests to participate in the Easter Egg Decorating Workshop at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture.

March 6-9

Focus: Government

The Honorable Vygaudas Ušackas, Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Chicago.

April 24

Focus: Government

The Honorable Vilius Navickas, Mayor of Vilnius and Mrs. Jolanta Navickienė visited Chicago.

May

Focus: Arts & Culture

The Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, in partnership with the Vilnius Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International, presented an exhibition of Lithuania by Iowa painter Marcia Wegman of landscapes, people and farm animals.

The Lithuanian Student association at the University of Illinois at Chicago, in partnership with the Vilnius Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International and the Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania presented an event dedicated to the Millennium of Lithuanian State.

June

Focus: Culture

"The Soviet Story" film screening in commemoration of the Day of Mourning and Hope.

July

Focus: Art & Culture

On the occasion of Lithuania's Millennium 2009 and Day of Statehood, the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, in cooperation with the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., Cultural Council, the Lithuanian National Museum (Vilnius, Lithuania) and Vilnius Committee of the Chicago Sister Cities International, hosted the opening reception of the folk art exhibit "Wayside Shrine and Cross Crafting in Lithuania".

September**Focus: Arts & Culture**

Vidmantas Vaitkevicius Exhibition of paintings on silk of Lithuanian architecture and landscapes took place at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture.

October 1-4**Focus: Medical**

Dr. Laima Grinyte from the Institute of Oncology, Vilnius University participated in the Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium – Sister Cities Medical Initiative.

December**Focus: Arts & Culture**

A Christmas Ornament Workshop was held at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture.

2010**January 21****Focus: Arts & Culture**

The third Lithuanian Film Festival was held in Chicago.

March 11**Focus: Ceremonial**

Re-dedication Ceremony of the “Darius and Girenas” plaque at Midway Airport.

November**Focus: Government**

Mr. Audronius Ažubalis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania visited Chicago.

2011**March 16****Focus: Arts & Culture**

On March 16, 2011 Vilnius Committee of Chicago Sister Cities and The Consulate General of The Republic of Lithuania hosted an Independence Day reception at the Chicago Cultural center. The reception included the presentation of the works of renowned Lithuanian artist M. K. Čiurlionis and a piano performance.

June 11**Focus: Arts & Culture**

The Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture hosted a book reading: Odyssey of Hope - The Story of a Lithuanian Immigrant's Escape from Communism to Freedom and the Return to His Beloved Homeland.

June 18**Focus: Arts & Culture**

The project series titled Hope & Spirit officially opened at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture. Dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Soviet deportation of Lithuanians to Siberia, Hope & Spirit, a series of ongoing exhibitions and programs continue from June 18 to October 22, 2011.

October

Focus: Music

The Vilnius Committee co-organized a performance and reception of Lithuanian singer and songwriter Mindaugas Briedis.

Vilnius committee hosted Violeta Urmana, internationally renowned Lithuanian opera singer for a welcome reception at the Hancock tower.

2012

April

Focus: Education

The Vilnius Committee was a partner of the Association of Advanced Baltic Studies (AABS) conference at University of Illinois in Chicago.

August 6-10

Focus: Culture

The 7th Annual Chicago Sister Cities International Festival transformed Daley Plaza into an international village filled with merchants, food, music, and dance from Chicago's 28 Sister Cities. The Dance Duo Studio performed traditional and beautiful dance representing the culture and heritage of Vilnius.

October 4-7

Focus: Medical

Edas Stakionis, MD, from Oncology Institute of Vilnius University participated in the Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium – Sister Cities Medical Initiative.

December 24

Focus: Culture

Benjamin Kelner, Communications Manager of CSCI was featured on ABC 7 Chicago talking about Christmas traditions in some of Chicago's Sister Cities. Traditional ornaments were highlighted in the segment representing the culture and heritage of Vilnius, Lithuania.

2013

April 19-24

Focus: Governmental Delegation

A delegation from Vilnius visited Chicago including Jaroslavas Narkevicius, Vice-Chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament; Jaroslav Kaminski, Deputy Mayor of Vilnius; and Miroslavas Monkevicius of the Vilnius City Council. They were co-hosted on their visit by the Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania and met with members of the Lithuanian and Polish communities of Chicago. The delegations met with Stanley Balzekas, Chair of the Vilnius Committee of CSCI, and Ieva Dilyte, CSCI Manager of International Programs, to discuss the sister city relationship between Chicago and Vilnius.

April 26

Focus: Culture

The Vilnius and Warsaw Committees of CSCI, in partnership with the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, present a screening of the documentary film *The Age of Czeslaw Milosz*. The documentary commemorates the 100th birthday of Czeslaw Milosz, the Nobel Prize-winning Polish-Lithuanian poet whose life spanned a century.

August 5-9**Focus: Culture**

The 8th Annual Chicago Sister Cities International Festival transformed Daley Plaza into an international village filled with merchants, food, music, and dance from Chicago's 28 Sister Cities. Merchant Made in Lithuania sold traditional and authentic Lithuanian merchandise representing the culture and heritage of Vilnius.

July 18**Focus: Culture**

The Vilnius Committee of CSCI celebrated the opening of the special exhibition *We Shall Fly to Lithuania* at Concourse A of Chicago Midway International Airport. This special exhibition honored the 80th anniversary of the first U.S.-Lithuanian Transatlantic flight by Captain Steponas Darius and Lieutenant Stasys Girenas. The exhibition is presented by the Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania and is made possible by the kind cooperation of the Chicago Department of Aviation, the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture and Vytautas Magnus War Museum.

September 25-29**Focus: Medical**

The Chicago Sister Cities International Medical Initiative Program took place in conjunction with the 15th Annual Lynn Sage Breast Cancer Symposium, a professional educational event highlighting the most recent clinical and scientific advances in breast cancer research. Dr. Andrej Ostapenko of the Institute Oncology, Vilnius University participated and represented Vilnius in the 2013 symposium.

October 13**Focus: Athletics**

The Vilnius Committee of CSCI hosted a cheering station along the marathon route at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon and hosted a welcome reception for Lithuanian runners.

November

On November 21st, Ambassador Žygimantas Pavilionis of Lithuania to the United States conferred the award of honor of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Lithuanian Diplomacy Star – on Honorable Rahm Emanuel, Mayor of Chicago. Mayor Emanuel received the award for his outstanding dedication to advancing bilateral relations between 'Sister Cities' Chicago and Vilnius.

2014**February**

Chair of the Vilnius Committee of CSCI Stanley Balzekas received the Lithuanian Diplomacy Star for his work in promoting Lithuania's name and preserving Lithuanian culture. The award was presented to Mr. Balzekas by Lithuania's Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. on February 18. The evening event celebrated the 96th anniversary of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence.

August

Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian culture partnered with the Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in celebrating "Embrace Freedom the Baltic Way" rally on August 23 at Daley Plaza. The exhibit organized by the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture titled *No Home To Go To: The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons* was open in the lobby of Daley Center on the day of the rally. Algirdas Kauspedas, Lithuanian architect, thinker, leader of the legendary band Antis that played a key role in Lithuanian Independence movement performed at the "Embrace Freedom the Baltic Way" event, and was hosted by Stanley Balzekas at his studio in the Hancock towers.

The next day, August 24, the official opening of the project *No Home To Go To: The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons* was celebrated at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture.

September

CSCI Vilnius Committee hosted a welcome reception for USA Ambassador to Lithuania Deborah A. McCarthy on Wednesday, September 10, 6 PM at the Hancock tower residencies. Ambassador McCarthy was welcomed by the CSCI Executive Director Leroy Allala, The Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania Marijus Gudynas, Chairman of the Board of the Lithuanian Foundation Marius Kasniunas, members and guests of CSCI Vilnius Committee. In her address the Ambassador noted the importance of strengthening the ties between Chicago and Vilnius, sister cities since 1993. During this visit, Deborah McCarthy participated in the Chicago Council of Global Affairs lunch where she led the discussion on US-Baltic cooperation in the wake of Russian threats to European security. Ambassador also met with the Deputy Mayor of the city of Chicago Steve Koch, visited the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, met with local community groups and organizations.

October

CSCI Vilnius Committee sponsored a set of runners' t-shirts for the Lithuanian team of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, October 12, 2014.

October 14

Focus: Government

Deputy Mayor Steve Koch welcomed Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius to Chicago. Foreign Minister Linkevičius and Deputy Mayor Koch met to discuss strengthening ties between Chicago and Lithuania in business and community. Deputy Mayor Koch congratulated Foreign Minister Linkevičius and Consul General Marijus Gudynas on the 90th anniversary of the Lithuanian Consulate in Chicago.

CSCI Manager of International Programs, Ieva Dilyte, was officially recognized by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Linas Linkevičius, for her work in strengthening the sister city relationship between Vilnius and Chicago and for promoting Lithuania in Chicago.

2015

April 11-12

Focus: Culture & Education

The Women's Guild of the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture proudly presented author, attorney Tony Mankus, who read from and discussed his book, *Where Do I Belong? An Immigrant's Quest for Identity*. This captivating memoir outlines an emotional quest for identity in the context of the author's immigrant experience. The event is part of the series of programs related to the exhibition *No Home To Go To: The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons from 1944 to 1952* on view at the Museum through Dec. 31, 2015. Attorney Al Domanskis will moderate the discussion.

On Sunday, April 12, the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, in partnership with Lithuanian Culture Institute and Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania to the United States of America, presented the poetry anthology *How the Earth Carries Us. New Poets from Lithuania*. The anthology contains the work of 26 Lithuanian poets presented with their poetry translated to English and an introduction by Rimas Uzgiris. The event consisted of readings by poets Ilzė Butkutė, Giedrė Kazlauskaitė and Marius Burokas and discussion about the poetry and readings. It was moderated by anthology translator and editor Rimas Uzgiris.

October 11**Focus: Sport**

In celebration of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, the Gothenburg, Hamburg, Osaka, Paris and Vilnius Committees of Chicago Sister Cities International joined with international organizations and foreign consulates to cheer on and celebrate international runners at points along the marathon route.

2016**March 16****Focus: Arts & Culture**

The Vilnius Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International and the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture hosted a Traditional Lithuanian Easter Egg Decorating Workshop to learn the ancient art of decorating eggs using the etching technique. This annual workshop, usually held at the Museum, has become increasingly popular and gained attention not only among the Lithuanian community, but also the wider group of Chicago's arts and crafts enthusiasts.

March 21**Focus: Arts & Culture**

The Vilnius Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International sponsored a post-screening reception with Lithuanian food and drink after the Lithuanian film *Land of Songs* during the 19th Chicago European Union Film Festival, of which CSCI is a sponsor.

May 14**Focus: Culture**

Chicago Sister Cities International hosted a Eurovision Song Contest viewing party at Old Crow Smokehouse. Since 1956, the Eurovision Song Contest has been one of Europe's most popular television programs and one of television's longest running music shows. Over 200 people came to cheer on their country.