



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, was presented as 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.

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.