

Ar žinai tu, klajūne, keleivi Do You Know, O Wandering Traveler ?

Music: Rita Čyvaitė-Kliorienė

Lyrics: Aušrinė Širvinskienė

The words are filled with longing. Although we send the wandering traveler back to his homeland, it feels as though we would gladly be there ourselves. Perhaps that wanderer is us... In our thoughts we comfort ourselves with memories and lingering images of our homeland.

Subsequent verses clearly show not only the narrator's directions as to where to travel and what to see, but also the longing to visit the home of one's parents. They describe the timeless beauty of the waves, amber, the shouts of happy children, and the echo of songs resounding through the villages as evening falls.

Why does the author send the wanderer home to the place of his birth? Perhaps the wanderer is her soul, which finds no peace where she lives now – so like a wanderer she only returns home in her thoughts. Or perhaps, once we leave home, we can never find home again...

The longing for one's homeland flows throughout the song; the beauty of Lithuania's scenery is presented; these feelings and images are described in detail to the wandering traveler. Who is this wanderer? One's soul, life, nostalgia, destiny, a displaced person... us?

Aš pasėjau linelį I Sowed Flax

Lithuanian folk song

Harmonization: Alfonsas Mikulskis

Accompaniment: Darius Polikaitis

Flax was grown in the geographic area of Lithuania more than 4,000 years ago. Prior to World War II Lithuania ranked 3rd in the world in flax exports (after Russia and Poland). Flax was a traditional fiber crop of our country, so it is no surprise that it is mentioned in the very oldest Lithuanian folk songs. It is most common in “multi-part” songs (“sutartinės”), where the lyrics describe the planting, growing, harvesting, spinning, and weaving of flax. Folklore considers flax to be a sacred plant: greenery of the sun. It was thought that flax provided protection against evil spirits and various maladies. Flax textiles (for example tablecloths, towels, or shirts) take on deep symbolic meaning and have an important place in Lithuanian folk songs.

“I Sowed Flax” identifies all the phases in the life cycle of flax: it was sown, sprouted, grew, and blossomed. The harmonization by A. Mikulskis does not use all the traditional lyrics. The original words also include the work of harvesting, gathering, threshing, spinning, and weaving.

It is a work song, describing the arduous labor required to process flax. The refrain: “Ritin dobilą, Ritin dobilą, Ritin dobil ją” is a recurring imitation of the sounds made by the tools used in processing flax – it’s a rhythmic accompaniment to the work. Although working the flax required long and tiresome efforts, there were traditional festivities when the work was finally completed. The customary ceremonies included dances, particularly by women, with choreography replicating the movements performed while working. Flax and hemp work songs were most popular in the Eastern Highlands (“Aukštaitija”) of Lithuania.

Sources: Lithuanian Encyclopedia and various Internet articles.

Baltas paukštis **Prayer – The White Songbird**

Music and lyrics: Vytautas Kernagis

Keyboard: Andrius Kulikauskas

Choir arrangement: Vytautas Miškinis

Maestro Vytautas Kernagis has said: “Every person understands things his own way. The correctness of my songs is this: the created song has to be interesting not only to me, but also to the listener. If that occurs, the song will not die and will survive the passage of time. That which continually affects our emotions is correct.”

His son Vytautas shares these insights into his father’s compositions: “Truthful songs are those that fulfill you. Those which give you something or provide you the strength to move forward. I believe that is the essence of Vytautas Kernagis’ compositions. Every one of his songs tells a story.”

“The range of Vytautas Kernagis’ compositions is so deep and wide that everyone who listens to his songs finds something different. I can only say that he loved the listening public unconditionally, had the utmost respect for the stage, and he always knew what message he wanted to get across in his songs. He didn’t do anything that was superficial or not thought out. I suppose that is what created his uniqueness, which is hard to explain.”

“The White Songbird” is one of Vytautas Kernagis’ most memorable and beloved songs. The melancholy and nostalgic mood of the song speaks of a person’s life and longings. Kernagis speaks of the fragility and temporary nature of life, symbolized by the white songbird. The songbird is understood to represent freedom of one’s spirit, although it can also symbolize the fragility of our life and dreams. Kernagis uses the white songbird as a metaphor to convey universal feelings associated with our existence and place in the world. The song ends with the wish that the songbird will continue to sing. New generations will come after us and continue the works we have begun.

Sources: Quotations from Internet websites and <https://www.bernardinai.lt/zyma/vytauto-kernagio-gyvenimas-ir-kuryba/>

Beauštanti aušrelė Dawn is Breaking

Lithuanian folk song

Harmonization: M.K. Čiurlionis

“Dawn is Breaking” is a wedding song. Lithuanian weddings are rich in traditions and rituals. These can be divided into multiple phases, beginning with matchmaking and ending with visits to the in-laws after the wedding. Each phase has its own happy and sad songs, customs and rituals.

Many wedding songs, including “Dawn is Breaking”, begin with the images of dawn and sunrise. (The sun in Lithuanian folklore symbolizes a mother.) The action takes place early in the morning. It’s as though the movement of the sun foreshadows and suggests a young woman leaving home and going with her husband.

Weaving a wreath for her head, with rue grown in her own garden, is indicative of maturity and readiness to marry. The young man saddling a stallion has a similar meaning. Her sister reminds the bride that it is time to weave the wreath, put it on her head, and prepare for the journey to the in-laws – because the “good brothers” (groomsmen and brothers of the groom) are coming to collect the dowry.

As the bride arrives at the in-law’s home, obstacles are evident. The gates are closed and there is no one to welcome her. The gates are a symbol of entry into a new phase of life. In a figurative sense, the gates indicate hardships, which begin with the daughter-in-law’s first steps. The hopes for a comfortable life, the promises made by the young man during matchmaking – all are like grains of sand slipping through her fingers.

The original text of the song (not as sung here) expresses the naïve hope: “If only a brother would come out carrying a sword and chop my hardships out of the gate”. The bride has an apprehensive wish to be delivered from imminent hardships. Of course, there is no hope of escape: “A brother came out carrying a sword. He chopped a board out of the gate, but not my misfortune.” Even the melancholy melody of the song at times exudes this inner anxiety.

Sources:

Kazlauskienė Bronė, Sauka Leonardas 1983. “Matchmaking Songs, vol. 2: Wedding Songs”
From the legacy of Norbertas Vėlius 2013. “Lithuanian Mythology, Semantic Layers in Ancient Wedding Songs and Customs”.
Leonardas Sauka 1998 „Lithuanian Folklore” p. 203

Buvo dūda Vilniuj- There Was a Horn (Bagpipe) in Vilnius

Lithuanian folk song

Variations by Jonas Tamulionis

This song is in the “sutartinė” style. The first written record of it is found in 1911. The original manuscript states: “They say there was an uncle in Vilnius. They also say there was a horn in Vilnius, a little horn in Vilnius”. The song is more than 100 years old, while the choral arrangement was written by Jonas Tamulionis in 1985. How did this song come into existence? And what is this horn?

The Swedish historian Magnus Olaus makes the first mention of bagpipes in Lithuania in his book “The history of Northern Nations” published in 1555. That same year Grand Duke Žygimantas, in a letter to the magistrate of the Orša region, states that bagpipe players and musicians with performing bears must be taxed. They can only be allowed to perform after paying the tax.

The instrument is mentioned in 1565 in the regulations of the Lithuanian parliament: “... party goers gather before Holy Mass and their bagpipes and drums are disturbing the peace. Therefore, the drums need to be punctured and the bagpipes destroyed...” There were other prohibitions against using the instrument, all of which contributed to the decline of the bagpipe.

In her article “Forgotten Musical Instruments: the Bagpipe in Lithuania”, Rūta Žarskienė claims that originally the bagpipe was the primary, if not the only instrument used for weddings, baptisms, and other village celebrations. This is prior to the ascendance of the violin and other string or wind instruments.

The bagpipe consists of a bag shaped bellows with a mouth blower, and 2-3 hornpipes. The bellows were made from the skin of a calf, goat, pig, woodchuck, or dog – or the stomach of a sheep. It was considered that the best bag was from the skin of a dog, because it didn't sweat.

R. Sliužinskas explains that the inside of the skin was lubricated with raw egg whites, to soften it and close any pinholes.

One, two, or sometimes three hornpipes are built into the bottom of the bellows bag. The musician blows air into the bag through the mouthpiece and squeezes the bag with his elbow, so that air would reach the hornpipes. Both hands are used to play a melody by covering the holes in the hornpipes. The sound is loud and strident, and carries for a long distance.

In the Middle Ages bagpipes proliferated throughout Europe, mostly played by shepherds and peasants. In the later Middle Ages, the instrument was played by travelling musicians. In France in the 18th century the bagpipe (musette) was even used as an indoor – parlor instrument.

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From the 19th century onwards, the bagpipe is mentioned in official writings of the Vitebsk, Vilnius, and Minsk regions.

The bagpipe became popular in Lithuania in the first half of the 16th century. It was used mostly in Lithuania Minor and Eastern Lithuania, with continuing use in the Eastern Lithuania highlands until the middle of the 20th century. Depending on the region, various names were used for the bagpipe: the Alvitas horn, the Labanoras horn, the Vilnius horn.

Bagpipes were played by musicians with performing bears, beggars, raftsmen, and wandering musicians. They would play marches, dance music, and accompany popular songs as well as religious hymns. The term “horn” came to include musical instruments of later invention, such as piano, concertina, mouth harmonica, tuba, clarinet, and others.

Folk ensembles from the latter half of the 20th century have been using the traditional bagpipe. The compact disc “Quiet Sounds of Labanoras” is part of the Lithuanian UNESCO project “The Horn of Labanoras”, which seeks to revive the bagpipe tradition in Lithuania.

Sources: Information about the bagpipe: www.dudmais.lt.

Additional information about the song: scientific paper by ethnomusicologist Daiva Račiūnaitė-Vyčnienė – Weaving of Two Rudiments – Vocal and Instrumental – in the Sutartinė “Buvo Dūda Vilniuj”.

Čiūto

Lithuanian folk song

Harmonization: Juozas Tallat-Kelpša

Juozas Tallat-Kelpša (1889 -1949)

His ancestors were of Tatar nobility who established kinship with Lithuanians. J. Tallat-Kelpša attended high school in Palanga, Lithuania and received a diploma in St. Petersburg, Russia. His early training in music was at the hands of his father, who was a church organist. Later he attended the school for organists in Rokiškis.

The composer lived in Vilnius from 1905 – 1907, during which time he attended the school of the Russian musical society and learned to play the cello. He became a grade school teacher and also organist at St. Michael's Church. Tallat-Kelpša was the director of the Lithuanian benefit society choir, which was later joined by the „Kanklių“ society choir. The ensemble had 70-80 members, organized evening concerts, and sang in church. In 1907 he composed the music to „Eglė žalčių karalienė“ (lyrics by G. Landsbergis-Žemkalnis) and staged the musical with his choir.

J. Tallat-Kelpša studied composition theory in St. Petersburg. During this period he directed Lithuanian and Belorussian choirs, conducted operettas, participated in drama performances, accompanied soloists, and composed music for stage performances. During summer vacations in Lithuania he documented folk songs and organized local choirs.

During the Soviet era, on the occasion of the 1940 elections to the people's parliament, the composer wrote propaganda works for choir and piano. In 1944 he was the director of both the Kaunas State Theatre and the Kaunas Conservatory. From 1944-1949 J. Tallat-Kelpša was the senior conductor of the state opera and ballet theatres. He received a Soviet prize in 1945 as an honored artist and the Stalin Prize in 1948.

Čiūto (The Harvesters' Song)

This harvest song is about the hard work of villagers, in this case young men, who scythe the hayfields and wheat fields.

Harvest songs (“sutartinės”) can have a number of themes. Most important is the song cycle with the theme “We will go, brothers, to harvest the hay”. The work itself in this group of songs is not described in any detail. It is merely mentioned in the first stanzas. Subsequent stanzas describe the harvest mood and surroundings: the workers are surprised by a storm and take shelter under a tree. This portrait of reality is merely a poetic device, whose emotional effect is enhanced by picturesque language and metaphors: “a thunderstorm is rushing towards us...” The storm is just a poetic tool to express an idea or an emotion, and has no direct link to the work itself. Similes are used to describe the love and protection that parents provide: “the oak tree is not our father”, “its branches are not arms”, “its leaves are not words”. The oak tree is a symbol

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of strength and manhood, but it's only a tree. It is not a loving father, who understands his son, can hold him close, console and protect him.

Many of these songs ("sutartinės") were songs related to work: sung while working, resting, going to work, or returning home after a day's labors. They were only sung communally by groups of workers – while harvesting fields of rye, oats, or hay, while gathering flax, spinning yarn, or performing other labors. The relationship with work is portrayed from the standpoint of the patriarchal family. The emphasis is on the commonality of work and communal efforts. Good work is praised, because it is in fact a measure of a person's worth.

Sources:

Music Information Center website – A Serf Song (1938).

Publications published in Soviet times:

Repertoire of the 1955 Song Festival "On the shores of the Nemunas river".

"Anthology of Lithuanian Choral Music".

Cykiai, cykiai

Quietly, Quietly

Lithuanian folk song from the dzūkų region

Variations by Raimondas Katinas

The time of matchmaking and courtship was not always a happy one. Daughters were frequently not ready to marry; they wished to remain longer at home with their mother, brothers, and sisters. On the other hand, the father's worry was to find his daughter a husband as soon as possible and have her leave home. Frequently, men looking to marry would be choosing women much younger than themselves. This occurred for a number of reasons.

Some men would return home after long military service and find that all the women of their age had already married and created families. Other men were in no hurry to marry – they wanted to save some money and build some wealth before starting married life. Still others had to earn enough to pay their sisters' dowries. For these and other reasons, men were frequently more advanced in age and looked for younger ladies for wives.

If a young lady chose a young man, who in the parents' opinion was unsuitable – there would be tears. But the father would pay little attention to tears – it was more important that the prospective husband was wealthy.

In this song, the river Nemunas symbolizes life – its eternal flow, its everlasting movement. The river flows and will continue to flow, and nothing will change its movement. The river parallels the young girl's life – that it's been this way for ages and will not change. You will marry the man who chooses you, who your father and brothers have decided on.

The song expresses sadness, as the girl cries bitterly. At the same time she threatens her parents if they force her to marry an older man. She will set the hounds on him and chase him out of the village. The river Nemunas flows, the young girl cries, but life goes on and one must adapt. Matchmaking depended not on the young ladies wishes, but on the "traditional order".

History tells us that it wasn't only village girls who often did not marry happily and for love. It was perhaps even more difficult for daughters of wealthy landowners or noblemen. The recently published novel "The War Bride", written by Ilona Skujaitė, vividly portrays the fate of daughters of wealthy parents.

Džigūnas The Stallion

Music: Jonas Švedas, arrangement by Eduardas Pilypaitis
Traditional Lithuanian folk lyrics

The song is in the matchmaking/wedding category. The young man asks his stallion to carry him to his young lady as quickly as possible.

The stallion (“žirgelis”) was a dominant symbol in folk art. It was believed that the horse had supernatural abilities, including the power of fertility. In songs the stallion is always strong, fast, and handsome – like his young rider. The stallion is a symbol of youth, vigor, manhood, and maturity.

The refrain “Oi, sadaučio sadautėlio” contains sonic variations of “sadula”, a word of incantation frequently found in wedding songs. Although the wedding and departure from home could be a painful experience for the bride, the refrain creates a mood of lightness, liveliness, and youthfulness.

The second part of the refrain “Linagaučio lina go” contains sonic variations of the word “linai” (flax). While it is frequently found in matchmaking songs, it is more common in work songs describing the flax harvest, and sung while working to lighten the labor and create a cheerful mood.

Subsequent verses emphasize the rider’s haste: he promises his stallion oats and water, if it reaches his destination – the young lady – swiftly. The refrains “Trinku, trinku trinkutėla” and “Taidu, taida opa, opa” imitate the rhythmic clatter of the hooves, from which sparks fly as the horse speeds onwards.

The young man knows that the girl’s father will meet and welcome him at the gates, because he is bringing gifts of a silk scarf and a golden ring. As in all matchmaking songs, there is no shortage of promises and presents – whatever it takes to win her hand and her heart.

Nine. The young man urges his stallion to carry him to the young lady’s home, which is nine miles away. The number nine is formed from the significant number 3 x 3. Three in the Holy Trinity. Three worlds: earth, heaven, and hell. These numbers are frequently found in folklore and folk medicine: nine trade skills, nine wolves, nine dragons, three nines (an herbal liqueur). And of course, pregnancy takes nine months.

Dzūkit, dzūkit girnelės **The Millstone is Humming**

Lithuanian folk song from the Dzūkija region
Variations by Danguolė Beinarytė

“Marriage puts its imprint on a young woman’s destiny. It tears her away from her home environment and impoverishes her spirit. A bride takes her dowry with her, but can linens replace her parents, brothers, and sisters? She would like to continue to stay with her family. Her brothers shouldn’t want to get rid of her. Her dowry chest and she herself take up so little space in the home.” (A. Maceina)

The song begins with the millstone grinding grain. The long and monotonous work of milling grain immediately directs her attention to her tired hands, tired feet, and tired eyes powdered with flour dust. By describing her tired body, she seeks consolation and reflects on her difficult and exhausting life. The tired body hides a tired soul, and feelings of longing and loneliness.

“The humming sound of the millstone makes the young woman feel that she is not alone. For a brief moment her attention is drawn to her work. However, reality intrudes and she feels her deep loneliness. This consciousness forces her to think of her fate. Why did the young man of her dreams come to love her? Her destiny is not to be idle. Her days are full of troubles and misery. The song’s focus on one’s inner world is quite clear. The action of milling is merely a vehicle used to portray the inner feelings and experiences of a working person.” (A. Maceina)

Greitai, greitai **Time Passes Swiftly**

North American-Lithuanian camp song

Author: unknown

Arrangement: Jonas Govėdas

“Time Passes Swiftly” is a song popular in diaspora camp settings as well as other festive gatherings. The song speaks of the inexorable flow of time. It reveals emotions connected with our hopes, dreams, past experiences, and our ever changing life. The “voice in the forest” represents the peacefulness and beauty of nature, but its echo also creates a nostalgic mood – remembrances of things past.

Our youth, adults, and seniors all sing it: each finding unique meaning, memories, joys of friendship – and also feelings of nostalgia and the sadness of separation.

During summer camps or various festivals, new acquaintances are made and friendships (possibly romantic) blossom. Maintaining and growing these relationships is not easy for Lithuanians scattered throughout North America. The song urges us to leave the past behind and not seek revenge, to forget our previous loves and heartfelt moments – which, sad to say, cannot be continued or repeated.

All the lyrics of “Time Passes Swiftly” invite us to reflect on the past, forgiveness, and the pain of emotional distancing. The song describes deep emotions experienced by many of us: love, lost love, and the unstoppable flow of time.

Greitakalbes **A Fast-talking Tongue Twister**

Music: Aleksandras Stankevičius

Lyrics: Folk tongue twister

(Alliterative meaningless sentences)

“Tongue twisters” are part of the popular folklore – sayings and word sounds, which are put to verse not so much for the meaning of the words, as for the sound itself. Typically the words need to be rattled off quickly – not always an easy task. Frequently, the speaker stumbles over the words, says the wrong syllable, and sometimes even makes up their own words. All this makes the listeners laugh, while the speaker wants to try again. Tongue twisters serve to improve one’s pronunciation of various word constructs, syllables, and sounds. They are suitable for young and old, as well as singers – functioning as an exercise for one’s mind, tongue, and breath control. In the end, the tongue twister is a vehicle for creating a good mood.

Ir jšoko ožėlis The Goat in the Garden

Lithuanian folk song

Harmonization: Banga Balakauskienė

This is a humorous children's song, perhaps teaching a lesson. As our little ones grow up, we sometimes see these „stubborn goats“, who appear at the wrong time and in the wrong place. Common people would call a child's capricious behavior “a little goat” (“ožiukas”). As people observed bird or animal behavior in nature, they would create stories, games, and songs for little children.

In the past, physical discipline was part of “folk wisdom” – to teach children a lesson. Today's parenting has moved away from corporal punishment, considering it counterproductive, causing emotions of anger, revenge, and fear. While singing this song, few adults will pay attention to what happens to the goat when it jumps into the garden, and there is no need to explain this in detail to children. The goat jumped into the garden and ate the cabbage leaves. The housewife (“kopūstienė”) went outside and chased the goat out of the garden.

The refrain contains catchwords, which are fun for children, and bring a mood of lightness and happiness to the song. Goats used to have little bells hung around their neck, so the owner could hear where the goat was grazing. The syllables “meilinga džiunga” perhaps imitate the sound of these bells. “Ciba, ciba (cabulai)” were the words used to call a goat to return to the barn. “Judyt budyt” are perhaps the words used to call baby goats to butt heads and play with each other.

The song ends with the loving words “my dear goat” (“oželi mana”) – no matter what mischief the goat gets into, it is still a favorite animal of the family.

Jau saulutė leidžias **The Sun is Setting**

Music: Darius Polikaitis

Lyrics: Tomas Žičkus

At first glance, the lyrics would appear to be a simple poem, a quickly drawn sketch: evening arrives, the sun hides behind the clouds, laborers return home after a day's work, birds and forest animals are going to sleep. Quiet and peacefulness everywhere. But why is a dark cloud obscuring light from the sun?

It becomes clearer if we take a closer look at the poet's life. Tomas Žičkus was born in 1844 and was a revolutionary participant in the uprising of 1863. He was a poet and member of the "Aušrininkai" society. The society was formed by a group of patriotic intellectuals at the end of the 19th century. They were motivated by love of their homeland. Members were often graduates of the Marijampolė and Šiauliai high schools, Veiveriai teacher's seminary, or the diocesan seminaries in Žemaitija and Seiniai. There were also doctors, lawyers, and university students who were studying or graduated from the universities in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

The "Aušrininkai" society sought to organize and arouse the Lithuanian population, to put a halt to the Polonization of the country, and actively resist russification. They understood the nation to be a community including all walks of life – rich and poor, peasants and nobility. Their primary focus was to promote the usage of the Lithuanian language. Their newspaper ("Aušra") began publishing in Lithuania Minor in 1883. "Aušrininkai" helped establish the Lithuanian language as the official spoken and written language of the nation.

So the "dark cloud" can be seen to represent the historical oppression and repressive attempts to eliminate the Lithuanian language.

Tomas Žičkus

- Poet, member of the "Aušrininkai" society, participant in the uprising of 1863, book smuggler.
- Born 1844, died 1929

Song Analysis

Jonvabalīs **The Lightning Bug**

Music: Gintautas Abarius

Lyrics: Stasys Žlibinas

It's a beautiful little story for children about a lightning bug, who begins to light up the sky as evening falls in late June. The little bug named "Jonas" lives in the forest, and at night shines for the smallest inhabitants of that environment: ants, grasshoppers, and other creatures created in a child's imagination. This song encourages us to visit the forest, to observe the wellcoordinated work of an ant colony, to study other insects, and appreciate all the little creatures living in harmony in the environment that surrounds us.

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Kalvelis **The Blacksmith**

*Music: Jonas Švedas,
arrangement by Nijolė Sinkevičiūtė
Traditional Lithuanian folk lyrics*

“The Blacksmith” is a light and cheerful song describing the hard-working labors of the blacksmith and the plowman, which to the uninformed might appear to be easy professions. In the first verse, the blacksmith is hammering a plow. The plow (“žagrelė”) is an ancient implement used to break up, till, and cultivate the soil. Horses or oxen would be harnessed to pull the plow. In the second verse, the farmer yokes a pair of oxen and plows the entire field.

“*Tin tan tin tan*” are sound making syllables which imitate the ringing noises emanating from the smithy as the hammer strikes a metal object. The song is fun for children and reminds grownups of their childhood.

Kraičio drobelės Linens for My Dowry

Lithuanian folk song
Variations by Eugenijus Čiplies

In Lithuanian village life, weaving was a skill necessary to provide for a family's household needs. As a result every young girl was taught how to weave. The skill was learned at home in the family environment. Sometimes men would weave as well. Clothes, bedcovers, rugs, and tablecloths were woven for family use, because they were expensive to purchase. Village women would work at their loom most frequently during the Lenten season and in springtime, as this was the time of year requiring less attention to farmwork. An additional reason for weaving in spring was that the threads spun in winter needed to be used without delay, before they became brittle or rough. The loom would always be stationed in the best lit corner of the house.

Most village women knew how to weave "ordinary" linens: bedcovers, towels, and tablecloths made with simple patterns. Woven products were an excellent means to clothe one's family or fill up a dowry chest. Few could make a living solely from weaving. As time went on and factories began to mass produce woven goods, the tradition of weaving faded from village life.

This brief song (or dance) describes a young girl who reminds everyone that her skillful weaving should be attributed to her masterful teachers. The shuttle flies smoothly through the loom not catching on the threads. "*Pykšt pokšt tapu pupu klepu klepu*" are noisemaking syllables, imitating the sound of a working loom.

Sources:

Ethnicart.lt

<https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kultura/12/1918051/libertas-klimka-isausti-audimeli>
and other websites.

Kupolinis Midsummer Night Festivities

A song for St. John's eve

Music: Balys Dvarionas

Arrangement: Eduardas Pylipaitis

The traditions associated with the festivities of St. John's eve are closely related to the phenomenon of nature known as the summer solstice. The songs, games, dances, and rituals all reflect an individual's hope to positively influence the harvest, fertility, and success in life. Men and women equally connect the summer solstice with the fulfillment of hopes and dreams. Light, fortune, happiness – it seems all of these proceed through the portal of life.

The first verse draws a picture: the father's estate, white birch trees, swaying branches – St. John's eve is approaching and fires will be lit. Who will light the bonfire?

The **estate**. This is a simple village homestead, not a wealthy landowner's estate.

The **birch tree**. Birch bark and wood are known as excellent firewood, and were commonly used in bonfires. Birch tree branches were used to decorate homes for the feast of the Holy Trinity (the Sunday after Pentecost). On St. John's eve birch tree branches were piled up to build massive bonfires. It was believed that the light from the bonfires, as it illuminated the surrounding, newly planted fields, would protect them from any harm caused by nature, evil spirits, or witches' incantations. Bonfires would also be lit in pastures to ensure the well-being of grazing cattle.

Fire. The lighting of bonfires was an exceptionally important part of St. John's eve rituals. Fire provided light, warmth, and symbolized vitality and life. In folklore, the sun was called "mother": during the summer solstice, when the sun was at its highest peak, the bonfire took the sun's place on earth. The burning of bonfires was a way to show respect for the sun, without which there would be no life.

The subsequent verses explain how the bonfire activities would proceed. The oldest brother will gather the branches; the youngest sister will light the fire; the young girl will weave a wreath and concern herself with finding a suitable young man. Bonfire rituals were typically entrusted to an important and respected person: the most senior village elder, the most important family member, the oldest person named John, and so on. In this song, preparation of the bonfire is entrusted to the oldest brother, who is responsible for the welfare of his parents, for providing dowries for his sisters, and also finding them suitable marriage partners. He will be assisted by his youngest sister, who in all likelihood will soon be weaving a wreath and searching for a young man. "O blossoming wreath, dear wreath, how can I find myself a young man?"

The **wreath** is a symbol of love and immortality. Young girls would weave wreaths from flowers grown in their own garden, from wildflowers picked in the fields, also sometimes incorporating small tree branches, leaves, and vines. It was believed that greenery

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woven into a wreath gained extraordinary powers. Because a wreath formed a circle, it was a representation of the sun, and had a protective connotation. Wreaths made from oak leaves signified strength. These wreaths would be presented to those named John or Jane, or provided to decorate the front door of their home.

The sun, fire, warmth, water – all indicate life and motherhood. But to become a mother, a young woman needed to find a young man and start a family. St. John's eve was a magical night, because by performing certain rituals, it was believed that one could foretell the future – in particular, which young man would be one's life partner.

"*Kupolia*" or "*Kupolinės*" are ancient names for this feast, which celebrates the growth of all plant life. Variations of this word describe actions taken during this period of time. The verb "*kupoliauti*" refers to the gathering of medicinal grasses and herbs – one of the important rituals of St. John's eve. The noun form of the word, "*kupoliavimas*", additionally refers to the dancing and merrymaking that takes place during the festivities.

"We will dance all night, *kupolia*". There was dancing not only around the fire, but directly over the fire. People of all ages would jump over the fire, hoping to bring youthfulness to their lives and inspire the growth of all vegetation, especially the flax, wheat, and rye fields. One would leap as high as possible, as though trying to reach the sun, and draw on its health and energy.

Adding together all the symbols we have mentioned, St. John's eve and its associated rituals, games, and merrymaking made for a feast not only of meditation and spiritual renewal, but also joyful revelry. It joined together thoughts of both renewal, growth, and the transience of life.

Sources:

Vydūnas, "Collected Works" vol. IV, p. 35–39

Kupole Rože: Folklore and Customs of Pentecost and St. John's Eve, Vilnius 2003

Kur sakalalis The Falcon and the Cuckoo

Lithuanian folk song

Variations by Raimundas Martinkėnas

“The falcon and the cuckoo” is a wedding song. It tells the story of a cuckoo and a falcon, who flew into the same orchard, perched in the same tree, ate berries from the same cluster, and drank dew from the same leaf. The song continues in a parallel mode, substituting a young man and a young woman. They both came to the same homestead, sat at the same table, nibbled at the same morsel of cake, drank wine from the same goblet, and made the same promises.

The song is replete with symbolism, which clarifies the deeper meaning of the song.

The cuckoo is one of the most significant birds in Lithuanian folklore, especially in sung folklore. Some believed that at the end of summer, a cuckoo would transform into a hawk or falcon. It was thought that the cuckoo was a medium, communicating between the world of the living and the world of the dead. In wedding songs, the cuckoo, the raven, and the falcon were considered to be all-knowing. In Lithuanian mythology, a cuckoo or a falcon perched on the gunwale of a boat was known as a messenger of bad news – a harbinger of death. It is evident that the roles assigned to these birds are many and varied. The actual role depends on the song and possibly some guesswork, as to what the author may have had in mind.

We can limit ourselves to the sung folklore tradition, particularly this song, and say that the cuckoo and the falcon make a pair, reflecting the wedding couple. The two birds flew into an **orchard**. The orchard filled with fruit trees signifies a place of shelter for the soul. It indicates a particular state of being – orderliness, freshness, and purity.

“They perched in the same **tree**”. A tree is considered the axis of the world. Its roots draw water from the earth, while its branches reach the sky and eternity. The tree symbolizes endless life energy, the power of the earth, growth, and upwards expansion. The tree also has a protective function and represents a place of holiness.

“They ate **berries** from the same cluster”. Berries can have multiple meanings. They can be a symbol of troubles, heartache, and tears. But equally they can represent love and kisses. Berries, especially red and sweet ones, hint at a young woman’s beauty, mutual attraction, enticement, and courtship. So in this song, surely the berries are sweet, fragrant, and indicative of love.

“They drank **dew** from the same leaf”. Dew consists of a drop of water. Water is the symbol of life and the source of all creation.

The subsequent stanzas repeat the same ideas, but with the young man and woman instead of the birds. “They both came to the same homestead”. Home is home – a place dear to one’s heart, whether it be a poor peasant’s shack or a nobleman’s mansion.

Song Analysis

“They sat at the same **table**”. The table in the home is a special, holy place: where the family gathers, where bread is shared, a place of sustenance, a place for discussions, a place for decision-making, a place for prayer. The table is decorated for various holidays and feasts; guests are invited to the table. The table is a family’s holy place, a place for family traditions, communal prayers, mutual respect – as though the table is an altar to the family’s history.

“They nibbled at the same morsel of **cake**”. “Cake” was the term used for bread, sometimes even known as “white cake”. In earlier times it was baked only on special occasions, such as weddings. The breaking of bread symbolized the union of the two families.

“They drank **wine** from the same goblet”. Drinking wine from the same wineglass is a tradition that has endured to our times. Traditionally, the newlyweds are welcomed and blessed by their parents, with an offering of bread, salt, and wine – symbols of life and fruitfulness.

“They made the same **promises**”. The promise is their vow to stay together for life, to share a common path in life, to love forever.

The song ends with the words: “where there is a falcon, you will find a cuckoo” – as though we were wishing the young couple all the best, and that they always remain at each other’s side.

Sources:

V. Šatkauskienė – LRT Classic television program “The morning dew”.

V. Stukaitė – “Birds – interpreters of our way”.

A. Valiukevičienė – “The tree in the Lithuanian world”.

O. Gaidamavičiūtė – “Three speckled cuckoos flew by”.

L. Kudirkienė – “The image of the cuckoo in folklore”.

Lietuviais esame mes gimę We Are Born Lithuanians

Music: Stasys Šimkus

Lyrics: Jurgis Zauerveinas

Composer and conductor Stasys Šimkus first published this song in St. Petersburg in 1912. It was dedicated to Vydūnas, a poet, philosopher, and leader of the Prussian-Lithuanian national movement in Lithuania Minor.

The lyrics are taken from a poem by Georg Sauerwein, first published in the “Aušra” calendar for 1884. The poem became the unofficial anthem of Lithuania Minor. It was originally sung according to the melody of an evangelical hymn.

In 1912 the text was somewhat modified and shortened, and choral music for four voices was composed by Stasys Šimkus. The song quickly became a popular Lithuanian patriotic song. The melody also rang out as the introduction to the Lithuanian Radio program for many years, until the forcible incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union in 1944.

Georg Julius Justus Sauerwein (1831 – 1904)

Born in Germany, was a publisher, poet, linguist, tutor, translator, pacifist, and world traveler. He was a prodigious polyglot, who could write or speak approximately 60 languages. As a Lithuanian author he used a number of pseudonyms: Girėnas, Pilėnas, Rukštinaitis, Silvatikus, and others. He worked for many years as a translator for the British Bible Society. His first acquaintance with the Lithuanian language was during his high school years, when he met Lithuanian immigrants working in factories in Gronau, Germany. Later on he lived in Lithuania Minor, learned to speak the language well, and was fascinated by it. He came to love the Lithuanian people, and sympathized with their concerns. He associated with leaders of the Lithuanian national movement and participated in their undertakings.

Stasys Šimkus (1887 – 1943)

He was an organist, conductor, composer, and teacher. He studied organ music at the Warsaw music institute (1906 – 1908). He continued his studies in organ music and composition at the St. Petersburg conservatory (1908 – 1914), where he received a diploma. S. Šimkus lived and worked in the United States from 1915 to 1920. He returned to study composition in Leipzig and Berlin (1921 – 1922). The composer moved to Klaipėda and founded a private school for music in 1923. While living in Klaipėda he assisted with the publishing of the magazine “Muzika”. S. Šimkus also prepared the music of M. K. Čiurlionis for publishing, which occurred in 1925. He was one of the senior conductors of the Lithuanian National Song Festivals (1925 and 1928). S. Šimkus moved to Kaunas in 1930 and was the conductor of the state opera theatre (1931 – 1933). The composer collected and documented approximately 1200 folk songs.

Sources: Various Internet articles

Ne dėl žalio vyno Not for the Green Wine

Lithuanian folk song
Variations by Vilija Mažintaitė

The color green is frequently encountered in Lithuanian folk songs. Greenery that keeps its color the entire year is worshipped and believed to have supernatural powers. The song “Not for the green wine” was most popular in the Dzūkija region of Lithuania, generally sung during Advent. It was also sung in other parts of Lithuania, albeit with somewhat modified lyrics. The song tells the story of a young man who got up early in the morning, washed, dressed, saddled his horse, and rode off to war, where he perished. The continuing refrain “Not for the green wine, but for the verdant greenery” seeks to emphasize his motivation for going off to war.

Aušra Kavaliauskienė helps explain the song in her article titled “Symbolism of the color green in the worldview of Lithuanian folklore”. “...In Lithuanian folklore, mythology, folk art, and traditions the color green was considered magical. It was believed that green symbols would ensure vitality and fruitfulness not only in nature, but also in one’s life. The color green signified eternal life, so that green symbols also indicated a protective function.”

Green wine

Folklore researchers have attempted to ascertain the source of the image “green wine” in Lithuanian folk songs. There is no green wine in Lithuania, and none of the traditional Lithuanian drinks (mead, kvass, beer, whiskey) are green. So it is thought that the image is not of Lithuanian origin and borrowed from neighboring countries, where the same sounding word could mean different things: green vine (the vine tree) = green wine (the drink). One way or another, the term became popular in Lithuanian folklore. “Green wine” can be taken to mean almost any alcoholic drink, particularly what is drunk during feasts and celebrations. What is significant in this song, is that the young man rode off to war not motivated by alcohol, but by a higher purpose. (A. Kavaliauskienė)

“Green wine” in Lithuanian folklore not was not only used to denote a special, expensive drink of high quality. It could also indicate „water“. For example, „the young woman washed her face with green wine“. Or „the girl drew green wine from the well“. On Christmas Eve water was said to turn into wine. During wedding celebrations, there were songs about a fountain or river of green wine. To identify a drink as “green” could also symbolize that it was a magical potion.

Verdant greenery.

The first greenery would appear typically in the month of April, at which time the arrival of spring would be celebrated. However, it was sought to guarantee the rebirth of nature much earlier – the „approaching greenery“ was celebrated during the time of Advent and Christmas. Images in Lithuanian folk songs frequently use the color green

Song Analysis

when describing weddings, life, vitality, and the notions of change and rebirth. The growth and verdancy of trees is used to describe the time of life when a young man or woman grow into maturity. Trees which are green the entire year symbolized the eternal wheel of life. In the context of wedding songs, we see references to green silk, green bridges, green carriages, and green boats.

Greenery was used during the feast of Pentecost to decorate homes, entrance gates, and barns. Young birch tree branches and other greenery were used to beautify gardens. Churches and wayside shrines were similarly adorned. People would drive to Pentecost services dressed up with greenery. Flowers, boughs of trees, and other greenery were used as decorations when celebrating holidays as well as traditional family ceremonies – baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.

“Verdant greenery”, as in this song, was symbolic of eternal life, renewal, and rebirth – as much in nature as in one’s own life.

Sources:

Aušra Kavaliauskienė – “Symbolism of the color green in the worldview of Lithuanian folklore”.

Bronė Stundžienė – “From the poetry of songs: the image and context of wine”.

Pienės pūkas Dandelion Fluff in the Wind

Music: Aleksandras Stankevičius

Lyrics: Aušrinė Širvinskienė

Aleksandras Stankevičius is one of the senior artistic directors organizing the XI North American Lithuanian Song Festival.

A. Stankevičius studied composition and conducting at McGill University in Montreal. For many years he led the choir at the Gates of Dawn Lithuanian parish, as well as a Lithuanian community choir, a men's octet, and a women's ensemble. The community choir published a recording of Christmas music (titled "Christmas"). On the occasion of the 600 year anniversary of Catholicism in Lithuania, the composer wrote a cantata "The Lithuania of Crosses and Wayside Shrines", lyrics by the poet Henrikas Nagys, performed in Lithuania as well as in North America. Mr. Stankevičius is recognized not only in the Lithuanian community, but throughout the province of Quebec. He has composed music for television, radio, films, and commercials. His own recording "Let it Out" contains 11 works, written in a modern, youthful style.

Dandelion fluff in the wind.

The song and dance invites us and gathers us together. Like a dandelion we have put down roots in foreign soil, but we invite our Homeland to be a guest at the party. This happy, cheerful, youthful song has not a care in the world. It brings us all together and makes us feel as though we invited Lithuania into our home.

I have no insight into some deeper meaning, merely what is written in these lines. Every listener can have their own interpretation. But I would dwell on the image of "dandelion fluff". The fluff is unstable – wherever the wind blows, there it flies. It seems to me this image represents not our own instability, but youthfulness, dance, song, and that light feeling – that anything is possible, that we will always be young, strong, beautiful, and happy.

Be merry, o my youth, while you are
still young.
While still young!



Pradės aušrelė aušti **Dawn Begins to Break**

Lithuanian folk song

Arrangement: Bronius Budriūnas

“Dawn Begins to Break” is a song (also a dance) in the matchmaking / wedding category. It’s early morning, the approaching dawn begins to lighten the sky and disperse the darkness. For farmers, the morning and evening stars would mark the workday’s beginning and end.

The first verses describe the upcoming day: dawn begins to break, roosters begin to crow; they won’t let the young man sleep. Or perhaps he can’t sleep because he has a young girl on his mind. The rooster is an ancient symbol of dawn, awakening, alertness, and rebirth. A rooster also signifies orderliness. Primarily, however, a rooster is a symbol of fertility.

The young man rides as fast as he can and stops his horse by the building where he thinks the young girl is sleeping. The hurried ride is impressive, but also suspicious – why is the young man making an appearance before sunrise? His business is urgent – to catch the young girl by surprise, unawares and without her parents.

“Is this a door, or is it a wall, or is my fair maiden sleeping alone?” The young man is having his doubts. He has ridden into unfamiliar surroundings and begins to wonder, whether the young girl is sleeping alone or with her mother. Young girls would be protected by their parents and brothers to ensure that nothing untoward would occur before a wedding to a suitably selected man. Unfortunately for the rider, the young girl is sleeping with her mother watching over her. The mother chastises the young man for showing up uninvited so early in the morning, and orders him to let her daughter sleep in peace. Evidently this young man was not approved of by the parents. The fact that the young girl needs her sleep may also indicate that she is too young for marriage.

Šarkela varnela The Magpie, the Crow

Lithuanian folk song

Arranged by Danguolė Aukselienė, redacted by Artūras Novikas for mixed choir

Birds have always been part of our environment. Throughout history there have been varying assessments of bird behavior – because of their appearance, unusual voice, and unique mannerisms. Centuries of observation have allowed us to discover certain patterns in bird behavior and connect them with forecasting the future.

- In German folklore a screeching magpie foretold misfortune: a future disaster, illness, or death. A dream of such a magpie had the same significance.
- In Northern England it was an ominous portent if a magpie flew across the road from left to right. Conversely, it was a good sign if it flew from right to left.
- In Germany the appearance of a magpie was a positive indication if the bird was silent. An even better omen was to see two birds in front of you early in the morning.

“The Magpie, the Crow” is a popular Lithuanian children’s song describing the magpie’s offspring. “How many children do you have?” What strikes us immediately is the ever increasing number of little magpies, always grouped in pairs. It is plausible that this song had an educational purpose – to teach children to count (the simplest calculations consisted of counting by twos).

One other item deserves mention – the important bond between the magpie and its cousin, the crow. In the worldview of folklore one could say that the birds are twins, two sides of the same coin. For example, it was said “what’s good for the magpie is good for the crow” (when you give one child something, the second child also wants it). Frequently the magpie was referred to with a double name “magpie-crow”, just as in this song.

Šių naktele, per naktele I Didn't Sleep Last Night

Lithuanian folk song

Arrangement: Gediminas Kalinas

It's a song of matchmaking and love. In Lithuanian folklore, the apple tree is one of the universal symbols for a woman, a mother. Of all the trees that could be in an orchard, only the apple tree and its fruit is ever specifically mentioned.

Marriage is a decisive event which divides a person's life into two distinct phases. Marriage not only indicates a change in the family status (single / married), but also in age (immature / mature). Change in family status and maturity frequently occur at the same time in one's life.

The young man plants an apple tree – to show that he has grown up and wishes to make an impression on a young woman. The apple tree variously represented a mother, grandmother, or woman. The apple represented fruitfulness and was a sign of love. In various songs red apples are variously compared to the appearance of a young lady's face, or youthfulness, or a troubled future. A young man would typically boast to a young woman – if she marries him, she will stroll through the orchard, pick apples and berries, take care of the beehives, and be in love with him. On the other hand, the young woman understood that life will have hardships and will be much more complicated: “apples are troubles”, “orchards are a black mire”, “berries are additional troubles”, “black currants are tears”.

The young man in this song, with his brother's assistance, is planting an apple tree in his orchard. He is anxious for the apple tree to take root properly – otherwise there will be no red apples. In similar songs, it is written that the young man brings a gift to his young lady: “Not a golden ring, not a silk scarf, but a wine colored apple with red edging”. (N. Vėlius)

“The link between apples and weddings is evident not only in Lithuanian, but also in the sung and written folklore of other countries. It is theorized that in earlier times the apple was part of the wedding ceremony, later supplanted by rue. So the link with the wedding ceremony is not coincidental. In Eastern Prussia the roundabout way to indicate that a young man and woman were being friendly was to say “they are picking apples”. (J. Basanavičius)

The young man not only finds time to plant an apple, but also hurries off to the local youth dance party, where he cannot find his young lady. We would like to think that he is not jealous or a stalker, but motivated by an overpowering need to charm the young lady of his dreams. Which is why he plants the apple tree, worries about its growth – and hopes by all that to captivate the young lady's heart.

Sources:

Norbert Vėlius: “The semantics of old wedding songs and traditions”. Agnė

Miliauskaitė: “Trees in Lithuanian oral folklore”. Jonas Basanavičius: “Collected works”.

Libertas Klimka: “The apple tree in Lithuanian traditions”.

Skaičiuotės **A Children's Counting Rhyme**

Music: Aleksandras Stankevičius

Lyrics: A folk rhyme of rhythmic nonsense words

A mischievous hodgepodge of made up syllables – it's jolly good fun and youthfully creative. I recommend this song not just for the song festival, but for a family traveling on a long automobile trip or otherwise spending extensive time together. The mixture of curious syllables develops a child's pronunciation, articulation, intonation – and leaves a smile on everyone's face, young and old.

Tautiška giesmė **Lithuanian National Anthem**

Music and lyrics: Vincas Kudirka

Vincas Kudirka (1858 – 1899) published the work in 1898 in “Varpas”, a bimonthly newspaper dedicated to literature, science, and politics. From that time on the anthem was sung at various informal gatherings. It was officially sung for the first time on June 6, 1905 at the evening concert prior to the opening session of parliament. From 1917 onwards, it was sung at various meetings and political demonstrations. There were discussions in 1917 – 1918, suggesting that the words and music be modified. However, in 1919 it was officially designated as Lithuania’s national anthem.

The anthem was banned in 1940 immediately after the Soviet occupation. “The Internationale” was required to be sung in its place. However, in 1944 it was reestablished as the hymn of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR). The anthem was once again banned in 1950 and severe penalties enforced for its performance or singing. Regardless, the anthem continued to be sung in private gatherings. It was sung in public in 1956 during the feast of All Souls in Kaunas, in 1977 during midsummer eve festivities at Kernavė, and in 1987 at the memorial for Adomas Mickevičius. In 1988, just prior to Lithuania regaining its independence, it once again became the official national anthem.

Ten mano svajos The Place of My Dreams

Music and lyrics: Darius Polikaitis

The poem is about the well-known camp Dainava, where our youth have gathered for the past 70 years, and continue to assemble to this day. The camp environment reminds one of Lithuania's ecosystem, with its forests, lakes, and rolling hills. The programs acquaint our youth with Lithuanian history, customs and traditions, music and dance. Having spent productive and fulfilled days at Dainava, it is difficult to depart. Upon returning home, we long remember our experiences, emotions, and the friends we left behind.

The words and music were written by D. Polikaitis when he was just 16 years old. The mood is of sadness and longing – one is left with only memories of the wonderful environment, friendships, and shared experiences. In a way, these are the same emotions experienced by those who have left their homeland, and can only return in memories to the place of their birth. Lithuanian camps in the United States and Canada have always been and still remain a place for both an enjoyable vacation and a deeper connection to Lithuania.

Už Raseinių, ant Dubysos Beyond the City of Raseiniai, by the Dubysa River

Music: Juozas Naujalis (1869 – 1934)

Lyrics: Maironis (1862 – 1932)

J. Naujalis composed 27 songs for choir, 13 of them with lyrics by Maironis. All of them were composed prior to 1924.

The poem “Beyond the City of Raseiniai, by the Dubysa River” appeared in the publication “Voices of Spring” in 1895. The poet draws a picture of the beauty of nature – a brilliant morning, the sun rising, the freshness of the dew-covered grass. And the pride of Lithuania: beautiful, blond girls delighting in their youth – much as we delight in the youth of our families and community.

The theme would seem to be the beauty of the countryside, the girls, and their concerns. At first everything is picturesque and wonderful. However, the later verses speak of anxiety and sadness. The girls are lovely, the scenery is splendid, the sunrise is promising a magnificent day. But the heart is restless and sad. Why?

We look for answers in the history of that time period: when was the poem written? In 1895 or somewhat earlier. What was happening in Lithuania at that time? Lithuania was under the rule of czarist Russia. All Lithuanian language publications printed in the Latin alphabet were banned (the ban ended in 1905). Compulsory service in the Russian army was for 6 years, followed by 9 years in the reserves, all together a 15 year commitment.

The final verse of the poem (which is generally not sung) provides insight into the reason for the anxiety and sadness:

Many perish, many rot away
With no one to shed tears for them
Beyond the Urals, beyond the ends of the earth,
Not in their own homeland.

This is why the widows and young girls weep – when their husbands, betrothed, and brothers do not come home. Soldiers conscripted into the Russian Imperial Army and forced to serve long years would lose their health, the best years of their life, and possibly their lives. Such a loss was particularly painful for those at home, as the men would lose their lives fighting for a foreign country.

Užaugo liepa A Linden Tree Grew

*Traditional Lithuanian multi-part song
Variations by Kęstutis Daugirdas*

From ancient times, Lithuanians considered the linden tree sacred. Even today some of these giants remain, adorning old homesteads and mansions. It was believed that this was the tree favored by the love goddesses Milda and Laima.

When a child was born, the mother would visit the linden tree to ask for health and long life for their newborn. A husband who quarreled with his wife would need to stand by the linden tree and ask forgiveness. Beekeepers would plant linden trees completely surrounding their homestead, because honey from its flowers was of the best quality. In olden times the soft inner bark was used to make baskets, woven footwear, and ropes. The wood was of a pale color, soft, light, and resistant to fracturing.

The themes of "A Linden Tree Grew" are coming of age, matchmaking, love, and formation of a family.

The linden tree is variously a symbol for a maturing young girl, a woman, a mother, love, protection and shelter.

Nine. The number nine is a symbol of love, completeness, and the appearance of a new life. It is associated with various spiritual and religious rituals. The nine branches in this song are twists and turns in a woman's life – possibly symbolic of her children and happy moments in life. A linden tree with beautiful branches is healthy, handsome, provides shade and shelter in summer, is full of busy bees in springtime, and radiates an air of restfulness and peace.

The storm. It's an image of hardships, trials and tribulations that one encounters in life. The storm breaks many branches, in fact all nine. It would seem hopeless that the linden tree will survive and continue to grow. But in the song and in life, the woman (metaphorical personification) is strong, calm, doesn't give up, and finds a way out. That is the message of this song – difficulties in life, whatever they may be, are temporary and need to be surmounted. The woman makes chairs from the broken branches, and has a seat. Isn't that how it is in life? The storms of life pass us by, difficulties come and go. Later on we sit down, reflect on what happened, and pass on the lessons from life experiences to our children.

The original song has verses not used in this variation. In these additional verses, the young woman not only makes chairs, but uses the smaller branches to make a bed, which she prepares for a young man. That is the type of strong woman who was raised in the Lithuanian village. The values important in life can be seen in the words of the song, without having to listen to a lecture or a sermon – just by observing nature and the parallel to our own lives.

Sources: https://www.sutartines.info/slaviunas/result.php?id=26094&kas=dok_tur

Viena šeima – Viena tauta One Family – One Nation

Music: Rita Čyvaitė-Kliorienė

Lyrics: Nijolė Kersnauskaitė

The venue for the XI Lithuanian Song Festival in North America is Cleveland, Ohio. It is only fitting that the festival's theme song is composed by native Clevelanders: music by Rita Čyvaitė-Kliorienė and lyrics by Nijolė Kersnauskaitė. The song expresses the emotions of Lithuanians no longer living in the country of their ancestors.

"Amber castles" – symbolic of Lithuania's history.

"Hope in our hearts" – our unwavering faith in Lithuania's freedom.

"Born of a common heritage" – an oath strengthening our commitment to the land of our forefathers.

"Our homeland will live on" – surviving all the previous oppressions, which those of us living elsewhere never failed to publicize, and fought to overcome.

The second verse reinforces the notion that the Lithuanian diaspora was unified and strong – "like oak trees". The oak tree is a symbol of strength and wisdom. Our fervent belief in Lithuania's freedom strengthened each other. Close contacts with relatives remaining in Lithuania reminded us that the homeland will never forget us – "across the seas, the earth cries out to us: be strong!". The diaspora remained strong, as did Lithuania, which once again saw the dawn of freedom.

"One Family – One Nation". The words of the song join our hearts together and invite us to celebrate our beloved and free Lithuania – it is our beginning, our identity, our nation, our family.

Zqsinas The Gander

Music: Rasa Kauneckaitė

Lyrics: Martynas Vainilaitis

A humorous children's song about a gander whose creaky voice doesn't really belong in a choir, but when all around the birds are singing, he also wants to join in. The gander's name "*Girgironas*" is funny sounding, just like the name of the goose "*Gagė*". The song is full of "sound words": "*gir-gir-gir*", "*ba-ri, ba-ri*", "*tra-lia-lia*", and the like. These noise-making syllables liven up the song, develop children's pronunciation skills, and are just fun to sing.

At the end of the song, the gander is finally satisfied, because the whole flock of geese join in, and with one voice they all sing "*tra-lia-lia, tra-lia-lia*".

Žmonės ant kalnų People on the Hills

Music: Laimis Vilkončius

Lyrics: Sigitas Geda

The lyrics were written in 1981, in a poem originally titled "The Larks". It was first published in 1985 in the author's book of poetry "The White Crow".

Currently these poems are considered classics of children's literature. They present to us a magical world of fantasy.

This is my own personal interpretation of the poem. I perceive deeper ideas than children could understand. In no way do I claim that my explanations are the only accurate ones. If a work of art does not lend itself to "intelligent" analysis, then we should give consideration to a personal approach.

The **lark** is a harbinger of spring. It returns from warmer climates in springtime, and symbolizes the renewal and rebirth of nature. The lark's happy song brings joy to the plowman working the field and calls the earth to new life. The lark's melodious song and soaring / dipping flight have come to represent naturalness and freedom. Its return in spring brings to mind a new beginning and brings comfort and hope, because it foretells that bad times are ending and a new, better period is approaching.

People on the hills can be interpreted as individuals who strive to overcome obstacles and reach for the heights. It might be a metaphor for people who are inspired by ideas, ideals, or spiritual goals – but also may feel isolated or rejected. Perhaps these are people who believed in Lithuania's independence and worked in the "underground" to achieve it. Because this is a children's poem, perhaps things in a child's world appear larger than life: the parents' size and height – like people standing on a mountain; adult conversation – like shouting; the fluttering of a bird's wings – like someone waving their arms.

The exhilarated mood of Laimis Vilkončius' music truly supersedes any search for serious and profound meanings in the poem. Instead, the music transports us to the care-free, safe, and joyful world of a child.

Sources:

Kęstutis Nastopka: "On the Way with Sigitas Geda."

Lithuanian Encyclopedia: "Sigitas Geda"

Sigitas Geda: "The White Crow", a book of poetry for children

Rimvydas Šilbajoris: "Sigitas Geda: from Near and Far"

Žvirbliai Sparrows

Music: Algirdas Šumskis, arrangement by Nijolė Sinkevičiūtė

Lyrics: Leonardas Gutauskas

Two is an even number connected with fertility, pairing off, a reflection, a shadow, and twofacedness. It is also associated with opposites: left – right, good – evil, life – death, day – night, etc. In other words it represents balance between two points, two lines.

The song is funny, happy, and playful. It perfectly describes the ongoing commotion of an outdoor marketplace: people moving, hurrying, buying, selling. It portrays the sparrows – always present in an outdoor market, always looking for seeds or crumbs, always enlivening the action and providing the marketplace its unique character.

The **sparrow** is a diminutive bird, described in Lithuanian folklore as intelligent, nimble – and also an annoying thief. In the literature a sparrow is sometimes a symbol of God's beneficence to mankind. It is considered a good omen if a sparrow builds a nest near one's home. A sparrow's chirping song is said to forecast rain.