

# LITHUANIAN CULTURE



Brochure prepared by  
participants of the project  
"Integration of two nations  
through dance and folk culture  
- Lithuanian edition"



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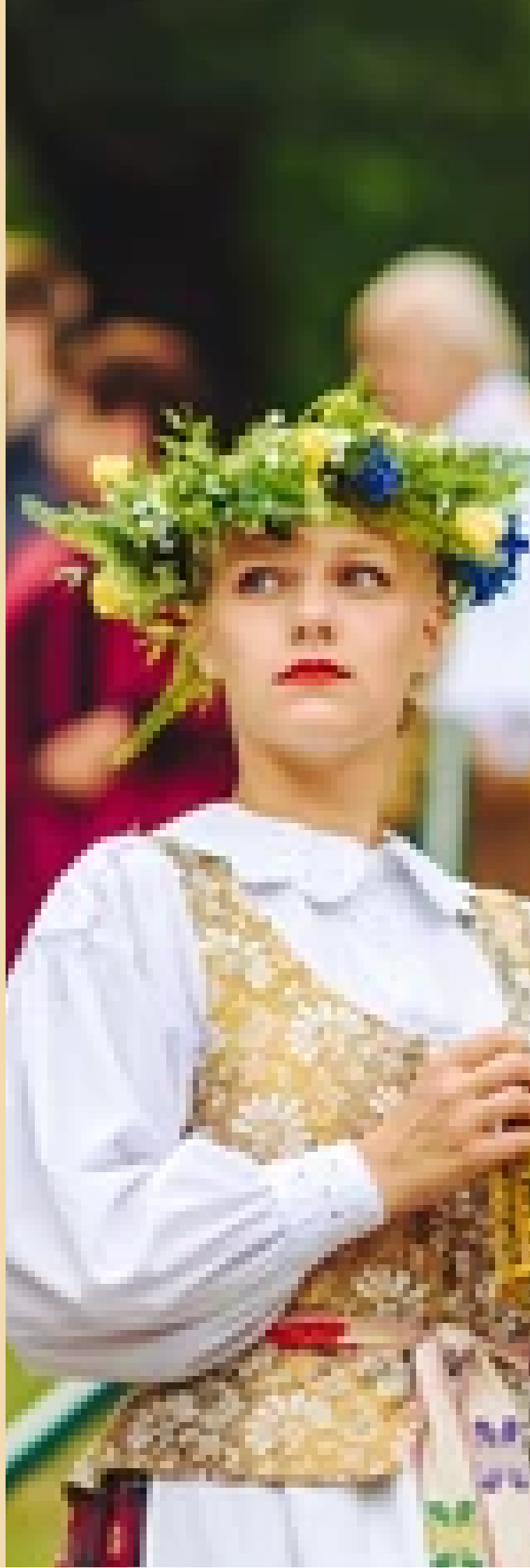
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# INTRODUCTION

*The brochure was developed by participants of the project "Integration of two nations through dance and folk culture - Lithuanian edition" as part of the foreign mobility initiative.*

*The project "Integration of two nations through dance and folk culture - Lithuanian edition" with the number 2021-1-PL01-KA122-SCH-000015417 is co-financed by the European Union.*

*The following schools participate in the project: Complex of Secondary Schools No. 2 Tadeusz Kościuszko in Łowicz as the beneficiary of the initiative and Rokiškio profesinio mokymo centras as the host institution.*

*Mobility in the project is carried out on September 12-23, 2022. The trip is attended by students from a Polish school, and at the same time members of the Song and Dance Ensemble "Blichowacy". Together with young people from a Lithuanian school, they implement an educational program related to the promotion of culture and improving digital competences.*

*More information about the project can be found on the School's website:  
<http://www.zsp2lowicz.pl/>*



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## LITHUANIAN FOLK CULTURE. HISTORICAL VIEW

*The history of Lithuania dates back to 3,000 BC. At that time, the Indo-Europeans came to today's territory of the country, who spread the culture of laced pottery in this area. The ancestors of the Lithuanians are considered to be the Balts, and the modern Lithuanian language belongs to the group of Baltic languages. The oldest history of Lithuanian culture can be associated with burial mounds - a historical form of graves traditional for this region.*

*The 13th century brought the birth of statehood in these lands. The unification of the tribes was directly related to the Teutonic threat. The 14th century saw the establishment of good relations with Poland, the adoption of Christianity and a personal union, confirmed by the marriage of Władysław Jagiełło*



with Jadwiga Andegaweńska. However, the strengthening of the state's position in the face of an external threat was the beginning of difficult Polish-Lithuanian relations, where the basis of conflicts was Lithuania's independence within the adopted union.

The eighteenth century brought a significant decline in the power of the state, caused by natural disasters, famine, pestilence, civil wars, and the Northern War between Sweden and Russia. As a result of the partitions, the Lithuanian state within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ceased to exist. Statehood was restored here during the Napoleonic period. It was also then that the first patriotic movements, related to the improvement of the social and cultural situation, were born in the Lithuanian lands.

In the 20th century, Lithuania was severely affected by World War II, and its fate and subsequent resettlements of both Polish and Lithuanian populations cast a shadow on relations between neighboring countries. The 1980s was a time of strong national revival in Lithuania, including the stimulation of efforts to separate the country from the USSR.

The very culture of Lithuania was influenced not only by its turbulent fate, but also by the multi-ethnicity of these lands, which had an impact on the richness of folklore and the interpenetration of various elements in it. Among the significant minorities present in the territory of the country, the Karaites, people of Turkish origin, and Tatars should be mentioned.

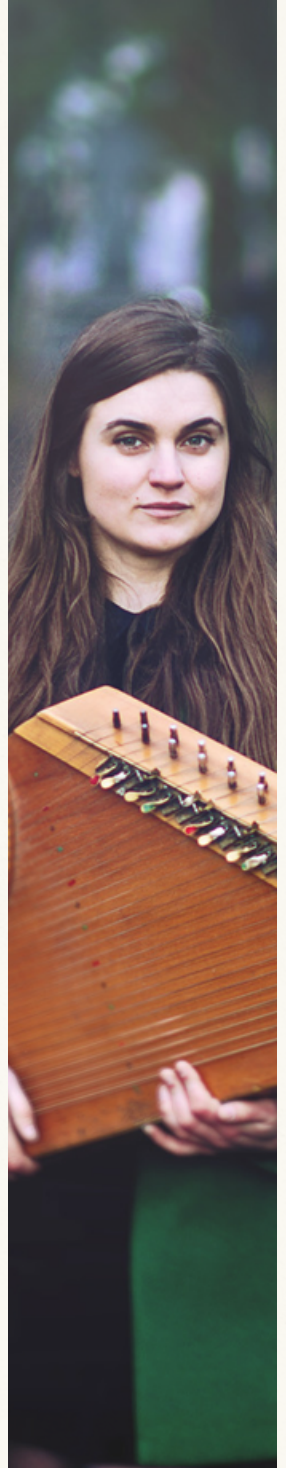


# TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Lithuanian folk music has many features in common with the musical culture of neighboring nations: Latvian, Finnish, Slavic. The existence of a separate Lithuanian folklore is mentioned in records from the 16th century (Miechowita, Strykowski); registration starts at noon 18th century. The song is dominated by one voice; in the north-east In Lithuania, a type of canon (sutarines) and polyphonic forms known from the second half of the 19th century appear. 18th century The most famous are the forms daina and giesmė, mostly devoted to work and also to love.

Daina is a traditional form of unrhymed Latvian and Lithuanian song, usually very short (up to four stanzas), varied in terms of subject matter, metrics, style and manner of performance.

Until the beginning of the 20th century, dains were transmitted only orally, although some are over a thousand years old. Many of them contain cultural elements from pre-Christian times, for example the names of pagan deities such as Saule (sun goddess) or Meness (moon god), and sometimes even references to magical rites. Dainas also show various areas of social and even political life, contain allusions to old traditions, holidays and erotic customs. The language of the song is colorful with a variety of styles and symbols. For example





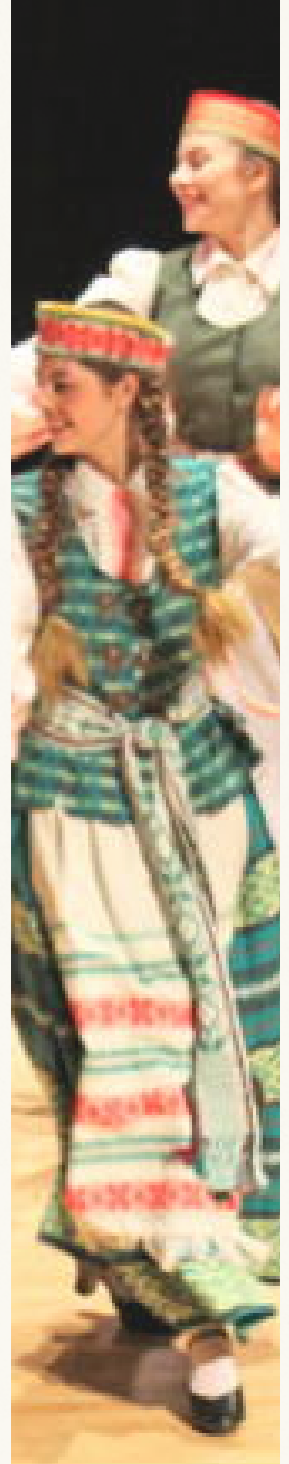
the maiden is often symbolized by the rue flower, while the symbol of the young man is the steed. The loss of virginity is expressed by a withered wreath or a garden with rue trampled by a steed. In Lithuania, dainas also include old polyphonic songs (sutartinės) and mourning songs, most often performed on the occasion of funerals, but also when mourning the bride's departure from home during the wedding (raudos). In 2010, sutartinės were inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List. Dainy were one of the pillars of Lithuanian folklore and national identity, especially during the Teutonic and Soviet domination. In addition, they are a treasury of data on the history of the Latvian and Lithuanian languages. Among the traditional musical instruments of Lithuania, violins, horns, kankles, cymbals, bandonia - early harmony, pipes made of corn ears and reeds can be mentioned.





# FOLK DANCES

Lithuanian folk dances are part of the artistic creation of the Lithuanian people, a legacy of traditional choreography, which consists of lyrical, domestic or humorous dances and circle dances. The vast majority of them are intended for entertainment, but there are also interesting ritual dances that are associated with the calendar, work and wedding ceremonies. Many of them are widespread throughout Lithuania, but others are typical only in certain ethnographic regions. Folk dances glorify their own land, express the character of the nation, history, faith, way of life and even the surrounding nature. The oldest written knowledge about Baltic tribal dances comes down to us from various travelers starting from the 10th century. The oldest form of dance is believed to be derived from religion and ritual. Walking in a chain, walking through fields and holy places, rhythmically jumping or crouching in accordance with the song sung, using various tools of a given ritual (flowers, bread, drink, fire, incense). The sacrificial function itself was a kind of religious dance. Over time, the rites lost their religious significance and eventually became a form of entertainment.







The most unique and richly described is the Lithuanian wedding choreography. As in other regions, there were dances with the meaning of "first dance". Data on them varies greatly, but it can be seen that here parents or their surrogates started their first dance much less often than in other regions. In some regions, such a dance was danced by the bride with other important participants in the wedding. In other regions, the father would start dancing with the bride, and then the bride and groom would take turns doing the "farewell dance" with everyone. In some regions, the "first dance" had a name. For example, the Primary dance (LT Pradėtinis), was danced around the Taurage: first the newlyweds danced it, then other attendants of the wedding house. The dance was performed twice - after the ceremony at St. matron of honor, and later at the bride's house, each time after the ceremonial round of the table. In the regions, another name for the "first dance" appears - the flower dance (LT Gėlių tancius) Taurage. The bride would attach flowers to the groom's chest and they would start dancing (according to any music). Then the bridesmaids would attach flowers to their partners' chests and go to dance with them.





## CULINARY

*Traditional Lithuanian dishes and delicacies include:  
Zeppelins - large-sized potato dumplings with fillings,  
usually meat and mushrooms, served with lard: pork  
fat or cream.*

*Kibina – dumplings originating from the Karaite  
tradition from Trakai, usually served with broth or red  
borscht.*

*Kastinys - a cream made of cream, butter, garlic and  
herbs, served with hot potatoes.*

*Šakotis - a cake resembling a Christmas tree, made  
mainly of eggs*





*Kugelis - Potato cake with chicken*

*Skilandis - hard dried sausage, somewhat reminiscent of Kindziuk*

*Cheburaki - deep fried pancakes with meat filling*

*Kołoduny - delicate, small dumplings with stuffing*



# LITHUANIAN COSTUME

The traditional outfit of Lithuanian women consisted of a shirt, a skirt, an apron, a sleeveless vest and a belt - selvedge. Maids wore "galionas" on their heads - a headdress or a wreath with ribbons, married women wore "drinks". The costume was richly decorated with embroidery. The outer clothing was made of coats or sheepskin coats.

Men's costume lost its national specificity earlier than women's. It consisted of a linen shirt, linen, cloth or half-woolen trousers, a waistcoat, a linen or cloth caftan, and a felt hat. In winter, siermięgi, woolen coats and half coats or sheepskin coats tanned in white were worn. The traditional shoes were clogs or leather "posts", while in the western regions of Lithuania wooden shoes "klumpes". Leather shoes were worn on festive days.







## OTHER ELEMENTS OF FOLK CULTURE

Handicrafts are an important element of Lithuanian culture, and small workshops using traditional production methods are still very popular. Among the handicrafts, ceramics and fabrics made on traditional looms deserve special attention.

Noteworthy is also the Lithuanian art of carving crosses. For Lithuanians, the art of carving crosses is part of a more than 400-year-old tradition that is widespread throughout the country, as well as the blessing of these crosses and the related rituals. They refer to Catholic religious ceremonies and other ancient holidays, with roots reaching back to pagan traditions.





The consecration of the cross by the priest made it a sacred object forever. During the period of subordination to the Russian Orthodox Church in the 19th century, and even more so during Soviet rule, these crosses also became symbols of Lithuanian national and religious identity. Made of oak wood, they are 1 to 5 meters high and are often carved with floral or geometric patterns, sometimes decorated with small statues and topped with a small roof. Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary and many saints are the recipients of requests for help for the sick and suffering, and people bring gifts under the crosses in the form of food, rosaries, money, colorful scarves (for example, on the occasion of a wedding) or aprons (symbolizing fertility). Crosses are also a very important meeting place. They were placed on the side of the entrance roads to villages, near other monuments and in cemeteries.