



THE YEAR OF THE VILNA GAON & OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF LITHUANIA

2020 | 5780

9th Litvak Days in London 27-29 May, 2020

Dear Friend,

Despite these unprecedented circumstances, we would like to welcome you very warmly to our annual Litvak Days, which will be taking place **online** during the last week of May 2020. This year we are hosting our 9th Litvak Days in London, but, for the first time, our in-person encounters will have to be substituted by what we hope will be similarly enjoyable, enriching, and stimulating virtual meetings.

This year marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of Vilna Gaon Elijah ben Ben Solomon Zalman – the 18th century sage who contributed immensely to the formation of Litvak Judaism and brought the city of Vilnius fame as the Jerusalem of the North. Lithuania has dedicated 2020 to the commemoration of this anniversary, as an opportunity to discover and to promote the long and vibrant history of Lithuanian Jews. The 300th anniversary also provides us all with renewed inspiration and impetus to reflect on the importance and complexity of the Jewish legacy in Lithuanian history, culture and identity.

We will commence this year's Litvak Days with **a virtual opening concert on Wednesday afternoon at 5 p.m. (BST) on 27 May**, broadcast live from the White Hall at the current Ministry of Culture of Lithuania, which is located in the historical Pohulianka street in Vilnius (presently J. Basanavičius street). The live performance by Lithuanian musicians – tenor Rafailas Karpis, pianist Darius Mažintas, violinist Dalia Dėdinskaitė, and cellist Gleb Pyšniak – will pay tribute to Anatolijus Šenderovas, one of the most famous contemporary Lithuanian–Jewish composers, and to all luminaries of the Jewish Lithuania.

On Thursday, 28 May at 2 p.m. (BST) we invite you to join us at a **Zoom webinar “Embracing its Jewish Legacy: has Lithuania reached a milestone?”** Underlying the importance of this year's occasion, the online discussion will bring together Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, Lara Lempertienė, Kamilė Rupeikaitė, Violeta Davoliūtė, Michael Berkowitz and Jon Seligman – prominent experts from Lithuania, Israel, and the United Kingdom. They will collectively inquire into how Lithuania's relationship with its Jewish heritage has evolved throughout the past 30 years since its restored independence, and discuss the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

On Friday, 29 May at 2 p.m. (BST) we invite you to join the Lithuanian Cultural Attaché in the UK in another **Zoom webinar – “Memory Parks. Contemporary Art and the Litvak Story”** – featuring a discussion between artists and curators from Lithuania, the UK and France – Daiva Citvarienė, Jenny Cagan, Lewis Biggs, Esther Shalev- Gerz. We are very pleased to welcome Irena Veisaitė – survivor of the Holocaust and an intellectual from Lithuania who will join the panellists in exploring how contemporary art can contribute to societal processes in dealing with issues of the collective memory in the context of the history of Lithuanian Jews.

We very much hope you will be able to attend our events during this year's Litvak Days in London!

Renatas Norkus,

Ambassador of Lithuania in the United Kingdom

See below for registration and a detailed look at the programme



THE YEAR OF THE VILNA GAON
& OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF LITHUANIA

2020 | 5780

9th Litvak Days in London
27-29 May, 2020

All events are open to the public but registration for our Zoom webinars is **essential**.

DAY 1

Wednesday, 27 May 2020

9th Litvak Days 2020 Opening Concert:

"In memory of Anatolijus Šenderovas and all luminaries of the Jewish Lithuania"

Time: 5:00 p.m. (BST)

Venue: Lithuanian Embassy's in the UK Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ambasadaJK/>)

More information: <https://docdro.id/JJAFyAT>



Composer Anatolijus Šenderovas, © D. Matvejevas

DAY 2

Thursday, 28 May 2020

Zoom Webinar: "Embracing its Jewish Legacy: has Lithuania reached a milestone?"

Time: 2:00 p.m. (BST)

Venue: Zoom platform

Registration link: <http://tiny.cc/be32oz>

More information: <https://docdro.id/GKKqQFk>



The Old Synagogue in Vilnius, 1929
© Moi Ver (Moshé Raviv-Vorobeitchic)

DAY 3

Friday, 29 May 2020

Zoom Webinar: "Memory Parks. Contemporary Art and the Litvak Story"

Time: 2:00 p.m. (BST)

Venue: Zoom platform

Registration link: <http://tiny.cc/4922oz>

More information: <https://docdro.id/yWw0Mha>



© Carmine Savarase/Unsplash.com



THE YEAR OF THE VILNA GAON
& OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF LITHUANIA

2020 | 5780

9th Litvak Days in London

27 May 2020, 5:00 p.m. (BST)



Composer Anatolijus Šenderovas, © D. Matvejevas

OPENING CONCERT (online)

IN MEMORY OF ANATOLIJUS ŠENDEROVAS AND ALL LUMINARIES OF THE JEWISH LITHUANIA

Venue: broadcast live from the White Hall at the Ministry of Culture of Lithuania via Lithuanian Embassy's in the UK Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/ambasadaJK/>

To celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Vilna Gaon and the Year of the History of Lithuanian Jews, the Embassy of Lithuania in the United Kingdom is opening the 9th Litvak Days in London with a concert "In memory of Anatolijus Šenderovas and all luminaries of the Jewish Lithuania", organised in partnership with the Ministry of Culture of Lithuania.

Opera soloist Rafailas Karpis, pianist Darius Mažintas, violinist Dalia Dėdinskaitė and cellist Gleb Pyšniak will pay tribute to Anatolijus Šenderovas, one of the most renowned contemporary Lithuanian–Jewish composers, and to all the luminaries of the Jewish Lithuania, whose legacy remains with us today. Šenderovas is the winner of the Lithuanian National Culture and Art Prize; his unique artistic style fuses the archaic traditions of Lithuanian culture and the ancient Jewish musical heritage. This year we commemorate the one-year anniversary of his death.

The event will commence with opening remarks from the Lithuanian Ambassador in the United Kingdom Renatas Norkus and greetings from other dignitaries, following which a short film "A Glimpse into The Jewish Vilnius" will be presented. The film depicts Vilnius as a Jewish city with a special focus to the former Pohulianka street (currently Basanavičius st.), which was a centre of the Jewish community and cultural life in the beginning of the XX century. Once it was home to YIVO founders Max Weinreich and Zalman Reisen, modernist photographer Moï Ver (Moshé Raviv-Vorobeichic), poet Abraham Sutzkever, award-winning writer and French diplomat Romain Gary, philanthropist Israel Bunimowicz, to name a few.



Moï Ver's 'The Getto Lane in Wilna', 1931, reprinted 2019 & "Homage à Moï Ver", 2019 ©Sigutė Chlebinskaitė

From "The Old Synagogue in Vilnius", 1929 © Moï Ver (Moshé Raviv-Vorobeichic)



EMBASSY OF THE
REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
OF THE REPUBLIC
OF LITHUANIA



MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA



LITVAK
DAYS in
LONDON

PROGRAMME

“Unter dayne vayse shtern/Under Your White Stars”

(Music: Avrom Brudno, lyrics: Abraham Sutzkever)

Rafailas Karpis, Darius Mažintas

“Two Songs of Sulamith” (Music: Anatolijus Šenderovas)

Gleb Pyšniak, Darius Mažintas

“Dialogues” for violin and cello (Music: Anatolijus Šenderovas)

Dalia Dėdinskaitė, Gleb Pyšniak

“Pages from the Forgotten Book” (Music: Anatolijus Šenderovas)

Rafailas Karpis, Darius Mažintas

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



Rafailas Karpis is a soloist at the Lithuanian National Theatre since 2003. In 2008 Karpis was awarded the Opera Hope of the Year prize and in 2010 was recognized as the Best Supporting Performer. In 2019, he was named the Soloist of the year by the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. Most recently, in 2020, Karpis was nominated for the Lithuanian Golden Cross of the Stage for his roles in *Turandot* (by G. Puccini) and *Candide* (by L. Bernstein). Having grown up in a Jewish family, he has always had a special interest in Jewish music, especially Yiddish songs, and has a wide repertoire of Yiddish songs composed by Litvak and other Jewish composers.



Dalia Dėdinskaitė is one of Lithuania’s most prominent young violinists. She won the main prize at the international competition “Violine in Dresden” in Germany in 2010, after which she was invited to perform L. van Beethoven’s Violin Concerto at the prestigious festival “Dresdner Musikfestspiele 2012”. She has also performed as a soloist together with the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, the Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, “Dresdner Kappelsolisten” and the symphonic orchestra “Carl Maria von Weber” of Dresden.



Gleb Pyšniak, a cellist, debuted as a soloist with the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra when he was just 14 years old. The student of the legendary cellist Natalia Gutman performs in the most famous concert halls all over the world, including the Wiener Musikverein, Royal Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, and the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. Pyšniak has received the highest evaluations in significant national and international competitions.

Darius Mažintas has won a number of international piano competitions and participated in many prestigious music festivals. As a concert pianist, he has taken part in the Arthur Rubinstein competition in France (2003), the International Stasys Vainiūnas competition in Lithuania (2000), and the Konzerthaus in Greece (1998), and represented Lithuania with cellist Gleb Pyšniak at the International Holland Music Sessions for young musicians in the Netherlands in 2009. In addition to his solo career, he collaborates with orchestras, singers and violinists, as well as taking part in various outreach programmes aimed at promoting classical music to the young.



THE YEAR OF THE VILNA GAON
& OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF LITHUANIA

2020 | 5780

9th Litvak Days in London

28 May 2020, 2:00 p.m. (BST)



The Old Synagogue in Vilnius, 1929
© Moti Ver (Moshé Raviv-Vorobetchic)

ZOOM WEBINAR:

EMBRACING ITS JEWISH LEGACY: HAS LITHUANIA REACHED A MILESTONE?

INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of Vilna Gaon Elijah ben Ben Solomon Zalman – the 18th century sage who contributed immensely to the formation of Litvak Judaism and brought the city of Vilnius fame as the Jerusalem of the North. Lithuania has dedicated 2020 to the commemoration of this anniversary, as an opportunity to discover and to promote the long and vibrant history of Lithuanian Jews. The 300th anniversary also provides us all with renewed inspiration and impetus to reflect on the importance and complexity of the Jewish legacy in Lithuanian history, culture and identity.

Over the past few years, a growing interest in the lost world of Jewish Lithuania and a determination to grasp the significance of this loss could be felt across the country. Confronting this painful issue is driving Lithuanian society to deeply reconsider the past and how it relates to core issues of the present.

Today, Jewish culture exists in fragments of spiritual and material heritage, as seen in literature, architecture, music and the sciences. Despite the appalling destruction of Jewish life and heritage, what remains provides a crucial foundation for the ongoing process of rediscovery.

This major online panel event will open with a keynote address. Entitled “Restoring the Collage of Jewish Vilna”, it will be delivered by Mindaugas Kvietkauskas, Minister of Culture of Lithuania, who is also a literary scholar and translator of numerous Yiddish texts into Lithuanian. In the panel discussion following his address, five distinguished speakers will engage in a collective inquiry into issues such as how the culture of embracing Jewish heritage has evolved over the past three decades of independent Lithuania, along with the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

The five panellists are: Lara Lempertienė, a specialist in Jewish cultural history and the head of the Judaica Research Center at the National Library of Lithuania; Kamilė Rupeikaitė, the director of the Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History and a specialist in Jewish musical heritage; Violeta Davoliūtė, professor at Vilnius University, Institute of International Relations and Political Science; Michael Berkowitz, professor of modern Jewish history at University College London, and, Jon Seligman, an archaeologist and the Director of the Excavations of the Great Synagogue of Vilna, one of the most prominent landmarks of Vilnius.

Chair: Rosie Goldsmith, former BBC journalist, director of the European Literature Network and Chair of the Judges of the EBRD Literature Prize.

REGISTER HERE: <http://tiny.cc/be32oz>

This event is part of the 9th Litvak Days in London, organised by the Embassy of Lithuania in the United Kingdom.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Dr. Michael Berkowitz is a native of Rochester, New York, with family roots in Šaukotas, Pašušvys, and Josvainiai, Lithuania. He is a professor of modern Jewish history at University College London and an author with his most recent publication titled *Jews and Photography in Britain* (2015). He is also an editor of a peer-reviewed academic journal *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*.



Dr. Violeta Davoliūtė is a professor at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University. A graduate of Vilnius University, she studied Yiddish and Hebrew at Oxford University and completed her M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. A specialist in the study of historical trauma, the politics of memory and collective identity, she has published several books and articles on these topics with a focus on the Baltic States and East Central Europe. In recent years she has been a visiting scholar at Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena, Yale University, EHESS and Uppsala University.



Rosie Goldsmith is an award-winning journalist specializing in arts and foreign affairs. In twenty years at the BBC, she travelled the world and presented several flagship programmes. Rosie is a linguist and has lived in Europe, Africa and the USA. Today she combines journalism with chairing and curating literary events and festivals for leading cultural organisations. She is Founder and Director of the European Literature Network www.eurolitnetwork.com and since 2018 has been Chair of the Judges of the EBRD Literature Prize, a major new prize honouring both author and translator of international literary works in English translation.



Dr. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas is a literary scholar, writer and translator from Yiddish and Polish. Since 2019 he is serving as Lithuania's Minister of Culture. Kvietkauskas studied Yiddish language and literature at the University of Oxford. His main areas of research are multinational literary modernism and urban culture in Lithuania and East Central Europe. He is an author of two academic monographs, a collection of poetry and a book of literary essays *Uosto Fuga (The Port Fugue)*. His recent publications include translations and introductory articles to Vilnius ghetto diary by a Lithuanian Jewish poet Matilda Olkinaitė, a reprinted photo album "The Ghetto Lane in Wilna" by Moshé Raviv-Vorobeichic (*Moi Ver*) & "Hommage à *Moi Ver*", „Abraham Sutzkever's book *Tsen lider / Dešimt eilėraščių / Ten Poems*.



Dr. Lara Lempertienė is the head of the Judaica Center at the Department of the Documentary Heritage Studies of the National Library of Lithuania and the YIVO archivist in Vilnius. Her field is the cultural history of the European Jewry, specifically Jewish classical texts and their integration in Jewish education in various settings as well as Jewish book and press and day-to-day life of Lithuanian Jewry. She is also an author and an editor with her most recent publication in *Tsen lider / Dešimt eilėraščių / Ten Poems* by Avrom Sutzkever. Vilnius: Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, 2020.



Dr. Kamilė Rupeikaitė is the director of Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History (VGMJH) and a researcher at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. Since 2008, she has been a member of the Lithuanian Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). In 2017, she was the Chair of the Memorials and Museums Working Group. Her scientific research includes symbolism of musical instruments, multicultural contexts of musical phenomena, and musical heritage of the Lithuanian Jews.



Dr. Jon Seligman is presently the Director of the Archaeological Licensing and International Relations of the Israel Antiquities Authority in Jerusalem. Dr. Seligman receiving his doctorate (summa-cum-laude) from Haifa University on the subject of the 'Rural Hinterland of Jerusalem during the Byzantine period'. Jon has directed some thirty excavations in Israel and has published widely, including three books (on the Temple Mount, the Holy Sepulchre and the Roman farm at Nahal Haggit). For the past five years he has directed, together with Zenonas Baubonis, the excavation of the Great Synagogue and Shulhoyf of Vilna. Jon is a Litvak, part of his family originating from the area of Vilnius.



LONDON'S GLOBAL UNIVERSITY



LIETUVOS NACIONALINĖ
MARTYNO MAŽVYDO
BIBLIOTEKA



VILNA GAON
JEWISH HISTORY
MUSEUM



ISRAEL
ANTIQUITIES
AUTHORITY



LITVAK
DAYS in
LONDON

9th Litvak Days in London

27-29 May, 2020



THE YEAR OF THE VILNA GAON
& OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF LITHUANIA

2020 | 5780

9th Litvak Days in London

29 May 2020, 2:00 p.m. (BST)



© Carmine Savarase/Unsplash.com

ZOOM WEBINAR:

MEMORY PARKS. CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE LITVAK STORY

INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Vilna Gaon – the 18th century sage who contributed immensely to the formation of Litvak Judaism and brought the city of Vilnius fame as the ‘Jerusalem of the North’. Lithuania has dedicated 2020 to the commemoration of this anniversary, as an opportunity to discover and to promote the long and vibrant history of Lithuanian Jews. The occasion also provides us all with renewed inspiration and impetus to reflect on the importance and complexity of the Jewish legacy in Lithuanian history, culture and identity.

In the past decade, we have seen memory politics become an important discussion in Lithuania, as history reveals itself ever more clearly and hitherto unknown stories and hidden emotional traumas cascade into light. A vast pool of as-yet untapped narratives resonate with the work of various contemporary cultural practitioners.

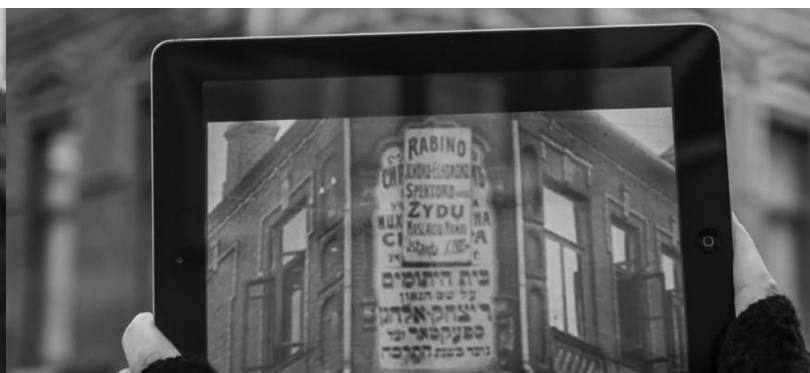
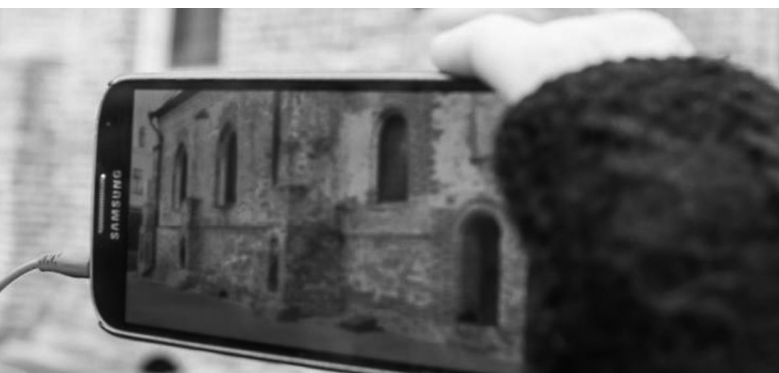
In this webinar, we will discuss how contemporary artists evoke and actualise private and public memories. What creative paths do contemporary artists take when exploring sensitive issues? Are these necessarily best explored through public art, where collective and individual experiences intersect? And if so, why?

Our webinar will take the form of a discussion between UK-based artist Jenny Kagan, Kaunas-based curator and researcher Daiva Citvarienė, curator and art director of the Folkestone Triennial Lewis Biggs, renowned Vilnius-born Paris-based artist Esther Shalev-Gerz and an intellectual and a Holocaust survivor from Lithuania Irena Veisaitė.

This event is part of the 9th Litvak Days in London, organised by the Embassy of Lithuania in the United Kingdom in partnership with the Lithuanian Cultural Attaché in the UK.

REGISTER HERE: <http://tiny.cc/4922oz>

© Jonas Petronis, Project "Places of Memory"/VisitKaunas/KEKS2022



ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Founder of Liverpool Biennial, **Lewis Biggs** was Curatorial Adviser at the Kaunas Biennial 2019, Curator of Land Art Mongolia 2018, and is Curatorial Adviser to the Public Art & Communities Involvement of the Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022. He is also the director of Folkestone Art Triennial.



Daiva Citvarienė is a curator and researcher in charge of the Memory Office project, part of the wider programme of Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022. Memory Office intends to commission contemporary artists to create new works for the occasion, including a number of Israeli artists and UK-based artist Jenny Kagan.



Jenny Kagan is an artist and a lighting designer with 30 years of experience in the field of theatre and art. She has created projects that deal with identity, memory and her Jewish heritage (*Out of Darkness* charts her parents' struggles during World War II, which very few Jews in Kaunas managed to survive). She was commissioned to create work for Kaunas Biennial 2017, and the organisers of the upcoming Memory Festival in Kaunas are planning a new large-scale collaboration with her.



Esther Shalev-Gerz is a Vilnius-born Paris-based internationally recognized artist. She is renowned for her creative practice, which explores questions of memory, trauma, and ethics in the contemporary world, as well as for her seminal contributions to the field of public art and her persistent investigation into the construction of history and cultural identity. She has exhibited internationally and created permanent installations in many public spaces. Find more information at www.shalev-gerz.net



An extraordinary thinker, **Dr. Irena Veisaitė**, is a respected academic, a scholar of Lithuanian theatre and human rights activist. She is also a survivor of the Holocaust. She was a lecturer at the Pedagogical Institute in Vilnius from 1953 to 1997 and has worked as the head of the Thomas Mann Cultural Centre in Nida. In 2012 she was awarded the Goethe Medal for her contributions to the cultural exchange between Germany and Lithuania. She is a long-term honorary member of the Open Lithuania Foundation and a cherished public speaker on memory, reconciliation, and mourning.



Discussion moderator, **Justė Kostikováitė** is Lithuanian Cultural Attaché in the UK. She works closely with UK arts institutions, including the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Collective Gallery, Hull City Dance, CCA Derry Londonderry, and Somerset House Studios, and collaborates with colleagues from around the world as part of the Lithuanian Culture Institute team. Her mission is to support the cultural exchange between Lithuania, the UK, and the rest of the world.



© Jenny Kagan 'Out of darkness', at the Viaduct Theatre, Dean Clough Mills, Halifax, Yorkshire