

Celebrations in honor of...

Mindaugas the King

The Republic of Lithuania annually observes July 6th as a national holiday celebrating statehood and commemorating the Coronation of King Mindaugas. In 2003, to mark the 750th jubilee, numerous festivals, events, and exhibits are being planned. One of the most notable is the World Lithuanian Song Festival, scheduled June 30 to July 6. But first, let's take a quick look at King Mindaugas and his times.

Even though a more or less organized Lithuanian State existed prior to the rule of Mindaugas (1237-1263), he is often spoken of by historians as its founder. The unification of the various Lithuanian lands and tribes under his supreme authority enabled Mindaugas to strengthen Lithuania militarily in responding to the incursions of the ever encroaching Teutonic Order, out-of-work Crusaders, as it were, who used the propagation of Christianity in heathen Lithuania as an excuse to invade Baltic lands.

Mindaugas became the first and only King of Lithuania and was crowned in 1253, but only after agreeing to accept Christianity, which he did formally in 1251, when he, his



whole family, and a number of courtiers were baptized. It is speculated that it was politics and not necessarily a conversion of faith that dictated the action.

In accepting Christianity, Mindaugas, a cunning statesman, obtained the favor of Pope Innocent IV for his petition to be crowned King, thus strengthening Lithuanian interests which were in opposition to the expansionist aims of the Teutonic Order. Although Mindaugas was baptized in 1251, efforts in the organized conversion of the Lithuanian nation did not last beyond several years.

Meanwhile, having received an assurance of peace from the Crusaders, Mindaugas consoli-

TULPE TIMES published the first part of this article in its February 2003 (Vol. 23, No. 1) issue. **REGINA NARUŠIS** is the Lithuanian-American Community's President of the National Board of Directors and sent along the schedule for the King Mindaugas Coronation events. The graphic illustration (undated) depicts the coronation of King Mindaugas.

dated the state internally and expanded Lithuania's power to the south and east, including into what is present day Belarus and Russia. By the end of the decade, he had renewed open war on the Livonian Order, joining with allies in a campaign to resist the Crusaders.

Political strife coupled with rivalries for the throne eventually led to Mindaugas' assassination in 1263. However, the strong nucleus of the Lithuanian state formed by Mindaugas survived intact throughout the ensuing internal

discord and power struggles. The next great ruler of renown was Grand Duke Gediminas, who came to power in 1295, and whose heirs included Kestutis, Algirdas, and Vytautas the Great. Lithuania remained a pagan nation for two more centuries, with the distinction of being the last nation in Europe to be converted to Christianity. Under Vytautas the Great, it also became the medieval superpower of Europe, but that is another story. ♦

Here is a schedule of events in celebration of the 750 year anniversary of King Mindaugas' Coronation:

- ♦ June 30, 2003 (Monday) – 18.00 hr. Presentation of the Lithuanian folk costume collection at the National Drama Theatre.
- ♦ July 1, 2003 (Tuesday) – 20.00 hr. Youth night- rock, folk, and classical music at Vingis park.
- ♦ July 2, 2003 (Wednesday) – 21.00 hr. Professional academic music night with Vidmantas Bartulis's "Ode to the Lithuanian Nation".
- ♦ July 3, 2003 (Thursday) – 13.00 hr. The announcement of the opening of the World Lithuanian Song Festival at Daukantas Place.
13.30 hr. The opening of the new bridge across the Neris River at the site.
14.00 hr. Folklore Day – at Sereikiškis Park and Vilnius Old Town.
16.00 hr. Opening of the folk art exhibit.
18.00 hr. Final competition of choruses at the National Philharmonic.
- ♦ July 4, 2003 (Friday) – 17.00 hr. "The Sound of Kankles" at the P. Skargos courtyard.
21.30 hr. Ensemble evening called "Transforming colors" at Kalnas Park.
- ♦ July 5, 2003 (Saturday) – 12 noon. Unveiling of Lithuania's King Mindaugas monument.
12:30 hr. "Coronation Mass" at the Archcathedral Basilica in Vilnius. Music by W.A. Mozart, performed by the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra directed by S. Sondeckis with choruses and soloists from all over Europe. (It is hoped this Mass will be on European TV channels.)
- 18:00 hr. Wind instrument parade "Varying Storm" at Vilnius Old Town.
20:30 hr. Dance Festival called "The Living Green Tree" at Žalgiris Stadium.
23:00 hr. Musical fireworks by the Sports Palace.
- ♦ July 6, 2003 (Sunday) – 12:30 hr. Mass at the Archcathedral
15:00 hr. Parade of the Song Festival participants from the Cathedral Square to Vingis Park.
19:00hr. Song Festival called "The Bells of the Homeland" at Vingis park. For information on the festival visit <http://www.lfcc.lt/ds/index.html>.

Other Projects

1. Festival at Kernave – "Living archeology", July 4, 5, 6.
2. "Inhabitants of the Castle" – opera by V. Klovas at Traku Pilis (Castle).
3. "Ignis et Fides" by B. Kutavicius, performed at the Opera and Ballet Theatre.
4. Youth jazz concerts on July 3 to 5 at the Cathedral square.
5. Classical music concerts and performances by Veronika Povilionis and her friends throughout Lithuania's towns and villages commemorating the 750 year anniversary.
6. Opening of exhibits at the Lithuanian National Art Museum. ♦