

This past summer, I had a wonderful opportunity to intern at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre where I met a number of accomplished artists and arts critics. My internship was funded by the Dill Grant and opened me a number of opportunities to gain valuable experience and inspiration for my future projects. One of the most significant parts of my internship was meeting Helmutas Sabasevicius and Daiva Sabaseviciene—two acclaimed theatre, ballet and art critics. We had extensive discussions about Lithuanian culture, its authenticity and gradual assimilation to the global aesthetics. All of those conversations inspired me to do an immersive study of Lithuania arts and their role in the country that was experiencing a number of economical difficulties.

Helmutas Sabasevicius was very kind to invite me to the publishing house for the biggest arts journal in the country--“Krantai” (“Coasts”). Mr. Sabasevicius is the editor-in-chief for “Krantai” and was interested in my point of view on Lithuanian culture. As an international student who had been living in America for two years, I was able to comment on different aspects of the relationship between arts and society in Lithuania from an outsider’s standpoint. My ideas intrigued Mr. Sabasevicius, and he agreed to read my essay based on my cultural observations this past summer. After he got acquainted with my thoughts written out, I inquired whether it was possible to publish my article in “Krantai.” Honestly, I did not expect much and was really pleased when Mr. Sabasevicius’ answer was positive. My article “Lietuviskos Tapatybes Ieskant” (“In Search of the Lithuanian Identity: Authenticity versus Global Aesthetic”) will be published in the next issue of “Krantai.”

I gained a myriad of valuable experience through communicating with Mr. Sabasevicius on different aspects of editing and a scholarly essay for publication. It is very enriching to be able to discuss different topics with somebody that accomplished and intelligent. Writing the essay challenged me, as a Lithuanian, as an artist and as a cultural observer who tried to stay objective despite emotional ties to Lithuania. It allowed me to reevaluate my own understanding of what the true Lithuanian identity was, what parts of the culture were conflicting with each other, what the general cultural tendencies in the country were, how the complicated economical and political climate affected artists, etc. Through this essay I learnt to take a step back from what I felt about certain things in my country and look at them from a cosmopolitan perspective.

“In Search of the Lithuanian Identity: Authenticity versus Global Aesthetic” presents my thoughts about how the visual folk arts and crafts are being influenced by digital art, Western commercial art, Disney cartoons and other art forms. I am discussing the birth of pseudo-Lithuanian folklore that is so affected by Western art aesthetic that is hard to recognize. Another major topic is how the opera director, Dalia Ibelhauptaite, attempts to make opera and ballet—that are considered to be art for intellectual elite—accessible to everybody. In other words, Ms. Ibelhauptaite is trying to create a Lithuanian version of Broadway—high quality art for masses. I also raised many rhetorical questions and discussed a number of potential ways that arts could develop in Lithuania.

Working on the article allowed me to form a better understanding of how to write scholarly essays which is crucial considering that I would like to continue to do that in the near future. I would like to thank Mr. Dill who funded my internship in Lithuania, Professor Abbott who helped me acquire the Dill Grant and Professor Cherry who inspired me to start doing arts criticism.