

See You Next Time in Another Theater of Life: A Biographical Tribute to Bo Haeng Sunim

Won Bo Sunim

Editor's Note

Bo Haeng Sunim, our senior monk from Lithuania, passed away suddenly during the early morning of April 22 at Hwa Gye Sa Temple in Seoul. He was known and deeply respected by sangha members in all of our Kwan Um School regions. Below is a tribute by a sister Lithuanian nun. —Bop Yo Sunim, Editor for Asia

Bo Haeng Sunim often talked about death—it was an interesting topic to him. His deep understanding of the fleeting nature of life inspired him to practice hard, never thinking about resting or skipping even small parts of practice. On one of the occasions when he and I talked about death, he joked that after he died, I should do a monodrama about his life. He even explained several technical details such as lighting. But I think there was no better actor than Bo Haeng Sunim, both in the theater and in real life. He played his role perfectly to the very last moment.

20] Bo Haeng Sunim was born in 1961 in Lithuania. He started practicing with the Kwan Um School in 1989. He received five precepts from Zen Master Seung Sahn's student Do Am Sunim in 1991. He first met our founding teacher in 1991 during a visit to Lithuania. He actively participated in the creation of the first Zen centers in Kaunas and Vilnius. In December 1999 he left for South Korea to become a monk. He became a novice monk in 2001 with Dae Bong Sunim as his unsa sunim, or ordination teacher, and in 2003 he received sami (novice) precepts in the Chogye Order. He received bhikkhu precepts in 2005. He truly valued being a part of Kwan Um School

of Zen and the Chogye Order and succeeded to combine these two types of trainings to help others. He was a monk who put practice above everything. During the twenty years of his monastic life, he never missed a three-month Kyol Che—in total he attended forty of them.

Bo Haeng Sunim was active in spreading Buddhism in Lithuania. He wrote two books—*Nabi: Or, the Theater of Life*, was published in 2021, and *Letters from Dragon Mountain* was published in 2010 and has been reprinted three times. At the 2018 International Vilnius Book Fair

(the biggest book fair in the Baltic region), it was recognized by the Lithuanian Writers' Union as the best spiritual book by a Lithuanian author. After it was published, Bo Haeng Sunim traveled throughout Lithuania, teaching in different cities. Thanks to his efforts, several new Zen groups were created. He gave public lectures at universities and libraries. He also regularly visited Lithuanian prisons, where he taught prisoners meditation and other spiritual practices.

In 2011, with the actress-director Egle Mikulionyte, he staged the play *The Golden Temple*, based on Yukio Mishima's novel of the same name, in which he played the lead role. The performance was shown more than twenty times in various places in Lithuania. It was extremely popular; every performance was filled, and there was always a shortage of tickets. In 2016, Bo Haeng Sunim staged and performed his own improvisational drama, *Letters from the Monastery*, based on his autobiographical book, *Letters from Dragon Mountain*. This performance was well received by the public, and he did more than fifteen such meditative evenings.

Bo Haeng Sunim was the main promoter of Korean culture in Lithuania. One of his most famous projects took place in 2012, inviting *pansori* singer Park In Hee to represent this unique Korean heritage in Lithuania. He also organized several exhibitions of Sol Chong Kun Sunim's calligraphies in the biggest cities of Lithuania.

Almost every spring or autumn, Bo Haeng Sunim organized three-day kido chanting retreats. In total, he organized about sixteen kidos in various parts of Lithuania from 2011 to 2019, with many Lithuanian people joining.

He was an inspiration for countless people to follow Buddhist practice. Also he was admired and loved by many people who were from different religious backgrounds.

Good-bye Bo Haeng Sunim!

See you next time in another theater of life! ♦

Won Bo Sunim is a Lithuanian nun who lives at Poep Ryon Sa Temple. She took novice precepts in 2002 and received full bhikkhuni ordination in 2007, both at Jik Ji Sa Temple.



Photo: Courtesy of Musangsa