

BULLETIN #37

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The Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire International
Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony

December 2024

Tbilisi

Ethnomusical Life in Georgia (July-December, 2024)

Festivals, Conferences, Competitions...

- 15-16.07.2024 – Zugdidi hosted Polikarpe Khubulava 4th International Festival “Kolkhi da”.
- 19-28.07. 2024 – “ArtGeni” festival was held at Tbilisi open-air Ethnographic Museum
- 19-23.09. 2024 – International Folk Festival “Sakartvelo” in Ambrolauri and Tbilisi
- 25-28.09. 2024 – Tbilisi State Conservatoire hosted the 12th International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony
- 29.09. 2024 – Festival of Kartlian traditional song and chanting in Kaspi
- 18- 20.10. 2024 – Giorgi Garakanidze 19th International Festival of Folk and Church Music in Batumi
- 21.10.2024 – Festive closing concert of the Tbilisi Folk Festival of Children’s and Juvenile choirs at Tbilisi State Conservatoire
- 2.11.2024 – Festival of Lechkhumian song in the village of Korenishi, Lechkhumi
- 22.11.2024 – Festive Opening concert of the Tbilisi Folk Festival of Children’s and Juvenile choirs at the Theatre and Film State University

Concerts, Evenings, Exhibitions, Anniversaries...

- 4.07.2024 – Reporting concert of the University of Chanting at the Folklore State Centre
- 5.07. 2024 – Ensemble Dziriani’s concert in Keda
- 6.07. 2024 – Ensemble Dziriani’s concert in Khelvachauri
- 7.07. 2024 – Ensemble Erisioni held solo concert dedicated to Ilia Zakaidze’s 100th anniversary in Dusheti
- 15.07. 2024 – Reporting concert of the Ilia State University student choir at Ilia State University
- 16.07. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s concert in Kutaisi
- 18.07. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s concert in Ozurgeti
- 20.07. 2024 – Ensemble Erisioni’s concert in Gori
- 21.07. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s concert in Mestia
- 23.07. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s concert in Chokhatauri
- 23.07. 2024 – Joint concert of ensembles Undine and Musikeli in Senaki
- 24.07. 2024 – Ensemble Erisioni’s concert in Batumi
- 25.07. 2024 – Ozurgeti hosted the event dedicated to Pilimon Koridze
- 4.08. 2024 – Joint concert of ensembles Didgori and Potskhishvilebi at Tbilisi open-air Ethnographic Museum
- 24.08. 2024 – Ensemble Erisioni’s concert at “Black Sea Arena”
- 7.09.2024 – Ensemble Sakhioba’s solo concert in Batumi
- 19.09.2024 – Ensemble Martve’s concert in Senaki
- 29.09.2024 – Joint concert of ensembles Didgori, Sakartvelo and Graidi at Tbilisi open-air Ethnographic Museum
- 4.10. 2024 – Ensemble Shemokmedi’s anniversary solo concert in Ozurgeti
- 7.10. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s solo concert in Oni

8.10. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s solo concert in Ambrolauri
9.10. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s solo concert in Lentekhi
10.10. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s solo concert in Tsageri
13.10. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s solo concert in Zugdidi
14.10. 2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s solo concert in Senaki
15.10. 2024 – Solo concert of choirmasters’ school choirs from Achara at the Grand Hall of Tbilisi State Conservatoire
16.10.2024 – Award ceremony and Gala concert of the 8th National Competition of Children’s and Juvenile choirs of Georgia at Tbilisi State Conservatoire
19.10.2024 – Ensemble Didgori’s solo concert at Tbilisi open-air Ethnographic Museum
24.10.2024 – Lela Tataraidze’s anniversary concert at Rustaveli Theatre
1.11.2024 – Ensemble Sathanao’s solo concert at the Grand Hall of Tbilisi State Conservatoire
21.11.2024 – Concert of “Georgian and European Church Music” at Jansugh Kakhidze Centre for Music and Culture as part of Tbilisi Festival of Baroque Music
24.11.2024 – The performance “Amiran’s childhood” of Children’s folk-ethnographic studio Amer-imeri was held as part of Children’s Theatre Festival “First Autograph”
30.11.2024 – Anseble Arsiani’s concert at Ozurgeti Drama Theatre
3.12. 2024 – Ethnographic ensemble Chakrulo’s concert at Tbilisi State Conservatoire
21-22.12. 2024 – Ensemble Erisioni’s concerts at Tbilisi Concert Hall

Lectures, Meetings, Master classes, Presentations, etc

14.07. 2024 – Ensemble Didgori’s master class of Georgian folk song at Tbilisi open-air Ethnographic Museum
15-28. 07. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Malkhaz Erkvanidze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music for a group of Irish music lovers in the village of Bukistsikhe, Chokhatauri district.
15-21. 07. 2024 – Nino Naneishvili’s master classes of Georgian traditional music at the summer school of Belgium Royal Academy
16.07. 2024 – Sopiko Kotrikadze, a Doctoral student of Ilia State University defended dissertation work “Tradition and Innovation in Georgian Authorial Songs” and was awarded the academic degree of Doctor of Cultural Studies.
22-31.07. 2024 – Davit Shughliashvili’s, Levan Bitarovi’s and Lasha Bedenashvili’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Tusheti.
23-29.07. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nino Naneishvili’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in several cities in the UK
3-13.08. 2024 – Choirmaster Levan Bitarovi’s master classes of Georgian traditional music for a group of French in Mestia and Lanchkhuti
29.08 – 9.09. 2024 – A week of Afro-American music in Batumi
6.09. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nino Naneishvili (together with Holy-Taylor Zuntz and Teona Lomsadze) held master classes of Georgian traditional music in the UK
9-23.09.2024 – Choirmaster Levan Bitarovi’s master classes of Georgian traditional music for a group of Australians in Lakhushdi (Svaneti), Merisi (Achara) and Lanchkhuti (Guria)

12.09. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nino Naneishvili, and the members of ensemble Ialoni held a master class of Georgian traditional music for a group of Australians in Tbilisi

26.09. 2024 – A master class of Serbian traditional music at the University of Chanting

29.09. 2024 – Ensemble Didgori’s master class of Georgian folk song for foreigners at Tbilisi open-air Ethnographic Museum

2.10. 2024 – Presentation of the book “Georgia - History, Culture, Ethnography” at Tbilisi City Assembly

19-20.10. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Liège (Belgium)

20.10. 2024 – Ensemble Didgori’s master class of Georgian folk song at the open-air Ethnographic Museum

21-22.10. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nino Naneishvili’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Vienna

26-27.10. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Leuven (Belgium)

2-3.11. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Findhorn (Scotland)

4-5.11. 2024 – Zurab Tskrialashvili’s workshops of Georgian traditional music in Rome

6-7.11. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Edinburgh (Scotland)

8-10.11. 2024 – Folklore State Centre of Georgia hosted master classes of Megrelian dance

9-10.11. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in London

12-13.11. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Cambridge

16.11. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Brasschaat (Belgium)

23-24.11. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Leuven (Belgium)

26-30.12. 2024 – Ethnomusicologist Nino Naneishvili’s master classes of Georgian traditional music in Belgium

Concert Tours

3-7.07.2024 – Children’s folk-ethnographic studio “Amer-imeri” participated in the 6th International Drone Singing Festival in Latvia

6.07.2024 – Ensemble Rustavi’s concert in Germany

15-17.08.2024 – Children’s folk-ethnographic studio “Amer-imeri” was on a concert tour in Lithuania

12-14.09.2024 – Ensemble Basiani’s concerts in various cities of Poland

24-25. 09.2024 – Ensemble Basiani and Kutaisi State Ensemble of Georgian Song and Dance held concerts in Copenhagen as part of the Days of Georgian Culture in Denmark

26. 09.2024 – Ensemble Basiani’s lecture-master class of Georgian folk song in Copenhagen

19-22.10.2024 – Ensemble Ialoni participated in Folk Art Festival in the city of Graz (Austria)

2.11 -18.11.2024 – Ensemble Musikeli’s concert tour in various cities of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia

5-9.11.2024 – Ensemble Gurjaani’s concert tour in Lithuania

14.11-8.12.2024 – Levan Bitarovi, Ana and Madona Chamgeliani were on a concert tour to various cities of Germany, Belgium and France, where they held concerts and master classes of Georgian traditional music

Expeditions

10.07.2024 – Students of the University of Chanting were on expedition to the villages of Telavi and Akhmeta municipalities

2-23.08.2024 – Ethnomusicologist Giorgi Kraveishvili’s expedition to Fereydan (Iran) funded by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia

19-25.08.2024 – Employees of the Folklore State Center were on expedition to Samegrelo

4-12.09.2024 – Ethnomusicologist Giorgi Kraveishvili’s expedition to the village of Anaklia (Zugdidi municipality)

10.09.2024 – Ethnomusicologist Maia Gelashvili’s (Ozurgeti Folklore Centre) expedition to the village of Shemokmedi (Ozurgeti municipality)

20-22.09.2024 – Students of the University of Chanting were on expedition to the villages of Tskhemlisi, Khabelashvilebi and Zhaniuri (Chvana Gorge)

28.09.2024 – Ethnomusicologist Giorgi Kraveishvili led an expedition to the villages of Kakhi and Zakatala districts (Saingilo)

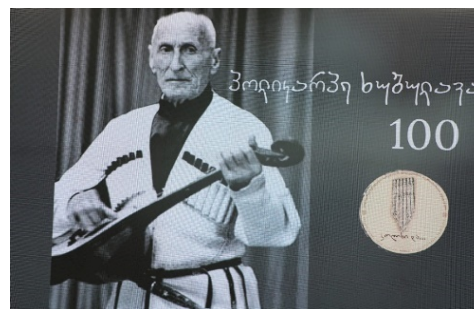
16.10.2024 – Ethnomusicologist Maia Gelashvili of Ozurgeti Folklore Centre was on expedition to the village of Tobanieri (Vani municipality)

22.10.2024 – Ethnomusicologist Maia Gelashvili of Ozurgeti Folklore Centre was on expedition to the village of Zemo bakhvi (Ozurgeti municipality)

9-12.11.2024 – Ethnomusicologist Giorgi Kraveishvili’s expedition to the villages of Samtatsqaro, Arkhiloskalo and Zemokedi (Dedoplistsqaro district)

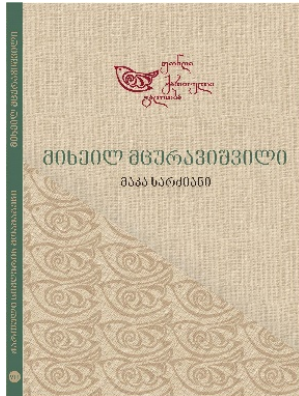
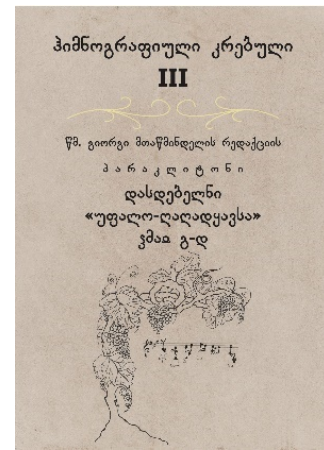
Publications

Folklore State Centre’s publication of Polikarpe Khubulava’s anniversary album



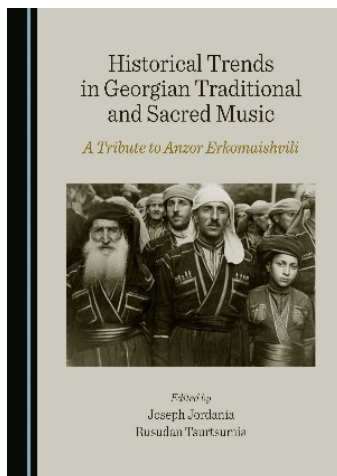
Ensemble New Bana’s Choir released first audio album

Ecclesiastical Chant Research Centre of the Georgian Patriarchate published the Paraclete as edited by Giorgi Mtatsmindeli



Georgian Chanting Foundation published the Monograph of Mikheil Mtsuravishvili

Cambridge Scholars Publishing issued the book “Anzor Erkomaishvili and Contemporary Trends in the Study of Traditional and Sacred Georgian Music”



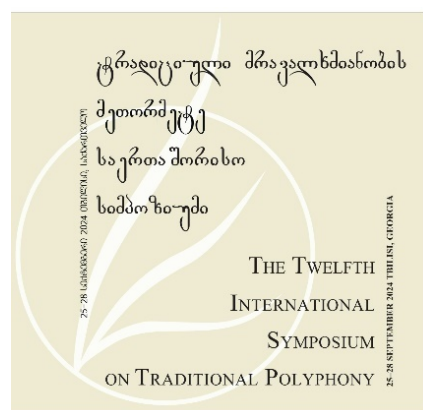
Cambridge Scholars Publishing issued the book “Historical Trends in Georgian Traditional and Sacred Music”

Prepared by Sophiko Kotrikadze

The 12th International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony

On September 25-28, 2024, the International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatoire held the 12th International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Sports. The symposium partner was the Anzor Erkomaishvili Folklore State Center of Georgia.

22 years have passed since the first symposium was held at Tbilisi State Conservatoire and the international conferences, started in the 1980s, have continued under the name “International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony” since 2002.



Following the UNESCO proclamation of Georgian polyphonic singing a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” in 2001, the first Tbilisi symposium aroused great interest among ethnomusical circles and since then, it has hosted many world-renowned scholars, researchers of polyphony. The Tbilisi Symposia present contemporary trends in polyphony studies and promote the integration of Georgian ethnomusicology with Western science. The symposia have sparked foreign researchers’ interest to Georgian polyphony, who unanimously recognize its special place among the musical cultures of the world. Traditionally, the symposium comprised several segments: scientific sessions, a concert part, film projection, and an excursion for foreign guests.

The scientific part saw participation of 52 scholars from 20 countries, including 35 from abroad and 17 from Georgia. Traditional topics of the scientific sessions were: Regional styles and musical language of traditional polyphony, Polyphony in secular and sacred music, Sociological aspects of traditional polyphony, and Computational ethnomusicology. This year Bodily (kinesthetic) aspect in the performance of traditional music was proposed to the scholars as a new topic.

The Round table, chaired by Austrian musicologist Gerda Lechleitner, discussed traditional concept of archiving and contemporary challenges; the participants included Miguel Garcia, Susana Sardo, Abdullah Akat and Sandro Natadze.



The concert part included opening and closing concerts at the Grand Hall of the Conservatoire, as well as afternoon concerts at the Conservatoire’s Recital Hall.



The symposium opened with the concert of foreign and Georgian student and children's ensembles. The concert participants included: student ensembles of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli University of Chanting, Georgian State University of Cinema and Theatre and Ilia State University; Bagdati and Kazbegi choirmasters' schools, Tristan Sikharulidze's Trio (Georgia), Kitka (USA), Mravalo (Germany), Maspindzeli (UK), Ori Shalva (Canada), Sausejas (Latvia), Alilo (France), Françoise Arnaud-Demir (France/Turkey), Margery Bray (Scotland), Gaumarjos (Australia), Oplenac (Serbia).

The afternoon concerts with the participation of ensembles: Sathanao (Georgia), Kitka (USA), Mravalo (Germany), chanter-singers choir of Mama daviti church (Georgia), Amer-imeri (Georgia), Maspindzeli (UK), Alilo(France) and Ori Shalva (Canada) were dedicated to world

and Georgian polyphony.

The symposium was festively closed with the concert the folklore of one gorge - the ensemble from the village of Mareti (Achara).

On 26 September, the Recital Hall of the Conservatoire hosted projection of the films: "Dali and the Hunter" (fragments) by British/German director Dan Shutt and the documentary "Beyond Tradition of Yodelling and Yoking" by Swiss ethnomusicologist and film director Lea Hagmann, which answers the question: "What does tradition really mean?" The film introduces three singers with different backgrounds who transcend the conservative understanding of tradition.



On 27 September, a cultural day was organized for the foreign participants of the symposium in Kvareli, which, as always, ended with an informal and surprisingly impressive concert of Georgian and world polyphony.

Over 22 years of its existence, the Symposium on traditional polyphony has succeeded in uniting ethnomusicologists and folk music performers from dozens of countries around the world into one big family, which, undoubtedly, is a significant achievement of the International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony and a prerequisite for the symposium's successful future.

Maka Khardziani

A member of the Symposium Organizing Committee

One New Project

"Let's Revive Folklore among Young Generation" – A New Initiative of the Nanina Group

“Nothing preserves original traditions and Georgian spirit like folklore does. It is eternal when it follows generations, but it dies when the youth forget it. If we want to preserve folklore and old traditions,



we must teach children and revive in them love to it from young age”. Anzor Erkomaishvili used to say. Precisely this is the goal of the educational project “Let’s Revive Folklore among Young Generation”, presented by “Nanina” creative group of ethnomusicologists, financed within the framework of the competition announced by the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Georgia.

Well-aware of the importance of passing folklore on to young generation, “Nanina” creative group of ethnomusicologists, planned educational folklore meetings for the students of choirmasters’ schools of the Folklore State Center; these included informative talks on Georgian folk music traditions, with live performance of illustrative material by the Nanina members. The first meetings were held on May 6 and 8, at Kaspi and Dusheti choirmasters’ schools.

The talks touched upon: the diversity of Georgian folklore; folk music as one of the distinctive branches of folklore and its specific features; uniqueness of Georgian polyphonic thinking; ethnomusicology as a science; diversity of Georgian folk music, manifested in: multitude of dialects, types of polyphony, variety of performance forms, individual performance manner, genre spectrum, repertoire, and diversity of song variants; Georgian instrumental music; Georgian urban folklore; Georgian church music. The group members took turns talking about these topics to the students; at the same time providing live illustrative examples related to each topic together with the other group members.



The Anzor Erkomaishvili Folklore State Centre has opened over 30 choirmasters’ schools in different regions of Georgia, where hundreds of adolescents learn Georgian traditional singing and chanting in practice. Since the lesson timing does not allow for detailed discussion of these examples, it will be no less interesting for children to know the origin and history of a particular song, the reasons why it is performed in this form and manner and not in another, what genre a particular song belongs to, etc.

The inspiration for the implementation of the proposed project was the training conducted by the director of

“Nanina” group for the teachers of choirmasters’ schools at the Folklore State Center of Georgia, which touched upon the need of learning folk music in its ethnographic context. The teachers unanimously noted that this extremely necessary information must reach young people so that they can thoughtfully and meaningfully learn musical examples, which contain the experience and thought of our ancestors.

The folklore meetings, as part of the project, are aimed at arousing interest in the ethnographic context of musical and folk examples among the teachers and students of choirmasters’ schools.

Based on the experience of the “Nanina” group, these folklore meetings will undoubtedly arouse young generation’s interest in the context, that led to the creation of a particular song, in the dialect to which this or that song belongs, and in people who created it, in the function of the song in everyday life, in its polyphony form, genre and performance peculiarities, regional performance manner, etc., thanks to these they will be able to bring the song to the listener with appropriate musical expression and character.

In addition, this information will strengthen the sense of national identity among future generation, interested in Georgian song, and create the need to protect our traditions, which will be the starting point for the preservation of the huge treasure of Georgian cultural heritage.



Maka Khardziani
Director of the “Nanina” group, the project manager

International Folklore Festival “Sakartvelo”

With the support of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of Georgia, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti Regional Administration, and Ambrolauri Municipality City Hall, the Anzor



Erkomaishvili Folklore State Center of Georgia, held the Fifth International Folklore Festival “Sakartvelo” in Racha-Lechkhumi Region and Tbilisi on 20-23 September, 2024.

The festival aims at introducing each other’s traditions and bringing cultures closer, popularization and preservation of Georgian folklore - our culture and national identity; transforming

Georgia into a permanent meeting place for Georgian and world folklore.

Among the Festival participants were sixteen folk groups and two individual performers from eight countries (Georgia, USA, Canada, Germany, France, Wales, Latvia, Scotland); ensembles: Alilo (France), Kitka (USA), Mravalo (Germany), Ori Shalva (Canada), Samaia (Wales), Saucejas (Latvia); Nanina, Dziriani, Sathanao, Mtiebi, Lalkhori, Lagusheda, Lile, Salaghobo, Sagalobeli, Racha (Georgia) and individual performers: Margery Bray (Scotland,Uk), Françoise Demir (France).



The most interesting part of the festival was the master classes of Georgian folk songs, which the host Georgian ensembles conducted for the visiting foreign ensembles. Namely, ensemble Saucejas (Latvia) was hosted by ensemble Nanina; Kitka (USA) by Lalkhori, Alilo (France)

by Dziriani, Mravalo (Germany) – Sathano, Samaia (Wales) – by Mtiebi... As a result, the repertoire of foreign groups was enriched with several Georgian songs, which our guests performed with great success at the concerts held as part of the Festival in Racha and Tbilisi.

The International Folk Festival opened with an open-air concert in Ambrolauri on 20 September. The evening was opened by host ensembles, and then Georgian and foreign performers took to the stage one after another. Along with Georgian folk songs the guests also performed the songs of their own country. It was a very interesting concert of the world folk music.

On the second day of the festival, the participants visited distinctive architectural sight of Racha – Barakoni church and arrived in the village of Korenishi, where local winemaker Levan Khmelidze hosted them at his ‘Korenishuli veranda’, in the wine cellar of Khmelidze family. The guests tasted rare varieties of Lechkhumian wines and attended a culinary master class. A grand master class of Georgian singing was also held here, where choirmaster Tornike Skhiereli taught Racha round-dance song “Raevo” to the guests and host ensembles.



It should be noted that within the framework of the Festival, for the first time this year the Anzor Erkomaishvili Folklore State Center held scientific conference on the topic “Performance of Traditional Music in Contemporary World.” The Forum was dedicated to the problems and challenges of traditional music performance (especially Georgian traditional repertoire) in a contemporary context. The conference was held in the format of multimedia panel presentations and interactive round table discussions, which was aimed at mutual exchange of different approaches, experiences, problems and viewpoints, as well as at deepening the knowledge. Georgian and foreign researchers, performers and teachers of singing took part in the conference. Among them: Caroline Bithell (UK), Joan Mills (UK), Polo Vallejo (Spain), Leah Hagmann (Switzerland), Shira Cion (USA), Kristine Barrett (USA), Karina

Samuel (Germany), Andrea Kuzmich (Canada); Tamar Buadze, Nino Naneishvili, Magda Kevlishvili, Tornike Skhiereli, Zurab Tskrialashvili (Georgia).

At the final evening of the festival, on the small stage of Rustaveli Theatre, Georgians and foreigners performed alternately. The guests and host ensembles together sang the examples of Georgian polyphony, which they had studied within the framework of the festival. The Gala concert ended with joint performance of Rachan round dance, which Tornike Skhiereli had taught everyone at 'Korenishuli veranda'.

Holding the International Folklore Festival "Sakartvelo" for the fifth time this year proves that it is already one of the main priorities of the Folklore State Center.

Organizing Group of the Festival

One Regional Ensemble

Folk Ensemble Mzeshina from Borjomi

*The Borjomi Municipality chanter-singers' ensemble Mzeshina is one of the most distinguished in the region for its individual style. The collective is directed by chanter-singer **Lela Mukhuradze**, a teacher at choirmasters' school. She tells in detail about the ensemble's creation, its repertoire, and future plans.*

S.K. When was Mzeshina created and for what purpose?

L. M: chanter-singers' ensemble Mzeshina was created in 2007 on the basis of the parish school at the Borjomi Center of Culture, however, the ensemble members were already experienced in singing together. Back in the early 2000s, there was a women's ensemble in Borjomi, of which I was a member. But the



ensemble existed for a short time and disbanded soon. In 2007 I collected chanters and church choir directors from various churches in Borjomi, we mostly came from singing families, and decided to create an ensemble. This was the period when in churches the so-called "Sioni chanting" style was being replaced by old, traditional chanting repertoire. We, certainly, followed this path. As for our love for singing, it had been passed down to us from our families, so it was logical for us to create an ensemble.

S.K.: Please tell us about the ensemble members...

L. M: Currently we are seven: Tinatin Mukhuradze, Irina Ivanishvili, Natia Sologhashvili, Tatiana Ivanidze, Tamta Gurgenidze, Lela Chaduneli and Lela Mukhuradze. We are representatives of different professions: we have a psychologist, a teacher, a kindergarten teacher... Most of the members have basic musical education and all of them are active chanters and church choir directors at various churches in Borjomi. In addition, some

are also involved in choirmaster's activities, for instance: Tatiana Ivanidze is a teacher at Borjomi choirmasters' school, and Tinatin Mukhuradze directs the ensemble in Tsaghveri.

S.K: What kind is the ensemble's repertoire and where do you learn the songs from?

L.M: Initially, we paid less attention to performing folk examples from our region. Later we started listening to old recordings and gave priority to learning songs from archival recordings rather than from sheet music. We often use the recordings uploaded on the Website of the Folklore State Center. From time to time, we also visit Mariam Zhuzhunadze - a distinguished tradition bearer in Meskhети region, we have studied several interesting examples from her. Our repertoire includes songs of Kartli-Kakhtian, Meskhetian and Imeretian dialects. Of course, we prefer women's songs. We also play musical instruments – *panduri* and guitar. We have recently started working on urban songs as well. Besides, as I have noted, all members of our ensemble are active chanters. Therefore, in our repertoire we have examples from all three schools of chanting.

S.K: What is the working process on songs like?

L.M. First we listen to old recordings. Then, with my help, the ensemble learns this or that example. I try to adjust particular genre and style of songs to each member's voice timbre or performance peculiarities. Almost all members can sing all voice-parts. Working on songs, we, certainly, always consider each other's opinions. As director, I do not limit their individualism and always allow them to improvise and develop.

S.K: How active is the ensemble's creative life?

L.M: Ensemble Mzeshina exists on the basis of the Borjomi City Center for Culture and Art. Accordingly, we often participate in various events organized by the municipality. In addition, we often hold concerts all over the country. Just recently we had a solo concert in Borjomi. Mzeshina is the laureate of the 2015-2016 National Folklore Festival. This year we have passed the first round of the festival and hope to make it to the second round. In our ensemble's history, I would highlight our participation in Festival "Nanina" of Georgian women's traditional music. In the first Festival dedicated to lullabies we presented Meskhetian traditions related to the birth of a child. In 2019 Mzeshina participated in the international festival in Lithuania.

S.K. Please tell us about your plans for near future.

L.M. In future, we would like to have an audio album. We also want to organize a small presentation-concert in the capital city. We will, certainly, continue to conduct expeditions and will offer our listeners a lot of interesting novelties in the future.

S.K: We wish you success!



Interviewed by Sophiko Kotrikadze

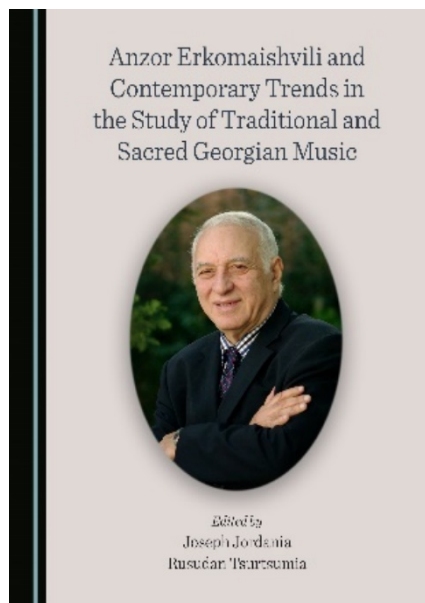
A New Publication

Collections Dedicated to Anzor Erkomaishvili

Cambridge Scholars Publisher published a twin collection dedicated to Anzor Erkomaishvili: (1) “Anzor Erkomaishvili and Contemporary Trends in the Study of Traditional and Sacred Georgian Music,” and (2) “Historical Trends in Georgian Traditional and Sacred Music: A Tribute to Anzor Erkomaishvili.” Compilers and editors of the publications are Joseph Jordania and Rusudan Tsurtsunia.

Initially editors aimed to publish a single book, but the desire to participate in this collection was expressed by so many eminent scholars that we faced a difficult choice, either to cut down the numbers of participating scholars to create a single collection, or to create two collections. To be frank, we never discussed seriously the possibility of refusing some authors to contribute to this historical Georgian ethnomusicology collection, so the idea of two collections, both dedicated to Anzor Erkomaishvili, came naturally. Twelve chapters in the first collection are dedicated to contemporary trends in the study of Georgian traditional music, and twelve chapters in the second collection are dedicated to historical trends in the study of Georgian traditional music.

The first chapter is written by a Russian/American scholar Izaly Zemtsovsky. Dedicated to Anzor



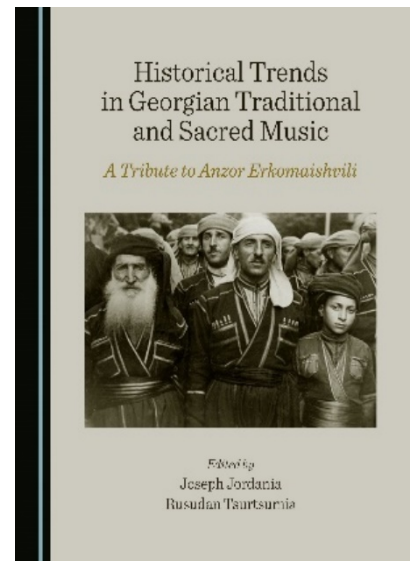
Erkomaishvili, the chapter “Polyphony as a Way of Creating and Thinking: The musical Identity of HOMO POLYPHONICUS” is a fascinating portrait of the creative thinking of representatives of polyphonic cultures. The second chapter, by Stuart Gelzer, an American professional writer and singer and a member of the trio Kavkasia, arguably the most proficient foreign ensemble of Georgian music, “How to Learn a Georgian Song by Ear,” is a vividly written description of the process of learning a complex Georgian song from Anzor Erkomaishvili by the American/Canadian trio Kavkasia. Anzor did so much during his life, sometimes people would ask, “Well, was he at least sick some time?” This chapter answers exactly this question – what Anzor Erkomaishvili was doing when he was sick. The third chapter belongs to Rusudan Tsurtsunia, the Director of the International Research Centre for

Traditional Polyphony. “Georgian Polyphony as a Symbol of the National Identity of a Multicultural Society” provides a bird’s-eye view of Georgian history and national identity through turbulent periods of Georgian cultural and ethnic history. The fourth chapter is by an international group of scholars, including Frank Scherbaum from the University of Potsdam, Germany, Nana Mzhavanadze from Tbilisi Conservatoire, Simha Arom from CNRS Paris, France, and Sebastian Rosenzweig and Meinard Müller from International Audio Laboratories, Erlangen, Germany. They researched the musical language of Georgian traditional music using contemporary methods of computational ethnomusicology in the chapter “Tonal Organization of the Erkomaishvili Dataset: Pitches, Scales, Melodies and Harmonies.” The fifth chapter is

by Nino Tsitsishvili, an Australian/Georgian ethnomusicologist from the University of Melbourne, Australia. The chapter “Mival Guriashi, Mara”: Improvisation Techniques in Gurian Polyphonic Songs” discusses the hidden mastery of improvising in the Gurian tradition using the example of several versions of a single song performed by two grandmasters of Gurian singing, Vazha Gogoladze and Anzor Erkomaishvili. In the sixth chapter, “Continuing Discussions on Scale Systems in Georgian Traditional and Religious Music,” Australian/Georgian ethnomusicologist Joseph Jordania attempts to discuss the long-running and still hot discussion on the nature of Georgian traditional scales with its achievements and pitfalls. The seventh chapter is by Giorgi Kraveishvili from Tbilisi State Conservatoire, probably the most active Georgian ethnomusicologist today conducting field work in various regions of Georgia and outside of Georgia. He discusses the sensational discovery of a hitherto unknown Georgian polyphonic style in a chapter titled “Discovery of a New Georgian Polyphonic Style.” The eighth chapter was written by two authors, ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze and traditional singer Madonna Chamgeliani. The chapter “The Role of Women in the Musical Life of the Svan People,” discusses the unusually important role of female singers play in Svan traditional society. The ninth chapter, “Stage Performance of Women’s Folk Music in Georgia,” was written by Maka Khardziani from Tbilisi State Conservatoire. The chapter discusses another relatively neglected area of females singing Georgian traditional music on the official stage. The tenth chapter, “Temporal Distortions, Timelessness, and Ancestry in Georgian Polyphony,” is by Canadian/Ukrainian ethnomusicologist Andrea Kuzmich. The chapter brings interesting new dimensions from the listening experiences of various ancient musical traditions. The eleventh chapter, “Folk Polyphony Goes Viral: Televised Singing Competitions and the Play of Authenticity in the Republic of Georgia,” was written by Canadian ethnomusicologist Matthew Knight. The chapter discusses three case studies in which folk polyphonic songs were performed in TV competitions like *Georgian Idol*, *Georgia's Got Talent*, and *Eurovision*. And the last, twelfth chapter of the collection is by Teona Lomsadze from Tbilisi State Conservatoire. “Folk-Fusion Music as a Contemporary Product of the Georgian Traditional Music Revival” is the only chapter that discusses the creative transformation of Georgian traditional and religious musical traditions in contemporary popular musical genres.

As I have mentioned, the first collection was followed by a second collection, “Historical Trends in Georgian Traditional and Sacred Music: A Tribute to Anzor Erkomaishvili.” There are other twelve chapters by leading Georgian and foreign authors. The collection opens with the chapter by Brian Fairley, a PhD student at New York University. “Blackbirds in the Archive: Anzor Erkomaishvili and a Century of Georgian Folk Song” discusses various aspects of Anzor Erkomaishvili’s long and productive work on the search for, and revival of archival recording of Georgian traditional music. The second chapter “Structural Patterns of Georgian Traditional Polyphony” is by Tamaz Gabisonia from Tbilisi Ilia University. The chapter discusses the richness of polyphonic forms of Georgian traditional polyphony. The author of the third chapter is Marina Kvizhinadze, independent researcher and Georgian ethnomusicologist. The chapter, “Family Ensembles in Georgia: Past, Present, and Future,” discusses the long and rich history of family ensembles in Georgia, the real strength behind the splendor of Georgian traditional polyphony.

The fourth chapter is by Baia Zhuzhunadze from Tbilisi State Conservatoire. “Musical Processes in the Context of Cultural Interactions (On the Example of Meskheta in the nineteenth-twentieth Centuries)” discusses the painful process of the gradual disappearance of the polyphonic tradition in the Meskhetian musical dialect. The chapter by Nino Razmadze, “Georgian Folk Instruments and Instrumental Terminology in Old Georgian Translations of the Bible (9-19 Centuries),” is the only chapter dedicated to Georgian instruments from the historical sources of biblical translations, confirming the thesis of total dominance of vocal music in Georgian traditional and religious music. The sixth chapter is written by Susanne Ziegler from the Berlin Phonogrammarchiv. “Georgian (Gurian) Polyphony in Historical Perspective” makes an interesting comparative analysis of the same songs from Guria, recorded in the 1930s, and re-recorded in the 1980s. The seventh chapter has three authors: Gerda Lechneitner, Franz Lechneitner, and Nona Lomidze—all from Vienna Phonogrammarchiv. “CD Project: Recordings from the Caucasian Region 1909 and 1915/16” discusses the earliest recordings of Georgian songs, including precious recordings made during WWI from the Georgian prisoners of war. The author of the eighth chapter, David Shugliashvili, discusses one of the longest-running problems of Georgian religious music—the neumatic musical signs. In “Multiplicity of the Neumes in the ‘Iadgari’ of Mikael Modrekili,” the iconic manuscript from 11th century is analyzed. The discussion of problems of religious music continues in the next chapter “Mnemonic Formulas—as the Main Organizer of the Musical System in Georgian Chanting Tradition” by Tatia Chkheidze from Tbilisi Conservatoire. The last three chapters discuss the experiences of foreign experts of Georgian music in teaching Georgian music to foreigners: Polo Vallejo with the tenth chapter of the collection, “Refining Western Polyphonic Ear through Georgian Harmonies: Teaching Experiences Based on the Georgian Musical Grammar,” then Frank Kane from Paris Marani Georgian association continues with the chapter, “The Challenge of Understanding and Transmitting the Essence of Georgian Singing: Experiences in Vocal Pedagogy,” where he discusses the new methodological tools for better and deeper understanding of the inner world of Georgian traditional polyphony. And finally, the last chapter, written by Caroline Bithell from Manchester University, “Performing Georgia in Distant Lands: Georgian Song and its Foreign Exponents,” is a sweeping picture of foreign ensembles and their unique ways of getting in touch with Georgian singing.



Joseph Jordania
One of the editors of books

Ethnophores Are Slowly Leaving Us

Murad Pirtskhelani
(1945-2024)

Murad (Guram) Pirtskhelani - this name is associated with the voice of Svaneti and Svan humor. The man who, in the first place, has been lost by the singing village of Lakhushdi, where he was born, raised and lived, then by all Upper Svaneti and all of Georgia and, it can boldly be said, by all the musicians of the world interested in Georgian (Svan) folklore.



Murad Pirtskhelani often recalled how he started singing: “My mother taught me to sing, my mother’s family, the Girgvlianis were renowned for their art throughout Svaneti. It was a large family, and they often performed round dances. Then it was my village, where I grew up surrounded by good singers. I remember great choirmaster and choreographer Maharbi Gurguliani visited our school choir; he selected three of us for the folk ensemble of Latali and told us he expected us at the rehearsal the next day. It felt like I had grown wings, I went home very happy. That night I couldn’t sleep because of anxiety”. From his youth, Murad Pirtskhelani sang in large choirs - in Latali and regional ensembles, then in ensemble Riho directed by great choirmaster, Islam Pilpani. He had numerous awards for participation in the events throughout Georgia.

His passing is a huge loss for the entire folklore community, not only because of his unique voice and performance style, but also because Murad Pirtskhelani was a link in the chain between great singers and contemporary singers.

Eternal kingdom to Uncle Murad - the esteemed Svan singer!

Madona Chamgeliani
Ethnologist

What One Man Planted, Has Come Up...
Georgian Song in the UK

The seed sown by one man 30 years ago has sprouted, and is still growing and bearing fruits...
It all started as follows...

In 1994, Ioseb Zhordania and Edisher Garakanidze, the scholars of Tbilisi State Conservatoire (Georgia) were invited to the UK as part of the project, comprised of two stages: teaching Georgian folk songs to the British and their performance subsequently.

The authors and implementers of the idea were Richard Goff and his spouse Joan Mills. Back then, no one could have imagined that this project would become a prerequisite for a great movement.



After an intensive week of rehearsals, the choir already knew 18 Georgian folk songs! After completion of the project, a table of Georgian traditional dishes was laid for 150 people, a tamada proposed Georgian toasts, and each toast was followed by the corresponding song. The members of the newly assembled choir came from different parts of the UK. For them, their first encounter with Georgian music was so important that upon returning home, they started organizing tours to learn Georgian songs. Edisher Garakanidze, both individually and together with ensemble Mtiebi, was invited to various parts of

Britain. This is how the people of Great Britain learned and fell in love with Georgian songs, performers of which they themselves became later.

Such tours were planned and conducted under Edisher's leadership in 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998, not only in the UK, but also in France, Germany and the Netherlands. The number of people interested in Georgian folk songs was increasing day in day out. More and more people showed interest in this music, as a result of which the number of the wishing to perform it increased, local ensembles were created, they regularly met and enriched the repertoire through interaction with various ethnomusicologists, ethnophores or ensembles.



Over years, along with Edisher Garakanidze and Mtiebi, renowned ethnomusicologists, various ensembles and ethnophores were invited. Those who wished would come to Georgia themselves, visit different regions of the country, meet old singers, learn songs from them, etc.

It is hard to say how many ensembles perform Georgian songs in the UK, however, the fact is that the interest has not waned, and these relations have long gone beyond music. They visit Georgia very often; they love not only singing, but everything Georgian: dishes, traditions, rituals, parts of Georgia and people; back in their homelands they organize meetings, celebrations, where they sing Georgian music and thank everyone for that is theirs too.

This year British lovers and performers of Georgian traditional music are celebrating the 30th anniversary of their encounter with Georgian song. This important fact coincided with the 18-day tour of Edisher and Gigi Garakanidze folk-ethnographic ensemble Amer-Imeri in the UK. At the invitation and organization of the Bristol-based Peachland Cultural Center and its leader Amer-Imeri traveled to the United Kingdom on 7-24 May 2024. As part of the tour, folk concerts and workshops of Georgian singing were held in 14 cities: Lancaster, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hebden Bridge, Sheffield, Birmingham, Mahindra, Brighton, Stow, Minchinhampton, Bristol, Oxford, London and Cambridge.

Over 18 days Amer-Imeri choir of 12 members, held 20 master classes of Georgian song and dance and 14 folk concerts. Each master class was attended by an average of 40-50 people. There were also cases when the same person attended both a master class and a concert in different cities.



Georgian traditional banquet was held in the city of Glasgow, attended by the members of the ensemble of Georgian song and the people interested. The banquet was led by a toastmaster - a member of the ensemble, and, as it is a tradition, each toast was accompanied by a corresponding song or dance. The “Tsutisopeli” festival, in the town of Minchinhampton (Stroud district) was attended by 150 people; as part of the festival, during a day the ensemble members held master classes of Georgian song at three different locations simultaneously, where the festival participants, divided into groups, learned various songs.

At the end of the festival, a traditional Georgian table was laid with traditional dishes, specially prepared for the occasion, and toasts, where members of other ensembles performed songs alongside Amer-Imeri, sometimes they sang newly learned songs together, and it all felt like a true Georgian celebration.

Particular was the meeting with Edisher Garakanidze’s friend Joan Mills in the town of Machynlleth, (Wales). For her, young members of Amer-Imeri are Edisher Garakanidze’s children, grandchildren, his descendants and continuers of his path... “Mravalzhamier” performed together with the audience at the end of the concert was emotional and full of gratitude, for most of those present, it was the first song that Edisher taught them.

The anniversary year of the encounter with Georgian song did not end there. On 18 October, 2024, St. Anthony’s College, Oxford University hosted the event “Internationalization of Georgian Traditional Music in Britain”, dedicated to Edisher Garakanidze and the 30th anniversary of the encounter with Georgian song. Its initiator and organizer was Teona Lomsadze, a Georgian ethnomusicologist involved in a research project at St Antony’s College. The day started with a workshop of Georgian song, where Georgian song lovers gathered and mastered Rachan round-dance song “Kriste aghdga” in 2 hours; this was followed by the research conference on Georgian traditional polyphony, where scholars and practitioners presented the results of their research. The conference saw the papers presented by: Teona Lomsadze, Caroline Bithell, Nana Mzhavanadze, Frank Kane, Holly Taylor, Susan Thompson, Sandro Shari, Joan Mills and Magda Kevlishvili. The day ended with the concert of Georgian folk song with the participation of the groups created specifically for this day, consisting of Teona Lomsadze, Sandro Shari, Nana Mzhavanadze and Magda Kevlishvili, as well as ensemble Maspindzeli created in the UK in 1999, Frank Kane, Frank Green and others.

All this was accompanied by the traces of the kindness that Edisher Garakanidze did in 1994... What one man planted has come up and will flourish...

Magda Kevlishvili
Director of ensembles Mtiebi and Amer-Imeri

Beneficents of Georgian Folklore

Piruz Aliashvili (1929-1975)

The column tells about Piruz Aliashvili - an incomparable performer on tongueless salamuri. As is known, the tongueless salamuri, unearthed by the archaeologists on the territory of Samtavro, dates back to the middle of the 2nd millennium BC. Tongueless salamuri is quite difficult to play, this may be the reason why the number of those who play the instrument is small. The merits of its performers, one of whom was Piruz Paliashvili, are all the more commendable.

Piruz Aliashvili was born in the village of Khorbalo, Akhmeta district, in 1929. He was taught playing tongueless *salamuri* by his cousin Giglo Aliashvili. He spent his childhood as a shepherd, which was when he mastered the instrument. When he grew up, he was accepted into the amateur ensemble at Akhmeta District House of Culture, directed by Aleksandre Ekvtimishvili. In 1951, at the 7th Olympiad of Georgian amateur art, Piruz performed “Zezvai” and dance melodies on tongueless *salamuri*. Of particular note is Piruz Aliashvili’s performance at the event dedicated to the visit of Indian Prime Minister Indira



Gandhi to Georgia in 1953; the Indian guest was so fascinated by his performance that she went up on stage and shook his hand.

At the 8th Olympiad of amateur art Aliashvili played “Mtieli kalis simghera” on tongueless *salamuri*. Folk Music Department of Tbilisi State Conservatory soon became interested in his performing skills. In 1956, Kakhi Rosebashvili, specially met Piruz Aliashvili, as part of an expedition, and wrote the melody of “Zezvai” down in musical notation; in 1958, folklorist Otar Chijavadze recorded 12 melodies as played by him. From the expedition diaries preserved in the archives of the Conservatory’s Laboratory of Folk Art, we learn that by this time Piruz Aliashvili had had 12 years of experience playing the tongueless *salamuri*, he himself made the instrument, and played in Akhmeta ensemble.

The diaries also have the list of melodies he played with the indication of the sources: “Leki kalis simghera” (performed by Aliashvili); “Tushuri simghera” (performed by Aliashvili); “Mtsqemsuri” (performed while sheep is grazing); “Meghoruli” (when beech gets ripe, pigs eat its seeds, at twilight, on the way home swine-herd walks ahead, playing this melody); Song “Bakhrioni” (Tushetian melody); “Monadire” (composed by Aliashvili); Zezvai (performed by Aliashvili. Tushetian melody); “Kartuli maqruli”; “Kistebis gadasakhleba” (Kist melody about their deportation); „Tushuri satsekvao”; “Goris simghera”; “Sachidao”.

Piruz Aliashvili’s creativity went beyond the borders of Georgia. In 1967, he participated in the international festival of amateur ensembles in Moscow. Arsen Berthlani provides an interesting recollection regarding this: “As soon as the Tushetian tune sounded at Moscow Theater, we all clearly felt that something happened: a sudden and brief moan reached Zemo Alvani from the theatre stalls in

Moscow. What could have happened? As I was told later, Piruz blew into the *salamuri* so that at the end of one staccato the *salamuri* burst and flew across the wide stage in two pieces. The self-taught maestro grabbed a spare *salamuri* hidden in the corrugated neck of his “Asian boots” and, while the first phrase of the Tushetian melody was still in the air, continued the following phrase on the second instrument. It was then that the sudden and brief moan of the theatre stalls reached Zemo Alvani by radio from Moscow. After the number ended, the thunder of applause almost took off the chandeliers in the theater.”

The verse about Piruz Aliashvili is obviously the echo of this story:

“Piruz Aliashvili is well-known in Moscow,
when he blows into the *salamuri*,
the sun sheds light on him.
He has big lungs and a heart of steel.“

According to a narration, Moscow was so interested in Piruz’s gigantic build that one of the scientific centers insured his life and made a contract that his body would be taken to Moscow after his passing.

There are many recollections about Aliashvili’s gigantic stature. He was about 2.3 meters tall. When he visited relatives in Gremi, in the house he had to walk bent over because the ceiling was 2.1 metres high. Aliashvili’s gigantic stature is also evidenced by the *salamuri* made according to his tongueless *salamuri*, which is 46 cm long and was difficult for an ordinary person to play (watch the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OteCYKFGGsQ>).

Piruz Aliashvili was often invited to appear in films. A close-up of his unique performance technique is visible in the 1962 film “Alavardoba” (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTpr-qOnLiA>). His playing is also heard in the films: “Pirosmani” (1969) (see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf7-00cUycI>) and “Tushi metskhvare” (1967) (see <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Svx5mid2hNo>). The melodies played in both films are unique and confirm Piruz Aliashvili’s supreme performance mastery.

Of the surviving recordings of tongueless *salamuri*, the melodies played by Piruz Aliashvili are distinguished in specific performance technique, segmenting of sounds, amazing control over the flow of air, a rare technique of overblowing, which implies continuous, pauseless performance, parallel to breathing. All of this is confirmed by eyewitness Arsene Berthlani, and the technique of overblowing is clearly visible in the footage of the film “Alavardoba”.

In addition to the existing melodies played on tongueless *salamuri*, Piruz Aliashvili also transformed songs into *salamuri* melodies and created his own compositions. Arsene Berthlani tells how Aliashvili specified and edited *salamuri* melodies with his mother, Mariam Lagazidze, who was of Tushetian origin and well-versed in Tushetian music: “Piruz Aliashvili, the king of kings of the divine instrument - tongueless *salamuri*, himself as thin and long as his *salamuri*, would caress his mother, asking her to sing



him something Tushetian. His mother, a woman with no education, but extraordinary musical ear, a heartbroken for the loss of her two brothers in the war, would wander in mesmerizing spirals of Tushetian song with sobbing top voice. Mother's top voice was replaced by Piruz's salamuri, salamuri - by Piruz's short comments, the comments - by requests from those present at this open theater, the requests - again by rustling of tongueless *salamuri*, and so it went on... Piruz learned from his mother and specified various musical details with her. Mother, encouraged, suggested a thousand things to the maestro, adding something, subtracting something, in short, they both had a great time.

– Uncle Piruz! – I once yelled to him, losing patience. – How can you play so accurately?

He roared with laughter in his carefree manner and answered:

– Little one! If I don't play like that, your Tushetians will card me like Tushetian wool, ha-ha-ha!

Piruz Aliashvili's life is often compared to Pirosmeni's. He could not stay in one place; he often visited people and attended various celebrations. He was a welcome guest to many families in Akhmeta and neighboring districts, having drunk a couple glasses of alcohol, he would play the salamuri. When his *salamuri* was damaged he would ask for help from his brother-in-law, Shalva Mamukelashvili from Matani, who made new *salamuri* for him.

Aliashvili especially loved interacting with children: he would gather them in the yard, play the *salamuri* and tell them various stories. Of particular note is the story of hunting and the composition "Hunter" based on it, where the melody follows the narration (See the history of hunting reconstructed through archival recordings and oral traditions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-rhyj0SC4o>).

Piruz Aliashvili died tragically on 15 September 1974. In a tavern near Shakriani bridge, a drunk man asked him to play, but Piruz could not as he was mourning over the recent passing of his sister-in-law. Because of this refusal, he was deliberately run over by a car on the road when he left...

He was interred in his native village of Khorbalo, together with his broken tongueless *salamuri*. He never married, nor did he have any students. All that remained were about twenty melodies recorded on audio tapes and the love in people's hearts that has not faded even after half a century.

In 1996, Giorgi Ushikishvili and his friends restored his grave. Aleko Khizanishvili revived "Zezvai", recorded by Piruz, and still continues playing it.

Piruz Aliashvili's creativity is a subject of future research, his legacy is truly invaluable and requires more attention.

Tevdore Gogoladze

Researcher of tongueless salamuri.

The material is compiled from personal

interviews with Marina and Giorgi

Aliashvilis, Sultan Mamukelashvili, and

Arsen Berthlani

Mravalo - The Extraordinary Story of a German-Georgian Choir

Tamar Buadze, known in Georgia as the choirmaster of the Tutarchela adult, youth and children's choirs from Rustavi is one of, if not the most important ambassador of traditional Georgian songs in German-speaking Europe. For over 15 years, Tamar has been introducing the polyphonic songs from various regions of Georgia to a steadily growing number of Georgian music lovers in Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

People from Western Europe not only get to know the music of Georgia but also gain an insight into the culture, history, and mentality of the Georgian people through Tamar - conveyed by an extremely loving, humorous, and charming ambassador. The Georgia that Tamar Buadze represents is a country full of impressive landscapes, strong men and women, passionate people who love their country and accompany every situation in life with songs.



Anyone who sings Georgian songs knows that this music thrives on the solidarity and mutual appreciation of the singers. Over the years, close friendships have developed between lovers of Georgian songs in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. Groups and ensembles have formed, and a Germany-wide network of singers who are in regular contact with each other and with Tamar Buadze has grown.

Then came Covid-19. Everyone remembers March 2020, which was full of uncertainty and a standstill. The world seemed to be holding its breath, and it became frighteningly quiet. One of the first conversations was with Tamar in Georgia: "How are you? How is the situation? Are you all right?" It was clear at that moment: we must sing!

Zoom, which is a digital platform that offers an opportunity to meet up with many people, quickly became a talking point. Groups formed everywhere and gathered via Zoom - also to sing together. The first meeting between Tamar and her closest friends to sing together digitally took place at the end of March 2020. After the first rounds, it was clear: we were going to carry on!

Tamar Buadze launched the open offer ChorOnline in April 2020 together with the Swiss choir conductor Franziska Welti and the ethnomusicologist Lea Hagmann (2020) "ChorOnline: A Transnational Singing Project Fostering Applied Ethnomusicology". (Paper presentation at the BFE One Day Conference "Ethnomusicology and music enterprise in catastrophic times", Online-Conference, 07/11/2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHuji9-YqXk&t=6s>).

The Zoom singing of the group of friends remained a platform for personal discussions, exchange, and mutual support. We learned new songs, sang together, and talked about how we fared in the different regions of Germany, Switzerland, and Austria - and how Tamar, her family, and the singers from Tutarchela experienced this extraordinary time.

How can you sing over Zoom? A major disadvantage of Zoom is that singing together is not technically possible due to the latency (sound delay). Only one person can "broadcast" while everyone else listens. However, Tamar found a creative solution by often inviting one of her sons, Irakli or Oto, sometimes the whole family, or singers from the Tutarchela choirs to co-teach with her. This meant that we could hear at least two voices and either sing along with them or, inaudibly to Tamar, add yet another voice. It seemed almost mysterious how Tamar, without hearing us, seemed to know exactly when we were having difficulties or which parts needed to be repeated. This was probably due to our body language, but also to her great experience and professionalism as a choir director. She had also known our voices and abilities from the workshops in Europe for years. Despite the creative solutions, it quickly became clear that no digital session could replace real singing together or meeting in person. So it was our wish to meet live as soon as possible and sing the songs we had learned together.

The first small meeting took place near Hamburg in 2022. In spring 2023, we were finally able to organize our first choir weekend together north of Berlin. It was a great pleasure to finally sing and hear the songs together on-site! The small mock concert was so successful that we accepted the invitation from the Singfrauen Berlin



women's choir, conducted by Franziska Welti, to perform at their anniversary concert in Berlin in November 2023. This concert was a complete success, and our Zoom choir, which subsequently called itself Mravalo - მრავალო after the name of the anniversary concert, was a special part of it.

Another opportunity to present our network choir on stage was at the International Choir Festival in Limburg in spring 2024. While the Tutarchela youth choir won several prizes and special prizes there, we performed outside the competition and impressed both the audience and the jury. The highlight of Mravalo's history so far was our participation in the Sakartvelo International Folklore Festival in Georgia in October 2024. It was with pride and gratitude that we accepted this special invitation to take our love of Georgian music back to Georgia and present it there. The festival allowed us to travel around the country, connect with locals, and get to know numerous ensembles and groups - from Georgia and other countries - who, like us, are fascinated by Georgian singing.

This festival and our visit to Georgia were joyful, enriching, inspiring, and encouraging! Mravalo is a singing project that is growing and developing like a plant. Now we are working on our sound, and the presentation of songs with individual voices, and small groups. We hope that we will be able to present ourselves again in the future, especially to our Georgian friends.

website: <https://mravalo.de>

facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mravalo>

Karina Samuel
member of ensemble Mravalo

Ethnographical Letters
Engagement and Marriage in Pshavi
(part II)

In Pshavi church wedding usually takes place on Sundays, and groom's family prepares for it. Animals are slaughtered, bread is baked, drinks are provided, etc., together with groomsmen the groom goes to the bride's house, where he is awaited by a beautifully dressed bride and bridesmaids. There, wreaths of branches are placed on the heads of the bride and groom, dressed in wedding attire; they are congratulated and wished happiness.

In the past, church wedding was held at the church in the bride's village. Church wedding was attended by groomsmen, bride's brother and bridesmaids. After the church wedding, groomsmen, shooting from guns, go to the groom's house. They are headed by chief groomsmen on the horse; he carries the bride's dowry: bedding, clothes, dishes, trinkets in carpet-bag etc. As they approach the village, groomsmen start shooting from guns, to get the villagers know that they are approaching.



The groom's family is overwhelmed with joy. They all go out to greet them, here come the groomsmen together with newlyweds. Groomsmen's horses are unsaddled; everyone heads to the house, with bride and groom walking ahead. At the door of the house, they are greeted by "groom's mother" dressed in festive attire, wearing a Pshavian long-furred hat and holding a tray in hands. On the tray there is yeast (khashi) and a bowl of honey mixed with ghee. An elderly woman is selected as "groom's mother". She is related to the groom and must not be widowed or childless. The bride and groom will pass under the swords and daggers crossed by the groomsmen at the door of the house; "Groom's mother" greets them at the house door with a tray in her hands. The bride takes the yeast and smears it on the threshold, meaning that she brings hospitality and abundance to the family. Then groom's mother makes the bride lick honey from her finger three times and utters the blessing: "May God grant you sweet aging together". The groom's mother takes off the hat and puts the bowl with honey on the groomsmen's tray. The bride and groom enter the house. They are preceded by a groomsmen, holding a tray on which there is a round loaf

of bread with a cross and a bowl of honey. The cross is decorated with apples. The bride holds the end of the kerchief tied around the groom's waist, and after the chief groomsmen turns the bride and groom round three times, everybody goes to the hearth in the house. The groomsmen walk first holding the tray with a cross. He is followed by the bride and groom, then comes chief groomsmen with swords, a bridesmaid, bride's brother and other bridesmaids and groomsmen. The people in the house sit in two rows around the hearth and one of them starts singing "Jvarobis simghera": "I have set foot in the house, may Lord have mercy on you, bless the newlyweds, our God Christ!" The groomsmen and the people standing in two rows, repeat each word of the song and the bride and groom are led around the hearth three times. At the same time, the bride's brother and bridesmaids beat the hanger with strong daggers to knock it down and will not let stop until the hanger is pulled down. The hanger is a common trophy of bridesmaids,

and no one can prevent them from pulling it down and taking it. On the groomsmen's third lap around the hearth, the hanger falls down, and everyone shouts in unison: "Gaumarjos!" Mother's brother puts the hanger on his shoulder, and the hanger is captured. In order to release the hanger, the groom's family has to pay a "ransom" to the bride's side. In this case the ransom is wine or vodka - no less than one *tungi* (a clay or copper vessel with a narrow neck). Then the bride and groom are seated on the spread felt cloaks they are accompanied by chief groomsman, a bridesmaid and bride's people. Chief groomsman puts a little boy on bride's lap and says: "May you have a son". The bride gives a motley sock to the child. It is the duty of a best man to follow the bride and groom holding a tray with a cross for two days. A bridesmaid takes care of the bride, adjusts her clothes and jewelry. Chief best man accompanies the groom, he is the manager and responsible for the order at the wedding. Everyone is armed with swords; the bridesmaid holds a dagger so that the devil does not harm the newlyweds. The groomsmen and bridesmaids are seated in two rows, the rest gather up and down the hearth. Separate trays are placed in front of everyone and wine pourers are also there. The best man puts the tray with the cross in front of the newlyweds and the party starts. Flat bread (*lavashi*), meat, cheese and drinking horns with wine are distributed; drinking and competition in improvised poetry starts. In the competition, whichever side has the most eloquent and intelligent poet is the winner. In the hallway of the house, the music is in full swing; people are playing the *garmoni* and dancing. After midnight, some relax and fall asleep there. The bride and groom did not sleep at night. Next morning the neighbors invite the wedding guests to their families for *khinkali*. The bride and groom together with some honorary guests are invited to the best man.

The groom's family starts preparing for the wedding party. The hostesses bustle about: some are cleaning rice for *plavi*, some are cooking meat, washing up, etc. Soon groomsmen also arrive and bring chickens. The bride's side slaughters the chickens, and it is their property. The hostess serves them a pitcher of vodka and takes away the slaughtered chickens. Having eaten *khinkali* the youth slowly gather on the flat roof of the groom's house and starts musicking and dancing. They play the *garmoni* and dance "Lekuri" in Pshavian mode. Girls take turns to dance with the dancing boy and it's upon the boy's endurance, a good dancer boy should dance with several girls and not get tired. Some guests play the *panduri* and sing Pshavian verses to monotonous tunes. In the afternoon, the wedding table is set on the house roof. Skins and rugs are spread on the floor, trays with *lavashi* bread, meat, cheese; wineskins of wine and vodka were placed are placed on them. A pot of beer is placed in the middle of the table. Men and women sit separately. The bride and groom are seated in the men's row. They sit next to chief groomsman, a bridesmaid, and the bride's brother. The elder of the gorge attaches lighted candles to the beer pot. He also distributes lit candles to the bride and groom, and to elderly men. Everyone stands up, except for the bride and bridesmaid, takes off the hats; with a lighted candle and a bowl of wine in his hand, the elder of the gorge utters the blessing for the "new flowers".



The eulogy to the oak, uttered by the elder of the gorge, is repeated briefly and expeditiously by chief groomsman, bridesmaid and bride's brother. Whoever says it "shortly" and clearly is the winner. The wine pourers serve drinking horns with wine to everyone. He who drinks to the bottom rolls the empty horn. A person from the bride's side spins the bride and groom three times and seats them down. A tray

with cross is placed in front of them. Everybody sits down and starts having food. Then presentation of wedding gifts begins. Gifts are brought on a tray: textiles for dress and kerchief, socks, money, etc. *Mqepari* stands in front of the bride and groom, takes the gift, names the giver and characterizes him with a witty joke. The groom's sister or cousin should offer „*mashkhala*” to the bride and groom, *mashkhala* is placed on a small wooden table. The *mashkhala* has a cross depicted on the tip; red eggs and apples attached on the branches; silk thread, motley socks, a white kerchief, etc. are hung on it. There is *khinkali* and textile for a dress on the table of *mashkhala*. *Mqepari* takes the *mashkhala* and says: “The groom's sister has invited me here; I am glad for your marriage. I wanted to give you a precious gift, an ox or a cow, but I couldn't afford it, and I have brought you this brocade.” *Mqepari* ends his speech: “May you be happy, and glory to the Lord!” Everyone responds “Glory, glory!” At the same time, *mqepari* collects money as wedding gift from men, and puts on the towel spread in front of the bride and groom. The gift belongs to the bride and is included into her dowry, while the collected money goes to the groom and his family. *Merighe* with a large tray in hand distributes boiled meat to everyone at table, then bowls with soup and *lavashi* are served. The wedding party accelerates. Joyous singing, dancing and competition in improvised poetry starts. The groom's sister makes the dancers drink from drinking horns. Thus, the competition between the bride's and groom's sides begins in singing, dancing, poetry. The competition sometimes ends in a fight.

On the third day of the wedding, *satsagmarto* is celebrated. Animals are slaughtered, table is laid, candles are lit and the elder of the gorge utters the “eulogy to the oak”. In the afternoon, the groomsmen toast to the bride and groom and a best man begins removing their crowns. The best man will hold a sword in his right hand and a dagger in his left, and with their tips he will remove the crown first from the groom and then from the bride. As soon as his crown is removed the groom must immediately run and hide. If he is caught by the groomsmen, he should bring a pitcher of drink as a ransom for his freedom. Sometimes the groom without crown is soiled with mud. After the crown is removed, the bride's side demands awards for groomsmen and bridesmaids. The host of the wedding gives a chicken and money. The groomsmen divide the money in half between the bridesmaid and the bride. This is followed by the abduction of a woman. For this the bride's side does its best to abduct an unmarried woman in the village. Women are hiding and if the groomsmen fail to find one, they will abduct a little girl. The girl's family runs after the groomsmen but will get the girl back only after paying a ransom of a pitcher of vodka. With this, the wedding ends and the groomsmen say goodbye to the host.

*The material is processed
from Sergi Makalatia's book “Pshavi”
Tbilisi, 1985*

**Pshavian wedding song "Jvaris Tsinasa", sung in groom's house,
while the newlyweds walk around the hearth three times**

Jvaris ts'inasa

♩ = 77

I choir

jva - ri ts'i - na - sa jva - ri ts'i - na - sa

sa jva - ri ts'i - na - sa

II choir

jva - ri ts'i - na - sa jva - ri ts'i - na - sa

ts'i - na - sa jva - ri ts'i - na - sa

I choir

khma - li ts'i - na - sa khma - li ts'i - na - sa

ts'i - na - sa khma - li ts'i - na - sa

II choir

khma - li ts'i - na - sa khma - li ts'i - na - sa

i ts'i - na - sa khma - li ts'i - na - sa

shen krist'e ghmerto
dasts'ere jvari
amat qoilta
okros jvarita

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