

The  
V. Sarajishvili  
Tbilisi State  
Conservatoire  
International  
Research  
Center for  
Traditional  
Polyphony  
  
B U L L E T I N

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## **Ethnomusicological Life of Georgia**

(July-December, 2020)

### ***Festivals, Conferences, Competitions***

**23.07.2020 - 26.07.2020** – Tbilisi open-air Ethnographic Museum hosted the ArtGeni Festival.

**25.08.2020** – Academic Ensemble of Georgian Folk Song and Dance Rustavi participated in the online festival “Vox Virtual Festival”.

**23.09.2020 – 26.09.2020** – International Symposium “Folklore of Silk Road Countries” was held in online format.

**3.10.2020** – Female folk ensemble Nanina participated in the online festival “Flowers of Song” (Latvia).

**20.10.2020-23.10.2020** – the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony was held in online format.

**29.10.2020** – Scientific Conference “Traditional Music and Education” was held in online format

**5.11.2020-6.11.2020** – Giorgi Garakanidze 15<sup>th</sup> Batumi International Festival of Folk and Church Music was held in online format.

### ***Lectures, Meetings, Master Classes, Presentations***

**4.07.2020 – 26.12.2020** – ethnomusicologist Nino Naneishvili’s Georgian traditional music master classes for foreign performers every week-end through the ZOOM platform

**14.07.2020** – At Ilia State University PhD student Nino Naneishvili remotely defended doctoral dissertation “Christian Liturgical Music in Tbilisi”

**15.07.2020 – 10.12.2020** – The project “Georgian Traditional Music Unites Us – This is a Treasure for Everyone” was implemented at Tserovani public school #3 as organized by the University of Chanting and with the support of Georgian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

**9.08.2020** – the village of Zemo Aketi, Lanchkhuti Municipality hosted the events dedicated to the Khukhunaishvili dynasty of folk singers.

**6.09.2020** – chanter choirs from different dioceses participated in the festive service at Samtavisi Cathedral on the commemoration day of St. Karbelashvili brothers.

**9.10.2020** – presentation of the catalogue of musical instruments preserved at the Museum of

Georgian Folk Song and Musical Instruments of the Art Palace in the backyard of the Folklore State Centre.

**29.10.2020** – V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire, the Caucasus University, I. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and National University of Georgia signed the memorandum of mutual cooperation, implying transmission of unique audio and video archival materials of the Conservatoire and the materials of folklore expeditions to digital media, their processing and publication, with the financial and technical support of the aforementioned universities.

**19.12.2020** – Online presentation of ensemble Patara Kakhi’s audio album at Telavi School of Traditional Music.

As a result of the joint work of Frank Scherbaum, Professor at the University of Potsdam and Doctor of Arts, ethnomusicologist Davit Shughliashvili, carried out as part of the three-year project (2019-2021) – **computer analysis of Georgian traditional vocal music**, 6 works related to Artem Erkomaishvili’s recordings have been uploaded on the internet, these can be viewed and the original recordings can be listened to at <https://www.uni-potsdam.de/en/soundscapelab/computational-ethnomusicology/the-heritage-of-the-old-masters>

### ***Expeditions***

**7.07.2020-13.07.2020** – Doctor of Arts, ethnomusicologist Giorgi Kraveishvili’s expedition to the Heretians in the village of Samtatsqaro, Dedoplistqaro district.

**9.08.2020- 14.08.2020** – Doctor of Arts, ethnomusicologist Giorgi Kraveishvili’s expedition to the Laz and Megrelians in the village of Anaklia, Zugdidi district.

### ***Concerts, Evenings, Exhibitions, Anniversaries***

**10.07.2020** – The Folklore State Centre hosted State Ensemble Basiani’s charity solo concert to help Meko Chitiashvili.

**12.07.2020** – On the initiative of Anchiskhati church choir a concert of folk songs and church hymns was held after the divine service in the yard of Anchiskhati church.

**14.07.2020** – Ensemble Sameba’s second online solo concert.

**14.07.2020** – Charity online concert of the “Friends of Lakhushdi village” to help built a song house in Lakhushdi.

**16.07.2020** – Concert of Ilia State University student choir at Ilia State University.

**9.08.2020** – Ensemble Sameba’s third online solo concert.

**10.08.2020** – Anzor Erkomaishvili’s 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary evening in the archways of Ozurgeti Municipality Drama Theatre.

**18.09.2020** – Charity exhibition-sale to help the gun-smith Zaza Aladashvili in the backyard of the Folklore State Centre.

**28.09.2020** – Jemal Chkueaseli’s 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Art Palace of Georgia; on the day, Jemal Chkueaseli’s hand-palms were imprinted in the Arch of Immortals of the Palace.

**4.10.2020** – Performance “Acharan Tunes” by Edisher and Gigi Garakanidze folk-ethnographic studio “Amer-Imeri” at the open-air ethnographic museum.

**7.10.2020** – Anzor Erkomaishvili’s anniversary evening “Known – Unknown Anzor Erkomaishvili” as part of the Festival “From Easter to Ascension”.

**12.10.2020 -21.12.2020** – The Folklore State Centre of Georgia hosted several concerts within the framework of “Folk Evenings”:

**12.10.2020** – State Ensemble of Folk Song Basiani

**19.10.2020** – Ensemble Didgori

**26.10.2020** – State Ensemble of Folk Song and Dance Erisioni

**2.11.2020** – Ensemble Adilei

**9.11.2020** – Trio Iarali and Quartet Ranina

**19.11.2020** – Ensemble Shilda

Aleko Khizanishvili and Khvicha Khvtisiashvili

**23.11.2020** – Ensemble Tbilisi

**26.11.2020** – The Gersamia family and ensemble Nanina

**30.11.2020** – Ensemble Gorda

**3.12.2020** – Trio Shalva chemo, trio Lazare, ensemble Shemokmedi, ensemble Rekheuli

**7.12.2020** – Ensemble Sathanao and quartet Melorama

**10.12.2020** – Ensemble Chveneburebi

**14.12.2020** – Ensemble Ialoni and ensemble Sakhioba

**17.12.2020** – Ensemble Anchiskhati

**21.12.2020** – Ensembles Bedinera and Chkhorotsqu

**14.10.2020** – Ensemble Sameba’s fourth online solo concert.

**20.10.2020** – The Opening concert of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony in online format.

**24.10.2020** – Online concert of Georgian folk songs performed by foreign ensembles as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony.

**15.11.2020** – Online solo concert of ensemble Mcheli at the Museum of Georgian Folk Song and Musical Instruments of the Arts Palace as part of the action “Night at the Museum”.

**23.11.2020** – The recording of ensemble Shavnabada’s anniversary solo concert on air of Channel 1 of Georgian State Television.

**27.12.2020** – Charity marathon to help artists at “Leno Records” as part of the campaign “Society for Artists” the participants included Tbilisi folk ensembles too.

### ***Publications***

**Georgian Chanting Foundation and  
Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire  
published  
Acharan Folk Songs: a Music Collection  
with a Teaching Audio CD  
(compiled by Nino Razmadze)**



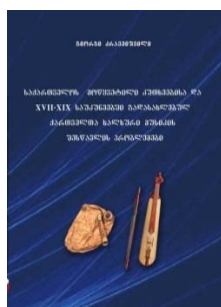
Batumi Art University published  
the proceedings  
“Issues of Folk and Church Music”  
of the Scientific conference of Giorgi Garakanidze  
15<sup>th</sup> International Festival  
of Folk and Church Music



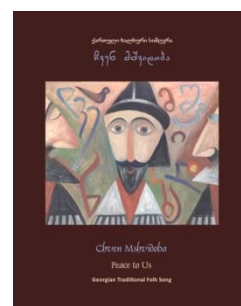
A collection of  
**Imeretian folk songs**  
“What we Have Sung....”  
from the repertoire of the Abesadze  
sisters and brothers  
(compiled by Giga Abesadze)



Shota Rustaveli National Scientific  
Foundation of Georgia published  
Giorgi Kraveishvili's book  
“Problems in the Study of Folk Music in Georgia's  
Torn off Regions and of the Georgians Exiled in  
the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries”



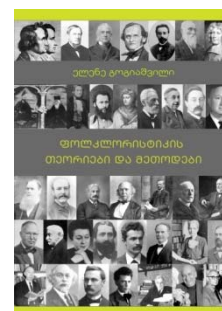
The book “Chven Mshvidoba”  
has been published with the support of National  
Parliamentary Library of Georgia,  
Tbilisi State Conservatoire and the  
Georgian Chanting Foundation  
(compiled by Davit Shughliashvili)



State Ensemble of Georgian  
Folk Song and Dance  
Erisioni  
published Jemal Chkhuaseli's  
anniversary album  
“Jemal Chkhuaseli 85”



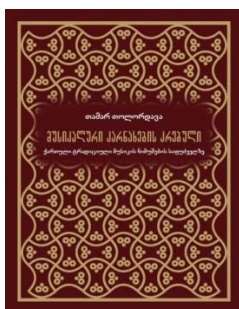
Tbilisi State University published  
Elene Gogiasvili's book  
“Theories and Methods of Folklore”



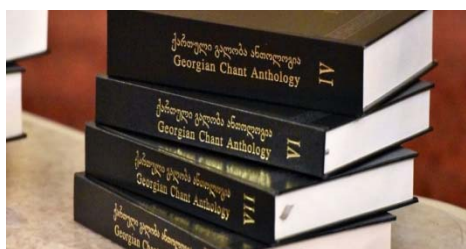
Vano Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire and Georgian Chanting Foundation published  
**Kukuri Chokhonelidze's scientific works**



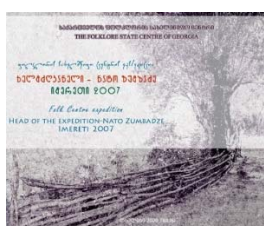
Giorgi Mtatsmindeli University of Chanting and Georgian Chanting Foundation published a  
**“Collection of Musical Dictations”**  
**Based on Georgian traditional music**  
 (compiled by Tamar Tolordava)



The Folklore State Centre of Georgia published  
**“Anthology of Georgian Chanting”**  
 volumes XII-XVII



**Materials of the 2007 folk expedition to Imereti**  
 (headed by Nato Zumbadze)



**Ensemble Ialoni** has released the CD  
**“Georgian traditional music. Healing Songs and Lullabies”**



**Ensemble Patara Kakhi** has released the CD  
**Georgian Church Chant**



Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgia State University published the book  
**“Svan Folk Art” part I**  
 (compiled by Davit Tsintsadze and Vakhtang Pilpani)  
 Song lyrics, audio-video recordings, round dances and dances



*Prepared by Sopiko Kotrikadze*



## *New Challenges*

### **The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony was Held Online**

International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatoire held the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony on 20-24 October, 2020. The symposium was held under the patronage of Salome Zurabishvili – the President of Georgia and with the financial support of the Georgian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. The project partners were the International Centre for Georgian Folk Song and the Folklore State Centre of Georgia.

Due to the global Covid-19 pandemic the preparation process of the symposium turned out to be fairly difficult. The decision on the format of the forum was changed several times. After the resumption of travelling abroad, the forum was decided to be held in a mixed format – for local and foreign scholars who decided to come to Georgia, the symposium would be held as usual in full compliance with government regulations, the others would join remotely.

As for traditional concert program, the opening concert with the participation of Tbilisi ensembles and video concert of foreign ensembles performing Georgian polyphony, as well as screening of the films on Georgian and Portuguese polyphony was decided to be held in the open space – in the garden of the Folklore State Centre of Georgia. Guests of honour were also invited. Cultural program was planned in Kvareli for the six foreign participants who had arrived.

Due to the exacerbation of the second wave of the pandemic, for the health and safety of the participants, at the last moment, on 19 October, the day before the opening, the Symposium organizers decided to move all the events planned for the forum remotely, this took a lot of effort on the part of the organizers

(dissemination of the information, preparation of the video concert of Tbilisi-based ensembles, in-

cluding filming, editing video files, preparation and editing the subtitles, etc., which replaced filming and editing of the open-air concert). The Conservatoire purchased Zoom package, which would allow for continuous transmission.

The booklet (with full information on the speakers and participating ensembles) was prepared and published, Georgian-language papers were translated into English, and English-language papers were translated into Georgian, respectively, the translations were edited. The materials were shared online for Georgian and foreign scientists. 13 Georgian and 27 foreign scholars from 17 countries participated in the Symposium online sessions. It should be noted, that the papers of 4 foreign scholars were dedicated to Georgian polyphony. The authors of the film on Georgian theme presented at the symposium were also foreigners.

The Round Table discussion was held on the topic: Traditional music and Contemporary Society. Topicality of the theme attracted several dozen participants from Georgia and other countries, who were actively involved in the discussion. It is also noteworthy, that every second day the organizers provided the information (conference papers in two languages, video presentations, recordings of online sessions) on the Centre's Google Drive. Since the materials were for reference, they were available only for 2 weeks after the end of the Symposium. Video concert of Tbilisi-based ensembles (Adilei, Anchiskhati, Basiani, Ialoni, Kimilia, Mtiebi, Rustavi and Shavnabada) was held on 20 October, on the opening evening of the symposium.

Organizing the concert in a short time was connected with technical difficulties, however the directors and members of the ensembles revealed great interest and responsibility, resulting in successful online show. About 90 people attended the live broadcast. The video concert was uploaded on the YouTube platform of the IRCTP. The symposium was crowned by the closing video concert with the participation of 19 foreign choirs of Georgian polyphony (from the US, Australia, Canada, France, Finland, UK, etc.) – the

participants of the Tbilisi symposia at various times. Each performance was preceded by the congratulation message on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary (see the link: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChSQK0Lkwr-5Qa1mvH6j3oQ/videos?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChSQK0Lkwr-5Qa1mvH6j3oQ/videos?view_as=subscriber)).

It should be noted that the video concert was prepared as part of the special project and aired on the Centre's YouTube channel by our Australian friends, who have been regular participants of previous symposia since 2002. There are several choirs of Georgian polyphony in Australia, in large part thanks to well-known Georgian ethnomusicologist Joseph Jordania and his wife ethnomusicologist Nino Tsitsishvili. About 40 ensembles of Georgian traditional polyphony from all over the world had expressed their desire to participate in the online concert of the symposium. Thus, even under the pandemics, our symposium once again united Georgian song-loving ensembles from all over the world.

Under the pandemics, entire symposium was held remotely, and naturally, we could not offer a diverse and extensive concert program. But, it must be said our online participants – scholars, singers and most importantly, a wide range of interested people, have not remained disappointed – they showed great interest to the video concert of our best ensembles, but the video concert of foreign singers, shown on YouTube as a sign of solidarity and love of the performers to the hosts was received with special admiration.

Finally, it should be noted that, holding the symposium remotely was not only a big challenge for the organizers, but also a big experience. It turned out, that along with difficulties (mostly technical) it had advantages as well: particularly, unlimited audience and the opportunity to be actively involved in the process from anywhere in the world. In our opinion, online format will actively be implemented in the future and the number of such meetings will significantly increase during various symposia, including the Tbilisi forum as well.

*IRCTP team*

## *Georgian Ethnomusicologists* **Nino (Nanuli) Maisuradze**



**Nino (Nanuli) Maisuradze**

Georgian ethnomusicologist Nino (Nanuli) Maisuradze was born in Tbilisi in 1937. In 1961 she graduated from Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and started working at the Ethnography department of Iv. Javakhishvili Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnology. The Department had had a great tradition of studying Georgian folk music. Great musicologists, composers and folklorists such as Dimitri Arakishvili, Grigol Chkhikvadze, Shalva Aslanishvili, Shalva Mshvelidze, Vladimir Akhobadze, Tamar Mamaladze, Boris Gulisashvili worked at the Ethnography department in parallel with V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire in 1940-1950.

Thus, at the Institute Nino Maisuradze came to the ground which, may have determined the fate of her future scientific activities. As an ethnologist she was formed beside Giorgi Chitaia and Vera Bardavelidze – the founders of Georgian professional school of ethnology, and as a musicologist – under the supervision of Shalva Aslanishvili. Distinguished is Maisuradze's relation with Vera Bardavelidze. She was one of the first ethnologists who followed Bardavelidze to the field, documented the material and participated in its classification together with Bardavelidze. G. Chitaia, who along with the establishment of ethnology as a field of science in Georgia, initiated various directions in this sphere, with Shalva

Aslanishvili's assistance in the 1960s laid foundation to musical ethnography and later – ethnomusicology at the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnology. Later, this direction was formed as a separate discipline in ethnomusicology, which provides for the study of folk music as an element of everyday life in close connection with natural environment, through empirical observations using the complex-intensive method. "This direction is a synthesis of ethnology and folk music. Musical ethnology studies folk music in its historical-ethnological aspect. It has aesthetic and at the same time ethnic function; it is generated in the depth of the household tradition and is included in the cycle of ethnological science" – Maisuradze writes. Since a researcher cannot work in ethnomusicology without inner hearing, a deep knowledge of the harmony of music, a high ability to comprehend the auditory material to correctly analyse the musical material, Maisuradze passed a special course in musicology at Tbilisi State Conservatoire.



**Nino Maisuradze in Tusheti expedition with Giorgi Chitaia, Vera Bardavelidze and other colleagues (1966)**

Nino Maisuradze is the author of over 100 works; she has participated in a number of conferences and symposia. She has been a member of ECEM since 1990. The topic of her scientific interest and research is: the issues related to the Georgians' identity and ethnicity basing on musical material, musical formation of separate ethnographic groups (regions), forms of polyphony

originated from the root language, Georgian polyphony in general, historical-ethnographic aspects of Georgian folk music, Georgian musical language, Abkhazian-Georgian and Georgian-North Caucasian musical relations, musical terminology, etc.

The theory of Georgian root language should be highlighted among other achievements in her scientific work.

In 1983 Maisuradze defended doctoral dissertation "The Problems of Origin, Formation and Development of Georgian Folk Music" and was conferred Doctoral degree and the title of professor in two fields (ethnology and musicology).

Maisuradze's musical and textual field-expedition materials are distinguished in their quantity, quality and reliability. When collecting materials together with Vera Bardavelidze, along with the stories of Bardavelidze's narrators, Maisuradze also collected her own ones under Bardavelidze's guidance.

In 1980-1990 Maisuradze was the first to lead a special course in ethnomusicology. In addition to Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Pedagogical Institute, she was Head of the Department at Tbilisi Independent University Georgika. At Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology she set up a problem group, which was, in fact, an independent department headed by her.

I would like to highlight not only her merits, but also the talent of a scientific supervisor. She has always been demanding, consistent, scrupulous and at the same time, friendly. Maisuradze has been an opponent of a number of dissertation works.

Nino (Nanuli) Maisuradze is the author of many songs, which have been included in the collection "Those, Who I Loved"; these have been performed on stage by many Georgian singers.

**Nino Ghambashidze**  
*Ethnologist*



## We are United by Georgian Traditional Music – This Treasure Belongs to Everyone

*Giorgi Mtatsmindeli High School of Chanting has implemented the project “We are United by Georgian Traditional Music – This Treasure Belongs to Everyone”. The project is the winner of the competition announced by the Georgian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, within the framework of the culture promotion program – “Art without Dividing Lines – Accessibility of art education in compact IDP settlements and regions of the country”. Tamar Chkheidze – the project supervisor, Dean of the University of Chanting tells us in detail about the goals and results of the project.*

**S.K.:** How did the idea for the project come about?

**T.CH.:** As you know the University of Chanting prepares choirmasters and church-choir directors. This is a level of higher education; however, in order to enter our university young people need some preparation. In this regard noteworthy are choirmaster’s schools opened with the efforts and support of the State by the Folklore State Centre in different regions of Georgia, where children learn Georgian traditional songs and chants. Here children have access not only to folk music, but to art education in general. In recent years, the graduates of these schools became the students of our university. Sadly, there are no such choirmaster’s schools in the regions where there are IDP settlements. Our projects promote access to education, on the one hand, and are also important in terms of student employment, on the other hand. One of the many competitions announced by the Georgian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in the spring of 2020 was about the access to art education in the compact settlements of IDP. Since the mission of our university and the theme of the competition matched each other, I started thinking which IDP settlement could be our target group. Finally, I selected public school #3 of Tserovani settlement.



teachers from the University of Chanting meet the pupils of the public school in Tserovani settlement

**S.K. :** What was the duration of the project?

**T.CH.:** This was a short-term project covering 5 months (July 15-December 10). From July to November we carried out preparatory work: defined the repertoire, selected the teachers. Teacher of folklore, associate professor of the University of Chanting – Teona Rukhadze; visiting teacher, the teacher of church chanting – Ekaterine Kazarashvili. The project was in active phase from October, when the educational process began in public schools. It should be noted, that the project initially envisaged the activities using online platforms as well, but the existing pandemic reality, naturally, hindered the project to some extent and changed the format. We had planned large-scale events: for instance, a joint concert of the children from Tserovani public school and Kaspi choirmaster’s school at the Kaspi Municipality House of Culture. Given the current reality it was held online. We also planned to bring the students participating in the project to the University of Chanting, in order to arrange their meeting with the University students, attend lectures and organize a Day of Open Doors for them..... We conducted this activity with the help of online platform, as part of the project. Specially for the pupils of Tserovani public school, an educational CD was made with the participation of Chanting University students. This is the repertoire that these children have learned.

**S.K.:** At what extent was the local side involved in the project?



**At the rehearsal**

**T. CH.:** We offered cooperation to Tserovani public school before submitting the application for the project, which they gladly accepted and were very happy when the project won the competition. I would like to note that the school administration has fairly organized relations with the pupils and their parents. The school helped us as much as possible in terms of allocating the space and mobilizing the pupils' interest. Our cooperation from the school was coordinated by music teacher Nona Beruashvili, who helped us a lot in communicating with the children. The school-children turned out to be very talented and interested. The project envisaged arranging a folklore corner in the school; for this purpose we purchased a *panduri* and *chonguri*, audio system and educational literature. We think that once the children learn hymns, they will be able to chant at the church.

**S.K.: What will be the result of the project?**

**T.Ch.:** Main goal of the competition announced by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport was to provide access to art education in IDP settlements. Our project aims to increase the availability of traditional music in this region. It is noteworthy, that the project also involves students from the University of Chanting, who can acquire some pedagogical practice through the relation with school-children. In the future, the graduates of this school may become our students. The project is supported by the Georgian Chanting Foundation; we are thinking also think about concluding a memorandum to continue this cooperation. I do not regard this project as a 5-month project, which started in July and will end in December. We have long-term goals. Of course

this was facilitated by the competition for which we prepared this particular project; however, the work we do is far more important than just access to art education. As you know, learning traditional music from early age is extremely important for the proper formation of value system and understanding of national identity. Especially for youngsters who are disconnected from their native habitat and natural environment. So, I think instilling love for this culture from childhood, is a big and truly national issue. Of course the project will have corresponding results in 5 months, but at the same time it will turn into the onset of our creative cooperation with School #3 in Tserovani.

*Interviewed by Sopiko Kotrikadze*

### **Anzor Erkomaishvili's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Anzor Erkomaishvili's merit is well known to Georgian and foreign musicians and lovers of Georgian folk music. This year he turned 80. Here is a brief review of his life and work, once again emphasizing his contribution to Georgian culture, thus we express our love and gratitude to him.



**Anzor Erkomaishvili**

Anzor Erkomaishvili comes from the dynasty of singers, with musical tradition of at least 300 years. The Erkomaishvili family is associated with singing and chanting in Guria (and not only in Guria). Anzor's paternal grandfather Ivane was known for being an exceptional *gamqivani*. His son – Gigo Erkomaishvili was a self-taught singer, choir master and unparalleled performer of Guri-

an songs; the 1907 recordings of his choir are one of the oldest in Georgia. Of Gigo Erkomaishvili's ten children his three sons – Artem, Anania and Vladimir, and Artem's grandson Anzor continued musical traditions.

Thus, Anzor Erkomaishvili has genetically inherited a deep knowledge of folk musical culture and its performance traditions. At the age of 5 he already sang old Gurian songs together with his father-Davit, grandfather Artem and great grandfather Gigo Erkomaishvili. A person, who, from early age had got familiarized with folk songs, should not have even thought about another profession, but after graduating from school, he wanted to become a journalist. Here is what Artem Erkomaishvili then said to his grandson: *“You are the six generation of musical tradition bearers in our family. Now I am the only owner of the wealth that cannot be sold for money or gold. If something happens to me I will take with me the treasure that no one can restore, and you and I will have to bear this sin. You have Gurian song in your blood and therefore you can do it best, if you receive musical education”*. These words made a big change in the young man's thinking.... He soon realized what his grandfather had said, and after finishing school, instead of studying journalism, he first studied at Sergo Zakariadze School of Cultural education, and then graduated from Choir Conducting Faculty of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. While still a student he started recording folk songs and church hymns as performed by his grandfather and transcribing them. At the same time together with his friends he created ensemble Gordela to learn these songs and hymns, the group existed for 15 years, returning Georgian listeners to traditional singing in Communist epoch and was the first to present our treasure to the world.

In 1968 together with his friends Anzor Erkomaishvili created ensemble Rustavi, which he directed until 2018. During 50 years Rustavi performed more than 7,000 concerts in over 80 countries of the world; recorded over 760 Georgian songs on LPs and CDs.

In 1976 Anzor Erkomaishvili created and directed the boys' ensemble Martve. Being one of the most popular and honoured Georgian boys' ensembles, it raised five generations and taught Georgian folk songs to thousands of children.

Anzor Erkomaishvili also actively promoted Georgian traditional music on television. For years he was the host of the TV series: “100 Georgian Folk Songs” and “Mravalzhamier”.



poster of the Jubilee

Invaluable is Anzor Erkomaishvili's merit as a collector of folk music. From 1972 he found the phonograms of hundreds of Georgian folk songs recorded in 1907-1930 in the archives of different countries (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Krasnogorsk, London and Riga).

Anzor Erkomaishvili continues to work on the catalogue of the recordings traced in foreign archives (draws and fills in multicomponent tables manually, without a computer), corrects actual and other errors made during certification, and selflessly strives to return these recordings to Georgia.

It is thanks to Anzor Erkomaishvili that old gramophone records have been restored, as a result of which future generations will have the opportunity to listen to the century-old recordings of Vano Sarajishvili, Sandro Inashvili, Niko Kumsiashvili, Sandro Kavsadze, Varlam Simonishvili, Samuel Chavleishvili, Avksenti Megreli-dze, Noko Khurtsia, Kirile Pachkoria, Maro Tarkhnishvili, Artem Erkomaishvili, Levan Asabashvili, Vano Mchedlishvili and other singers...

In 1983-1996 on the initiative and with the support of Anzor Erkomaishvili, more than 300 Georgian folk songs were recorded for foreign companies, which are distributed world-wide as CDs. Parallel to all this, in 1985-1998 Anzor man-



aged to bring renowned singers and their ensembles from different parts of Georgia to the capital city and record them. Hundreds of Georgian folk songs were recorded, which, in fact, acquired educational function.

Anzor Erkomaishvili is the compiler of a large number of music collections and catalogues of audio recordings. Such as: Collections of Georgian (Gurian) folk songs; “Martve is 20”; “First Audio Recordings in Georgia”; music collection recorded from Artem Erkomaishvili – Georgian (Gurian) folk songs and hymns; Georgian audio recordings of 1901-1930 abroad; Georgian Folk Song – Ensemble Rustavi; Ensemble Rustavi is 40; 400 Georgian Folk Songs.... One part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Anthology “Georgia, History, Culture, Ethnography”, which includes Georgian folk music, was prepared and published as organized by Anzor Erkomaishvili.



**Anzor Erkomaishvili was awarded St. George Order by the President of Georgia**

In 2001 the project “Chakrulo” was presented at UNESCO under Anzor Erkomaishvili’s leadership, followed by UNESCO proclamation of Georgian polyphonic singing a Masterpiece of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The same year The International Centre for Georgian Folk Song was created on Erkomaishvili’s initiative and with the support of UNESCO; the Centre released a large number of publications for those interested in learning Georgian folk music.

Anzor Erkomaishvili’s journalistic talent still showed itself. He is the author of very interesting books: “Grandfather”, “Black Thrush Said”, “My Grandfather Artem Erkomaishvili”, “Roads, People, Songs”, “Givi the Teacher”, “Magicians of

our Football”, “My Village”, “Strange Voices”, “I am Going to Guria, but....”, “Following in the Footsteps of Old Songs” and others.

The songs composed by Anzor Erkomaishvili constitute an interesting part of his diverse work. Namely: “Mival guriashi mara”, “Tu ase turpa iqavi”, “Kali gadmodga mtazeda”, “Ais ghrublebi miqvaran!”, “Saidan mokhvel shen kalo”, “Khareba da Gogia”, “Shirakis velze mivdivar”, “Khars vgevar naialaghars”, “Kalo gikhdeba kamari”, “Gazapkhultan ertad vitqvi simgheras”.

To show Anzor Erkomaishvili’s merits, it is enough to list the awards and prizes he has received over the last four decades: the Prizes of Shota Rustaveli, Ivane Javakhishvili, Ilia Chavchavadze, Ekvtime Takaishvili, Albert Schweizer, Iakob Gogebashvili, Zakaria Paliashvili, Niko Berdzenishvili, Dimitri Arakishvili, the title of People’s Artist of Georgia, Charter of Honour of Estonia, Mexico Prize for the best musical arrangement of the performance, academician of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, Georgian State Award – Order of Honour, highest award of the Georgian Church – St. George Order, Honorary Professor of Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Georgian Chanting Foundation Award “for safeguarding Georgian Folk Song”, Honorary Citizen of Tbilisi. On the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary Anzor Erkomaishvili was awarded the title of Emeritus Professor by Giorgi Mtatsmindeli High School of Ecclesiastical Chanting.

Anzor Erkomaishvili has fulfilled truly historical mission with dignity and has worked for the benefit of Georgian folk music for more than sixty years. .... It can be said without exaggeration that in his person Georgian folklore has a reliable beneficent, devoted fan and an exemplary follower of family traditions. The International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony congratulates Anzor Erkomaishvili on his anniversary and wishes him health, vigour and many more fruitful years of active life.

**Maka Khardziani**



## ***A New Publication***

### **Teach Yourself Acharan Folk Song**

A music collection of Acharan folk songs with a CD has been published. The collection is the second edition of the series – Let's Learn Georgian Folk Song; with Anzor Erkomaishvili as the author and supervisor of the publication, Nino Kalandadze-Makharadze – the editor, Nino Razmadze – compiler and project coordinator.



The collection includes sheet music and audio versions of 24 Acharan songs. For learning purposes the songs are recorded in four tracks. The first track contains full version of the song, while on the other three – the voices are arranged in sequence. The publication aims to teach and popularize the examples of the traditional musical heritage of Achara. Learning from audio recordings will help to get acquainted with and master the mode-intonation peculiarities, improvisation techniques, interrelation between voice-parts and performance manner of Acharan songs.

The songs are performed by: folk ensemble Moqvare (directed by Amiran and Jemal Turmanidze) from the village of Merisi, Keda Municipality and folk ensemble Elesa (dir. Irakli Sirabidze) of Keda Municipality.

### **Ensemble Moqvare**

The village of Merisi in Keda Municipality, famous for its singing and dancing traditions, is a happy exception that still adheres to the ancestors' traditions and preserves their vitality. The Turmanidze family has made a special contribution to the preservation and development of these traditions for decades. The Turmanidze dynasty has a long history.

Distinguished in medicine, they also had a talent for singing and left an indelible mark here as well. This can convincingly be said about the Turmanidzes from Merisi.

The ensemble was created by Revaz Turmanidze in 1950 and today, Amiran and Jemal Turmanidze, the descendants of this village, dynasty and family continue this path.

In 2006 the ensemble was thoroughly renewed. Amiran the father, was assisted by his son and young generation came as directed by Jemal Turmanidze. It was then that the group was given the name Moqvare. There are many beautiful words in Georgian language. Among them the word *moqvare* – semantically related to love and grown from this root: the ensemble members are all members of one family, uncles, nephews, close relatives, in a word. Moqvare aims to preserve, revive folk musical traditions of the native village and pass them on to young generations, which it scrupulously does. Today Moqvare's membership comprises three generations of singers, which is a solid guarantee for the immortality of the folk-singing traditions in this region. The ensemble's repertoire chiefly includes traditional songs of Merisi and the Merisi variants of Acharan songs.

The project – "One Village Folklore: Merisi, Achara" was successfully implemented under the guidance of ethnomusicologist Nino Razmadze in 2010. The project involved reviving local traditions basing on the expedition materials preserved at the archive of Georgian Folk Music laboratory of Tbilisi State Conservatoire and presenting them to a wide audience. Presentation of the project was held at the Grand Hall of Tbilisi State Conservatoire. The project was repeatedly presented at Batumi International Festival and Conference of Traditional Music in 2011.

With the growing interest of foreign listeners in Georgian traditional music, it is especially important for them to learn songs from local performers. In this regard Moqvare – in the person of Amiran, Jemal, Besik and Revaz Turmanidze works actively and productively: holds lecture-concerts, workshops for foreign amateur and professional musicians, thus making great

contribution to the development of folk tourism in Achara.



**Ensemble Moqvare**

In 2017 the Georgian Chanting Foundation awarded Amiran Turmanidze – the director and eldest member of Moqvare in the nomination “Beneficent of Georgian Folklore”. The same year Folklore State Centre of Georgia released Moqvare’s first audio album (compiled by Nana Valishvili).

#### **Ensemble Elesa**

The tradition of stage-folk performance in Keda dates back to the late 1930s, when a mixed female-male choir was created at Keda House of Culture. Changes took place in the early 1990s: the mixed choir disbanded and choirmaster Tariel Mamaladze continued working with a group of 8 male singers, which was soon formed into a folk ensemble. The ensemble was named Elesa in 1996; its updated membership has existed since 2011. The ensemble is directed by Irakli Sirabidze, with Tariel Mamaladze being a consultant until 2019. Elesa’s repertoire mainly includes traditional songs of Upper Achara (Keda, Shuakhevi, Khulo). This is Elesa’s chief creative goal – to find and give new life to the traditional folk examples from mountainous Achara. Elesa selects songs mostly from archival recordings. The ensemble has already revived dozens of Upper Acharan songs and added them to the repertoire. Elesa’s popularity and creative success is conditioned by authentic performance manner and natural, mastery performance of folk examples. The first audio album of Elesa (compiled by Nana Valishvili) was released by the Folklore State Centre in 2016; and the second album (compiled by Nino Razmadze) – by Georgian Chanting Foundation in 2017. Sev-

en songs from Elesa’s repertoire have been included in the audio album “Folk Songs of Achara” released by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the Autonomous Republic of Achara (2013).



**Ensemble Elesa**

The audio material included in the collection was recorded by the portable sound recording studio “Georgian Chanting” Giorgi Mtatsmindeli Higher School of Chanting within the framework of Georgian-German expedition (2019). In the joint expedition of German side was represented by the University of Potsdam – Professor Frank Scherbaum, and Doctor of Arts, ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze (University of Potsdam, Germany), who, together with the University of Erlangen is involved in the Implementation of a three-year (2019-2021) project “Computational Analysis of Georgian Traditional Vocal Music) funded by the German Research Foundation. The Georgian side of the expedition was represented by the International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony of Tbilisi State Conservatoire and Charitable Georgian Chanting Foundation.

Elesa actively participates in international symposia, festivals and concerts, Radio and Television projects and tours with concerts in Europe. For the contribution to the revival of traditional polyphony in Achara, Elesa was awarded the Prizes of Georgian Chanting Foundation (2013) and Tsinandali (2014).

**Nana Valishvili**

*Ethnomusicologist,*

*Head of Georgian Folk Art Direction  
at the Folklore State Centre of Georgia*

*Foreign Performers of Georgian Folk Songs*  
**The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary IRCTP  
Symposium International  
Choirs Concert  
“Gaumarjos”**

Over the past 50 years there has been a growing appreciation of the beauty and complexity of Georgian traditional music worldwide. Many hundreds of singers in choirs around the world now have these songs at the core of their repertoire. In recent years they have been inspired by the work of Georgian ethnomusicologists Anzor Erkomaishvili, Edisher Garakanidze, Joseph Jordania, Nino Tsitsishvili, as well as choirs and ensembles such as Rustavi, Basiani, Rihho, members of the Turmanidze family and many other groups, as well as individual singers who travelled and taught widely.

International choirs have participated in the cultural program which runs in parallel with the academic program at each symposium and are extremely grateful for the opportunities to learn, to meet and hear local and other international singers, to perform at wonderful concerts and for the generously shown by IRCTP. Many were keen to attend the 2020 Symposium but COVID-19 travel restrictions made that impossible.



**Poster of the concert**

For many months COVID-19 had prevented singers from meeting in the same room. Some had stopped rehearsing altogether; others had honed a variety of online networking and recording skills.

The Boite (Victoria) Inc., a multicultural music organisation based in Melbourne Australia,

together with two groups it has supported for many years, Gorani and the Melbourne Georgian Choir, all felt a strong allegiance to the IRCTP Symposium, and were working hard to adapt to the COVID-19 environment. Rehearsing by Zoom is extremely frustrating. Individuals sing along with pre-recorded tracks with their microphones muted to avoid the chaos caused by the significant latency (delay) in the online system. These groups, in common with many others around the world, started producing video recordings of songs. This led to the idea of producing an online concert for the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium featuring videos of Georgian songs by international choirs with links to the Symposium recorded in this distressing but historic year of the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Roger King**

The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Symposium International Choirs Concert was developed to meet a challenge presented by COVID-19 as it spread across the world, forcing the International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony (IRCTP) to convert the 2020 biennial International Symposium into an online format rather than the usual week long gathering of local and international academics and singers at the State Conservatoire, Tbilisi, Georgia. On 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2020 Roger King, with the support of Dr Joseph Jordania, approached Dr Rusudan Tsurtsumia, Director of the IRCTP, proposing an online concert of international choirs (choirs not based in Georgia), with Georgian songs at the core of their repertoire, to be included in the 2020 Symposium scheduled for 20 -24 October, 2020. Choir leaders



were contacted via international networks of singers and by IRCTP staff using their own lists. Significant early support was offered by John Graham, Matthew Knight, Geoff Burton, Jen Morris, Lill Hajncl and Therese Virtue. Despite the extremely tight timeline, and noting that we planned to present ten videos, 24 choirs submitted 37 video recordings of traditional Georgian or Georgian inspired songs together with brief introductions. Most of these videos were recorded in 2020 under the constraints imposed by COVID-19. With some revision to the guidelines and the cooperation of all involved, film maker Jules Ober combined 22 videos into a one hour seven minute presentation for the closing event of the Symposium.

The concert was introduced by Dr. Nana Sharikadze, Rector of the State Conservatoire, Tbilisi, Georgia and closed by Dr. Rusudan Tsurtsumia, Director of the IRCTP. The online concert was streamed via YouTube, a reliable platform for a large international audience. The “live” concert was viewed by about 500 people from countries including Georgia, the USA, Canada, the UK, France and Australia.



**Ensemble Slaveya (USA)**

Participating choir members, symposium participants and staff attended a Zoom online gathering which started 45 minutes before the concert began and ended 45 min after the concert finished. Despite most participants being fatigued after enduring months of online conference meetings and rehearsals, this was a particularly lively gathering.



**Ensemble Maspindzeli (UK)**

Here are the ensembles, participated in the concert: Chela (Cambridge, UK), Darbazi (Toronto, Canada), Machari (Toronto, Canada), Gorani (Melbourne, Australia), Harira (Montreal, Canada), Kalendar (Toronto, Canada), Kitka (Oakland, California, USA), Knight Family (Winnipeg, Canada), Koronas Qvarteti (International), Maspindzeli (London, England), Melbourne Georgian Choir (Melbourne, Australia), Mze Shina (France), Niavi (Washington, DC, USA), Nino's Workshop Choir, (International), Ori Shalva (Toronto, Canada), Samshabati (Billom, France), Satchukari (France), Slaveya (Washington, DC, USA), Tevri (Helsinki, Finland), Tsinskaro (Melbourne, Australia), Yale Russian Chorus (New Haven, USA), Zoomis Sopeli (International).

The concert is now hosted on web-site:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChS\\_QK0Lkwr-5Qa1mvH6j3oQ/playlists](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChS_QK0Lkwr-5Qa1mvH6j3oQ/playlists). Total viewing by mid December 2020 was 3,100. All submitted videos have been individually uploaded to the website and each has been viewed hundreds of times. The selection of online technology to support the project and the preparation and uploading of several hours of video was completed by Eyal Chipkiewicz, General Manager of the Boite in Melbourne, Australia. Rusudan Tsurtsumia and her staff, particularly Teona Lomtsadze, were unfailingly supportive.

The work of Eyal Chipkiewicz was sponsored by The Boîte. All other work was completed on a voluntary basis.

**Roger King**

*Initiator and coordinator of the concert*



## Gorda

*Ensemble Gorda was created three years ago, however, given the epidemiological situation of the last year, in two years the group succeeded to attract the interest of both Georgian and foreign listeners. Giorgi Gordeladze, director of the ensemble tells about the ensemble's creative life before the pandemic and how it responds to modern challenges.*

**M.Kh.** – When did you get the idea to create an ensemble and how did you realize it?

**G.G.** – To tell you the truth initially we thought of creating a Gurian trio. My brother Damiane and I often sang with Levan Sikharulidze, Tristan Sikharulidze's grandson and we thought we would form a trio. At that time I was already enrolled at Giorgi Mtatsmindeli University of Chanting. It happened so that the trio was joined by other boys – mostly the students of this University. The membership slowly increased and since about 2017 we have become an ensemble.



Giorgi Gordeladze

**M.Kh.** – Why did you call the ensemble Gorda?

**G.G.** – The name is symbolic. As you know *gorda* is an old Georgian small dagger. My ancestors made such daggers in Guria. The surname Gordeladze comes from here.

**M.Kh.** – What is the profession of the ensemble members?

**G.G.** – Currently we are 12 in the ensemble: Aleksandre Mikeladze, Akaki Kuprava, Bachana Melashvili, Giga Diasamidze, Giorgi Shanava, Davit Kolelishvili, Damiane Gordeladze, Tengiz Alkha-

zishvili, Ilia Khvichia, Levan Iosava, Rati Iadze, and I.

As I have already said, most of us are graduates of the Chanting University. This is where we became friends and got skilled. It is noteworthy, that one of our soloists Davit Kolelishvili is a lecturer at this University and heads Kakhetian song direction at the studio of Anchiskhati choir; Ilia Khvichia and Aleksandre Mikeladze are choirmasters and church choir directors at the Choirmaster's school of the Folklore State Centre. Akaki Kuprava and Giga Diasamidze are also engaged in pedagogical activities; Bachana Melashvili grew in ensemble Mdzlevari, being its soloist for years; Levan Iosava and Tengiz Alkhazishvili sing in the State ensemble of Abkhazia in parallel with Gorda.

**M.Kh.** – How do you select the repertoire and the songs of which region do you prefer?

**G.G.** – I must say that initially we went in the direction that probably everyone follows at the first stage of creating the ensemble. I mean selecting and sorting the repertoire from old archival recordings and music collections. Later we realized that we did not want this to be our main focus, so we decided to think of our individual style and we started creating songs based on old folk motives, searching for lyrics and arranging them for new melodies. Which we think was a good idea. This process is not simple, but is creatively interesting and attractive for both listeners and performers. We do not give preference to any region. We do our best to encompass more or less all dialects, create new examples imprinted with our style.

**M. Kh.** – Is the origin of the ensemble members decisive in selecting the repertoire?

**G.G.** – yes, generally, it is. It is important who sings the song of this or that region, but I would add an interesting opinion to be considered: if the song is sung sincerely, if it is “genuine” and the singer does not simply sing it, but presents himself, I am sure such a song and singer will always have listeners, regardless of where he comes from. If along with professionalism there is heart and soul in the song, it will make ice melt.

**M. Kh.** – How active was your creative life before the pandemic?

**G.G.** – From the day of its inception Gorda tried to be actively involved in various events in Tbilisi and the regions. We actively collaborated and still collaborate with the Folklore State Centre of Georgia. Luckily, we also had the opportunity to travel abroad and introduce our creations to foreign listeners. Last year we performed at Vilnius State Philharmonic Hall, open stage of Paris Museum of Modern Art, on the grand stage of Moscow Academy of Music, etc. The critique was really impressive, however, I think that the applause and praise we received, in fact belong to folk song and great people who preserved this treasure for us.

**M. Kh.** – Have you already held a solo concert?

**G.G.** – We held our first solo concert in May, 2018 at the Royal District Theatre in Tbilisi, for which we are grateful to the administration.

**M. Kh.** – Have you recorded an audio album?

**G.G.** – The album includes lesser and well-known the songs from almost all parts of Georgia. We are delighted that the album contains immortal versions of the songs: "Chven mshvidoba" and "Utsinares mas vadideb" of our teachers Tristan and Guri Sikharulidze the members of the trio Shalva chemo. I had the good fortune to be friends with and learn a lot from Guri Sikharulidze, who was a unique singer in Guria; Tristan Sikharulidze was my first teacher and I am proud to be so lucky. I still learn from him and am immensely grateful to him!

**M. Kh.** – What do you do now and what are your plans for near future?

**G. G.** – We were actively preparing for the solo concert in the beginning of 2020. We planned to present completely new songs and the examples arranged by us to the audience in the spring, but we were prevented by the pandemic. We think that as soon as we return to active life, we will definitely hold this solo concert in the new concert hall of the Folklore State Centre.

We worked before the pandemic and continue to work, as far as possible, on the second audio album. It will include completely new

songs created by us on folk motives, which I think will interest everyone.



**Ensemble Gorda**

**M. Kh.** – What did the pandemic change in the ensemble's life, do you manage to meet in the time of restrictions?

**G. G.** – Unfortunately, over the past year, we, like probably many musicians, could not meet and rehearse together. This is a very difficult time and we do our best to take care of each other's health.

**M. Kh.** – In your opinion are remote creative relations fruitful?

**G. G.** – We try to remotely share old recordings, learn and get familiarized with interesting old and new musical material. This too, will probably bear good fruits. We think that when the pandemic is over we will see our work in a completely different way. We will appreciate singing together and a lot of precious things, that we did not consider so important before!

**M. Kh.** – Can you imagine a long online activity of singers and chanters?

**G. G.** – We live in a digital era and I think we should follow it as much as possible. We should use all modern technologies, however we should also consider the extent to which folk song allows doing so. I find online forums and concerts, discussions about folk songs relevant. I am glad we already have practice for this. Georgian folk music is the property of the whole world and we must use all means for it to be heard anywhere in the world, regardless of our physical presence.

**M.Kh.** – I wish you success.

*Interviewed by Maka Khardziani*

## Polyphonic Singing of Chakhesang Naga tribe in India

The Chakhesang Naga is an ethnic minority of Indo-mongoloid origin who live in the mountainous areas in the south part of Nagaland, a state of Northeast India near the Myanmar border. Most of them make a living from agriculture and their villages are surrounded by terrace fields of slash-and-burn cultivation. Nowadays, most of them are Baptist Christians. They have a rich traditional vocal polyphony called *Li*, which is a kind of conversation with other members of their own village.



Traditional clothes of Chakhesang Naga

Today, *Li* is often sung by village women during cooperative work in the mountainous rice fields, and there exist various polyphonic motions. *Li* is not a parallel polyphony, but the parallel fourth, fifth and eighth frequently appear and this is also characteristic of the harmonic texture of perfect fourth and fifth intervals. The *Li* repertoire is classified into free rhythm *Li* and pulse rhythm *Tati*. 1) Free rhythm *Li* songs are performed *a cappella* and their distinctive feature is that they are sung with the slow vibrato extent of major second. 2) Pulse rhythm *Tati* songs are accompanied by a plucked string instrument called the *Tati*. In *Tati*, a simple rhythmic pattern is performed repeatedly with only two notes. In *Tati* songs, the singer of each part chooses from three to five notes among the C, E, G and A in three octaves. Interestingly, E and A are used in

both natural and flat notes, and the pitches are considerably different to those of equal temperament. In addition, some *Tati* songs have drone polyphony or canonic polyphony.



Chakhesang Naga girls with a *Tati*

The song lyrics in Chokri language are composed of a fixed verse of two alternating phrases of four and five syllables and people express internal feelings by vocalizing simple words in rhyme. The lyrics of *Li* and *Tati* songs cover a variety of topics, including love, nature worship, battles, village heroes, obsequies, friendship and so on. Unfortunately, in some villages, such traditional singing culture is in danger of being lost due to Christianization and modernization. The traditional musical elements of *Li* continue to be inherited, but there is a general tendency among young people to have less interest and ability to sing free rhythm *Li* songs and complex *Tati* songs due to a lack of opportunities to learn deeply. In addition, songs on the themes of battles or obsequies are no longer performed and have been replaced by new lyrics influenced by Christianity.

Why did polyphonic singing style develop in the Chakhesang Naga society? A commonly used *Li* verse may give us a clue: “*Ne hi mo zho, Hanü di yo le*” (Without you, I am not happy). This line has multiple interpretations. It is not only a message for a lover, but also a metaphor that one cannot sing alone and that singing together brings happiness. It is also a metaphor of a Chakhesang social system founded on interpersonal cooperativeness. I would argue that in the case of the *Li* of the Chakhesang Naga, it is most



associated with the geographical environment and traditional cooperative system of labour. The village of the Chakhesang Naga are situated in mountainous terrain surrounded by terraced rice fields, and most of the processes of plowing, harrowing, impounding, transplanting, harvesting, threshing and hulling are undertaken by small groups of close friends called *Müle*, without the use of agricultural machinery or beasts of burden. During hard work in the terrace fields, when someone begins to sing *Li* as they fall into the rhythm of work, other *Müle* members will respond with different voice parts. Singing *Li* together helps to improve work efficiency and to overcome fatigue. Furthermore, the most important function of the *Li* is that it maintains solidarity, creating systems of mutual aid and interpersonal cooperativeness.

**Emi Okada**

*Associate Professor,  
National Museum of Ethnology, Japan*

### ***One Regional Ensemble***

#### **Folk Ensemble Shgarida from Dmanisi**

*Folk ensemble Shgarida of the eco-migrants from Svaneti was created on Gurgen Gurchiani's initiative in Dmanisi. The group seeks for, restores, revives and researches the examples of Svan folklore buried in oblivion. The name Shgarida is related to Svan warriors' song. Today, the ensemble's repertoire comprises over forty Svan songs and round dances. Gurgen Gurchiani, director of Shgarida tells about the history and goals of the ensemble:*

**S.K.** – Please tell us the history of Shgarida, how it was created

**G.G.** – Shgarida was created in 2002. Our direction was defined from the inception of our collective: restoration and research of archival and expedition recordings. I would like to mention Anzor Erkomaishvili's contribution to the creation of Shgarida – he supported and encouraged us on

the initial stage. In Dmanisi our forerunner was ensemble Lile, of which I was a member.

It existed for several years, but, then, due to some reasons it disbanded.



**Old generation of ensemble Shgarida**

Shgarida's creative credo is fundamentally different from Lile's performance principles. As I have already said, the goal of our ensemble is to revive the variants of old, forgotten Svan ritual songs and hymns. At the time of Shgarida's creation, I had restored the fragments of over 20 ancient ritual songs, recorded from elderly tradition bearers during my personal expeditions in Svaneti; and with this repertoire in 2003 Shgarida presented itself to the audience in Dmanisi.

**S.K.** – What is your repertoire and where do you learn the songs from?

**G.G.** – Our repertoire mainly comprises Svan songs and hymns. However, we also sing the songs from other parts of Georgia; for example, “Shen bicho anagurelo”, several variants of “Mravalzhamier”, etc. Shgarida's repertoire mainly includes the songs found and restored by me. In recent years we restored Gadrani family variant of “Kviria”. Chuberkhevi variant of the round dance “Mirmikela”, which I learned from Miron Tsindeliani and Shura Vibliani – the Svans displaced to Tandzia. In addition, we have revived Svan warriors' song from Datiko Chkhetiani's recording. From Vladimir Akhobadze's music collection we have restored Svan “Harira”; from my father and uncles – Mushni and Chicho Gurchiani I learned the songs “Ga”, “Tskhau krisdeshi” and “Zashinava”....



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

**G.G.** – It is me who basically works on the songs. As I mentioned, I have recorded separate voice-parts from elderly Svans. First I work on these recordings, and then bring it to the ensemble. All ensemble members participate in the process of working on the song. In the creative process, young people often express their opinion, which delights me. Sometimes the creative process se-  
gues into an argument and gradually the song gets its final shape. It can be said, that we do not only work on songs, but restore them in fact. In this way we restored the village Lenjeri variant of “Raidio” from Akhobadze’s music collection.

**S.K.** – Who are the ensemble members and what do they do?

**G.G.** – All members of Shgarida singers and dancers are Svan. None of them have special musical education; they are engaged in different fields of activity. The dancers are mostly young people. By performing round dances and sharing Svan musical traditions together with older members, they gradually master the songs as well. Erekle Pilpani combines the function of choreographer in the ensemble.

Sadly, some members have passed away; some moved elsewhere, some are students. The membership keeps changing, although the core remains.



Two generation of ensemble Shgarida

Current membership is as follows: Ghuda Ansiani, Vasil Parjiani, Anzor Gadrani, Mikheil Tsindeli, Valeri Vibliani, Joqola Jachvliani, Mindia Gurchiani, Erekle Pilpani, Vakhtang Girgvliani, Spartak Ansiani, Ilo Pilpani, Giorgi Pilpani, Giorgi Charkviani, Ilo Charkviani, Giga Ansiani, Bakur Jachvliani, Luka Vibliani.

**S.K.** – How active is Shgarida’s creative life?

**G.G.** – We actively participate in the events held by Dmanisi Municipality. Shgarida has led active creative life since its presentation in 2003.

Noteworthy are two solo concerts in Tbilisi (2004 and 2010). In 2005 a six-member group of Shgarida participated in the Festival “Asian Voices” in Samarkand, where we became laureates. We are also laureates of Georgian National Folklore Festivals in 2005-2006 and 2015-2016; second-prize winners at the International Festival-Competition of Folk Art in Kobuleti (2007).

Along with performing, my ensemble members and I research Svan traditions. In 2014, in the framework of the project “Tradition – National Treasure” I delivered a lecture to the specialists and researchers of Georgian folklore on ritual songs – an important component of Svan folklore, which was followed by the presentation of Svan wrestling restored by me.

In 2019, as part of the project “Singing Georgia”, ensemble Shgarida held a lecture-concert at the Museum of Georgian Folk Song and Instruments of the Art Palace. The ensemble has released one audio album; two documentaries have been made about our work.

**S.K.** – I wish you success!

*Interviewed by Sopiko Kotrikadze*

### One Folk Instrument

## Folk Instrument Saz and the Only Female Ashugh Performer on it in Georgia

Saz is an old oriental string folk instrument with a deep pear-shaped body, a long neck, frets, 3-4 pairs or triple strings. The string arrangement is usually fourth-fifth. It is disseminated in the Caucasus, especially Azerbaijan, Armenia; also in Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and other Oriental countries. Saz is a leading instrument in the ensemble of Oriental folk instruments, although it is also often used as a solo instrument. The performers of saz were *ashughs* – folk singers, poet-improvisers; they sang heroic, historical and love songs with saz accompaniment in market squares, at public gatherings. Shirvan *tanbur*, Persian *setar* and *dutar* are considered predecessors of *saz*. According to Azerbaijani art historians saz took its modern-day shape in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In Turkey, two similar instruments are called saz: 1) Bağlama (baglama) a 7-string (two pairs+three strings) saz; 2) Cura – a 6-string (three pairs of strings) smaller saz.



Tinatin (Nargile) Mehtieva

The most common type of saz in Azerbaijan is 'tavar saz' or 'ana saz', with eight or nine strings. Lesser common are slightly more compact *ofta* or *goltug* (with 6-7 strings) and smaller *cura* (with 4-6 strings). Saz is played with plectrum, made from cherry-tree bark. It is still relevant in Azerbaijani ashugh art.

Saz was disseminated in Georgia along with other oriental instruments in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was especially popular among the Azerbaijanians living in Tbilisi. Saz was also played by ashugh poets at the Georgian Royal court. This instrument seems to be still viable not only on Azerbaijan, but in Georgia too. This was evidenced by the unique performance of **Tinatin (Nargile) Mehtieva**, a young woman of Azerbaijani origin, at the 2016 Georgian National Folklore Festival, for which she was awarded first place. She is the only ashugh woman in Georgia; she tells her own story related to the instrument.



Tinatin (Nargile) Mehtieva with her disciples

"I was born and grew up in the village of Ksani, Mtskheta district. I was attracted by saz from early age since I was 12, when my parents bought me a small saz and I learned that it was a very old instrument – it was said to have existed since the time of Muhammad. In olden times, saz was played mainly by ashugh men, who walked from village to village and sang heroic and love songs. I also learned that ashugh repertoire was very complex and along with desire it also required talent. After graduating from school, I went to Baku for 4 years studied saz at the conservatory and became an ashugh. Currently there are many ashugh women in Azerbaijan, but I am the only one in Georgia. I live in Georgia and am glad that I can arouse the Georgians' love to saz, which is part of my native culture.

I have travelled almost all over Europe on behalf of Georgia, have participated in ashugh festivals in different cities of Turkey, as well as in

many European countries: Great Britain, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark..... I am everywhere received with great interest and applause. In addition to performing traditional pieces, I also participate in experimental compositions. For example, I tried with jazz, pop music, it was very interesting. At the same time I decided to synthesize ashugh tunes; this brought me great success not only in Georgia and Azerbaijan, but also in Europe.

I am especially glad, that my performance on saz has attracted young people. Currently, I am a teacher at Mirza Fatali Akhundov Museum of Azerbaijani Culture, where I have 15 disciples. I also have children's ensemble Meidan. I am a member of Georgian Women's Union, with whom I organize concerts, exhibitions, participate in competitions... I am happy to have the opportunity to awaken young generation's love to folklore, that never dies...

Let me tell you a few words about my plans: it is known that in the past ashughs used to tell Dastan (general name for heroic, love and romantic poem in Oriental folklore and literature) and this took them 3-4 days. No woman has done this before, and I decided to take on this difficult task. I am planning to tell the Dastan, but in 2 hours instead of 3-4 days.

Like everyone else, the pandemic also prevented me from implementing my plans. However, during this period, I decided to work online – I even performed a solo concert. I took advantage of my free time and wrote a number of projects. I try to think less about the pandemic, and look to the future with hope.

*Interviewed by* **Maka Khardziani**

## *One Traditional Ritual* **Lomisoba**

Lomisoba is a traditional celebration in East Georgian mountains. The oldest ethnographic material on Lomisoba was provided by Sergi Makalatia. He writes: "St. George of Lomisi is the greatest icon in Mtiuleti. The communities of Ksani and Aragvi Gorges as well as the residents of the farthest corners of East Georgia gather at the celebration of the icons". Lomisoba is celebrated on the Wednesday following the Pentecost, on one of the feasts of Mtskheta Jvari.

The shrine of Lomisi St. George is located on the high ridge of Lomisa. The ridge is the watershed of the Ksani and Aragvi. According to Vakhushti, the mountain was called Lomisi, because the church of Lomisi St. George was erected here. It may have been constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The legend has it that during a raid along with 700 Georgians the Muslims also took with them chief icon of Mtiuleti – Gzovana St. George. The icon brought drought and death to the Muslim country. The Sultan threw the icon into the burning lime kiln, but the slightly singed icon flew out and landed on the horn of a white bull which had just appeared there. Both the icon and the bull left the place only when the Sultan had released all the Georgian captives, i.e. when the icon had completely regained its serfs. In all places where the icon stopped on the way to Georgia, people constructed niches. "The bull climbed up the peak of Lomisa and died there. The icon also flew there. People lined up from this peak to the Aragvi river, and started constructing present church of Lomisa. The legend relates the name Lomisa to the name of the bull – Loma.

Lomisa shrine is also the ancestral icon of the Burduli dynasty, and the archpriests of this dynasty are superior at Lomisa. At the celebration the archpriest would ask the icon for childbearing, fertility and victory over the enemy, this was

followed by offering the slaughtered cattle as sacrifice.



**Lomisi St. George church**

The archpriests also healed the sick at the shrine. He would place the Lomisa icon on the waist, head and shoulders of a sick person lying face down, i.e. make a cross on him, then would step over him; the requesting would stretch a cotton or woollen thread round the church, would walk barefooted or in bast shoes around the church, leave their jewellery there; childless women would entreat the ability of childbearing and sacrifice cradles. The archpriest would make the womea, who had no milk to breastfeed her child, drink water with lime scraped from the walls of the church.

Lomisa was also sacrificed live pigeons and roosters, that freely walked in the church-yard. Those , who could not go to the shrine gave some grains of wheat to the person going there to feed

the pigeons of Lomisa. The well-known chain of Lomisa is still kept there to this day. Nobody knows who brought this chain here or why. However there are many legends about this sanctity. One of them is told in the text of Lomisi Perkhisa (the round dance performed at Lomisa celebration): “There is a chain hanging at Lomisa, / nobody knows whose it is,/ a woman looked at it and wept,/ that chain is my brother’s,/ brought from the war,/ by a brunette young man,/ he sacrificed gold to Lomisa”.

Throughout East Georgia, it was believed that if anyone wanted to ask Lomisi St. George for anything or the promise had already been made, he has to put the chain around his neck and go around the church three times in prayer. Lomisa St. George chain is especially kind to young unmarried people.

Lomisa Church is located quite high, at 2190 meters above sea level. Once on New Year day, the people of the village of Mleta, who together with archpriests, had traditionally gone to the shrine with icons, crosses and singing Perkhisa, were taken away and killed by an avalanche on their way back.

After this in 1876 St. George church was constructed in Mleta, being the niche of the main shrine.

**Nino Ghambashidze,**  
*Ethnologist*



# Lomisuri

lo - mi sas ja -

lo - mi-sas ja-ch'vi hk'i - di - a

lo - mi sas ja -

lo - mi sas ja -

ch'vi - a hk'i lo - mi - sas ja - ch'vi hk'i - di - a he

ch'vi - a hk'i lo - mi - sas ja - ch'vi hk'i - di - a he

ch'vi - a hk'i lo - mi - sas ja - ch'vi hk'i - di - a he

Soloist

ne - t'a vin i - tsis vi - si - a

net'a vin itsis visia  
movida kalam shest'ira  
es jach'vi chemi dzmisia

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