

# GEORGIAN POLYPHONY IN A CENTURY OF RESEARCH: FOREWORD FROM THE EDITORS

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This collection represents some of the most important authors and their writings about Georgian traditional polyphony for the last century. The collection is designed to give the reader the most possibly complete picture of the research on Georgian polyphony. Articles are given in a chronological order, and the original year of the publication (or completing the work) is given at every entry. As the article of Simha Arom and Polo Vallejo gives the comprehensive review of the whole collection, we are going instead to give a reader more general picture of research directions in the studies of Georgian traditional polyphony.

We can roughly divide the whole research activities about Georgian traditional polyphony into six periods: (1) before the 1860s, (2) from the 1860s to 1900, (3) from the 1900s to 1930, (4) from the 1930s to 1950, (5) from the 1950s to 1990, and (6) from the 1990s till today.

The first period (which lasted longest, which is usual for many time-based classifications), covers the period before the 1860s. Two important names from Georgian cultural history stand out from this period: Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries), and Ioane Bagrationi (beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries). Both of them were highly educated people by the standards of their time.

Ioane Bagrationi (1768-1830), known also as *Batonishvili* (lit. "Prince") was the heir of Bagrationi dynasty of Georgian kings. His encyclopedic work *Kalmasoba* (term for travel in order to collect offerings for the Church), written in 1817 - 1828, is widely regarded as the first most important source on Georgian music (see the discussion of "Kalmasoba" in Javakhishvili, this volume). As most of the earlier writings, *Kalmasoba* discussed only the matters of church music, virtually ignoring traditional music. Apart from the interesting information on different aspects of Georgian church singing, the author also discusses the disappearing tradition of five and six-part singing in Georgian church music by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ioane Bagrationi also made an attempt to create an original Georgian musical writing. This system has

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only historical importance, as neither the author himself, nor Georgian musicians after him, used this system to transcribe any of the musical compositions.

Ioane Bagrationi is widely regarded as the first author who discussed the matters of Georgian music; we should also remember another important Georgian thinker, Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani (1658-1725), who lived more than a century earlier. Orbeliani's contribution was the first encyclopedic dictionary of Georgian language, with highly important information on some aspects of Georgian music, mostly on different terms of Georgian polyphonic singing. Here we must mention, that Georgian terms for different parts of polyphonic texture are also found in the writings of many other Georgian medieval authors, including the writings of Ioane Petritsi, Georgian philosopher of 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries (you can see the discussion of many of such sources in Mindia Jordania, and Rusudan Tsurtsunia, this volume).

To summarize, we can say that the first period of the study of Georgian music provides important information on Georgian church music and polyphony, but virtually neglects Georgian folk polyphony.

Second period started from the 1860s, and was linked to the national movement that became very strong throughout Europe in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Georgia was a part of Russian Empire, and the struggle for independence and particularly for the maintenance of national culture was the central aim of national movement in Georgia. Ilia Chavchavadze, often regarded as "father of Georgian nation", paid attention to different aspects of Georgian culture and social life, including unique polyphonic character of Georgian traditional music. The establishment of the "Committee for the revival of Georgian Church Singing" (1860) marked the beginning of this period; first special works on Georgian music appeared (Machabeli, 1864), first collections of Georgian traditional songs were published (Machavariani, 1878; Benashvili, 1886; Zakaria Chkhikvadze, 1896), first choral collective of Georgian traditional music started its performance activity (from the 1886).

It was natural that most of these activities had practical aim: the aim of the first songbooks was to educate children, not to research; also, as in Europe of this period, most of the early writings about Georgian music were done by non-professionals; and finally, the influential first Georgian choir (the so-called "Aghniashvili Choir") tried to follow European classical choral model, specially hiring a professional musician from Europe to transcribe Georgian traditional polyphonic songs from singers, and then to teach the same songs to the choir members.

Despite these shortcomings, we must remember that the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a very active and very fertile period, the time when writings about folk music first appeared, the time when the first transcriptions of Georgian polyphonic songs (in European notation system) were published, and despite the Europeanized sound quality, there is no question that the first choral collective of Georgian folk music did a hugely important work in rising awareness about the uniqueness of Georgian traditional polyphony among Georgians. For example, Dimitri Araqishvili, the key figure and the "founding father" of Georgian professional

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ethnomusicology, became interested in music (in Georgian folk music) after hearing the performance of Aghniashvili Choir in North Caucasus, in 1890. Another central figure of the history of Georgian music, Zakaria Paliashvili, was himself a singer in Aghniashvili Choir.

During the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century first non-Georgians started transcribing and collecting Georgian folk and urban songs (these were mostly Russian, like a brilliant musician Ippolitov-Ivanov, Klenovsky, and Grozdov).

To summarize, we can say that this was the period when the interest towards Georgian folk music was expressed in the form of first essays on Georgian music, first collections of Georgian folk songs appeared, and the first official concerts of Georgian folk music were held. This movement was a part of a broad national movement trying to revive national culture and to come closer to the European ideals of statehood.

The third period in the study of Georgian polyphony comprises the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (from the 1900s to 1930). This period is widely regarded as the beginning of professional scholarly study of Georgian traditional music. The first phonograph records of Georgian folk music appeared from the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. English Gramophone Company was arguably the first who made phonograph recordings of Georgian songs, including folk songs (from 1901 until 1915). The originals of these recordings are kept in phonogram archives of London, Riga, and Moscow. German Adolph Dirr was the first western scholar who visited Georgia a few times during 1909 and 1924, recorded songs on phonograph and published two articles about Georgian music (Dirr, 1910, 1914).

Phonograph records, made during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War in Austria and Germany from Georgian war prisoners played an important role in bringing Georgian traditional polyphony to European scholars (particularly with the publications of Robert Lach and George Schunemann).

Most importantly, this period was dominated by two brilliant Georgian musicians, founders of Georgian professional composition school and highly esteemed folklorists, Zakaria Paliashvili and Dimitri Araqishvili. Despite the many similarities, attitude of Paliashvili and Araqishvili towards traditional music was very different. For Paliashvili traditional music was primarily the source for professional compositions, and he appreciated traditional music primarily for its aesthetic qualities. Even in the published collection of his phonograph recordings Paliashvili sometimes could not resist temptation to intervene in the musical text and make small changes in the transcriptions. On the contrary, Araqishvili had a strictly ethnomusicological approach towards fieldwork materials. For him the simplest songs were as valuable for scholarly study, as the most elaborate polyphonic songs. When transcribing fieldwork recordings Araqishvili would try to transcribe every detail with the utmost precision, including the indications of slightest higher or lower pitch, or a slightly shorter or longer sound. The difference between Paliashvili's and Araqishvili's attitudes was clearly visible on one occasion: during one of the first competitions of the choral ensembles, organized by Soviet authorities from 1929 onwards, where both Paliashvili and Araqishvili were members of a jury.

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A choir led by Georgian composer and choir leader Kote Potskhverashvili was among the competing choirs, and apparently he introduced new versions of well-known traditional songs with his own “creative additions” to the texture of traditional songs. Paliashvili, as a jury member, gave the highest possible mark for this choir, whereas Araqishvili, on the contrary, gave the lowest possible mark, showing his negative attitude towards the attempts of professional composers to change traditional songs. Scholarly output of Dimitri Araqishvili, consisting of several books on different aspects of Georgian traditional music, is still considered as one of the most important contributions in the history of Georgian ethnomusicology (see one of his works in this volume).

Another important figure of this period, mostly overshadowed by the giant figures of Araqishvili and Paliashvili, was Ia Kargareteli, highly educated musician, who’s two collections of Georgian folk songs (1899, 1909) were of high professional standard.

Short and turbulent period of Georgia’s independence (1918-1921) witnessed a spectacular development of many element of Georgian culture, like the establishment of Tbilisi State University (1918) and appearance of three of the best known Georgian operas (by Dimitri Araqishvili, Zakaria Paliashvili and Viktor Dolidze). The establishment of Tbilisi State Conservatoire in 1917 had a crucial importance for the study of Georgian traditional music and polyphony. Regular fieldworks were conducted in different regions of Georgia, including the music of minorities as well (for example, Araqishvili recorded Ossetian songs, Akhobadze – Kurdish songs). Rich materials were collected by composer Shalva Mshvelidze (in 1929-1933).

To summarize, we must say that this period saw a true professional development of national scholarship on Georgian traditional music and polyphony. Some of the best works from this period are still considered standard in Georgian ethnomusicology.

The fourth period, comprising two decades, from 1930 to 1950, was in a certain way continuation of the previous period. This was a very difficult period in the life of Georgian people and the whole USSR, dominated by the harsh Stalin inner policy and the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War years. Araqishvili continued his publishing activity, although, busy with his many official duties (at the State Conservatory and the Union of Composers), his fieldwork activity stopped, and his scholarly output dropped drastically in comparison to the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paliashvili died in 1933.

The 1930s produced two very important Georgian and one influential foreign works on Georgian music.

The first important work from this period is the book of German scholar Siegfried Nadel (see part of this book in this volume). Nadel’s conclusion about the possible influence of Georgian traditional polyphony on the emergence of Medieval European polyphony started a new important trend in European (particularly German) musicology. Marius Schneider, arguably the most authoritative scholar on the issues of the history of polyphony, first criticized

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Nadel's suggestion, but soon he himself became an ardent follower of the idea of the Caucasian origins of European medieval polyphony.

Another important work from this period is a monograph on Georgian panpipes, written by a Russian scholar Valentina Steshenko-Kuftina, who lived in Georgia together with her husband, Alexander Kuftin, one of the founders of Georgian archaeology (Steshenko-Kuftina, 1936). Steshenko-Kuftina suggested that the musical language of Georgian vocal polyphony was connected to the instrumental (panpipe) music. Steshenko-Kuftina's book is still among the best publications on Georgian instrumental music, based on author's deep knowledge of scholarly works on the subject, published in European languages.

The book of Ivane Javakhishvili, the "Founding father" of Georgian historiography, about Georgian music was (and still remains) the most important work covering wide range of medieval sources and authors in array of languages (see also in this volume). His work does not contain musical examples, and he virtually does not discuss musical language of Georgian traditional music (as Javakhishvili was not a musician himself), although his discussion of the indigenous origins of Georgian polyphony still remains influential in Georgian musical scholarship.

By the end of this period two very important figures of the study of Georgian folk music started their activity: Grigol Chkhikvadze and Shalva Aslanishvili. Born in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they both received professional musical education in Russia, and they both became key figures in the study of Georgian folk music and polyphony. They both were also prolific teachers, and supervised whole generations of Georgian musicologists. In the 1940s both Chkhikvadze and particularly Aslanishvili conducted numerous fieldworks in different parts of Georgia, and this material became the basis for their future publications.

We can summarize this period suggesting that during this period some of the standard works on Georgian traditional polyphony were published, and possibly the most importantly, Georgian traditional polyphony entered the circles of European scholarship (particularly, the German school of comparative musicology).

The fifth period, comprising the time span between the 1950s and 1990, was marked by the appearance of a big group of Georgian scholars, the first generation of Georgian musicologists who received their education in Georgia. Most of them were connected to the teaching activity of two prominent figures of Georgian musicology: Grigol Chkhikvadze and Shalva Aslanishvili, mentioned above. Aslanishvili, primarily a music theorist, studied the musical characteristics of Georgian folk music. Chkhikvadze had more ethnographic direction, although they both contributed to the study of Georgian traditional polyphony (see Aslanishvili and Chkhikvadze in this volume).

Numerous Students, supervised by Aslanishvili and Chkhikvadze through the newly established departments of Music Theory and Georgian Folk Music (the latter was a section of

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the Department of History of Georgian Music until 1972) contributed to the further study of Georgian traditional music and polyphony.

Among the first generation of Georgian scholars, who received their professional education in Georgia, were Vladimer Akhobadze (see in this volume), Kakhi Rosebashvili (instrumental music), Mindia Jordania (scales and musical terminology, see also in this volume), Ketevan Tumanishvili (form of traditional songs), Vladimer Gogotishvili (scale system, see also in this volume), later - Evsevi Chokholelidze (scales and chordal systems, see also in this volume), Dodo Meskhi (instrumental music and urban music), Valerian Magradze (see in this volume), Ivane Zhgenti (study of harmony of West Georgian folk and polyphonic urban songs) Gulnara Gvarjaladze (rhythm and metre). During this period Boris Gulisashvili was active in researching scales of Georgian folk songs, and Christophor Arakelov studied Georgian cadences and modulations. Scholars from the Department of the History of Georgian Music (mostly students of Vladimer Donadze) were also active: Otar Chijavadze conducted numerous fieldworks in many regions of Georgia, and Mzia Iashvili published a monographic study of the links between Georgian folk and early professional polyphony (Iashvili, 1977).

Ivane Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology was another research institution where the issues of Georgian traditional music were researched, and it was represented by several scholars, among them Tamar Mamaladze (Kakhetian work songs), Manana Shilakadze (instrumental music, see also in this volume), Nino Maisuradze (ethno-historical aspects of Georgian music). Vazha Gvakharia, linguist with musicological interests, was also active in this period. Rusudan Tsurtsunia studied folk music in art music, polyphony and the problems of identity (see also in this volume).

Anzor Erkomaishvili, representative of several generations of traditional singers on one side, and professionally educated musician on the other side, conducted important studies (with the series of audio publications) of the early recordings of Georgian polyphony. As the leader of widely renowned Rustavi choir, he also greatly contributed to the International recognition of Georgian traditional polyphony.

The 1980s saw the appearance of a new generations of Georgian scholars: late Edisher Garakanidze (musical dialectology and performance practices, see also in this volume), Joseph Jordania (comparative research of Georgian polyphony, see also in this volume), Tamaz Gabisonia (forms of Georgian polyphony, see also in this volume), Nino Kalandadze-Makharadze (relation between text and music, lullabies), Natalia Zumbadze (Georgian women's singing traditions), Nugzar Jordania (Gurian bass and trio tradition), Nino Shvelidze (instrumental music), late Tina Zhvania (instrumental music and tuning), Ketevan Nikoladze (parallels between vocal and instrumental polyphony), Ketevan Baiashvili (traditional laments and dirges), Nana Valishvili (folklore of East Georgian mountain regions), Nino Pirtskhalava (polyphony in medieval Georgian literary sources), Ketevan Nakashidze (folklore of West

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Georgian mountain regions), Nino Tsitsishvili (gender studies, Georgian pop and rock music, see also in this volume),

Foreign scholars also contributed to the study of Georgian traditional polyphony in this period. Marius Schneider did not publish any work specifically on Georgian music, but Caucasian (and Georgian) polyphony played an important role in his picture of the origins and distribution of vocal polyphony (Schneider, 1940, 1951, 1969). Ernst Emsheimer delivered a paper dedicated to Georgian traditional polyphony at the ISTM 1966 Conference in Ghana (Emsheimer, 1967). Due to the closed character of the USSR and infamous “Iron Curtain”, foreign scholars mostly used the published materials of Georgian polyphonic songs (as well as the recordings of the war prisoners of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War). Yvette Grimaud was one of the first European ethnomusicologists who conducted fieldworks in Georgia during the Soviet period (in 1967). She managed to record about 400 Georgian songs, and very recently Grimaud very generously sent copies of her recordings to Georgia. Georgia was also visited (mostly for short visits with short recording sessions) by Alan Lomax (USA), Erich Stockmann (Germany), Anthon Shalinsky (Poland). Suzanne Ziegler conducted fieldwork and started research activity in the 1980s (Ziegler, 1989).

The research of Georgian traditional polyphony among non-Georgian scholars became more active from the end of the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s and the 2000. The 1980s were also important as the ongoing series of international conferences “Problems of Folk Polyphony” started (1984, 1986, 1988).

To summarize, we can say that this period saw a solid increase of number of experts and number of topics in Georgian ethnomusicology, and the last decade of this period (the 1980s) prepared Georgian ethnomusicology for a constructive dialog with the western colleagues.

The last period of development of Georgian ethnomusicology covers a post-soviet period from the 1990s till today. Last years of the 1980s, with the perestroika in full swing, already had a new ideological atmosphere in a country, with a new possibilities and new challenges for Georgian scholarship.

Possibly the most important change of this period was the opening of contacts between Georgian and Western scholars. It was virtually impossible for Soviet scholars to participate in any of the International scholarly meetings. Amazing, but none of the Georgian scholars, discussed in this article, have been to any of the International ethnomusicological conferences between the 1930s and the 1980s outside of the Soviet Union. With the emerging contacts with the Western world the importance of English language became obvious, and the usual for the USSR bilingualism (native language + the Russian language) started to shift to a new “post-soviet bilingualism” (native language + English language).

Together with the widening contacts and travel possibilities to other countries, came the new challenges and problems in a form of military conflicts and disastrous economic situation of the post-Soviet period. Fieldworks could not be conducted, and even basic study process at

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the Conservatoire was often impossible to conduct due to the disastrous economic and energetic situation. Series of the conferences on traditional polyphony were halted for a decade, and a number of Georgian ethnomusicologists left Georgia for western countries.

By the end of the 1990s polyphonic conferences came back (1998, 2000). In 2001 Georgian traditional polyphony was declared by UNESCO the Intangible Heritage of Humanity and in 2002 the First International Symposium for Traditional Polyphony was held. In 2003, with the help of UNESCO and financial assistance from Japan, an International Research Center for Traditional Polyphony was established. Series of the international symposia on traditional polyphony (2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, planned also in 2010) greatly contributed to the contacts between Georgian and Western ethnomusicologists and brought new Georgian and foreign scholars in the study of Georgian traditional polyphony.

Number of young Georgian scholars appeared during the last few years. Among them are Gia Bagashvili (aesthetic aspects of Georgian traditional polyphony), Maka Khardziani (hunting songs in Svaneti), Otar Kapanadze (researching round-dances), and Teona Rukhadze (wedding songs).

During the last years of the 1980s, and particularly in the 1990s, with the break up of Soviet Union and the demise of Communist ideology, a new important branch of Georgian musicological scholarship started, or more precisely, was revived – studies of Georgian Religious music. Studies of religious music was banned in by Soviet authorities during the existence of Communist ideology. As a separate collection of articles on Georgian church singing is being prepared by the Nova Science, we are not going to review this important research sphere of Georgian musicology.

In 2000 a number of new scholars studying Georgian traditional polyphony appeared in several foreign countries: Thomas Hausermann from the Zurich Canton Music College (Switzerland) researched different aspects of Georgian folk music. Silvia Bolle-Zemp and Hugo Zemp conducted two fieldworks and made ethnographic films about Georgian traditional music. Also in this period appeared: Lauren Ninoshvili from Columbia University, New York, USA (Georgian folk and contemporary pop and jazz music), Andrea Kuzmich from York University, Toronto, Canada; Johan Westman from the University of Bergen, Norway (Sweden); After two decades of close relation with Georgian culture and traditional polyphonic song, Russian-American scholar Izaly Zemtsovsky from Stanford University proposed Georgian singing as a polyphonic model for Eurasian continent (see in this volume). Franz Foedermayr together with Walter Deutch started researching acoustic qualities of Georgian polyphony, and a group of Japanese scholars presented their findings on psycho-acoustic characteristics of Georgian polyphony. Most Recently Simha Arom from France and Polo Vallejo from Spain started researching the musical language of Georgian traditional polyphony.

Georgian scholars living in different countries also contributed to the study of Georgian traditional polyphony. Among them are Austria-based Georgian musicologist Nona Lomidze

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from the University of Vienna (Archive recordings of Georgian folk polyphony), Australia based Nino Tsitsishvili and Joseph Jordania, respectively from the Monash and Melbourne Universities.

Another new development after the establishment of free communications between Georgia and western countries was that dozens of ensembles of Georgian traditional music emerged in the 1990s.

The very first foreign ensemble which had only Georgian songs in their repertoire was "The Kartuli Ensemble" (lit., "Georgian Ensemble"), which started in USA in 1985. Some of the members of the foreign Georgian ensembles contributed to the study of different aspects of Georgian polyphonic singing, like Frank Kane on physiological aspects of Georgian polyphony, or Stuart Gelzer, on scale systems of Georgian polyphonic songs. During the last two decades Georgian ethnomusicologists and traditional singers are often invited to the western countries to conduct workshops and master-classes.

To summarise, we can say that the last period, comprising of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, was particularly useful for Georgian ethnomusicology in establishing links with western colleagues. These contacts also influenced widening of the geography of the participants of the series of the international symposia on traditional polyphony. On the other hand, Georgian ethnomusicologists started appearing at the International conferences held in western countries (Portugal, Austria, the USA, Brazil, Canada, France, the UK). The presence of Georgian polyphony is increasing both at the concert halls and on the programmes of the international ethnomusicological conferences in different parts of the world.