



Episode Number: 3

Episode Title: Healing Songs and Circle Dances

Interviewee: Nino Naneishvili

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Music:

Rachuli batonebi by Shalva Aslanishvili, collected in 1950

http://www.alazani.ge/base/shalva_aslanishvili/Aslanishvilis_koleqcia_-_Batonebo_Racha.mp3

Rachuli batonebi by Ialoni

Ia Patonepi by Vepkhia Antia (recorded by Nino Razmadze)

Ia Patonepi by Ialoni

Holly Taylor 0:05

Welcome to Voices of the Ancestors, where we explore Georgian polyphonic songs,

Susan Thompson

and the women who sing them.

Holly Taylor

Hello, the voices today are me, Holly Taylor- Zuntz,

Susan Thompson

And me Susan Thompson.

Holly Taylor

and our special guest, Nino Naneishvili whose speaking to us from her home in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Susan Thompson 0:35 And I too am speaking to you from Tbilisi Georgia.

Holly Taylor 0:39 Oh you lucky thing! I'm holding down the fort here in England.

Susan Thompson 0:45 Well done Holly.

Holly Taylor 0:47 Now Nino is not only the leader of women's ensemble Ialoni, but she is also an 'ethnomusicologist'.

Susan Thompson 0:56 OK I'm slowing you down now - what is an 'ethnomusicologist'?

Holly Taylor 1:01 Well it is someone who studies music in the context of culture. So that could include many things like cultural anthropology, or psychology, folklore and conventional musicology.

Susan Thompson 1:16 Wow. That's a lot of stuff isn't it?

Holly Taylor 1:18 Yeah. *Laughter*

Susan Thompson 1:22 So as well as being a musicologist, or I suppose as part of being a musicologist Nino knows all about peoples rituals and beliefs, so in this episode she talks quite a lot about the 'Batonebi' ritual. Um.. but she doesn't go on to explain it so I thought - although I'd really like to ask Nino, and I'm sure in future recordings we will ask Nino. um for now I'll tell you a little about what I understand the Batonebi ritual to be. So 'Batonebi' translates as 'Lords' and I think by that is meant spirits. Not evil spirits or good spirits, just spirits. Um And I think the idea is that the spirits can enter a child and then the child is ill. Um so the rituals of praying, and

singing, and dancing are about 'delighting' the Batonebi and enticing them to leave the child and move on so that the child can recover.

Holly Taylor 2:25 Yeah - some of my favourite songs are the Batonebo songs that we have learnt from Nino and other teachers and this ritual is still alive in certain villages in Georgia and it was really nice actually to reminisce with Nino about spending time in her village Ledzazame which is in the Western part of Georgia, where they actually speak Mingrelian not Georgian. And she told about how the local kids there were inspired to learn about Georgian folk music because of us foreigners visiting their small village and I just love how Nino's tours bring foreigners and 'ethnopurs' together. And I just, I hope that they can start again soon, these lovely tours.

Susan Thompson 3:15 Oh yes, but before they do, can we just go back again - 'ethnopurs'...what are they?

Holly Taylor 3:22 Yes - good question. Well Nino defines an 'ethnopurs' as someone who lives in a village and performs ethnographic traditional songs and rituals. - How cool is that? *laughter*

Susan Thompson 3:34 Great, I'm so glad there's a word for it!

Holly Taylor 3:38 Yeah - In fact Nino mention so many interesting words, and people and ethnopurs and films and songs and we can't possibly explain all of them - so if you are curious to know more then you might go to <https://www.voicesoftheancestors.co.uk> then click on 'Transcripts' where you will be able to find all of our episodes typed up, and there's links there to many of the people, places and songs mentioned.

Music

Susan Thompson 4:13

While you're on the website, move across to the '**Contact Us**' page and sign up for our email updates. We've got something special lined up for next week - the extended version of our conversation with Nino.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz 4:24

Yes, so we had such an in depth chat with Nino that we couldn't fit it into one episode, so we decided to make an extended version especially for our community of listeners.

Many of you will have been taught by Nino, face to face or on zoom. So I'm sure you're really going to enjoy hearing about how she adapted her teaching during the pandemic as well as putting grandmother's in the village on zoom! And she also tells a beautiful story about some carpet sewers who are also and singers. So to be part of our community and receive exclusive content, sign up for our email updates on the website and I'll also put the direct link in the show notes.

Susan Thompson 5:10

That's brilliant and just a reminder of the website address again

www.voicesoftheancestors.co.uk.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz 5:24 And for now enjoy the first part of our conversation with Nino Naneishvili.

Music

Susan Thompson 5:33

Hello, welcome to the podcast and Nino Naneishvili. I wonder if you would mind introducing yourself to our listeners.

Nino Naneishvili

Hello My Dear ladies. I'm Nino as you know as you told our listeners, er.. an ethnomusicologist, georgian ethnomusicologist, and founder and leader of the woman ensemble womans traditional music ensemble [laloni](#). We have 11th year for founding. And yeah...warm laughter

Susan Thompson

Congratulations on being 11!

Nino Naneishvili

Thanks. And yeah, now it's a strange time for us, but we are still working on our new projects. And it's my, I think it's my main happiness in my work to do this with nice girls, and performers.

Susan Thompson

And what projects are you working on?

Nino Naneishvili

The last one, it's I think, connected with this pandemic strange situation. We decide to record healing songs and lullabies, because you know, it's a more quiet and nice intonations on it and it's like a, it's really healing for us when we work on it and perform and for our listeners, also, on the stage, we, every time had a questions, what kind of songs it is because it made different mood for listeners and to this content, is that it's from our old rituals, a part of ritual, and it has just not just music, it has moving and praying with words and with candles and roses, circle dance and everything this was so nice and so important for ill people, mostly with illness, 'batonebi' we say it like this. And it's not so alive tradition nowadays in Georgia, not so much but in several villages, for example, in Samegrelo and Guria in west part of Georgia. We know two three performers - 'ethnopors', who believes power of these songs and ritual and they do it also in life.

Susan Thompson 8:22

Oh, that's so wonderful. Nino. Would you tell Holly the story you were telling me the other day about the the circle dance that isn't a complete circle? Where it's an open circle?

Nino Naneishvili 8:33

Yeah, I think it's a very nice symbol. It's connected with our ancestors pre-christian religion view, it was a religion of the moon. And we have also religion of to sun, is old Egypt and other civilizations. And the circle dance, connected with this 'sky part' so called. And the open circle mean, 'New Moon', the symbol of the new moon. And the closed circle which is so spread in

different regions of Georgia it's connected with 'Full Moon' and also to sun. And it was also part of praying of this ritual that they express the visual form of this moon and sun which was so valuable and important and they believe the power of them. But afterwards it's changed to, for example in Svaneti, it changed the symbol of St. George. And mostly nowadays we perform this circle dances not with these symbols, but it stayed in forms of... and it's nice to know about it, and think about it. Yeah.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Oh, wow.

So what's the song that laloni sings, do you sing a particular batonebo with a half circle?

Nino Naneishvili

Yes, yes, it's a Batonebo from Racha region from the highest village Glola, which recorded from Shalva Klanishvili in 1950 years. But it's just a 40 second - this recording - very, a bad quality of recording and old voices of course.

Music Shalva Klanishvili

They just perform two line of song and words. But it's so nice sample that I decided with the girls to renovate it with other batonebi words and we leave this melody but change inside like improvisations, which can be in Rachian folk lyrical songs.

Music laloni Batonebo from Racha

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

Oh wow. So you're taking that old recording and giving it some new life?

Nino Naneishvili

Yeah, yeah, and also I thought I read about this, open-circle round-dances, in Gigi Garakanidze's research also and in other ethnographers, and I thought that it would be nice to perform it with open-circle round-dance Yeah.

Susan Thompson

Oh, thanks for that story. And there's another story that that that makes me think of where where you heard just one voice I think of a recording this time from was it from?

Nino Naneishvili

'Ia Patonepi', do you mean?

Susan Thompson

Yes, a member of Polikarpe's choir I don't remember his name. Yeah. Can you tell us about that?

Nino Naneishvili

Yeah, it's so nice person. It's Vepkhia Antia it's a strange - Vepkhia is the tiger in Georgian and Mingrelians like so strange names. Yes. (laughing) And the name of a person is tiger. Antia is the surname. And he lives in Zugdidi. And he was a performer and also he is now performing in Polikarpe Khubulava founding ensemble [Odoia](#). But we discover that he performs solo song. Best performer I think, the lyrical Mingrelian Batonebi, la Patonebi song. And he performed it the first time in the Conservatoire stage in [Nato Zumbadze](#)'s concert, she was organiser of this 'Megrelian Evening' so called. And I was so young, maybe 20 years old, not so much. And not more. And when I hear it was so amazing. And then we try to connect with him. And my friend also ethnomusicologist Nino Razmadze went to Zugdidi village with Polikarpe on expedition. Now after two years, and I asked to record exactly this version, and she sent me immediately. And then I started to work on this song and decide to do it in solo and choir. It's repeated part solo words, it repeated in choir, but in three ways with chonguri. Yeah, and when we went in the last year of Polikarpe, was alive. It was celebration evening and to perform this song. And this Vepkhia was so happy, it was so emotional for us. And it's one of the most valuable feeling when your 'so called' ancestor, your old generation hear his own songs. Not his own the folk song but which he knows from grandmother's grandfather's from its family. And when you perform it in your variation, improvisation and when it's like it and when they are happy. It's I think the most gift towards performer can feel.

Music laloni la Patonepi

Holly Taylor-Zuntz

I think you're so right. It's not about just copying what our ancestors did. It's about taking that gift and bringing it into our own words and our own style, I suppose.

Nino Naneishvili

Yeah, exactly. Sometimes I was afraid to change something because it wasn't my own music and I knew it from them. And I thought maybe they will be angry or not like so much this working on their own variation, but they are. For example from Andro Papa Simanishvili's example also we ran away his several songs and all time he was so happy. And it means for me that these persons are so open and real creative workers. And they are not like er in a frame that it must be like this, not another way. Also Polikarpe was so open, because I remember when me and member of [Didgori](#) ensemble in Poti, Givi Abesadze performed the um, 'ghrabadude damanebit' the famous megrelian love song with boy and girl. And when we did it, we decided to show it to Polikarpe because he performed it in his young days with his ensemble member of woman. And he was also so happy. And he told that nobody can be in Samegrelo nowadays, perform this like you and we, we want to hear something more like a note and example how to do it.... more interestingly, but also, of course, it gives you more confidence and like a permission to do more and more and I want to tell all of them big thank you for their work on also this attitude to, to feel that it's possible to, to be part of this creation, and exactly the folk, it's that people. And we are part of this folk, and in the future, we will be like ancestors for our next generation, I hope. And also it's for us, it's a bigger example to be like these so called teacher, that individual can be free and can attend, can hear itself and find its individual things and voice and because for example, in Vepkhia Antia's case, I changed the mood of the song, because it was beautiful how he

performs, but it wasn't mine. It was so, um, it was more, Vepkhia's, version was like you're playing, not lyrical, and not a so called dramatical as for me by healing songs. Because when I saw for example picture of Iavhana, the famous beautiful film you know, I think and here is the part when a one child died and other adults stay alive. But this ritual is so clearly played on it. That it was a really not just nice melody and nice words and nice ritual with roses and candles. It was real fear, because a parent's afraid and really pray to 'batonebi' and they gift their purse to it. And yeah, I think it's needed from our side, from woman sensibility, to put this affair and our performing style. It's more lyrical as Vepkia's but it was okay for him. And it was, I think, big thing for us to

Holly Taylor-Zuntz 21:

So the women are sort of giving it a different flavour to the men that's really interesting. And Nino you clearly have such a respect for the people who've passed on songs to you and ancestors who you've learned from and I wonder about your own ancestors. And do you come from a musical family?

Nino Naneishvili 22:

No, I can't say that it was exactly musical family er, which was in past time, not every member of our family, performed but I remember very clearly the first case when I touched to, er, singing process. It was with my grandmother in Samegrelo village in my Ledzazame and I was maybe four or five years old, and we were sitting on the chairand er..my grandmother was so kind ...

Holly Taylor-Zuntz 22:

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