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**Interviewee: Zoé Perret**

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***Music: Ialoni***

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Welcome to Voices of the Ancestors, where we explore Georgian polyphonic songs

**S:** And the women who sing them

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Hello, the voices today are Me, Holly Taylor-Zuntz

**Susan Thompson:** and me, Susan Thompson, and our guest today is Zoé Perret, a french singer who has been living in Tbilisi for 14 years.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** If you listened to the very first episode of the podcast, you would have heard our guest Jen Morris mention Zoe, and how exciting it was for her to see a non-Georgian woman singing Georgian songs and speaking the language so well. And in that way she has been a great example too, seeing her sing alongside Georgians as if she were an honorary Georgian, or showing me that there is light at the end of the tunnel with the Georgian language.

**Susan Thompson:** And I'd like to thank Zoe for agreeing to be interviewed in English, which is not her first language... it might even be her 3rd or 4th.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Yes but she does it so well, doesn't she. Zoe is well known in the folk scene in Tbilisi, when you mention her name everyone says - ah! you know Zoe? I love Zoe! and she is accomplished But that doesn't mean she is not still hungry for knowledge. She's still fascinated by Georgian polyphony. For example she's said that she is intrigued to see - how should my body be when I sing this Mingrelian song versus how should it be for a Kakhetian song - or how is it different when you are singing on a stage versus waiting for khachapuri round a supra table.

**Susan Thompson:** That thirst for knowledge is still there. I know just what she means and when she talks about yes - the expectations one has of oneself when you're on a stage and the fact that Georgians are affected in that way as well. Um it was inspirational to hear her insights into the culture, the singing culture and I was so pleased to be able to ask her, from her perspective as a single woman in Georgia, and

someone who has set up and run a business for six or seven years just how she felt the balance of the sexes was, what her perspective was. It was really great to hear those first hand observations

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Yes that was a little gem right at the end of the interview. Now Zoe likes to be inclusive, and having learnt from and sung with so many people over the years, Zoe was careful not to mention too many names so as not to miss anyone out wasn't she!

**Susan Thompson:** She was, But one ensemble that did come up was her collaboration with her own family- at the The International Symposium for Traditional Polyphony.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Mm that was great. So listeners, sit back and enjoy the show. By the way, If you enjoy this episode, you might consider buying Susan and I a coffee on Ko-Fi or PayPal - all the information can be found on our website under Donate or click the link in the show notes. For now, here's Zoe!

***Music: Kimilia - Dghash do serit***

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Hello, Zoé. Welcome to the podcast.

**Zoé Perret**

Hello

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Would you introduce yourself for us?

**Zoé Perret**

Thank you for hosting me, my name is Zoé, Zoé Perret. I was born in France, in the south of France. And I can say I was connected to music since my early childhood. Since I started to play violin at the age of six and the whole, whole my life I was singing in different choirs. And as a student I was studying, amongst others, ethnomusicology, I got interested in traditional polyphony, and decided to first actually, during my master's degree, since I was studying Russian as well, I went to Russia to first get introduced to polyphony of oral tradition from Varonejskaya Oblast. So from a specific region in Russia. But then when I came back to Paris, I had the chance to work in a small festival in the south of France, that was dedicated that year to South Caucasus. And that's when I first met my Georgian friends, new Georgian friends, as well as people from Azerbaijan and Armenia. And it was for me a wonderful discovery both musically and musically speaking. So from my studies, as from my studies of ethnomusicology, I knew a little bit about Georgian singing, but combined to this human experience that I had with Georgians, I thought, Okay, this is the this is an wonderful opportunity to go a little bit deeper to that culture and Okay, now after the festival, I need to go to Georgia, I need to meet these people and I need to understand and practice more about this Georgian polyphony. So I decided that was back in 2006, 14 years ago already. And I decided then to come to Tbilisi, I found a little project as a volunteer. So I was supposed to stay here only for one year. But of course, at the end of this year, okay, this is not enough. I need more time, to get to more, get to know more about the culture and also about the singing because since the very first day, when I was here, I started to learn Georgian polyphony. I got introduced to people who were singing from these friends that I had in France that I had met on this festival, and, and so on. So I found the experience so incredible that after a year, it was only the beginning. And I continued to learn. And still here I am after 14 years.

**Susan Thompson**

So from your introduction and just just starting I'm kind of it takes me back to not not long ago when I was at the [Ninth Symposium](#), International Symposium 2008. And you were at the Symposium, but also your family were at the symposium, singing.

**Zoé Perret**

Exactly.

**Susan Thompson**

How did that happen?

**Zoé Perret**

Well, first it happened from the, I realized that in Georgia, people like hearing people singing in the family, and that we have, we have often what they call an ensembli - the family ensemble right? I had never thought before that I also have a family actually. (laughter) And they can also sing. So when we were thinking about the next Symposium arriving, I suddenly realized that probably the main person that taught me singing or at least from whom I am, I have taken let's say this passion of singing, is my father. So he used to sing to me since my childhood, and he's a very good singer, although we didn't actually really sing together so much. But by the way, he got quite interested in the polyphonic, in the Georgian polyphonic singing as well, since I was living here and talking to him about this. So I knew that he knew some Georgian songs. And I knew as well that my sister can sing, my brother can sing. So it was a kind of challenge. Okay, they are in France I'm here. We don't get to gather so often. But why not? Try? Why not try to do something? And this is why I proposed to the organizers of the festival, of the the Symposium and they said, Yeah, that would be a great idea. So the challenge was really hard because we only had like a couple of days basically to, to prepare this repertoire for for the concert. But finally we did it. And we sang Georgian songs as well as Basque songs, and Occitan songs from France.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Oh wow

**Susan Thompson**

Such a lovely concert.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Yeah, it's great to have those combined. And I've actually just been listening to your album [Kimilia's album](#). That's your ensemble in Tbilisi. And you haven't just got Georgian songs on there either. Have you?

**Zoé Perret**

Yes, yeah. So we have a few songs from the Middle Ages and from Renaissance periods in France. We have one for example, for example, from Guillaume de Machaut. And we decided to perform that because we love the harmonies that are in there. And somehow we find ancient Georgian polyphony having some similarities. I mean, we can, let's say find a kind of common soul with these harmonies. And I found it interesting to combine Georgian and French polyphony. And we did so in the album so that it's kind of mixed. So it's not the first part of French and second, Georgian, but we try to put them together to have another way of listening to them.

***Music: Kimilia - Phytton***

**Susan Thompson**

That's so nice. And you were chatting the other day that you're starting to think about a second album, have you? Can you share your thoughts about that?

**Zoé Perret**

Yes, so we, we recorded this album last year, in March. And I thought that as a challenge first. And because we did have a accumulate other songs as well, that we couldn't record yet, as Kimillia. And we just want to share more to the people. So that would be great if we could record this next one. Of course, it's a little bit hard now with the sanitary situation. So let's see, but I'm hoping for beginning of 2021, at least, it will be ready. We will continue recording some Georgian songs, as well as other songs as well. And what we want to introduce also in this new album, would probably be some collaborations with other singers or instrumentalists. For example, we had this one song recorded with Dato Khositashvili. That so it was '[patara bichi damekarga](#)', quite famous song, city song from oriental style, let's say. And Dato had the idea to well we wanted to make a little bit different version because this is quite a famous song. So he did a small arrangement with a guitar so that it sounds let's say, our own way or his own way, and not the not the usual one. So in general, I'm really interested in in collaboration with different artists. Also, maybe why not in the future collaborate with the experimental musicians or musicians that work with electronic music as well? Maybe not now for the second one, but for the third - why not?

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Yeah, the third experimental album, right. Classic.

**Zoé Perret**

Exactly. Yeah.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Yeah, I think it's clear that you are a natural in collaboration. And I was saying to Susan, that you come across as someone who wants to gather people together and you have a natural joy of bringing people together. So you bring your family together as an ensemble. You've come to Georgia, you've brought together, an ensemble there, Kimilia. And you also bought together you're a businesswoman as well, and you bought together something there with Zoestan right.

**Zoé Perret**

Yeah, exactly. Thank you for these words. It's true that I like when I see people gathering and enjoying good time together, especially when they when there is something that connects them. And music, especially singing is a is a wonderful way I think of sharing emotions and sharing, let's say many, many, many things, actually. So this is probably why I like not only singing but singing in polyphony singing together with other people. So this, the idea of Zoestan, which was a bar for it was functioning for five years, was first to have a place where I could gather some people who would like to listen to traditional music. So I would organize sometimes small concerts of traditional ensembles. And that was probably the part that I liked the most. It was really, really nice to have these people gathering, for the people singing, but as well for this

public that was enjoying it. So from the point of view of the organizer that was really, really nice to see it and to feel. And as, so you were saying, that I like bringing people together. Yeah, Kimilia, for example, it is true that probably the most important for me is not only singing but singing with the people that I love, with people that I'm friends with. And, and this is the case like, we get along very well. And that is why I don't think that we will stop singing probably. I think it's really some like condition number one, to have an ensemble, whatever the number of people is, is to be, to feel well and to enjoy being with these people. But if they sing well, it's even better (laughter)

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Agreed

**Zoé Perret**

Feeling these voices together. It's great but I, you know, it first for sure passes through this relationship through this friendship.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Well, yeah, and I suppose singing together only strengthens that relationship.

**Zoé Perret**

Exactly. Exactly.

***Music: Dghash do serit - kimilia***

**Susan Thompson**

So Zoé when we were preparing for the, the, the interview, I was chatting with [Nino Naneishvili](#). And she holds you in very high regard, I have to say, and you used to sing for a while with [laloni](#). And I remember coming across you when you'd very recently joined, I think they were releasing one of their albums, and they had a concert at the [Folk Garden](#). And you were saying just how hard it was and how many how many words you had to learn in a very short space of time. And I just thought you'd like to hear that, you know Nino's words were of having you in the ensemble was that she, she, your ability to sing the Middle Voice in Mingrelian songs, she just thinks is unsurpassed. All your hard work, it was well worth it.

**Zoé Perret**

It's really a nice to listen to these words. Thank you. You know, it was for me as well, a wonderful experience. It was the first time actually that I was invited to sing in a Georgian Ensemble with Georgian people. So I joined laloni in 2016, I think or 15. I don't remember exactly, but before I had been living here for almost 10 years, without being able actually to join properly, let's say, a choir. Yes, I did sing with supras, and with friends in general, around the table and stuff. But I think joining a choir was like a second or third step that was not so easy to, to make as a as a foreigner. So talking to Nino, I was mentioning that I would like you know, I would like to sing in an ensemble and that I was planning to create to create my own choir for that. And then she said, Oh, by the way, you know, you could maybe as a first experience, you

could try and sing with us. And I was like, Yeah, I didn't expect at all this invitation. It was really nice. So I sang with them a couple of years. Ialoni is a female choir. And yeah, I did. I did learn a lot from being in a choir, being with Georgian people. And it was a good experience. I think that helped me as well. When I decided because in the end my idea was any way to create my own ensemble because I had my own view and you know, like as a musician, so yeah, that that was definitely an important part of my experience as a, as a singer.

***Music: Ialoni - Potpourri***

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Zoé, where do you generally learn your songs? And who do you learn them from? I know you mentioned your father is your first teacher. And then this festival in the Caucasus, where you first heard Georgian songs. But then when you came to Georgia, how do you pick up new songs?

**Zoé Perret**

Yeah, so, good question. Actually, I, I always asked myself, by the way, where did I learn this song from, and I'm now happy to realize that I have, I have had so many teachers that sometimes I cannot say exactly from where I learned what. But that was, what was wonderful for me is, was to be able to join some supras some gathering at at homes with different friends that I made a time by time. So I would say first, the first source for me of learning was just attending rehearsals, from different choirs, even though I didn't have like, I never had actually private lessons as such. But sometime, you know, I would always carry my, my notebook, where I would write down the words, and I would always manage to find an opportunity to ask the person, okay, the song that you just sang, now, can you just tell me the lyrics, and then I would try to remember it or recording it, you know, with my recorder, and then people would be kind enough as well to just teach me on the go, let's say, the three parts because you know, as a musician, of course, it was never too difficult for me to, to separate in my mind, you know, the three voices, the three parts and as they always say, you don't know completely the song until you you know, the three parts, right? So, something really fascinating for me to see how they interact these these parts, how you can also improvise a little bit of course, on each of these parts. And as a source of learning, of course, I should mention, as well as the the archive recordings. At that time, there was this radio, [folk radio](#), that was actually playing only folk music. So I would, for the first couple of years, I think I was listening only exclusively to old Georgian folk songs. And you know, it's even though you are not you were not born in the country, I think, if you listen to it constantly, then you in the end, kind of get the feeling that there is something that sounds natural or not natural, so that you would be able to decide the way you want to interpret the way you want to perform this song because you have kind of, you know, understanding in not theoretically, but practically, because listening to recordings, or even to real people, but listening is is practice as well, I think for for for learning.

**Susan Thompson**

Yes, I have a daughter who has attended many rehearsals and workshops with me and and as a child, so she would be 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 sort of age. And the adults in the room would despair of

her and think she wasn't learning because she didn't sit still and she didn't pay attention. But I knew that just the very fact that she was in the room and the sound was all around her that it was getting into her body somehow. So and now she's a musician. So yes.

### **Zoé Perret**

Ah, yeah, that's it. Exactly. And I should mention as well, of course, the people so that was you know, I was, I've always lived in Tbilisi since I'm in Georgia. So this is my base, let's say, but of course, I did have traveled a lot in the regions in in the countryside. And this was also a very important part of my studying process is go to [Svaneti](#) to go to [Samegrelo](#) to go to [Achara](#), [Guria](#), [Kakheti](#) as well. Where, there were these wonderful, how to say 'tradition holders' - right?

### **Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

We had a lovely word, from Nino, she uses the word 'ethnopor', for somebody who lives in a village.

### **Zoé Perret**

Exactly. And so the whole thing I wanted to say, but I wasn't sure in English because they say like, in Georgian, 'ethnopor'. Yeah. So one example was [Polikarpe Khubulava](#), for example, in Samegrelo, whom I knew very well. And I was really like, we can say good friends with him. And I got to meet him in 2007 already. So for years, I would go and sometimes I remember when I was kind of, burned out in, in my, in my work, I was working in an office at that time and decided once to go to Samegrelo. And for one week, go and er. Being only busy with learning, mingrellian songs with Polikarpe. So I will never forget that. You know, I still have like recordings of the song duo of me with [Polikarpe](#) who passed away unfortunately, a few years ago.

### **Susan Thompson**

What a treasure.

### **Zoé Perret**

Yeah, real treasure.

### ***Song - Polikarpe and Zoe Perret - Mesish Vardi***

### **Susan Thompson**

Zoé, can you tell us about bringing other choirs to Georgia and traveling around and showing them the regions?

### **Zoé Perret**

Mm hmm. Yeah, exactly. So I have since 2013, every year I have been bringing some people mostly from France. So people who are interested in Georgian, or even in polyphony from different parts of the world, sometimes. I bring them some so that they can discover Georgian polyphony. And at the same time discover not only the songs, but the culture, the hospitality, and many things and of course, countryside and landscapes and stuff. So what I generally do is that for 10 days or two weeks, they come to Georgia and we go directly to the villages. So



mostly I have been traveling with them to Western Georgia for the moment that I'm planning to go in the next years to Eastern Georgia as well. So we've been to Guria, Samegrelo, Achara and Svaneti of course, with the [Chamgelianis](#) with a family from Lakhushdi, a wonderful family of singers. And it's always like really, really big happiness to see these people, gatherings of French people who enjoy and discover Georgian songs. And Georgian people who get to know a little bit more about French people. And there is a real cultural exchange taking place at this time, which is like taking place very naturally, naturally, I would say, you know, and so it's like 24 hours of, you know, non stop. Something is happening all the time, they would try to learn a little bit of the language from both sides. And so yeah, singing is just, again, another way, a wonderful way to get people together. So during this stage during this workshops, let's say I am mostly so I'm involved in the pedagogical part as well, since I have now gathered some experience as a teacher, which is something else that I realized that I enjoy as well very much. So apart from performing I think teaching is also a really wonderful way to learn even better. So when you teach I have the feeling that I'm really really getting deeper into that song. And so I love this this process and and I love really seeing people enjoying it. So yeah, I think that's probably my my favorite professional activity is to teach and to see people then, you know, coming from nothing go, you know, to see this musical product, if you can call at the end. I think that's wonderful.

### **Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Are you teaching at the moment?

### **Zoé Perret**

So at the moment with this sanitary situation complicated of course in 2020. Some people from France that I knew from my workshops, asked me if I could organize some online lessons. So in the beginning they would want like maybe some individual lessons because I didn't realize how we could do, you know choir online, but then time by time we managed to set a situation where we could have a online class for actually quite a lot of people. So since April or May now I have been teaching online. With sessions that's actually sometime gather. Well, now I have to fix a maximum number of people because the first during the first session, almost 80 people came. (laughter) So it was really too much.

### **Susan**

Eight zero?

### **Zoé**

80 Yeah, exactly. So I realized, wow, but of course, this was because the people in France were quarantined, right, they didn't have the right to go out. So many people had time. And they responded, yes. You know, my first sessions were like, okay, you can, I'm just offering this and you know, that I was not, I didn't put like, any limits. But then what I realize, okay, let's at least divided into three. And so yeah, after that, I continued, and now I'm trying to build more and more how to say a system where, you know, if I have the more I have students, the more I can separate them into different levels, different interests, because I - There are some people now who are completely, completely beginners, they just like singing, maybe not more than in the

shower, but they, they just, okay, listen to Georgian song once and they thought, okay, maybe I should, I could try to do something. So I'm what I like in this situation is to introduce them not only to the songs, but to the country a little bit, you know, talking about the different regions, and explaining how differently you can sing, depending on the the origin of the particular song. So in my so I have now set a kind of introductory workshop that I organized over a weekend, where people get to know specific regions. Some look, you know, what characterize them visually as well, a little bit historically, and, of course, musically speaking. So this is something I think in my in my teaching. My, the style for me that is a closer for me is really to this stylistic approach. So regional approach, so I really pay a lot of attention on the manner, performing manners. So before we start to learn a song, of course, we should know what it is about, but also where it is from, and what is expected from the this style, musical style as a as a performer, and then we can try, you know, some different vocal techniques that are specific to that region. This is actually something that I have only learned through my practice, I'm used to listening and through singing with these people, a lot with Georgian people. But this was not something that was put into words to me. And so as as a person that needed at the time, too. Say to - somehow to imitate - Yeah, when we talk about the manner, I had to find in my own body, let's say in my own vocal machine, I don't know how to say it in English. How to do what to do? What is what do I feel when I do this? Or this particular let's say for example, Mingrelian song? Yeah. So it's a kind of mixture between words when you want to transmit it to someone, I like using images, like imagine that you have this and this and that, are you are you on a cloud or you're on a train or whatever? I didn't realize but the students keep telling me like, Oh, yeah, it's it's crazy how many images you have in your mind? I didn't realize and then that, oh, yeah, it's true actually I always talk about, you know, things that are not happening, but that I just imagined, and that helps me to perform. So it's a mixture of these images and also some physical things that are happening inside because I also did follow a course as to become a voice teacher. So that was in France, but it was conducted mostly online. It was three four years ago and I felt I needed this course it was a one year course, designed for any people who wanted to teach other people how to develop their vocal potential. So this approach is called [Chants, Voix et Corps](#) singing, voice and body. So it's a physical approach of voice pedagogy. And so I learned a lot about how the voice is functioning, what is going on in our body. But even more importantly, how important it is to try to connect mentally to our feelings. And always keeping in mind that when we sing, we use, we use an instrument, which is our body. So not only limiting the vocal production to our vocal cords, this is only one part, but the whole body is actually involved in, in this process. So in this approach, we pay a lot of attention to free, let's say, free our body to be able to free our voice. And by this process of freeing the voice, you can sing in different styles, which is actually the like the latest aim, I would say. And it's really the case for Georgian singing, because it's different styles that you can sing in one, let's say Georgian, big Georgian tradition, actually, it's completely different to sing Kakhetian song and to sing Svanetian or Mingrelian, right. So of course, the teacher that I had was absolutely not. I mean, she didn't know anything about Georgian singing. But in general, she was teaching about the voice. And this was really useful for me to apply to this. And to the Georgian reality, and what is what is, let's say, common to different Georgian songs, and what is specific to this region or this region. I think this is really interesting. Like, I'm really passionate, passion, about that. And I

really, really need to know more about that. And I think it will be probably one of the constant things that I will always be learning through my life.

### **Susan Thompson**

Oh, I so want to put you together with um, the person who used to lead [Maspindzeli](#), who is a Georgian woman, but who spent time in France in Paris, because when she was teaching, she would be trying trying to convey like you're saying wrestling with how to convey the different ways of singing in the different regions. It was just when you were speaking it just brought her words to mind somehow. So I will put you in touch with each other because I think you will have fascinating conversations.

### **Zoé Perret**

Sure with with pleasure with big pleasure.

### ***Music : Netai me da shen - Kimilia***

### **Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Yeah, I'm also really interested in this psychophysical approach to singing and I was wondering, do you see that in Georgians? Do you see that they change their body? Or that they have a free and relaxed body when they sing? And is it something that they actively think about? Or does it just come naturally to them?

### **Zoé Perret**

Yeah, it's a really good question. Actually. Actually, I think there is a big difference when it comes to Georgians between what's happening on stage and what's happening on the supra right - what's happening around the table. So I always made these comments to Georgian friends that on stage, they don't seem as free as they are around the table. And that is for sure that me as a performer what I learned the most was not on the stage listening to them on the stage but really, really much more in a authentic let's say, set up an authentic I just mean like, like real real. I don't mean a certain type of seeming like singing like this or this or that. But in authenticity, I mean like real feelings and free feelings. So when you are you are you are waiting for Khachapuri and you sing you don't have the same expectation about yourself while performing than when you're on the stage and when you have all the specialists listening to you right? I think yes, it is a good question like what, how to deal with this fact that we at the same time want to be traditional musicians but at the same time we want to perform we want to show our art, let's say to public? So how to do that? Yeah, of course, it's often it goes through this stage, like it's the kind of necessary procedure, let's say, but I think there is something to think about not here, maybe a different way of considering stage. It could be like, informal stage, it could be stage without stage, let's say, for example, even when I had my bar in Zoestan, we didn't have a small stage, but it's like, maybe it really didn't look like a stage. But at the end, we're thinking maybe having people singing on the table, you know, and not, and then the people that would be around, could listen to them, and would be a much more natural way of things happening. Right. So this is this is an option. I think, when in general, yeah, it is difficult to be very freed when you're on stage. Although if you manage to do that, that's wonderful. So

yeah, I don't know if I answered your question, Holly. But I wouldn't say that naturally, especially on stage they are freed and that they would, when they but I mean anyone and not only Georgians gain a lot from really, you know, free yourself even on stage. And consider not considered that you have that the most important thing in your singing will be to transmit your emotions to transmit your musicality, rather than that, you know, performing exactly the same way as someone hundred years ago was performing. So that is, I think, from my point of view is something that we should always keep in mind while performing wherever we are.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Oh, and Zoé, what does 'Voices of the Ancestors' mean to you? If anything?

**Zoé Perret**

Hmm, that's a good question. I should think about it a little bit.

***Music - Chela by Kimilia***

'Voices of the Ancestors'. So that's a really nice, beautiful name. That for me, for sure, refers to first, of course, this ancient time, while it refers to the fact that we have singing we have polyphony that comes from a time where it's we don't know from when exactly it is coming from so ancestors to me, it evokes a kind of uncertain time. So there is something about 'ancient'. And as well, ancestor in, in the sense of the blood. Yeah, of someone who is who was before you. It's interesting for me as non Georgian, because if we talk about Georgian singing, can I consider these people who were singing 100 years ago as my ancestors, it is difficult to respond to that. But I guess that we can also consider ancestors as like globally seen on the worldwide ancestors, because even for Georgians, they might be Georgians, but they might not have in their family in the past people singing but still ancestor as as a common treasure, let's say for, for the world. Maybe we should. Not we should but we can consider that this is a world wide treasure.

**Susan Thompson**

Yes, I like to think of worldwide ancestors being being our global treasure. That's delightful and delicious. Thank you. Yes, so Zoé one of the things I'm curious to ask you with your experience of living here and running a business here and singing in an all female ensemble and now running a mixed ensemble is just your take on the balance between the sexes between men and women and just yeah, your perspective.

**Zoé Perret**

Yeah, very good question. Well, I think in general, this is probably not in Georgia but a worldwide question, that it is difficult to be a women that many people do not realize especially especially from the men point of view. Yes, we do say that men and women are equal, but when it comes to the reality and to the facts, it is not the same actually. So there is a, unfortunately, a big difference between what is written on the paper and what actually happens. So, in Georgia, it is also quite obvious, I would say that there is a lot of things expected from a woman and when it comes to singing, if you, if you look at the singing situation of the choirs, most of the

choirs are masculine, right? It's men's choirs, okay, it is difficult to say exactly why - how it happened and stuff, but probably one of the reasons would be as well that when women get married, they, they are expected to, to do a lot at home and they do not have much time. Maybe not everyone would agree with that, but I am for sure I have seen even, even in, in a female choir people having to quit because they were getting married or because you know, and this is less the case when you are a man. So, of course, I would definitely love to see in the future a society where it will be equally feasible for any gender to to spend time, time for themselves and to spend time enjoying their activity. Should they be a man or woman. Yeah, although we should not forget that they are as well female choirs like Ialoni, but like others, as well. And I think it is really crucial that these continue and that we do not see only men on stage. I think a female choirs do have another style when it comes to singing as well. And, and basically, I would say that, both are needed. And it is also interesting to me to have choirs that are mixed. So if for example, I decided to sing with men in Kimilia, some people prefer to have like, only with women, only with men, but actually, I think it gives a kind of different color as well. And I am definitely interested in that as well how we can mix both types of timbers.

### **Holly Taylor-Zuntz**

Yeah, it's an interesting dynamic in your group which I haven't seen much before. You are the founder and leader of the ensemble and the rest of the members it's three men right?

### **Zoé Perret**

Exactly. Yes - so at the moment we are only three with er, two other guys and we are looking for a bass which we are missing right at the moment. It was not my intention in the beginning to be singing with, only with men but it happened that I found these people with whom I wanted to sing and they didn't have another choir experience. And somehow it was mostly connected to our friendship and now the fact is that the two people who are singing with me know they also both have quite high voices, so we wouldn't hire another woman otherwise - although it would of course be ideal - I would love to have a choir with half woman and half men but physically speaking it would be hard. Unless we find a bass, bani which is a woman but it is a little bit unlikely (laughs).

Ah there are some beautiful women out there with the most delicious bass voices - you never know who might walk through the door Zoé.

Exactly - I would really dream of that, like - it has been 'how to say' a big question for me lately - where to find the person we can sing with?

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz** Well good luck on the search.

**Zoé Perret** Thank you. It's really nice to talk with you and answer to your questions. I was a bit like - OK I have nothing to say, but what should I say, but when you start, things come to your mind and (laughter)

**Susan Thompson** Sitting here today - I have learnt so much in the last half and hour or so Zoé. Really - yeah seriously, seriously.

**Zoé Perret** Thank you for asking these kind of questions - these kind of interviews will be even greater after like ten years or twenty years when you remember what your thoughts were. Thank you for your invitation, really, it was a pleasure.

**Susan Thompson** Thank you for listening to Voices of the Ancestors with Holly Taylor Zuntz and Susan Thompson our guest was Zoe Perret - if you would like to hear more please sign up to receive our email updates. You can do that by visiting our website [www.voicesoftheancestors.co.uk](http://www.voicesoftheancestors.co.uk) and clicking 'Contact Us' or just click the link in the show notes. Thank you to our listeners who have bought us a Ko-fi, this is a simple way to support the show and helps to make more episodes.

The music in today's episode is by Kimilia, and Ialoni, with a field recording of Zoé Perret and Polikarpe Khubulava.

**Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>**

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