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**Episode Number: 2**  
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**Interviewee: Nino Razmadze**  
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**Intro music:** Makharia, chonguri. From the laloni album, 'I fell in love with that sweet voice'

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

**Susan Thompson** and the women who sing them.

**Susan Thompson** So welcome to Series 2, Episode 2 of Voices of the Ancestors. The voices today are Holly Taylor-Zuntz and Susan Thompson, that's me and our guest is [Nino Razmadze](#).

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz** Our interview with Nino gives a really broad overview of all the folk instruments of Georgia. So if you want to know your chuniris from your changis from your chianuris this episode is going to help you out and if you really want to get stuck in we've even included photos of the instruments in the transcript. So you could click the link in the show notes and follow along while listening - just not if you are driving obviously. So my favourite bit of the interview was when Nino talked about the spiritual significance of the folk instruments for example when rituals like the batonebo and she even told us some kind of creepy legends about the instruments being made out of dead people.

**Susan Thompson** Oh that was so - oh I had no idea the interview was going to go there - to go into body parts wooooo. I mean I've always wanted to interview Nino because I met her in the UK, she was a post graduate student and she was working with a professor - [Jeremy Montagu](#) and he was the curator of the [Bate Collection of Musical Instruments](#) in Oxford. Um and you'll hear in the interview how their research really put the Georgian folk instruments on the map of the international museum world. I mean Nino has many strings to her bow - pun intended - she's an ethnomusicologist, she works at the Conservatoire in Tbilisi, she works at the [Chanting Foundation](#) in Tbilisi, she has many publications to her name. Um and in her early years she did a lot of field work in Ajara which really lead to her very wide interest in folklore in general -

not just music, um but she has done a whole project on the textile ornaments from Ajara. She had to put something novel into this project so she didn't just um arrange for these embroideries to be photographed and described, they were also um created computer vector files so that any designer anywhere can use the file to um use those designs on their pieces. And we'll put a link in the show notes for that.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz** Yeah - that is so great and I'm sure some of our listeners might wanna get handy with the embroidery. (Susan: Oh yeah, for sure). So if folk music and folk textiles weren't enough she's also now created a toy company called [Gogora](#) which is using these patterns to create toys in those shapes - so yeah watch this space for that (Susan: Absolutely). So our chat with Nino happened back in October 2022 er in an airbnb in Tbilisi and we'd all been together at the Symposium on Polyphony and we'd had a few weeks to recover, from that, because we'd had a bit of a crazy time - hadn't we. Susan and I had been presenting our new episode, the first episode of Series 2 which was with Tamar Buadze and we were celebrating 2 years of the podcast.

**Susan Thompson** Well we certainly were .. and Nino was full on busy because she is part of the organising team for the whole thing. So, then you and I Holly, with our friend Jenny were part of the opening Gala Concert and I can't tell you what a bill that was to be on. There was Mzetamze or friends of Mzetamze, [Ialoni](#), [Nanina](#), [Sathanao](#), [Margaliti](#), I don't know if you got the theme here but all these are women's groups there was [Leila Tataraidze](#) who plays garmoni from Tusheti um, so many, so many and we did have to tease one group - the Chamgeliani Sisters - there are three sisters and they do sing together but only two of them made it down from Svaneti so they managed to er twist Levan Bitarov's arm behind his back and get him to come and sing with them - and he only realised on the night that he was practically the only man on the bill the whole night.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz** Yes and so the reason that this whole concert was celebrating the best women in Georgia was that it was the presentation of a really special new book which is all about the UNESCO practices of women folk singers in Europe and Nino's paper is included in that book and we will talk more about that in the episode.

**Susan Thompson** That's right. Yeah so after that glorious time when Holly and I were both in Georgia at the same time, Holly went back to the UK um and fortuitously I ended up in Georgia when there were so many concerts. There was a national um Folk Competition and I was lucky enough to go to many of those concerts both in Tbilisi and in the provinces, in Kutaisi, um and in Telavi and yeah I took loads of videos and I've uploaded a good half of them onto our [YouTube channel](#) so there's a lot more material there and you'll enjoy every moment.

**Music:** Khorumi from Merisi in Ajara (supplied by Nino Razmadze)

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** That is/was Khorumi from Merisi in Adjara played on the Georgian bagpipe or chiboni. We'll introduce the key pieces of music but not all so keep an eye on the transcript if you're curious, which you can find on our website. So hope you enjoy our chat with Nino.

**Nino Razmadze:** Hello.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Hello Nino.

**Susan Thompson:** Welcome, how are you?

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Okay, how are you?

**Nino Razmadze:** I'm fine with you.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Thank you for being our guest on the podcast.

**Nino Razmadze:** Thank you to invite me.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Would you mind introducing yourself to our listeners who've never met you before? (Nino R. Mm mm) Some of them?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah. I'm Nino Razmadze. I'm working at the Conservatory in International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony. We have too long, a long, name.

**Susan Thompson:** It's a mouthful.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, of Tbilisi State Conservatoire.

**Susan Thompson:** Oh wow.

**Nino Razmadze:** So yeah, I'm deputy director of the centre and I'm working in there maybe 10 or 12 years. So this is the place like my family. Yeah, I'm studying musical instruments and finishing my PhD, maybe in this year, I hope.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Is that on musical instruments?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, Georgian musical instruments. My bachelor's diploma was about chonguri then masters diploma was about chuniri, chuiniri and changi, and now I will writing about all Georgian musical instruments.

*Chonguri - played by Darejan and Bella of the Kolkhuri trio*





Chuniri, from Svaneti - 3 stringed with bow resting on a changi



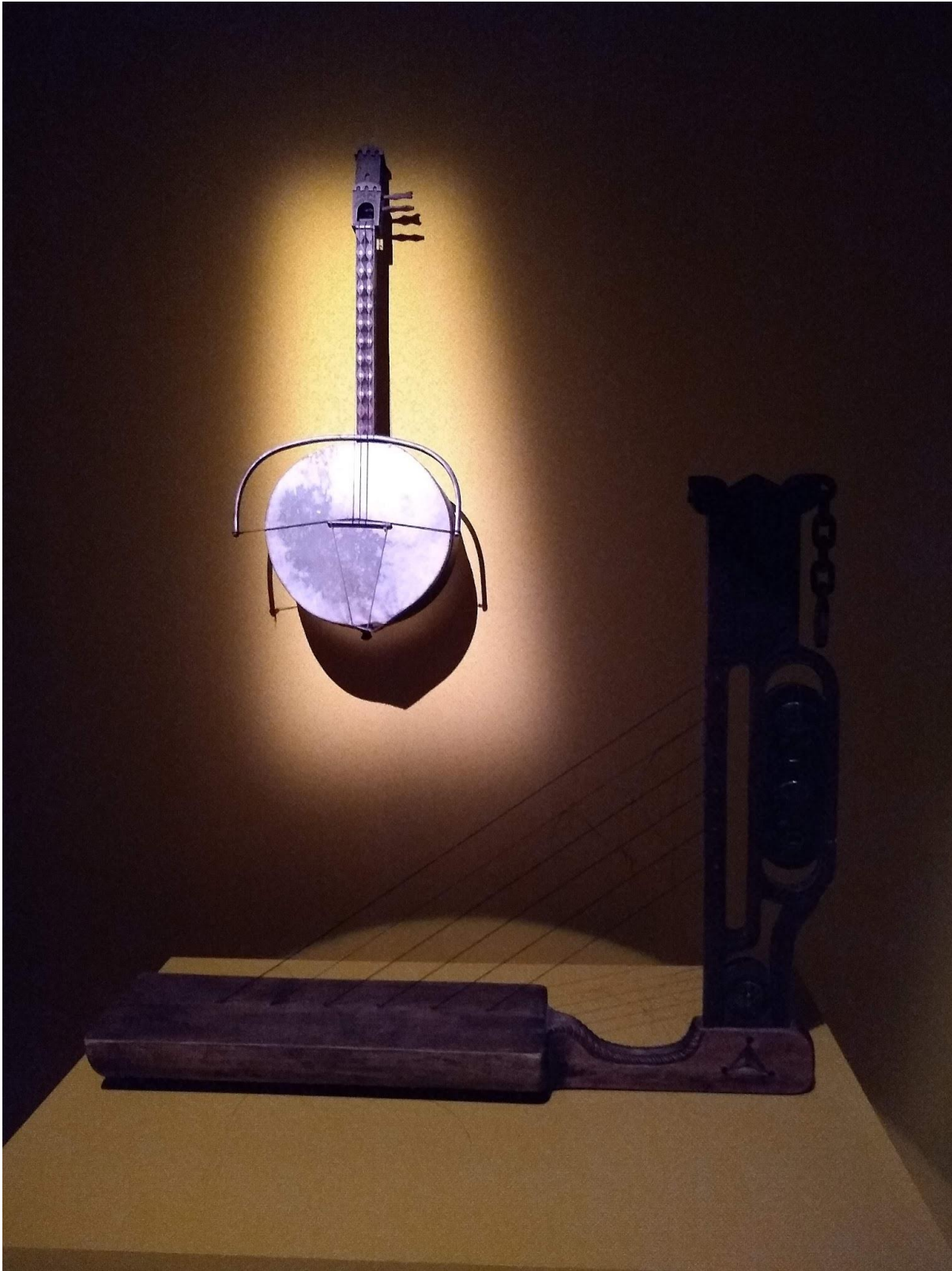


Changi - held by Eka Pilpani





Chuniri, from Svaneti 3 stringed with bow above a changi - *Mestia museum*



**Susan Thompson:** And now I'm going to ask you to take each of those in turn and tell us what each of those instruments are. So imagine somebody who's never seen one.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, all of them are folk musical instruments in different regions of Georgia has different kind of musical instruments and some of them are more popular. And some of them is near disappeared. (Susan: Oh) And actually we have er different kind of musical instruments. Yeah, it's a chordophones, iraphones, idiophones also. (Holly: What!) Yeah, this is a professional names of type of musical instruments - yeah. And also membranophones, for example membranophones. Are doli and diplipito.

*Doli held by Levan Gersamia*





Diplipito



Diplipito (leather and clay, Telavi museum)





**Susan Thompson:** I know they are drums.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes there are two, yes. Two or three or four, yeah. Ah, and doli very widespread in Georgia, you know, and also maybe दौरа also it's very well known.

*Daira - played by Darejan of the Kolkhuri Trio*



*Daira - Oni museum*



**Susan Thompson:** The Daira I think is the most beautiful. I think of it like a tambourine, but it's much more beautiful than a tambourine.

There's a great photo of a daira on the album cover of '[Mountains of Tongues](#)' this instrumental from Racha is played by Lola on garmoni and Gratsia on daira more about the garmoni later - for now just know that it's like an accordion.

**Music:** Daira - Lola and Gratsia from [Mountains of Tongues](#) LP playing garmoni and daira.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, yeah. I don't know. We have different kind of dairas, for example in museum you can see we can see very nice dairas and nowadays some of them doesn't have a lot of ornaments or something, but the voices were very nice and interesting. For example for Rachian Dance song. (Susan: uh uh) Yeah, It's very good musical instrument yeah,um. Yeah some of them are very popular. For example panduri and chonguri.

Panduri





**Susan Thompson:** So they're stringed instruments.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, these is group of string instruments. It's like - lute type in musical instruments, are chonguri and panduri.

**Susan Thompson:** Here's the panduri, playing a dance tune, most probably from Kakheti. It's by the group Mzetamze.

**Music:** satsekvao - panduri by Mzetamze

Chonguri and Panduri



Also we have bowed musical instruments. Chuniri, Chianuri, yes. (Susan: bowed instruments) Yes um, the chianuri has two strings and Chuniri has a three strings from Svaneti and Chianuri is from Rachian mountain.Yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** So here's the sound of chuniri from Svaneti. It's Anna Chamgeliani playing the introduction to Irinola. Other women in the Chamgeliani family from the Singing Village of Lakhusdi, will feature later in our chat with Nino.

**Music:** Intro to Irinola on chuniri by Anna Chamgeliani

**Susan Thompson:** And am I right in thinking when you came - because we met in England when you were over studying.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** And Am I right in thinking you were trying to - you were putting a classification to all these different Georgian instruments.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes. Yes. Yes. Yeah. You know this classification system is coming from the museum work. For example, maybe 100 years before Victor-Charles Mahillon started this classification system and maybe in the world, all museums used this system to classify musical instruments. Yes and my professor from Oxford, Jeremy Montagu. He helped me to make a classification numbers for Georgian musical instruments, because we didn't have it before. So after we published this catalogue of musical instruments from [State Museum of Georgian Folk songs and Instruments](#). We gave each of them this classification numbers.

**Susan Thompson:** So that would enable you to, to speak about Georgian folk instruments internationally in a way that people, would understand.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, yes. If you want to explain to somebody which kind of, for example, bone musical instruments you have, does it have an open end or not, does it have a... which kind of, er, shape it has, for example or how they're playing on them er you can choose.

**Susan Thompson:** Somebody has told me about, I think, is it chonguri? - I have been explained, there are two types. There's one where it's made out of a solid piece of wood (Nino: yes) where the bowl part of it is. And then there's another where it's made out of individual planks, a bit like you make a ship.



**Nino Razmadze:** and each of them has different number, in classification system.

**Susan Thompson:** Yes, I see and which region does the two styles come from.

**Nino Razmadze:** You know, this is not depends on region, (Susan: Oh) it depends on the period when the people made them. (Susan: Oh Okay) yeah, the oldest one is when chonguri is made from one piece. Yes, and later they started to make it with different parts. But it was um it was, because they changed the play, the er the shape and the size of the musical instrument, yeah. The oldest chonguri is much, much smaller than new one.

**Susan Thompson:** But are people still making them both styles now?

**Nino Razmadze:** yes, yes, and it's more old old styled chonguries with one piece. Yeah.

**Music:** mze shinao by Sathanao, Lullaby from Samegrelo played on chonguri.

So then we have we, I mentioned Idiophones. It's like a bells and rattles. This kind of musical instruments. (Susan: Idiophones? I've never heard this word) Idiophones - yes. It's a professional name of this group of musical instrument and maybe you saw all of them in our church and also in eastern part of mountain - in religion er festivals or somewhere?

Bells - *Church bells Shilda*



Horse bells *Telavi museum*



**Susan Thompson:** They're mostly used with rituals then?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes. Yes, it was more widespread in the past than now, but er, and some people doesn't call them musical instruments. (Susan: but they are) yes, but they are of course and we have different shape of bells for, we use for cows, for example.

**Susan Thompson:** Your cow bells in Georgia, they're delicious. I've been walking in woodland thinking, what's that? What's that? And realising it's just the gentle chink of this cowbell (Nino: Yes) and they can get so close and you can't see them through the trees and yet you can hear them from a long way.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, and it helped to people to find their cows, for example. (Susan: yeah) It helps the cows to be more safe in the forest. (Susan: Yes) Yeah, and it has this spiritual meaning. Yeah. (Susan: There's a spiritual meaning?) Yes, some of them. The owners thinks that this rattles will save their animals. (Susan: Ok wow) And also in the some manuscripts we had some information about er, how they were playing with the rattles also. Er But its, it was maybe in 17th century.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Who was playing? Like children were playing with it?

**Nino Razmadze:** Not children - the mens were playing with the rattles.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Ah, they were playing them as musical instruments - right OK.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes and they used more er so if you will go to the museum and you will see archaeological heritage er, every time, you can find a lot of rattles and bells. Because the material, er, was bronze or something like this, so it saved - preserved. Yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** Nino shared a piece by the men's ensemble Lashari for you to hear a wind instrument - the salamuri. It's a melody from Tusheti and the salamuri joins what we think is a panduri.

**Music:** Ensemble Lashari play tushuri melodies with salamuri (supplied by Nino Razmadze).

**Nino Razmadze:** And also we have this wind musical instrument, Salamuri - wind, wind musical instruments Salamuri and Larchemi and Soinari. And this Larchemi, Soinari we had in the Samegrelo and Guria. But nowadays and no one plays on them. I er the last few musical recordings we have from 1960's and then disappeared er because it was very difficult to play with this musical instrument and the melody was er very, very old. And people just forget them. Nowadays there are some people, some young men, who want to renovate them, but er musical instrument is the shape and also music together. Yep, er so in music we have some to some problems. Those are tuning system was very very difficult. And it's so difficult to play on traditional Soinari and Larchemi today.

**Music:** larchemi (supplied by Nino Razmadze)

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** But Salamuri is still

**Nino Razmadze:** Salamuri still yeah er. It's very popular and also some new choirs started to make, to play, in two salamuri together. And they added some holes and made some - bigger - bigger range of notes. (Susan: OK.) Yeah. of scale. Sometimes they are playing classical music's too.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Classical music on a folk instrument.

**Nino Razmadze:** yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** That reminds me - so you are talking about the wind instrument being made bigger, but aren't there bass panduris, that are like, (Nino R: Oh yeah) the size of person?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, it's a, um, from Soviet Union they started this kind of modification of musical instruments. But we don't have, er we don't call them traditional folk musical instruments.

**Susan Thompson:** okay. So that would be what, like 1930's, round that area.

**Nino Razmadze:** yes. But it was more popular in Soviet Union.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Do you play it like a stand up bass then?



Art Gene Festival, Tbilisi 2022



**Susan Thompson:** I think so, yeah.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz: I've never seen that before.

**Nino Razmadze:** And also we have this bagpipes. (Susan: of course) Two kind of bagpipes, one from Racha and one from a Adjara.



Chiboni - held by Levan Gersamia



**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Is that the chiboni?

**Nino Razmadze:** Chiboni - the name is chiboni in Adjara and gudastviri in Racha.

Holly Taylor-Zuntz: Gudastviri

**Nino Razmadze:** Khi, In Racha and also in Kartli. Also we have some information that this eastern part of mountain - in Tusheti for example or Pshavi, they used also this - musical instrument.

**Music:** Merisi Khorumi (supplied by Nino Razmadze)

**Susan Thompson:** That's actually, quite a lot of folk instruments, isn't it?

**Nino Razmadze:** Erm yes, so. And also it's very important that we have the Georgian, Georgian and names of musical instruments and also Georgian names of the parts of musical instruments and also some legends.

**Susan Thompson:** What sort of legends?

**Nino Razmadze:** Actually, it's always is um, connect with the death people. When somebody will make these musical instruments from, from the body of dead people, yeah, but this kind of legend is, in different places in the world.

**Susan Thompson:** Really.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes.

**Susan Thompson:** So, I'm going to get very morbid here. But what, what do you make out of the body of a dead person?

**Nino Razmadze:**

For example hair. (Susan, hair) Also hand bones. Yes, (Holly: skin?) No, not skin. No. (Holly: Kind of -ligaments maybe would make strings – Susan: I don't know) No strings they use hair, (Holly: okay).

**Susan Thompson:** Yeah, but is hair strong enough? I'm sorry to ask but – you could use it for a bow I guess.

**Nino Razmadze:** You mean hair? Yes.

**Susan Thompson:** Really. Lovely strings. What so the changi, perhaps the harp because their strings aren't so long.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, actually we used, before nylon, we use the horse. horse.

**Susan Thompson:** OK. Horse hair yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** Like a seamless supra toast it was time to move the conversation back to the land of the living. Next Holly asks about accordions, or garmoni, as they are

called in Georgia. Here's a Tushetian, dirge played on a garmoni by Ketevan Nik'oladze from Mzetamze.

**Music:** Chemo Zalo by Mzetamze

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** And what about?

**Nino Razmadze:** Garmoni's it came from...the some people think that it came from Russia, but some scholars think that it came from Germany. Yeah, maybe just 2 century's, something like this.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** That's like squeeze box?

**Nino Razmadze:** But Georgians.Yeah,

Garmoni - *played by Tiko (Mtiebi)*



**Susan Thompson:** I was gonna say the garmoni has a keyboard or buttons? (Nino: er both.) Both. So keyboard one end and buttons the other end.

**Nino Razmadze:** And Georgian made some models of Georgian, for example, Tushetian garmoni. And the scale is different than classical one, (Holly: Ah ha) yes. And it's a very common in musical instruments, in the world, when some musical instruments is going from one place to second place, they are changing the scale and sometimes the shape. And if you can, talking about garmoni when it came from, from where? We can't talk about this with salamuri, for example, because this kind of musical instruments are in every, every place. And the most important thing is that musical instruments must be, um connect with singing tradition. For example, the scale must be same for singing and musical playing and also the type of polyphony, for example. And if we have two strings, for example, chianuri and one singer, this man or woman singer is singing one voice and playing another two voices with musical instrument and if this singer will change the voice. For example, will start from the first voice and go to the second voice and the bass, they are changing this voices on musical instrument.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Wow. Did not know that.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, for example, if we've singers singing first voice, they're playing second and bass on the instrument. If they're singing second voice, they are playing first voice and bass. But it's very interesting that sometimes singers are singing the bass, but they are not playing second and first voice, they're playing bass and second or first voice on the musical instrument. It's because the bass is very important for musical instruments. You can hear it every time.

**Susan Thompson:** Yes, I have a question, it's like which comes first - the chicken or the egg?

**Nino Razmadze:** So yeah, nobody knows.

**Susan Thompson:** In Tusheti, is it the singing that has the sound like garmoni first and then the garmoni comes along and people like it because it's like their singing. Or does the garmoni come along and everybody goes? That's a gorgeous instrument - I want to sing like that?

**Nino Razmadze:** For musical instruments, it came from singing of course, yes, and the oldest form of the playing and singing together, it's when people, when one person is singing and with musical instruments it make a bass, yeah. Because bass is very important in Georgian polyphony.

**Music:** Chemo Zalo - Mzetamze

**Susan Thompson:** I'm just thinking, we've mentioned so many instruments, but what about the Tsiko tsiko?

'Cause that's that's a is it an accordian.....?

Tsiko tsiko [State Museum of Georgian Folk Songs and Instruments](#)







**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, we have a different, it's a bandoniri. Like Bandoneon. We have different bandoneon. is kind of in this musical instrument group. (Holly: Ah .. classification) So we have different kind of garmoni and bandoneon. And some of them we have just one example. (Susan: Ah gosh) Tsiko tsiko. (Susan: There's only one in the family and it's a tsiko tsiko. Yeah. I get it, I get it. I think.)

**Susan Thompson:** So, you wrote a paper about all of this. That was published recently, at the 11<sup>th</sup> Symposium – I won't give the whole name because it takes too long.  
(Laughter)

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** I would like to hear the name of your paper. What was it called?

**Susan Thompson:** The one that was published in the... I'm going to read it out because - The issue of gender (Nino: this yeah) The title is - The Issue of Gender in Georgian Instrumental Music (Nino: yeah) and it was published in [The Women's Role in UNESCO Recognised European Traditional Singing Practices](#).

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes. Yeah. When we started to make a plan, what we would like to put on this book, I was working on the musical instrument and I chose this topic. So - I wanted to collect all information about women and musical instruments in Georgia. Yeah, it's very interesting situation because um actually we don't know anybody who plays on soignari or larchemi. But mostly women are playing in all musical instruments. Some of them are quite difficult to play, for example, bagpipes. But, for example, chonguri or panduri is very usual for women playing. Also salamuri is not very women instrument.

**Susan Thompson:** Not many women play it. (Nino: No) So in the past I've read it's the boys that learn how to play because they're out in the fields on their own with the sheep, so but that's not the case now...

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, Yeah, mostly it's the string musical instruments they're playing now, popular in women playing. And also we have some of them who are playing on chiboni, for example, it's very difficult musical instrument to play because it needs a lot of energy and (Holly: that's the bagpipe one?) yeah, but these two women are playing very well.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** And whose that?

**Nino Razmadze:** Ah from Adjara, er, one is Eter Darchidze er and his nephew, her nephew yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** So they're her niece if they are two women?

**Nino Razmadze:** yes, only this two women.

**Susan Thompson:** So Eter Darchidze and her neice, I think, is the .... (Nino: yes.) Um Yeah. I often trip up when I'm reading things in Georgian because Georgian doesn't have a he and a her, or she and him, so I can (Holly: or a niece and a nephew) or a niece and a nephew, so it's like are they talking about a man or are they talking about a woman I'm not sure. (Holly: and in this case it's very important.) Yes.



**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Because we've met Eter haven't we? (Susan: Yeah. We have.) Susan – we've met her in her village. Yes, Yeah, Yeah, With her mother and all her brothers and sisters. And that was so nice. And I, I heard that she was that she was the first gudistviri player (Nino: chiboni ) the first woman player.

Eter Darchidze playing Chiboni in Adjara



**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah. Actually, I don't know nobody who played on chiboni before.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Wow. I wonder what made her start? Learn it. Yeah.

**Nino Razmadze:** And also when we were in Turkey in Inegol, where Acharian people are living erm some of our, our hosts told us that they know that some some woman who made chiboni for the men, yes, and they were talking about two women. (Susan: Oh, nice.) But you didn't get to meet them, did you?

**Nino Razmadze:** No, because we are talking about last period. (Susan: Oh in the past). Yes um and the recording we have, it's from 1963, but the man is playing, but as they told, women made them and also cared about....

**Susan Thompson:** looked after them, I know they need quite a lot of maintenance, I know I've been sent into Adjara to get a reed, to mend one back in Tbilisi before now. So yeah.

**Nino Razmadze:** So if you don't know how to care about this musical instrument, it'll just destroy. Yeah,

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** It's made of a sheep's stomach, is it?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes.

**Susan Thompson:** And are there other women making – makers? making musical instruments in Georgia?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, we have some of them. For example, Patti who made diplipito. (Susan: They are the double drums) Yes, actually, we have information about this musical instrument from old manuscripts.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Is that Turmanidze? (Susan: Yeah I think that was the name)

**Nino Razmadze:** Turmanidze yeah. But um it's, it's disappearing also, we don't know how they played or what they play. So this woman started to make a new diplipitos and she found some information about the technical um manufacturing of this musical instrument. And um started. (Holly:Wow.) (Susan: Body made from clay?)

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes. Yeah. Yes. Yeah. And actually, it's this, this type of musical instrument is coming from Islamic world. Yes.

**Susan Thompson:** Do you? Are there any? Did when you doing your research, did you find the names of women who were renowned as players of different instruments from the past or...

**Nino Razmadze:** No.

**Susan Thompson:** None at all?

**Nino Razmadze:** But if we were talking about string musical instruments there are a lot, for example, Gurian women's, and Kakhetian women were playing and also in Svaneti. Yeah. It was very popular to play on string musical instruments in chuniri and changi.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** let's hear Papiko Chamgeliani playing chuniri and singing mirangula. She'll be mentioned later in the episode along with her nieces Anna and Madona.

**Music:** Papiko playing chuniri (supplied by Nino Razmadze)

**Susan Thompson:** Oh, you mentioned changi.  
I read somewhere about there's a ritual called catching the soul.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes.



**Susan Thompson:** Would you tell us about that?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah. It's very interesting. It's not only about changi and also chuniri. And also in chonguri at this everything is er, er, talking about string musical instrument group. (Susan:OK) not only some of them. So when somebody will died, not at home, but I outside. (Susan:Yeah) They, they thought that the soul is not with this body. So, they were going to this place er with musical instruments and also with cockerel yes. And they were playing and when this cockerel. (Holly: you mean when it crows) yes and when it start to make some unusual behaviours, they understand that they touch the soul and they were coming to home. Now, it's playing musical instruments.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** And singing too?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes. Not, not traditional way, but as I recorded, some of them were singing.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Oh you recorded this ritual?

**Nino Razmadze:** Not singing no - it's it's old ritual and nowadays nobody make this.

Susan and Holly: I've heard a story, Yeah, involving a Tbilisi hospital and a cockerel.

Holly: Yeah,

**Nino Razmadze:** Nobody doing this.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** I'm not sure about that. You should talk to the Chamgelliani sisters.

**Nino Razmadze:** Maybe yes actually Islam participated in this a lot of times.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Islam Pilpani?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes. And he passed away in 2017 as I remember and maybe 20 years before, 30 years before this, ritual was acting. Yes, but the nowadays no one playing. And erm calling part by playing and it's not, it's not very common.

**Susan Thompson:** I had fun in Tusheti a year or so back with someone called Marie, who had been learning the garmoni and she was researching all the old rituals and traditions and she said ah, I am a Tushetian woman, whenever we travel we must play garmoni and so part of our journey was on foot. And she got her garmoni down and she said right now, we are going to walk and play. (Holly:Wow) And I asked her when we arrived, I said – Is that the first time you've ever done that? And she said yes. (*Laughter*) But it was great fun.

**Nino Razmadze:** And also sometimes they were playing musical instruments when they had a...somebody who, who is near died. How to say – who is ill. ( Holly: Approaching death.) very ill and they were playing with string musical instruments.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** To sort of help their transition to the next world, I guess.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, and sometimes.They asked him to bring for them some musical instrument player. Yes, and also they are playing on chuniri and changi in Lipanali ritual.

**Susan Thompson:** Yes, so that's a Svanetian ritual

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, it's for one week. When they are hosts their souls.

**Susan Thompson:** Host the souls of the dead and they layout food for the ancestors.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, yes, yes and they're playing all the time. Yeah, this situation changed of course, because of this globalisation and electricity and computers and etc. But some of them nowadays also have these rituals.

**Susan Thompson:** I wonder why it's stringed instruments. I wonder why.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** I can't say that I'd like to leave this earth to the sound of a bagpipe. I think I prefer to leave to the sound of a chonguri.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, because in old um recordings, manuscripts or legends, or poetry text, yeah. They er, how to say, this stringed instruments is always connected with souls and er illness and this kind of things, and you know this wi.. wind musical instruments is connected with um. For example, how to say, when they're hunting or - doing this kind of thing to do with animals. (Susan: More active work with animals) Yes, in this, in this area. And we actually doli and this drums are very popular in Georgian musical instruments. But there is no a lot of information about this group of musical instruments connected with this kind of legends or old stories. Mostly with er string instrument, instruments.

**Music:** Ase Chonguri by Ensemble Shavnabada

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**Susan Thompson:** Now let's get back to the episode.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Do you think in Georgia there's a like men and women have different domains? Like one is more about singing and one is more about playing instruments? For example, the women more playing instruments than men? Or is it the opposite?



**Nino Razmadze:** If we will talk about string musical instruments, for example chonguri. Chonguri is more casual for woman's. (Holly: more usual for women.) Yeah more usual, for women, but it's depends on people which kind of family they have had their traditional, very traditional family or quite independent women they have or it depends on this social situation?

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Ah so you think for, for a woman to er play on the chonguri it needs a bit more independence and a bit less traditional?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, (Holly: okay) yes. Because. And also it depends where they are playing these musical instruments. (Holly: Ah - like is it public or private?) Yes, yes for example we know that er we had some musical instrument players who played just sat at home. But we had the woman, that somebody could invite them to play for their ill children, for example. And they were very well known women.

**Susan Thompson:** So was that the Batonebo?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah for example the batonebo ritual because they invited, for example, nine chonguri players (Holly: wow) Yeah and some of them, they after the playing they put this musical instruments next to this children and they thought that it will help to er batonebi.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** The instrument itself is, is holding some kind of sacred...

**Nino Razmadze:** Er Yes.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Power there then?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, actually all musical instruments in the world had some spiritual meaning. In the beginning. Yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** If you are curious to know more about Batonebo healing rituals check out episode 3 with Nino Naneishvili who leads Ialoni. Here's Ialoni playing the beautiful chonguri introduction to Sabodisho batonebo.

**Music:** Sabodisho batonebo by laloni

**Susan Thompson:** What musical instrument do you play?

**Nino Razmadze:** I'm playing on chonguri. I, I started to play on chiboni but I couldn't.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** It does look really hard.

**Nino Razmadze:** And also I tried to play on chianuri and chuniri and changi. Yeah so string musical instruments.

**Susan Thompson:** Yeah so you go for the stringed instruments?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah. I also tried to play on salamuri, but it was terrible so I stopped. Yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** And how, how did that come about? Is that, was that from people around you playing or you had a teacher or?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, that's a good question because I always love to talk about this. (Susan: Oh good) I made recordings of Polikarpes (Susan:Ah) Islams and Givi Pirtskilani and er, because the people did not pay more attention to the musical instrument. For example, we have self study recordings. You can listen. Er separate the first voice, second voice, third voice, but no musical instruments. (Aaah) But this is with musical instrument and you cannot hear what they're playing. So I made recordings, without singing, just part of playing.

**Susan Thompson:** And how old were you then?

**Nino Razmadze:** It was in 2009 with Polikarpe and I recorded all songs he could play for, during three days. Yes, and if you would like to I can show you. (Holly: That would be great.) Yes, I'm always giving people who are interested in this. Yeah, and also he played different versions of erm, same songs. (Susan: Of course). Yes - a lot of versions. (Susan: I bet) And you can see that they are playing er very simple melody, but if you want to make a copy it's very difficult because it has some old style technique. And that's fantastic. Yeah, it's the sound depends on for example, what is the direction of your finger? (Susan: Yeah) It has different sound. (Susan: Yeah) And also it's important we take only one string or two string or three together and which technique you will use. So these combinations was very, very interesting in Polikarpe's playing.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz** So let's hear some of the field recording that Nino made of Polikarpe playing chonguri.

**Music:** [Polikarpe Khubulava](#) (field recording by Nino Razmadze)



**Nino Razmadze:** Er, and also we have some scores and manuscripts about musical instruments, but there is, maybe 100 way how to play them. (Susan: Yeah yeah one score but so many different ways of) So many.

And also I recorded Islam. And his playing was also very interesting. Which, how to say, the technique was also very interesting in his playing. And erm how the people, how the player will make a melody is very important. In which kind of technique? Because there are several, kind of techniques and the sound is very very different. So this was very interesting work for me because it was first time to record all these erm, songs, pieces, but from, only with musical instruments - yeah. In this period I recorded Pappico Chamgelliani, who was a .. (Susan: grandmother?) Er, father's sister how ..(Susan: Father's sister, OK) and Anna and Madonna. Yes, and er she was playing in very different way. Yeah. This is very interesting, how this ..

**Susan Thompson:** What was she playing? Which instrument?

**Nino Razmadze:** Chuniri. Yes. And she was playing er famous songs but with different version. These old people - was very different than us. And maybe they had some knowledge which we didn't have. (Susan: I'm sure.) (Holly, okay.)

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** So that kind of brings me to a question, but that's kind of coming from the past and coming to the present day, what do you think needs to happen to encourage more women instrument players to bring those things from the past to the present? Is there?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah. You know, sometimes it depends on this musical instrument if it is quite difficult - less people will play on them. Even mens, yeah. For example this gudastviri - it's quite difficult and if you, if you can say that, for example, 100 people are playing on chongri or panduri, maybe 10 people will play on gudastviri. Yeah, very important is er to have very close relation with er old recordings, old sound recordings. To understand how they are playing, which kind of techniques they use, because if you are inside this music and techniques. And you know this er theoretical issues er sometimes you can understand this technique.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Well I'm so glad that someone like you is here and making recordings and making this categorizations, because now I - we don't have to worry that these traditions are going to be lost. I mean, I'm sure some things were lost, but I'm so glad that they've been recorded and put down.

**Nino Razmadze:** We forgot a lot of things. Ah, but we still have something to research, and something to play as an old way and also we have some very professional people who studied, for example, their grandfathers, for example Shergil Lushadze, who played in very old style Giorgi Donadze who played as a Polikarpe taught to him. Also Malchaz Erkvandze they know, they know some old techniques and they're playing, it's a sounds, more different than people who can play from scores, for example.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Here's a recording Nino made of Givi Pirtskhelani playing changi.

**Music:** Givi pirtskelani playing changi - chiche tura (field recording by Nino Razmadze)

**Susan Thompson:** Do you think there any old women out there who are waiting to be discovered by a young woman like yourself? Because I know I've read in papers where it's usual in not just ethnomusicology but other studies of societies, that women who play privately at home don't get heard. So, then they may still be there, waiting for us to knock on the door and listen.

**Nino Razmadze:** Um. I don't know the folk, of folklore and this ethnomusicology is very interesting areas. So even if you think that you recorded everything again, you wrote everything in you read everything. Everyday you can find something new. (Susan: yeah) This is folk lore. So I remember when my professor was so surprised when I recorded one more woman while she was playing on panduri and she was using left hand (Susan: Ha ha) and she just er how to say - played on panduri in different way. (Susan:Uh uh) not not like this, not, not like this - like this. (Holly: OK.Yes. She kinda flipped it left hand) And she was surprised because it was the first time for her as she all her life studied musical instruments and it was first time when she saw this kind of playing technique. (Holly: Wow.) So maybe, I'm not sure that they will be the old musical instrument player, with er, because all professional people in this field, we know, yeah. Yeah, but, maybe we.. there somebody who is waiting for us. I especially - especially in the eastern part of Georgia (Susan: yeah, yeah) And also maybe Svaneti.

**Susan Thompson:** yeah, yeah - perhaps so. And I was going to ask you, I nearly forgot, about those photographs I've seen, from the turn of the century, down in - probably Batumi/Guria sort of area, with just many, many women on a stage all playing together panduri or chonguri, I'm not sure which - panduri I think.

Massed chonguri players from photographic exhibition in Anakhlia



**Nino Razmadze:** yeah, you know this is er. It started from like the beginning of the 20th century, (Susan: Okay.) Yeah. The main figure was Avksenti Megrelidze for example, who started to make this kind of collective work.

**Susan Thompson:** It almost looks like an orchestra.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes. But it's different to. Different than er, this orchestra we're talking about. (Susan: Uh huh) Yeah, this style of, their style was er less variation and playing together the same music.

**Susan Thompson:** Which you need to do, if you've got 30 people on a stage playing a panduri altogether.

**Nino Razmadze:** We had some tradition when er people playing two chonguri - different melodies (Susan: okay) but in these choirs they were playing, same, same melodies.



**Susan Thompson:** Because I think you mentioned Eter Darchidze. I mean, I think that's how she teaches today. She's a teacher in Batumi and she often posts on Facebook pictures of her classes and (Nino Razmadze: Yes) many, many players altogether learning.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, if you know - it depends - what is your direction? So what you would do? What is your main idea to do? So her idea was to collect a lot of children together and if you give 10 minutes to each of them it will be impossible. I think this main idea was for Avksenti Megrelidze ავქსენტი მეგრელიძე too, the same rules. If, if you want to give opportunity for 30 or 40 women to play together, yeah. Yeah, it's, it's very normal if they will play the same melodies of chonguri, and this is a period when people were exciting to see so many people together. This is not a traditional (Susan; no, it doesn't look like it in the photos, but it's just interesting to see - Holly: It's kind of a spectacle, isn't it?

**Susan Thompson:** It is, absolutely it is.)

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes and no individualism and everybody yeah playing the same, same. And they also choose the, this kind of songs, which needed only very simple accompaniment.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Here's a recording of Avksenti Megrelidze's choir from soviet times, probably accompanied by mass chonguris. You can find it on alazani.ge, a great resource for Georgian folk music.

**Music:** Avksenti Megrelidze's choir - dedats miqvars

<http://www.alazani.ge/dzveli-CHANATSERI-AVKSENTI-MEGRIDZE-DEDATS-MIKVARS-SIMGERIS-TEGSTI-SNG1059.html?qartuli-folklori>

**Susan Thompson:** And then the other thing I was interested in, was, I think the [Trio Mandili](#) are, have made Georgian folk instruments known throughout the world just because they're so popular. And I know amongst folklorist there's great argument as to how traditional or not they are.

**Nino Razmadze:** Of course they are not traditional but um what does it mean? Just nothing. If we're talking from science - scientists side - of course we can say that this is not traditional, um, songs and this is not traditional technique and etcetera. But it's also part of our culture. (Susan: yeah). And I'm sure in the old period, not everybody was

excellent player, singer so, it's very important to call the correct and the exact name to every everything. Er but, it's, it's like a part of our culture and our musical instruments, cultures, so.

**Susan Thompson:** So we have a question we ask all our guests. (Holly: Usually the last question.) Laughter

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Nino - What does "Voices of the Ancestors" mean to you?

**Nino Razmadze:** Um - It's a connection for me. It's a connection which - a strong connection which we have to you. I'd say, and I'm always happy to hear about your new podcast. *Laughter* Because I'm very happy that you are interested in this, our culture and our people, and you're spending so many times with us. So it's, it makes me happy. Yeah, it for me, it means just um maybe friendship. I thank you. (Holly: Thank you) This job - I think, a very very soon, maybe your recordings will be, a very interesting resource for scholars, maybe, or for singers and players and also it's in English, (Susan: yes) which is very important for foreigner people to, know something - interesting and new information for them from Georgian musical culture and people. (Susan: Yes) I don't know.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** I think that's the first time that the answer to "What does voices are the ancestors mean to you?" is - The Podcast. *laughter*

Oh, we're doing something right.

**Susan Thompson:** We absolutely are, yeah. And although we usually ask that as nearly the last question, I want to give you the opportunity to tell us about you as a maker because I know you have really exciting projects.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah,

**Susan Thompson:** Wanting to make toys out of - locally sourced wood and using local labour and up in the rural areas in Adjara. And part of your idea is to do musical instruments, I think.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, of course, of course.

**Susan Thompson:** Tell us, what's the name of the company? What's the project?

**Nino Razmadze:** It's name Gogora, which means wheels.

**Susan Thompson:** Wheels,

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, wheels in Adjara dialect and they called gogora toys. Two children toys to Grandparents made for children, which has a wheels (Susan: okay) Yes. It's a very long story, but I will tell very short. Main idea is to make a toys er based on Georgian ethnographic themes. Because I think we don't have to make a copies from Pinterest or Google. Yeah no, because we have a lot of sources to use and we have opportunity to show er people in the world, some new, new toys based on our - this folk, (Susan: Yes - Folk themes.) Themes. Yeah, we had a lot of, for example, musical instruments, toys - as a toys. For kids and also, not musical instruments, but kids. Kids toy in the villages and in Adjara, for example. This old people are always making some handicraft toys for children and I also want to make a museum - toy museum. Yes, because I love this tradition, this - er still, still alive.

**Susan Thompson:** Yes, amazing designs - coz didn't you do a project - was it turning some of the embroidery designs into vectors? Am I right?

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, I made this project because I wanted to collect all this material which I have access. Made a lot of pictures, about 3,000 or something, so if somebody wants to make a new socks they can check, maybe 500 socks and understand which kind of colour they can use, which kind of ornaments and have they put together.

**Susan Thompson:** Well, I'm going to ask you to send me the link because I know there will be people listening who love their handicrafts and would find that resource amazing.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** yes - we'll put that link in the show notes.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah, you know. Hmm. In the past, maybe 15 years old, ago, ago. In every, every family, you could find 1, 2, 3 or more women who were making this handicraft work. But the daily life, the style, they changed a lot and this, this, it was nearly disappeared. Yeah. They had a tradition to make this kind of things together. It called Nadi. And when they are doing this job together to make a...

**Susan Thompson:** To make thread. To spin I think it is.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yes, yes and coloured them and then. Make something, for example. A woman who were going to get married. Yes and this tradition just destroyed. But nowadays, you know it's already very popular in the world to see how people how woman's are making something in the mountain and I'm sure it will become more popular. So my project was because of, because of that. If you don't have a tradition and nobody teach it to you, you can just go and see all this pictures and understand how and what you could do.

**Susan Thompson:** And Holly I think I remember you coming back from Adjara once going ah there is this wool making song. Oh yes - is it sock making?

**Nino Razmadze:** They were singing this song during the work. (Susan: Yeah, that's what I thought.) Yeah - All night.

**Holly & Nino Hum the song**

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** It's just two voices.

**Nino Razmadze:** Yeah.

**Susan Thompson:** So nice.

**Nino Razmadze:** Then they could continue with other songs and dance and playing panduri. And dance and dance and dance.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Done the wool making and now it's time for dancing? Yeah, maybe.

**Nino Razmadze:** I was thinking to make - a Nadi festival, for example.

Yes please.

Women sitting at doing this - singing and dancing and yes, making this.



**Susan Thompson:** Yeah, I'm coming to that festival - just give me the dates.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Men can do the cooking.

**Nino Razmadze:** Women Nadi. - Yeah. Why not? I will start with toys and then. Yeah.

**Holly Taylor-Zuntz:** Thank you for listening to Voices of the Ancestors with Holly Taylor-Zuntz and Susan Thompson. Our guest was Nino Razmadze. We've listed all the music used in the show notes and the transcript - where you'll also find pictures of the instruments mentioned. To see the transcript visit [voicesoftheancestors.co.uk](http://voicesoftheancestors.co.uk). While there you could support the podcast by clicking donate, and that will show you how to become a supporter on [Patreon](https://www.patreon.com/voicesoftheancestors) or [ko-fi](https://ko-fi.com/voicesoftheancestors). If that's not possible, consider sharing it with a friend or on social media, rating and reviewing it. You help us grow - you are our amazing marketing team! So thank you listeners for keeping this podcast sustainable. See you next time for more stories and songs. Bye for now!

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