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Episode Title: Myths & Stories of Svaneti

Interviewees: Madona Chamgeliani translated by Zoé Perret

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Interviewees: Lika Liparteliani translated by [Givi Poti](#)

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Interviewees: Vanda Bakuradze & Bakuri Mukbaniani translated by Vanda

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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 and the women who sing them.

Hello this is Holly here and welcome to series 2 episode 5 of Voices of the Ancestors podcast. Now today's episode is all about the stories of Svaneti. And you might remember in the previous episode we heard from the Chamgeliani singing sisters who live in this high remote mountain region of Georgia called Svaneti. Well they had so many stories to tell, because Svaneti is full of ancient myths and legends, that we decided to dedicate a whole episode to them. And Susan and I have invited our friend Annalie Wilson to be a guest co-host on this episode, because she's been there and heard these stories too. So I'm stepping back and looking forward to hearing the stories that Susan and Annalie are going to bring us today. I'll be listening along with you excitedly. So enjoy!

Susan Thompson: Thank you Holly and welcome to you all. The voices today are, me Susan Thompson, Madona Chamgeliani and we're also going to be joined by members from Ensemble Lalkhor that cherish all things Svan. We'll hear from the founder Lika Liparteliani along with two members of the group - Vanda Bakuradze and Bakuri Mukbaniani. And as Holly mentioned we have a guest co-host today - Annalie - who is a singer songwriter, actor and most importantly, lover of Georgian folk music. Thanks for joining us.

Annalie: Well thanks for inviting me Susan. And it's been really heartwarming to delve back into some of the stories and songs that we discovered on our trip to Svaneti, especially the hunting myth that Madona Chamgeliani told, by the bonfire in that massive thunderstorm, which we'll hear later in the episode.

Susan: Oh yes that was the story with the goddess Dali. And, dear listeners, if you want to catch every nuance of our guests and translators speaking English with Georgian, Svanetian

and French accents there is a full transcript of the episode on the Voices of the Ancestors website - so you can download and read along or check bits later.

Annalie: Yes and there's a further complication, isn't there, because the Svan language is actually different to the Georgian Language so we had some interesting moments with translators.

Susan Thompson: Oh yes now the first person we're going to hear from is a young woman called Vanda. We'd arranged to meet at the Ethnographic, outdoor museum, in Tbilisi. I learnt that she was born in Lower Svaneti and moved to Tbilisi for education. Now Lower Svaneti is just as remote as Upper Svaneti, It would take her about 6 hrs non stop driving to get back home. And she is going to set the scene for us now.

Vanda: This is um like a history, er like when we are learning and um er searching old songs that we er, understand other things also because er, because the songs have history like er, text and like, melody. Like now we live in a different world right, (Susan mmm) and everything is different and when we um are searching the old songs we feel that past energy - like, er how er what kind of our ancestors were. They living very strong, like er nature, and er today everything change - right - you can go from one place to another by car or something but they - it was not in the past they were struggling like - worked really hard, especially in Svaneti, mountains and living was really hard (Susan mmm) and we feel that hardness in the song when we sing.

Music: From Ensemble Lalkhors [Solo Concert](#) with chuniri

Annalie: Wow there's just so much even in that short excerpt isn't there? And listening to Vanda talking about the hardness that we feel through the songs it really just took me back to that moment in Svaneti when we were listening to Madona Chamgeliani telling this amazing story about her grandmother and the chuniri and it was with [Zoé Perret](#) who was on the trip with us - she was translating it.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So imagine it was really difficult for my grandmother, especially because er at that time they were considered as an enemy yes? (Susan mmm) And the family was enemy of the communists. (Susan mmm)

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So she, she appeared to be in such a difficult situation with her five children, when her husband died, right?

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: The only person who could, er, more or less help her, was her. Um, oldest child, who was like a daughter. Her daughter. Thirteen years old.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: But this daughter became sick. Nobody understood why, what, happened.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So of course, there was no doctor and er well she had to die. So before she was dying she asked her mother to sing a song - a lullaby.

Music: Nanila - 'Chamgeliani Sisters' Madonna and adopted sister Levan Bitarov with Ana playing chuniri

Zoé Perret: So his mother had just lost her husband, right? And her child, oldest child. So my, my father remembers how every time she would cry over these two dear persons. She would take the chuniri and she would cry.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So she took it because she wanted to because actually she was crying and she wanted her children to think that they are, that she's singing.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: And one day he thought, my father thought, that this was, er because of the chuniri that she was crying. (laughter) So he thought okay. I want to break this chuniri and actually broke it down.

Music: 'Chamgeliani Sisters' - Madonna and adopted sister Levan Bitarov with Ana playing chuniri

Susan: That was the Chamgeliani sisters singing Nanila.

So we have some more voices for you today. I caught up with a couple of people at a very special moment at the Folk Centre in Tbilisi. It was the morning after the very first concert by Ensemble Lalkhor. Now they are a fairly young ensemble, they've only been going a couple of years. And Lika told me - that's Lika Liparteliani, the founder, how when she started for the first year I think it was an all female group and then she saw the opportunity to work more widely with the Svan community and the group now welcomes men and it's a really large group, there were about 30 singers on stage of all different generations.

Now Lika is a striking woman, very softly spoken with black, black hair and twinkling eyes. She created Ensemble Lalkhor to bring the Svan life into Tbilisi - music, dancing and speaking in the Svan

language. When I asked her to tell me who is Lika - she very soon started talking about her grandmother."

Lika was joined by Givi Poti, also a wonderful singer who very kindly translated for us.

Lika: speaking in Georgian.

Givi: So my grandma was er most interesting and tragic person at the same time. She was widowed 33 years old with seven kids and she raised all of them in a way that she was a pillar of the family. And she was all the time er taking care of all of them and putting them together all the time and I remember her er hands and er these hands were very dry and thin er like er skinny er because she was working all the time, hard and er when - and I can compare er this hands to er the branches of the trees without leaves and when she was um praying like - it was er, it is a very memorable er thing for me because i er I - how to say - met God with her hands.

Annalie: I met God through her hands - I was so struck by this phrase and it put me in mind of one of my all time favourite songs by Bill Withers (laughter) and it's called grandma's hands. And the very first line of the song is - *Sings: Grandmas, hands clapped in church on Sunday morning*. And it got me thinking it's something I've noticed about all aspects of Svan culture is it's very embodied (Susan: Yes) and here you have the sense that spirituality is very embodied too - it's not separate.

Susan: Yeah - And Madonna also had her own story about embodied spirituality. And here's Zoe and Madona again.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: One day er when it was a feast day.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Of course the villagers went up to that church - Tangilly like always on feast day

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: And these monks were living there at that moment, started to prohibit it and say this is not right you should not do that - why are you dancing if you want to do that you would be better go to a nightclub.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Actually here even if you don't have very good dancers or whatever - the spirituality that you can feel through this 'perkhuli' round dance is much higher than when you hear other ensembles not from here performing this um song, song and dance.

Annalie: And now Lika remembers her grandmother dancing.

Lika: speaking in Georgian.

Givi: In my childhood still er cattle was taken to the mountains in the summertime for several months it was quite hard work and during this process people were working really really hard but in the evening times when they were resting and er having time, they were getting together we call 'sweepy' - 'sweepy' or 'tsvipy' (Lika - tsveepy) so er 'sweepy'/'tsvipy' at the place where village is sitting together in the free time and talking and singing yes, This process was really alive and that ladies who were er some kind of, how to say, very tough ladies and hard working ladies they were, like er sometimes jumping on the rocks like er mountain goats (Susan yeah) But simultaneously they could transform. very soft, flowery kind of ladies who are dancing really really great dances which was like straight forward and then coming back like the moves she is er and this little steps which were er, er, something special like, you could think that were not stepping at all but (Susan: levitating) levitating

Susan: Here's Vanda talking about the perkhuli, the round dance

Vanda: It's one year I am doing perkhuli (Susan:huhuh) - firstly I can't even imagine that I can do it - when I er - What is this I can't even do it - it was really hard but when I the first one after I was let's do the perkhuli because when you are singing and doing this together it's like really connected - its whole changing. (Bakuri and Susan laugh).

Vanda: Yes you know first you are doing ...crazy yes. Firstly it was like sing and do this - how can I concentrate on .. when I am learning but after ...

Susan: This is so lovely to hear you say this - so you learnt to sing and dance together one year ago. (Vanda: Yes - I am trying) For Bakuri what is it like because you have been doing this since you were a toddler?

Bakuri & Vanda talk together

Vanda: Really great. (Bakuri: xand magaria)

Susan: Bakuri grew up in Lower Svaneti and is from a long lineage of singers.

Susan: xand magaria - what a great phrase

Bakuri: speaks in Georgian

Vanda: He thinks that without it - he can't even live. With feelings like this if I can't have this I can't even live. (Susan: Yes) This song and perkhuli, all of this. So I can, like choose - most of things like - (Susan: You can leave most of things behind but not this) Not this.

Susan: Wow. And to throw in my feeling - when I have been singing and dancing together and in Svaneti even - there's a feeling that when you go round in that circle that you are moving something else - it's not just your body and the people around you.

Vanda: Yes - the whole body. (Susan Yeah) You are giving er by hand - you are giving energy and your Svaneti giving others and they are giving others it's like something crazy (Susan Yeah - beautiful, beautiful). Lika always say that there's - feel on your hands - not just sing, not just like, doing perkhuli, feel from your hands, each other and give them back energy.

Music: Ensemble Lakhor - perkhuli - encore from [Solo concert](#) with clapping and the sound of dancing feet.

Vanda speaks with Bakuri.

Vanda: So as he explained its really different when you are singing in your home your feeling more free and comfortable and the mountains and er place gives you a different energy and I er why i thinking about it when he was speaking and er I did not sing in Svaneti but speaking in Svan is same right. When I am speaking, talking Svan here (Tbilisi) it's different, different. When I am in my home and I am speaking in Svan it's um er freedom and you feel different yeah.

Vanda speaks with Bakuri.

Vanda: The nature gives the Svan person - gives the Svan person that kind of, free, kind of, the whole thing and that's why of course it will be different when you are singing in your nature, these mountains, because it's so, we have,

Vanda: We have traditions about the nature and how um its changing weather changing there are days you can't do something because weather was really important for us because we were um doing because we have um potatoes and things that we eat - products - so there are days you can't do anything with um ground - you can't even take from the ground like um flour because it brings you like bad um (Susan: Bad luck?) Yes um bad weather. (Susan: Bad weather ah OK) There are praying days when you are especially praying about weather.

Vanda: Sun is like Lille. (Susan: uh huh)

Vanda: But the moon is really important and also like - when you are starting, new business or new thing my father and aunt are always saying - let's see what kind of moon today...

Music: [Latali Singers](#)

Holly: Hello, this is Holly again. I'm loving hearing these stories from Svaneti along with you. I just wanted to pause to acknowledge the reason we're able to bring you these songs and stories from Georgia. Because it wouldn't be possible without our patrons and kofi supporters. If this podcast enriches your life in any way, and you appreciate the thought, time and energy we

pour into it, please consider supporting us at patreon.com/voicesoftheancestors or ko-fi.com/voicesoftheancestors. So that we can keep telling these stories that want to be heard! Allright back to the episode.

Vanda: Hunting was their main very important er because we were living in mountains and in the past was not er ways to come like other products and hunting was er, like really important for the families. So there was special days which days you er, you choose for, go there, and not everyone can go for hunting which needs experience and everything when you go like shoes and things that you need to have and experience is really important.

Susan: Would the hunters be walking or would they be riding horses?

Vanda and Bakuri speak together.

Vanda: Yes. Um both

Susan: Both. OK has Bakuri ever..

Vanda: It depends what kind ...

Susan: Have you been hunting? Yes? OK - You've been hunting too Vanda - Ooh. I want to hear - what, what did you catch?

Vanda: Datvi ra aris? Bear.

Bakuri: Datvi

Susan: Bear! You caught a bear?

Vanda: Not me but er. It was huge they er catch it by um something to catch it -

Susan: A trap?

Vanda: The trap was with a tree. It was like really angry and er it almost took them took them from that tree from er (Susan Wow) I was little - like 8 or 9 years.

Annalie: So I remember when we were in Svaneti that one of the characters that came up a lot was this goddess called Dali and we heard lots of stories about her and we even learned a song called Bail Betkil in which he features and I remember very particularly that Madonna saved the story of this song for a special evening where we walked a little bit out of the village into just wild nature completely pitch black and this is bonfire set up and there were people gathered around the fire and Madonna proceeded to tell us this story and then there was this massive thunderstorm going (Susan: oh yeah) and we were sitting by this fire listening to this story about

this goddess and the rain was pouring down or crashes of thunder and lightning and it was just so atmospheric one of the most memorable experiences I had while I was in Svaneti.

Susan: yeah and do you remember there was that great big dog and I think we can even hear the panting as long as well as the fire and the thunder you can hear the dog on this recording Annalie.

Annalie: I do not remember the dog Susan - I do not remember it. (Laughter)

Susan: Seriously (Annalie:No I can't) - wow I'm surprised

Annalie: Isn't it funny how we all remember different things - at that is precisely why stories evolve in such different ways over time.

Susan: (laughter) So true, so true.

Annalie: Now we are we going to hear some of that story told by Madona around the fire preceded by a clip from the song by Bail Betkil sung by Anna Chamgelliani, Zoé Perret and Givi Prtskeliani from the Latali singers

Music: Bail Betkil - sung by Zoé Perret, Ana Chamgeliani and Givi Prtskeliani from the Latali singers

Note: In this fireside section there is background noise from the crackling fire and excited people speaking in Georgian.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Dali has golden hair.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: She is absolutely beautiful.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So She is the goddess and protector of animals who live in the mountains.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Often you can read that she is the goddess of like er hunters and hunt - but it's not true.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Because when anyone kills an animal, she suffers a lot.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: She can fall in love like any person.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: She also suffers from giving birth like all women.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So she really looks like a woman, she just has one difference.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: She can not forgive.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So that's why she couldn't be a part of a, Christian goddess.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So as I was saying er most, like, almost all the Svan gods and goddesses from Svan paganism were replaced by (Zoe in Georgian) Christian saints. But Dali could not be replaced because er Christianity for Christianity its very important - forgiveness - yeah which she cannot do.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So Dali is er looks like the mountain yeah. The mountain doesn't forgive you. If you make a mistake you can die so for Dali is really like a mountain.

Susan: So when I met Vanda and Bakuri of course I asked them about Dali and I got a different aspect of the Dali myth and a different song which we heard in the concert.

Vanda: Until mens will go hunting they were praying for Dali - like er success for our hunting. Dali was like er a there are many myths about that - he/she was er choosing the hunter and then gave an exam - like different kinds of maybe he/she be ox, white ox.

Susan: She would change her appearance and she would show herself as a white ox.

Vanda: A white Ibex.

Susan: An Ibex - Yes

Vanda: And um hunter - like it's really beautiful and um hunter can't kill. He wants to kill but can't kill because he knows that it is Dali, Dali's exam Um but most of the persons maybe, they kill and after he falls from the rocks, from the mountains and dies or something.

Susan: Oh no

Vanda: Yes but if he like, can't kill, OK, Dali - I know you are and I pray, continues praying and I will not kill this animal and go. And after Dali gives him success and er Yeah. I will explain what Dale Kojas Khelvaghale (Susan: Yes) It's the song that tells in the text and it happen like this. Dale Kojas Khelvaghale - it means Dale is giving birth (Susan: Yes) in mountains and up his head there are birds flying and down there are wolves screaming - watching. So Dale is giving birth all night and um day. All night and all day - and this kind of text it is. And um Khelvaghale it's really - important word because it's, it's, giving birth, it means giving birth.

Susan: It means giving birth?

Vanda: By Svan - in Svan. (Susan: OK) It's not er, it's concratic it means er male, not female (Susan: OK). The word er contains like er male. But she's giving birth there's no male or female, the whole words mean that giving birth. Like concratically in the word there is male. I, I realised.

Susan: Wow - which part of the word?

Vanda: ghvage

Susan: ghvage - right. And you are playing changi - Okay. Will you sing a little bit for us?

Bakuri sings: Shai voi re ro rasha re ro sha rasha

Vanda joins on bass: Dale Kojas khelvaghale re ro sha rasha

Music: Ensemble Lalkhor - Dale Kojas Khelvaghale - live recording from first [solo concert](#).

Note: *Return to Fireside Story with background sounds of fire etc.*

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: And so he was a hunter that killed er the favourite er 'Jikvi' like er (Geoff Burton: a mountain goat) Mountain goat. She's asking do we want to go home?

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So of course she got very upset because someone killed her mountain goat.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So she meets this Betkil.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: But Betkil was very handsome!

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So she tells Betkil - OK I can be either your mother, your sister or your lover.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: 90% of the hunters, when she asks them this question, of course say that I want to be your lover.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian - Magram ...

Zoé Perret: So every time she says OK you can be my lover but there is one condition - that you should not betray me. (Oh dear)

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian - Magram ...

Zoé Perret: But - it is the nature of men that every one is a betrayer.

Sound of thunder - shrieks and reactions from the party round the fire.

(Dawn: Who said that?)

(Bernard: See - that's what the gods think of you.)

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Thunder!

Zoé Perret: And so when with Betkil, for example, she gives Betkil her scissors. Which is the only thing that allows him to cut her hair. And, actually all her power is in her hair. (Dawn - Oh no)

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian (Dawn - Oh no don't do it)

Zoé Perret: So basically she er by this action er the hunter, the simple hunter becomes - (mepe sad dis) - becomes a king. Because she basically offers her life. (Bernard: Yes)

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So of course Betkil falls in love with. er, with another woman.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: And suddenly he loses erm these scissors. (Bernard: Oh dear)

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: When Betkil stops hunting the whole village started to understand that he made some kind of mistake with Dali.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Crackle from the camp fire and Rain and Thunder!

Zoé Perret: So in the song that we actually learned there is a feast in the village and everywhere, everyone is gathered in a circle

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: And suddenly arrives a white (Zoe speaks in Georgian) white animal - I'm not sure which one it is.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: She says um mountain goat - but it is not the same as the one before.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Ah - so it is a female one, the other was a male

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: And you remember that between the legs he come, he ran.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So in the song you can hear the, the

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Question - Who is going to er follow?

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So the whole village asks the questions who is going to, who has to follow this goat. And the village answers this question - of course it's Betkil.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Everyone was afraid of Dali because they knew that if they made a mistake then they had to be responsible for it and Dali would be very angry.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: Betkil knew already his mistake and he knew that he couldn't avoid this judgement.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So he has to go and he follows this animal. This happens in winter

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So he goes and he follows this 'lepar' (Ghislaine - the steps) so what, what - the footprints. So in front of him he can see the footprints of the animal but in the back he can not see them any more.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So this animal takes him to a kind of cave.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: And of course in this cave is Dali who asks him where is my scissor?

Music: [Bail Betkil - Ensemble Amer-Imeri](#)

Zoé Perret: who lost the scissors so you know how you will end.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: erm so she takes Betkil and she holds him with one hand and one leg above the precipice, cliff.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: But at the same time of course she cries, because she loves him.

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: But she can not forgive. (chuckles)

Madona Chamgeliani: speaks in Georgian

Zoé Perret: So Betkil is still on this cliff about to fall and er his dog found him!

Susan: So you see there was a dog, in the story as well as by the fire!

Annalie: Susan you are totally right and I had forgotten both of those things 'cause there was actually a whole other song wasn't there - Betkil in dialogue with his dog.

Susan: Oh my god - yes.

Annalie: But we didn't learn that one.

Susan: No, no we didn't and um we never did find out the end of the story properly.

Annalie: No Cause the thunder storm was so intense we had to pack up everything and head back to the house.

Susan: Ah that's it. Well I did do a bit of digging to see if I could find the end in you know a written form - and I did some more Svan beings - not Dali but some other creatures

Susan: I was thinking - Are there any evil spirits in Svaneti?

Vanda: Evil spirits - maybe it's like Chinka it's kind of evil spirits - Chinka. It's um like a small ugly thing. (Susan: laughs OK) And it comes in the night times, it comes and scaring people.

Bakuri & Vanda talk together

But it has its own period - period like it appears like time. (Ah) (speaks in Georgian) In November. (Susan OK) We also have the special days where we think that they are scared from iron, of iron.

Susan: They're scared of iron?

Vanda: iron - how can I say - iron it's not er (Susan: a metal?) Yeah metal - they're scared from metal and in that period in home and in windows we are putting some kind of metal for safety.

Susan: OK So you could put a metal cooking pot?

Vanda: yes maybe, any, any metal (OK) a knife or

Bakuri speaks

Vanda: There was, like, a kind of legend that chinka goes to mountains and rocks. It's like, there will be good weather for us and if it like, goes down, someone saw that goes down to the river it will be, like it will be rains. (Susan OK). So they have prognosis. (Susan: They are weather forecasters - ok laughter)

Susan: And er I think I've read, there are Devi who are evil, but they are - they are in the mountains where there is a sheer drop of a gorge or something. Is that something in Svaneti? (Vanda Yes) Do you have Devi?

Vanda talks with Bakuri

Vanda: Yes we have. Devi, like, strong evil creature yes we have with a huge, like er, head and um something was living mostly mountains and forest and sometimes like going to villages and kidnapping the persons there (Susan ah ok) in the legends yeah.

Susan: so more like a giant - OK.

Vanda: Every evening in my home when I was child in the mountains. Today it's a little bit life changing. We had like talking, sitting together as a family and my father or aunt who is living with us like was mmm telling their stories and in the past and um mostly I don't remember but I remember the process of sitting and hearing that it was old stories - like um kind of thing (Susan: yes) I have some video recording that my uncle was, that the process was sharing the histories about scary things, like um, chinkas also devs – how was came, how was happened – I was a little bit scared – it was very interesting - so I heard from them yes.

Susan: Here's Givi translating for Lika.

Givi: Yes we are living on the edge of reality and er myth all the time and yes we are part of this bear world but er I believe in every dimension of this er life. Yes I am standing here on the ground but er I believe in Dali I believe in other gods, er and er goddesses which are part of my life. And part of my tradition and culture in which I am raised. And if it's not true - I don't care still (laughter) very beautiful (laughter) to have this kind of stories and this kind of myths around us.

Music: Nana from [Lalkhor's solo concert](#) - where women sing nana's to a child in a cradle.

Susan: What does Voices of the Ancestors Mean To You?

Vanda: I have connection in the past with them. er not just because I have their blood, my ancestors, I just - it's just 'real' connection. Like I really feel when I sing and when I think about - like it's so great thing when you have connection with the past. Like with reality - not just thinking and something (Susan uh uh). So it's like, connection which is not stopping (Susan yes) from the past and goes and goes and maybe it's the circle and maybe it's unstoppable line - but oh it's really great feeling.

Annalie: That connection that she's talking about, (Susan Yeah) that's what I feel when I sing these songs. And it doesn't matter that it's not my blood ancestors, you know, makes me think that as non-Georgians coming to Georgia singing this music, feeling it in our bodies and transmitting it further we become part of that unstoppable line. We become part of the Ancestors for the Next Generation.

Susan: Yeah yeah and I was taking just listening to that again, I mean she said that honestly we'd been sat down a couple of minutes and normally I save that question right till the end of an interview. But it was like oh wow we're in Georgia we were talking with Svans just reality myth everything's, in front of you, right now. And that just came out of her that - "unstoppable line" or is it a "circle"?

Annalie: Yeah that's right it's just it's so present, the past is present. (Susan:yeah) and when I think about the circle I just think about the perkhuli you know that round dance that ritual of course you feel it when you're dancing because it's in the body it's an expression everything that's (Susan:yeah) past present and future

Susan: yeah for sure and I'm going to tell you something from from last night, so last night I was at a concert of Georgian stuff in the UK and I was looking down from above and this whole room was dancing in circles so it was Amer-Imeri dancing in this case but they got all the audience up they told them to put their chairs to one side and they just made circles and circles and circles got everybody to hold hands and the energy was extraordinary. Just you know nobody in that audience had come to dance and yet there they were dancing at the end.

Annalie: yeah the power of this music to bring people together it's just electrifying, you know, it doesn't, you don't have to understand the words, to understand the words, like the Svan language is something so deep and so primal that resonates and when you have the the dance as well, it's just like you just become part of this big human family.

Vanda: I really just want to show people how much I love this and they will feel I think. Every person - like anything you are doing in your life - my philosophy is like if there is anything you are doing you need to do by love and you need to feel it. And others - you don't need to do something really important. Others really feel you doing something by passion and by love.

Givi: You know that when you love your home land you don't need to talk about that, you need to act. So we are trying to act.

Music: from [Ensemble Lalkhor's solo concert](#)

Susan: Now I'm crying and this is ridiculous and your crying (laughter)

Givi: Translator is not crying!

Music: from [Ensemble Lalkhor's solo concert](#)

Susan: Thank you for listening to Voices of the Ancestors with guest host Annalie Wilson and Susan Thompson. Our guests were Madonna Chamgeliani with Zoé Perret translating Lika Liparteliani with Givi Poti translating and Bakuri Makbaniani with Vanda Bakaradze both translating and speaking as herself. The meetings with our guests Lika, Bakuri, Vanda threw up many different audio challenges so I am very grateful to [Snow Lion Media](#) for solving those technical issues so we could bring you this episode. Now we are not academic ethnic musicologists or people who study stories and myths, so we'll signpost you to some books in the show notes - if that's your kind of thing. If you were interested to visit Georgia you could go to the resources page of our website www.voicesoftheancestors.co.uk where you'll find information about all the tours that we know of happening in Georgia. While you're on the website you can support us by visiting our donate page and you can find a transcript of this episode and all our episodes. Some of the music in this episode came from Lalkhor's very first solo concert and we can share that with you if you go to the Voices of the Ancestors YouTube channel where there is a video of the whole concert - Bye for now.

Music in this episode was by:

The Chamgeliani 'Sisters' - Ana, Levan Bitarov and Madona from the Singing Village Album - Song - **Nanila**

Ensemble Lalkhor - [live recording](#) by Susan Thompson of solo concert, Tbilisi. Song - **Dala Kojas Khelvajhale, Nana and perkhuli (round dance)**

Ensemble Amer-Imeri - [live recording](#) by Susan Thompson during UK tour, Sheffield. Song - **Bail Betkil**

The Latali singers - live recording by Annalie Wilson, Latali. Song - **Riho**

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