

Friday, October 21, 2016, 8pm

Venue to be announced

Ensemble Basiani

George Donadze, *artistic director*

Zurab Tskrialashvili, *director*

Irakli Tkvatsiria
Tornike Merabishvili
George Gabunia
Elizbar Khachidze
Sergo Urushadze

Giorgi Khunashvili
Zviad Michilashvili
Lasha Metreveli
Batu Lominadze
Zaza Zuriashvili

PROGRAM

Mravalzhamier (Long Life) – Table Song, Kakheti

Orira – Travelling Song, Guria

Tu ase turpa ikavi (You Were So Pretty) – Lyric-Love Song

Circle Dance – Svaneti

Shavi shashvi (The Black Thrush) – Hunters' Song, Guria

Tsmidao gmerto (O, Holy God)

Saidumlo utskho da didebuli (A Mystery, Strange and Most Glorious)

Tkveta ganmatavisuflebelo (As the Deliverer of the Captives)

Motsikuli kristesagan gamorcheuli (Apostle Distinguished by Christ)

Akebdit sakhelsa uplisasa (Praise Ye the Name of the Lord)

Sashot mtiebisa (Out of the Womb)

Imeruli naduri – Work Song, Imereti

Tsintsqaro – Lyric-Love Song, Kakheti

Gandagan – Dancing Song, Adjara

Khasanbegura – Historical Ballad, Guria

Veengara – Lullaby, Samegrelo

Chakrulo – Table Song, Kakheti

Chochkhatura – Work Song, Guria

*Tonight's concert will last approximately 75 minutes
and will be performed without an intermission.*

FOLK SONGS

Mravalzhamier (*Long Life*) is a *supra* song from Kakheti (a region in eastern Georgia). The Georgian *supra* (“table party”) usually begins with *Mravalzhamier*, creating a festive mood. As voices rise, so does the spirit of everyone at the table. The gathering becomes a celebration.

nurtsa ikharos mterma chvenzeda,
arts ara gauxarnia!
Tsutisofeli ase, dges game utenebia
rats mtrobas daungrevia, sikvaruls ushenebia

May no enemy defeat us—and it hasn't yet!
The world is like this—day follows the night.
Love restores everything destroyed by enmity.

Orira is a travelling song that uses the *krimanchuli* (yodeling) technique. It is from Guria, a region in western Georgia.

The road and its travellers have stirred the imagination since ancient times. Travellers have considered God to be their guide, and this faith has helped them overcome everyday difficulties. Very often, Georgian folk songs include words or glossolalias that have no clear meaning. “*Orira*” is such a word. There is no fixed text for this song.

Tu ase turpa ikavi (*You Were So Pretty*) is a lyric-love song that is accompanied by the *pan-duri*, a traditional string instrument. Songs of this genre convey human spiritual experiences with extraordinary candidness and immediacy. Lyric songs from different regions of Georgia vary significantly in their musical structure.

tu ase turpa ikavi, rad ver gamchnevdi iao,
imad, rom sikvarulistvis, guli ar gagigiao.
akhla sxva mebage shemxvda, alersit gamagviao
tkviladats mamigurgura, kaltazed damartsiao

Why couldn't I notice that you were so pretty,
little violet?

—*Because your heart is closed for love.*

Now I met a new gardener who filled me with
cares and love.

He talked to me sweetly and held me on his lap.

Circle Dance is from Svaneti, a mountainous region in northwest Georgia. Circle dance songs are among the oldest surviving types of Georgian folk music, both in terms of traditional performance characteristics and form. The accompanying dances have become inseparable from their songs, which are performed in the Svan language. Along with Georgian, the people of western Georgia also speak Megrelian and Svan, which are heard mainly in the Samegrelo and Svaneti provinces. They have no special scripts and belong to the Kartvelian languages. *Kartveli* means “Georgian” (man or woman).

Shavi shashvi (*The Black Thrush*) is a hunters’ song from the Guria region. Sung by a trio, it tells the story of hunters who, following the voice of a thrush, come across a deer. The story of the hunt includes an imitation of a dog’s barking.

*shavi shashvi chioda, netav rasa chioda?!
 “mtai dautovia, arsad aris savali.”
 moukepe chemo mura, deichire iremi*

*The black thrush tells the dog,
 “Here comes a deer! Bark and catch it!”*

RELIGIOUS HYMNS

Tsmidao gmerto (O, Holy God)
 The hymn of Liturgy.

Tsmidao gmerto, tsmidao dzliero,
tsmidao ukvdavo, shegviitskalen chiven!

O, Holy God, O, Holy Mighty,
O, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!



Saidumlo utskho da didebuli

(A Mystery, Strange and Most Glorious)

Irmos of Nativity. Shemokmedi Monastery chanting school. Sung by a trio.

Saidumlo utskho da didebuli vikhilet. kvabi tsata emsgavs, kalsuli kerubimta, kholo baga sakhe ikmna samkarosa, rametu daitia dghes kriste ghmerti dautevneli, romelsats vadidebt.

A mystery, strange and most glorious I behold: The cavern, Heaven; the Cherubic Throne, a Virgin; the manger, the receptacle wherein lieth Christ our God, whom nothing may contain. Him, therefore, do we magnify, praising him in song.

Tkveta ganmatavisuflebelo

(As the Deliverer of the Captives)

Troparion of Saint George, the great Martyr. Svetitskhoveli Monastery chanting school.

Tkveta ganmatavisuflebelo da glakhakta khelis aghmpkrobelo, sneulta mkurnalo da mepeta udzlevelo, tsinambrdzolo, ghvatslit shemosilo dido motsameo giorgi, evedre kristesa ghmertsa chvensa shetskalebad sulta cheventatvis.

As the deliverer of the captives and protector of the poor, as the physician of the feeble and combatant of the kings, champion and great martyr George, intercede with Christ our God to save our souls.

Motsikuli kristesagan gamorcheuli

(Apostle Distinguished by Christ)

Kontakion of St Nino Equal-to-the-Apostles, enlightener of Georgia (who converted Georgia to Christianity). Shemokmedi Monastery chanting school.

motsiquli kristesagan gamorcheuli, kadagi sitqvisa ghytisa, ganstsavluli, makharebeli tskhovrebisa, tsinamdzhvari kartvelta erisa gzata simartlisata, dedisa ghytisa sakutari motsape Nino shevamkot dghes qovelta dznobita saghvtota. meokhi mkhurvale, mtsveli daudzinebeli.

Let us glorify St Nino today, the apostle distinguished by Christ, the preacher of the word of God, the enlightened herald of life, the leader of the Georgian people's way of justice, the disciple of Mary the blessed Virgin, the ardent toiler, the sleepless guardian. Let us glorify Nino with all divine chanting.

Akebdit sakhelsa uplisasa

(Praise Ye the Name of the Lord)

Hymn of Matins. Gelati Monastery chanting school.

Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the name of the Lord; praise him, O ye servants of the Lord. Ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant. For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

Sashot mtiebisa (Out of the Womb)

Religious hymn. Introit of Nativity. Shemokmedi Monastery chanting school.

sashod mtiebisa tsina gshev shen, hputsa upalman da ara sheinanos. shen khar mgvdel ukunisamde tessa mas melkisedekissa.

Out of the Womb, before the morning star have I begotten Thee: the Lord hath sworn and will not repent: thou art a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizidech.

FOLK SONGS

Imeruli naduri is a work song from the Imereti region. *Nadi* (hence *naduri*) is given special significance in Guria. If a family hoed its field without a *nadi*, it would be thought of as inhospitable. If the village had no singers for the *naduri*, they were specially invited from elsewhere. The people gladly worked together with the singers of the *nadi*, as the work then became more pleasant and cheerful. Apart from easing the work, the *naduri* was entertaining as well. By the end of the 19th century, the song had become so popular that it was often sung in churchyards after services.

Tsintsqaro is a lyric-love song from the Kakheti region.

tsintsqaro chamoviare.

tsin shemkhvda qali lamazi, koka rom edga mkharzeda.

sitqva vutkhar da itsqina, ganriskhda, gadga ganzeda.

*I went past the village of Tsintsqaro,
I met a beautiful young lady, carrying a pitcher
on her shoulder,
I said a word to her, she was offended,
She got angry and stepped aside.*

Gandagan is a comic song, with dancing, from the Adjara region. It is accompanied by the *chiboni* (a traditional wind instrument) and *chonguri* (string instrument) and includes comic text about girls and boys in love. The song ends in dancing.

Khasanbegura is a historical ballad from Guria. In the second half of the 19th century, Georgia's Guria and Achara regions were caught in a political conflict between Russia and Turkey. Some nobles decided to use the conflict to their own advantage. One such figure is Khosro Tavdgiridze, who had a dispute with Prince Gurieli and emigrated to Turkey. There he was appointed the commander of a military unit.

Some researchers believe that the music of *Khasanbegura* was created earlier, and that this historical text was set to it later. Romain Rolland and Igor Stravinsky were fascinated by *Khasanbegura* and its remarkable polyphony.

khasan-begi tavdgiridze, gariskhuli ghvtisgan erti, tatrish pashoba ishova, sul mtlad daavitsqda ghmert.

shekvetilshi shemovida, idzakhoda: "olan geti"; lanchkhutamde mas vatsalot, mere chven gviquros, erti.

chven gakhlavart gurulebi, brdzola gvkonda shukhut-perdshi,

mteri ise davamartskhet, mtkhroblad ar goushviti erti.

chemi dzmai khasan-pasha tavmochrili devinakhe,

radgan chemi dzmai iqo, vai metki, devidzakhe. tsina ghamit man gadagvtsva, mit deigo tsudi makhe,

radgan chemi dzmai iqo, bolos maints me davmarkhe.

Khasan-beg Tavdgiridze who rejected God Sought the Turkish title of pasha, completely forgetting God.

He entered Shekvetili, crying in Turkish, "I have come."

We'll allow him to pass as far as Lanchkhuti, Then let him see what we do.

We are Gurians. We had a battle near Shukhut-Perdi.

We defeated the enemy leaving no one to tell the tale.

I saw my brother, Khasan-Pasha, beheaded.

As he was my brother, I cried out, "Woe is me!"

The previous night he had fought us, snaring himself in the process.

Because he was my brother, I buried him.

Veengara is a lullaby from Samegrelo in western Georgia, sung in the Megrelian language.

*veengara nanasqua nanashi chirima
chkolir gursu vamichua, nanashi chirima
dzudzus qirafili mafu bzhashen mutul vamitsua*

*Don't cry my baby, you my love;
My heart is burning when you cry;
Eat from my breast and go to sleep calm.*

Chakrulo, one of the greatest of all Georgian folk songs, belongs to the family of long Kakhetian table songs. Various explanations exist as to the origin of the song's name. The literal meaning of the word in Georgian is "intertwined." One theory cites everyday farming activity as a possible source: just as *Chakrulo* needs a strong resounding voice, a load placed on an oxcart needs to be tightly bound. Hence, it is thought that *chakrulo* means a strong, reliable, loud, charming song that requires a singer with a high voice. Scholars like Joseph Jordania, however, believe that the name of the song implies that the voices should be strongly linked or intertwined.

The Georgian musicologist Shalva Aslanishvili noted, "*Chakrulo* is characterized by noble content and high spirits. It features flawless modulation, developed polyphony, strict architectonics of form, rich ornament, and profound ethical content." Some researchers believe that songs like *Chakrulo* date to as early as the 10th century CE. Aslanishvili observed reflections of ancient traditions dating to feudal times in such table songs. *Chakrulo* has come down to us in several forms.

*gamkhiaruldi, bukharo,
gulchamtkhrobili nu kharo.*

shvili mamas eubneba:

—daberdi, chemtan nu kharo.

—ra gitkhra, shvilo, mokhutsma,

tavs bevri gadamkhdzenia,

sul damivlia mta-bari,

is udaburi kedia.

movkal, khmlit movkal, chem dzmebo,

khval dilit mival sikvdilsa,

PROGRAM NOTES

*top-iaraghis tsamali mashin virchivot tsol-shvilsa,
movkal kidev.*

*Cheer up, fireplace,
Do not be morose.*

*The son says to his father,
“You have grown old, do not stay with me.”
“Son, what can an old man like me tell you?
I have had many adventures.
I have crossed all the mountains and plains,
That desolate ridge.
I have killed with my sword, brothers, I have
killed.*

*I am going to war tomorrow.
At war it's better to have gunpowder
Than a wife and children.”*

Chochkhatura, like *Imeruli naduri*, is a work song. Field *naduris* are the longest and most sophisticated antiphonal work songs, numbering in the dozens. Most antiphonal *naduris* from this region are in four parts, an unusual phenomenon in world musical folklore. Their texts have nothing to do with the work process.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Ensemble Basiani was formed in 2000 under the blessing of his Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia, to perform and promote Georgian traditional polyphony at home and abroad. It then became the Folk Ensemble of Georgian Patriarchate. The ensemble is part of the Patriarchate Choir of Tbilisi Holy Trinity (Sameba) Cathedral, which participates in services conducted by the Patriarch. Ensemble Basiani is composed of singers from different parts of Georgia. Most members of the choir come from families that perform traditional music and many have sung in different ensembles since childhood. In 2013, after 13 years working and performing Georgian folk music all around the world, Basiani received the title of State Ensemble of Georgian Folk Singing from the government of Georgia.

The ensemble's repertoire consists of the oldest folk songs and traditional religious hymns from all parts of Georgia and diverse monastery chanting schools. The group's work includes researching and reviving songs from ancient archival phonological and notated recordings, and studying songs directly with famous singers and conductors of older generations who are still active in different regions of Georgia.

Ensemble Basiani has recorded and released nine albums, performed at numerous international festivals, and visited more than 20 countries. In recent years, the group has received

special international acclaim and recognition, giving performances in some of the world's most renowned concert halls, including Madrid's Auditorio Nacional de Musica, Lisbon's Gulbenkian Great Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and New York's Alice Tully Hall.

“Basiani” is the name of one of the regions in southwest Georgia, in what is now Turkey, northwest of the town of Erzurum. Here, in 1203, Georgian royal troops defeated the Conqueror; the victory consolidated Georgia's position in Asia Minor.

George Donadze (*artistic director*), born in 1979, was a member of Bichebi children's folk choir, and studied at Tbilisi Music College between 1995 and 1999. Donadze was the children's choir conductor at Tbilisi Music School between 1997 and 2000 prior to becoming the conductor of the Tbilisi Holy Trinity Cathedral Patriarchate Choir and the founder and conductor of Ensemble Basiani. He studied for degrees in choral conducting at the V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatory and in 2006 became the choir conductor of G. Mtatsmindeli Church Chants Institution of Higher Education. He became project chief of the Georgian Chanting Foundations in 2012 and director of the Folklore State Center of Georgia in 2014. In 2013 Donadze became the artistic director of Ensemble Basiani.

Zurab Tskrialashvili (*director*), born in 1980, was a member of Martve, the children's folk choir, from the age of nine to 16. He attended music school and college in Tbilisi before studying at the Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatory, where he received his master's degree in choral conducting. Tskrialashvili has been part of the Tbilisi Holy Trinity Cathedral Patriarchate Choir since 2000, both as a singer and, since 2013, the director. In 2002 he was the conductor of the Kolkheti folk ensemble.

In 2007 he became assistant professor at the G. Mtatsmindeli Church Chants Institution of Higher Education, and from 2011 until last year he taught at Kiketi I. Gogebashvili school. He is currently the children's folk choir conductor at Folklore National Palace.

Ensemble Basiani is presented on tour in the United States by David Eden Productions and Pemberley Productions.

Ensemble Basiani and Georgian Singing

Carl Linich

Ensemble Basiani, the choir of the Georgian patriarchate, comes from Tbilisi, Georgia. Formed in 2000, the choir has been active in researching and reviving traditional songs and sacred hymns both from archival recordings and transcriptions and from its own fieldwork with singers throughout Georgia. The choir has performed internationally to great acclaim, and made its US debut at the 2010 Mostly Mozart Festival.

Georgian polyphonic song is one of the world's musical treasures, admired by such visionaries as Igor Stravinsky, Alan Lomax, and Werner Herzog. It is unlike any other traditional music in the world, with unique scales and voice structures, and progressions that seem unexpected, almost impossible. And while it may sound modern to our Western ears, Georgian music also has a primal appeal, speaking to our hearts and souls just as it delights and perplexes our minds. Where did this remarkable music come from? And who are the Georgians?

Our story begins... well, in the beginning. According to legend, when God created all of the Earth's peoples, he instructed them to

come to him at a designated hour to receive a place to live on the Earth. The hour arrived, and true to his word, God carefully divided up all of the land on the Earth and gave it to those who came. The following day, the Georgians arrived. "We're here for our land, O great and generous God!" The Lord shook his head and said, "I'm very sorry, but I've given all of the land away. I told you to come yesterday—why have you arrived so late?" The Georgians replied, "We are so sorry! We were having a banquet in your honor, and we got caught up in our toasts to you and your generosity in giving us land on the Earth. We toasted you till dawn and lost track of the time! Please forgive us! Isn't there some small corner somewhere that we might still have to live on...?"

God realized that he could not leave the Georgians without a place of their own, and so he gave them the one place on the Earth that he had been saving for himself. And thus, the Georgians came to live in the most beautiful place in the world, nestled in the Caucasus Mountains.

Legend aside, it's true that the earliest historical accounts of the Georgians places them right there, in what is still Georgia. They speak a lan-

guage that is unrelated to any other, and foreigners who choose to explore their culture will find it a Pandora's Box. Georgia is the fabled land where Jason and the Argonauts travelled in search of the Golden Fleece, and home of Medea, the sorceress. Many archaeologists agree that Georgia is probably the birthplace of wine, with the earliest evidence of winemaking dating to around 6000 BCE. Any visitor to Georgia will be sure to taste Georgian wine at a ritual banquet, or *supra*, where hours are spent in fellowship, merriment, and reflection on "this fleeting world." It is a time for everyone to stop, look around, and acknowledge the things that are important in life: family, country, love, beauty. But it's not a free-for-all; there is always one person who leads the toasts, according to protocol. The *supra* remains one of Georgia's richest living traditions, and it is closely linked to song.

Historically, Georgians have had songs for all occasions, many of which are represented on our program this evening. Although few of these survive in their original context (work songs are no longer sung in the fields, for example), they are still sung, and new generations of Georgians will pass them on to their children. Polyphonic singing is a source of national pride in Georgia, and it has enjoyed renewed interest since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In close parallel to this, the Georgian Orthodox Church has also experienced a revival. Georgia adopted Christianity as its state religion

circa 327 CE. Significantly, the Bible was translated into Georgian soon thereafter, and a liturgy was created in a common Georgian language that all churchgoers would understand. Georgia reached its pinnacle as an empire in the 12th century under Queen Tamar, and monasteries nurtured the composition of hymns for the liturgy. However, this golden age did not last. After centuries of struggle with other invaders, Georgia was annexed by Russia at the dawn of the 19th century, and the Russian Orthodox Church restricted the use of Georgian liturgy. In the Soviet period, during the height of Communist atheism, the church went underground. Today Georgians enjoy freedom of religion, and Georgian liturgies are heard throughout the country, both in restored and in newly built churches. As Ensemble Basiani is directly associated with the Georgian patriarchate, the choir also devotes careful study to the practice of Georgian sacred chant, several examples of which we will enjoy this evening.

Since gaining independence in 1991, Georgia has been struggling to rise from the ashes of its Soviet and post-Soviet past. Things are certainly far from perfect, but Georgia's hope lies in its rich and unique culture, its wonderful heritage of arts, and its breathtaking natural beauty. Tourists who visit Georgia are guaranteed an unforgettable experience, and many return again and again, overwhelmed by the famous Georgian hospitality and spellbound by the land that God almost kept from us all.

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This performance by **Ensemble Basiani** is part of the 2016/17 Berkeley RADICAL *Immersion* strand, a selection of concerts and related activities that dive deeply into a single genre or follow the trajectory of an artist's work, allowing fresh, new perspectives to emerge. Cal Performances' next vocal *Immersion* programs feature the continuation of our ongoing choral festival with performances by the **Vienna Boys Choir** (Nov 26) and the **Choir of Trinity Wall Street** (Dec 10); and on December 4, a performance with mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato** (with **Il Pomo d'Oro**) begins the season's Celebration of the Human Voice. For complete details of all performances and related activities, please visit calperformances.org.