Anzor Erkomaishvili and Contemporary Trends in the Study of Traditional and Sacred Georgian Music

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Edited by

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Anzor Erkomaishvili: World Ambassador of Georgian Traditional Music

Joseph Jordania

1. Introduction

In a rich and colorful gallery of performers, scholars, and benefactors of Georgian traditional music hardly anyone can match the importance of Anzor Erkomaishvili, particularly when it comes to bringing the vibrant polyphonic tradition of Georgia to the wider circles of music lovers around the world. An outstanding public figure, researcher of historical sources, prolific recorder of Georgian traditional music, tireless teacher of thousands of students, leader of the epoch-making ensemble Rustavi, and brilliant composer, Anzor's credentials are hard even to list exhaustively.

Quite paradoxically, despite the widespread love, and I would even say the adulation, that Georgians and foreigners have bestowed upon Anzor Erkomaishvili, some activities of this remarkable musician and human are still not sufficiently researched and known. The main reason for this strange neglect was Anzor himself, a deeply humble human being, who would be happy if he were just left alone to do what he loved the most during his life—working tirelessly for the benefit of the rich cultural legacy our ancestors left us in the form of thousands of traditional songs and church songs.

This collection, dedicated both to Anzor Erkomaishvili and the phenomenon for which he became a true ambassador—Georgian traditional music—is a twin dedication, and two of the editors of this volume were long in discussing the version of the title for this collection. There is probably no better way to look at the recent history of the phenomenon known as Georgian traditional polyphony to millions of listeners and hundreds of ensembles singing it than to look at the history of the Erkomaishvili family singers.

2. Golden Age of Georgian traditional song: The birth of a legendary family

Ask any seasoned fan of Georgian traditional music which was the best period of Georgian traditional singing, when the best traditional singers were active, and most likely you will hear the response that the first years of the twentieth century, up to the 1930s, was probably the time when the largest number of truly outstanding traditional musicians were active in Georgia. Interestingly, it is not only the richness of traditional musicians that distinguished this period, but also the professional performers. For example, few remarkable Georgian singers, famous around the world, can compare with the legacy of the legendary Vano Sarajishvili from that period (the Tbilisi Conservatoire carries his name).

By some strange coincidence, if you ask the representatives of different cultures about the time in history when their most outstanding performers were active, there is a good chance that they will mention the same time frame – the beginning of the twentieth century. And in the same way, the most iconic names of their classical singers also come from the same period. It is difficult to compare with the likes of the Italian tenor Caruso, or the Russian bass Chaliapin. During my travels to different countries, and my meetings with ethnomusicologists from various cultures, for some time I was asking them to tell me if there were a time they would call a "Golden Age" of traditional singing for their culture. As a rule, many of those I asked, replied that from the end of the nineteenth century till about the 1930s was probably when the biggest number of legendary names were active.

I believe this fact has an objective explanation. Several decades starting from the end of the ninetieth century were exciting times for music lovers, as sound-recording systems became available. For the first time in human history, to hear a performer did not require attending any of the performer's live performances, or even to be in the same country where the performance took place, or to live at the same time when the performer was active. This was when the outstanding performers became the living legends of their national cultures, as their singing was forever recorded and could be listened to in very different places and times. The performers of previous generations could not even dream of such a possibility of eternal fame. So, it was natural that the first national masters of singing who appeared on the first sound recordings obtained the glory of national and international stars.

Of course, technological developments never stopped, and during the decades that followed, recording technology was constantly improved. It is

also likely that the performing talents of humanity did not dry up, but the star power of the first generation of performers who appeared on the first recordings still keeps them at the very top of national cultural memory[1].

3. Anzor Erkomaishvili and his family

During this magical period between the end of ninetieth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, many Georgian traditional singers came to national and international prominence. Among them were the singers from the Erkomaishvili family from the Gurian village of Makvaneti. The amazing family saga started with Gigo Erkomaishvili, the truly legendary singer who was still in great vocal shape when he was nearing a hundred years of age (he died at the age of 107). When recorded, he was a singer of one of the most physically demanding parts – Krimanchuli (yodel).

Gigo's sons, known as the "Erkomaishvili brothers," continued the tradition. In perfect harmony with the demands of national three-part polyphony, there were three of them, all amazing singers: Artem, Anania, and Ladiko Erkomaishvili. The eldest, Artem Erkomaishvili, was the natural leader. No wonder that he is the central character of several chapters in these two twin collections. And finally, in the second part of the twentieth century the family tradition was kept by Artem's grandson, Anzor Erkomaishvili. Sadly, Anzor's father, David, also a wonderful singer, died tragically relatively young, so the bond between the grandfather Artem and grandson Anzor became particularly strong.

It is also symbolic that, throughout his life, Anzor Erkomaishvili was deeply interested in collecting and re-issuing the earliest recording of Georgian traditional singers (see, for example, Brian Fairley's chapter in the twin collection).

In terms of his education, Anzor was probably the perfect amalgam of traditional and professional educational systems. Anzor was the first among the Erkomaishvili family singers who received a Western-style music education at Tbilisi Conservatoire. Anzor became the first Erkomaishvili to combine the brilliance of traditional family education with a full contemporary music education. To the great pride and joy of his grandfather Artem, even as a teenager Anzor wrote down several church songs using

[1] See this in: Jordania, Joseph. (2010). Sete Ensaios Sobre os Filems Etnograficos de Michel Giacometti. In Paulo Lima (ed) *Michel Giacometti, Filmografia Completa*, Vol. 8, pg. 26-39. (In Portuguese).

contemporary musical notation. This act needed some bravery, as in the atheistic Soviet Union any interest in topics related to religion (and particularly actions that could be perceived as their propaganda) was considered an act of hostility toward the state ideology.

I never met Artem Erkomaishvili since he passed away before I turned 14, but I was fortunate to meet two of his remaining brothers – Anania and Ladiko (Vladimer) in the 1970s. And I was extremely fortunate to know Anzor from the 1970s, when, by sheer luck, he moved with his mother and his sister to an apartment in the same block of flats where our family lived in Saburtalo Development, district 3, house 19. I can even say that Anzor and his influential ensemble of Georgian traditional and church songs, Gordela, made an indelible mark on my musical memory and personal life. Hearing for the first time Georgian church songs on Georgian TV was one of the biggest musical impressions of my life, and when my father had an all-important talk with me about the possibility of becoming an ethnomusicologist (I wanted initially to become a zoologist, biologist, evolutionist, or geneticist), the mysterious and heavenly harmonies of the Georgian church songs I remembered from Gordela became the decisive factor for making that life choice.

Anzor Erkomaishvili became a symbol of Georgian traditional and church singing for all Georgians, a symbol of dedication to this intangible treasure of our national culture. And he maintained his work, which demanded lots of time, energy, and finances, with the dedication of legendary figures from our cultural and religious history. His dedication to the recovery of the earliest recordings of Georgian traditional songs has already been mentioned (and will be mentioned many times throughout these volumes). His outstanding role in bringing the sounds of Georgian traditional music to the world, primarily with his influential ensemble Rustavi, is another huge accomplishment, impossible to match. His immense influence on raising generations of Georgian singers and choirmasters via Martve, the children's ensemble, has been realized in the fact that hardly a Georgian traditional singer today was not connected with, or influenced, by Martve or other Anzor-related choirs; after Perestroika started, and particularly after Georgia gained independence, Anzor established regional schools of church singing, fought tirelessly for their financial viability and professional mastery, and did much more.

4. Anzor Erkomaishvili as a composer

One activity of this multitalented musician that was amazingly hidden from Georgian audiences was that Anzor Erkomaishvili was a brilliant composer, author of several masterpieces of Georgian traditional music. Of course, when a song is written by a contemporary author, ethnomusicologists have several ways to designate such newly composed songs (such as an "author's song"), but in the case of Anzor Erkomaishvili, this was not easy. First of all, the language of these songs was so unmistakably and deeply traditional that it was impossible to imagine their being composed very recently. Second, he was always so quiet and humble about authoring the songs, even the most popular ones, that many Georgians are still unaware that several of the songs they treasure as masterpieces of Georgian traditional polyphony were written in fact by Anzor Erkomaishvili.

Interestingly, in the *Georgian Biographical Dictionary* the article about Artem Erkomaishvili (Anzor's grandfather) mentions that Artem was a composer, and we certainly know several songs he authored (including "We've Lost Three Singers," "Different Kinds of Love," "Song about Guria"). The same dictionary does not mention that Anzor wrote several beloved songs.

Only during the last years of his life, after his students started researching songs composed by their teacher, did Georgians become gradually aware of many songs written by Anzor Erkomaishvili. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that the list below is exhaustive, as Anzor himself was very reluctant to confirm authorship of the songs, so there is a chance some of his songs are around, that we do not know about, which demonstrate Anzor's creative power.

Anzor Erkomaishvili's confirmed songs include:

"Mival Guriashi Mara" (I Am Going to Guria), a much-loved light love song in the Gurian style, written for the play based on Nodar Dumbadze's novel "I, Grandmother, Iliko and Illarion" (see Tsitsishvili's chapter in this volume on the improvisational techniques of Gurian singers, based on the versions of this song);

"Tu ase turpa ikavi" (If You Were So Beautiful), an enchantingly beautiful song written in the East Georgian mountain style, with its use of the colorful Pshavian mode with unexpected cadences and changing lights;

"Tsmindao Ghmerto" (Holy God), probably one of the most loved examples of East Georgian church songs, with haunting harmonies and colorful modulations;

"Khareba da Gogia" (male names), a typical East Georgian song with a long drone and two soloists with competing melismatic melodic parts;

Other songs, for which Anzor Erkomaishvili's authorship has been confirmed both by Anzor and independent sources, include: "Khokhbis Qelivit Lamazi" (Beautiful as the Neck of a Pheasant), "Ais Ghrublebi Miqvaran " (I Love Those Clouds), "Saidan Mokhvel Shen Kalo" (Where Have You Come from, Woman?), "Shirakis Velze Movdivar" (I Am Walking through Shiraki Valley), "Khars Vgevar Naialaghars" (I Feel like a Bull on Open Grasslands), "Kalo Gikhdeba Kamari" (Woman, the Belt Suits You so Well), "Gazapkhultan Ertad Vitqvi Simgheras" (I Will Sing Together with the Spring), "Simghera Snoze" (Song about a Sno), "Shinmousvlelo sada xar" (Those Who Did Not Come Back from the War, Where Are You Now?).

As mentioned, this is most likely not a full list. When I discussed the list of songs composed by Anzor Erkomaishvili with his closest former students, now senior figures and authorities of Georgian traditional music, Svimon Jangulashvili and Giorgi Donadze, we agreed that there might be some missing from this list. This is again primarily because of Anzor's reluctance to admit composing songs that became so widely accepted by Georgians (and foreign performers) as a part of treasury of Georgian traditional music. For example, we were trying to work out whether Anzor had ever composed any church songs in the West Georgian (Gurian) style. Having been taught by his grandfather Artem, the grandmaster and one of the last keepers of this tradition, the language of this tradition was so close to Anzor that it is difficult to believe that with his creative genius and searching soul Anzor never tried to compose a new specimen of Gurian chant. We know that even in the early Gordela days he composed (using the well-known text) a masterpiece of East Georgian church song "Tsmindao Ghmerto," so why would he refuse the creative urge to do the same in the tradition he knew the best?

With Svimon Jangulashvili, Giorgi Donadze, and David Shugliashvili I discussed the possibility that some of the known Gurian church songs might have been composed (or altered) by Anzor, but the search, without Anzor, was very difficult, so we came to the acceptable consensus for us that although it is very likely that Anzor added details in some existing Gurian

church songs, we cannot be sure that any of them was entirely composed by him. Whether this is the result of deep reverence for the legacy of his ancestors, personified by the great figure of Anzor's grandfather, Artem Erkomaishvili (who, by the way, also did not compose church songs, although he composed traditional songs), or some other unknown factors, is difficult to say.

To conclude this short text about Anzor Erkomaishvili's legacy, I want to cite the words written by Svimon Jangulashvili and Giorgi Donadze about Anzor Erkomaishvili, which sum up beautifully the life and legacy of this remarkable human and musician:

> "With his life example, with his creativity, Anzor clearly demonstrated that the tradition of great Georgian unknown musicians who created the international name for Georgian polyphonic songs, is still alive and thriving. …Georgian polyphony is not an ancient art that became today a museum artifact, this is a vibrant live organism, still growing and still captivating. This is probably the biggest legacy that Anzor Erkomaishvili left to us, to the next generations."

5. The Collection and the Authors

The popularity of Anzor Erkomaishvili among Georgian and foreign scholars of Georgian music created another problem for the compilers of this collection: The desire to participate in this collection was expressed by so many eminent scholars that we faced a difficult choice, either to cut down the numbers of participating scholars to create a single collection or to create two twin collections. To be frank, we never discussed seriously the possibility of refusing some authors to contribute to this historical Georgian ethnomusicology collection, so the idea of two collections, both dedicated to Anzor Erkomaishvili, came naturally. Twelve chapters in this collection are dedicated to contemporary trends in the study of Georgian traditional music, and twelve chapters in another collection are dedicated to historical trends in the study of Georgian traditional music.

As mentioned, this current collection "Anzor Erkomaishvili and Contemporary Trends in the Study of Traditional and Sacred Georgian Music" contains twelve chapters.

The first is written by a Russian/American scholar Izaly Zemtsovsky. Dedicated to Anzor Erkomaishvili, the chapter "Polyphony as a Way of Creating and Thinking: The musical Identity of HOMO POLYPHONICUS"

is a fascinating portrait of the creative thinking of representatives of polyphonic cultures.

The second chapter, by Stuart Gelzer, an American professional writer and singer and a member of the trio Kavkasia, arguably the most proficient foreign ensemble of Georgian music, "How to Learn a Georgian Song by Ear," is a vividly written description of the process of learning a complex Georgian song from Anzor Erkomaishvili by the American/Canadian trio Kavkasia. Anzor did so much during his life, sometimes people would ask, "Well, was he at least sick some time?" This chapter answers exactly this question – what Anzor Erkomaishvili was doing when he was sick.

The third chapter belongs to Rusudan Tsurtsumia, the Director of the International Research Centre for Traditional Polyphony. "Georgian Polyphony as a Symbol of the National Identity of a Multicultural Society" provides a bird's-eye view of Georgian history and national identity through turbulent periods of Georgian cultural and ethnic history.

The fourth chapter is by an international group of scholars, including Frank Scherbaum from the University of Potsdam, Germany, Nana Mzhavanadze from Tbilisi Conservatoire, Simha Arom from CNRS Paris, France, and Sebastian Rosenzweig and Meinard Müller from International Audio Laboratories, Erlangen, Germany. They researched the musical language of Georgian traditional music using contemporary methods of computational ethnomusicology in the chapter "Tonal Organization of the Erkomaishvili Dataset: Pitches, Scales, Melodies and Harmonies."

The fifth chapter is by Nino Tsitsishvili, an Australian/Georgian ethnomusicologist from the University of Melbourne, Australia. The chapter "'Mival Guriashi, Mara:' Improvisation Techniques in Gurian Polyphonic Songs" discusses the hidden mastery of improvising in the Gurian tradition using the example of several versions of a single song performed by two grandmasters of Gurian singing, Vazha Gogoladze and Anzor Erkomaishvili.

In the sixth chapter, "Continuing Discussions on Scale Systems in Georgian Traditional and Religious Music," Australian/Georgian ethnomusicologist Joseph Jordania attempts to discuss the long-running and still hot discussion on the nature of Georgian traditional scales with its achievements and pitfalls.

The seventh chapter is by Giorgi Kraveishvili from Tbilisi State Conservatoire, probably the most active Georgian ethnomusicologist today conducting field work in various regions of Georgia and outside of Georgia. He discusses the sensational discovery of a hitherto unknown Georgian polyphonic style in a chapter titled "Discovery of a New Georgian Polyphonic Style."

The eighth chapter was written by two authors, ethnomusicologist Nana Mzhavanadze and traditional singer Madonna Chamgeliani. The chapter "The Role of Women in the Musical Life of the Svan People," discusses the unusually important role of female singers play in Svan traditional society.

The ninth chapter, "Stage Performance of Women's Folk Music in Georgia," was written by Maka Khardziani from Tbilisi State Conservatoire. The chapter discusses another relatively neglected area of females singing Georgian traditional music on the official stage.

The tenth chapter, "Temporal Distortions, Timelessness, and Ancestry in Georgian Polyphony," is by Canadian/Ukrainian ethnomusicologist Andrea Kuzmich. The chapter brings interesting new dimensions from the listening experiences of various ancient musical traditions.

The eleventh chapter, "Folk Polyphony Goes Viral: Televised Singing Competitions and the Play of Authenticity in the Republic of Georgia," was written by Canadian ethnomusicologist Matthew Knight. The chapter discusses three case studies in which folk polyphonic songs were performed in TV competitions like *Georgian Idol, Georgia's Got Talent*, and *Eurovision*.

And the last, twelfth chapter of the collection is by Teona Lomsadze from Tbilisi State Conservatoire. "Folk-Fusion Music as a Contemporary Product of the Georgian Traditional Music Revival" is the only chapter that discusses the creative transformation of Georgian traditional and religious musical traditions in contemporary popular musical genres.

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As I have mentioned, the current collection of articles is followed by a twin collection, "Historical Trends in Georgian Traditional and Sacred Music: A Tribute to Anzor Erkomaishvili," with another twelve chapters by leading Georgian and foreign authors. Let me briefly introduce them as well to readers of the first collection:

The collection opens with the chapter by Brian Fairley, a PhD student at New York University. “Blackbirds in the Archive: Anzor Erkomaishvili and a Century of Georgian Folk Song” discusses various aspects of Anzor Erkomaishvili’s long and productive work on the search for, and revival of, archival recording of Georgian traditional music.

The second chapter “Structural Patterns of Georgian Traditional Polyphony” is by Tamaz Gabisonia from Tbilisi Ilia University. The chapter discusses the richness of polyphonic forms of Georgian traditional polyphony.

The author of the third chapter is Marina Kvizhinadze, independent researcher and Georgian ethnomusicologist. The chapter, “Family Ensembles in Georgia: Past, Present, and Future,” discusses the long and rich history of family ensembles in Georgia, the real strength behind the splendor of Georgian traditional polyphony.

The fourth chapter is by Baia Zhuzhunadze from Tbilisi State Conservatoire. “Musical Processes in the Context of Cultural Interactions (On the Example of Meskheti in the ninetieth-twentieth Centuries)” discusses the painful process of the gradual disappearance of the polyphonic tradition in the Meskhetian musical dialect.

The chapter by Nino Razmadze, “Georgian Folk Instruments and Instrumental Terminology in Old Georgian Translations of the Bible (9-19 Centuries),” is the only chapter dedicated to Georgian instruments from the historical sources of biblical translations, confirming the thesis of total dominance of vocal music in Georgian traditional and religious music.

The sixth chapter is written by Susanne Ziegler from the Berlin Phonogrammarchive. “Georgian (Gurian) Polyphony in Historical Perspective” makes an interesting comparative analyses of the same songs from Guria, recorded in the 1930s, and re-recorded in the 1980s.

The seventh chapter has three authors: Gerda Lechneitner, Franz Lechneitner, and Nona Lomidze—all from Vienna Phonogrammarchive. “CD Project: Recordings from the Caucasian Region 1909 and 1915/16” discusses the earliest recordings of Georgian songs, including precious recordings made during WW1 by prisoners of war.

The author of the eighth chapter, David Shugliashvili, discusses one of the longest-running problem for scholars of Georgian religious music—the

neumatic musical signs. In "Multiplicity of the Neumes in the 'Iadgari' of Mikael Modrekili," the iconic manuscript from 11th century is analyzed.

The discussion of problems of religious music continues in the next chapter "Mnemonic Formulas—as the Main Organizer of the Musical System in Georgian Chanting Tradition" by Tatia Chkheidze from Tbilisi Conservatoire.

The last three chapters discuss the experiences of foreign experts of Georgian music in teaching Georgian music to foreigners: Polo Vallejo with the tenth chapter of the collection, "Refining Western Polyphonic Ear through Georgian Harmonies: Teaching Experiences Based on the Georgian Musical Grammar," then Frank Kane from Paris Marani Georgian association continues with the chapter, "The Challenge of Understanding and Transmitting the Essence of Georgian Singing: Experiences in Vocal Pedagogy," where he discusses the new methodological tools for better and deeper understanding of the inner world of Georgian traditional polyphony.

And finally, the last chapter, written by Caroline Bithell from Manchester University, "Performing Georgia in Distant Lands: Georgian Song and its Foreign Exponents," is a sweeping picture of foreign ensembles and their unique ways of getting in touch with Georgian singing.

We are sure that this twin collection dedicated to both historical and contemporary trends in the research of Georgian traditional songs and church songs, united under the remarkable figure of Anzor Erkomaishvili, will delight the professional ethnomusicologists, singers, and lay people who love this vibrant polyphonic culture.

CHAPTER ONE

POLYPHONY AS A WAY OF CREATING AND THINKING: THE MUSICAL IDENTITY OF *HOMO POLYPHONICUS*[1]

IZALY ZEMTSOVSKY[2]

In memory of Anzor Erkomaishvili, outstanding *Homo polyphonicus*, a musician who heard his fellows in harmony with himself, and himself in full accord with the universe.

> When speech serves only to separate men,
> they sing to understand each other.
> (Marquis de Custine, 1839)

Oral tradition is full of puzzles. It throws down a challenge—we undertake the adventurous pleasure of its solving. Among numerous and sometimes mysterious questions of world music is the one I am going to broach and we as a scholarly forum intend to discuss. This is oral polyphony. Seemingly so natural, it is not known to all humankind and presumably belongs to a special kind of human being. Let us name it (in Latin) *Homo polyphonicus*, the part-singing human being, so to speak. I believe that this "breed" of humans, unevenly scattered over the globe, possesses not only distinctive styles, repertoires, and ways of collaborative music-making but also no less distinctive types of musical thought, perception, and cognition. The latter—that is, the musical mind of ethnophores (bearers of ethnic tradition)—intrigues me the most.

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[1] This paper was initially published in Rusudan Tsurtsumia and Joseph Jordania, eds., *Proceedings of First International Symposium for Traditional Polyphony*, pp. 45–53. Tbilisi, 2002. Reprinted with permission.

[2] Stanford University.

To make this paper more easily digestible, I will limit myself to a few general remarks as a point of departure and then will test a proposed hypothesis by way of demonstrating two selected types of evidence.

Firstly, I will show how much polyphony is realized by ethnophores in their own speech about relevant music-making. Consequently, I am going to emphasize how important it is to study oral **singing terminology** in order to penetrate into the way particular types of concerted part singing have historically been conceptualized within a given tradition. Secondly, I will briefly discuss the juxtaposition of **cognition and notation**, and specifically how much the ethnomusicological process of notating oral polyphony can be considered as an experimental method to investigate the musical consciousness of ethnophores—in our case, *Homines polyphonici*. In other words, is tentative notation able to demonstrate the extent to which folk singers themselves are aware of their part style and its constituent functions? In conclusion, I will touch upon the question of whether traditional polyphony is able to structure our identity.

1. A premise

In approaching polyphony of the oral tradition—in my case mainly the vocal tradition—I proceed from the need to examine this phenomenon from two basic ethnomusicological points of view. One is **human-centric**, that is, oriented to human beings and music-making, while the other is **song-centric**, that is, oriented to music theory and structural universals. Both points of view are current and topical. Actually, they can even form two productive research paradigms. I am certain that our symposium will demonstrate it fully. The hero of my paper, though, is *Homo polyphonicus*—therefore, I belong today to the first paradigm. I believe, however, that these two paradigms, being relatively independent, are in a strong complementary relationship between themselves.

The human-centric approach occupies the dominant position today. We are less aware of the efficacy of the second paradigm. Meanwhile, behind it there is a fundamental but little explored assertion. According to this assertion, basic laws and regularities that govern the creation and very existence of the music of oral tradition subsist as though they are independent of ethnophores. I found a good formula for this hypothesis in a book by Richard Taruskin, although its author meant something slightly different. He wrote about the aesthetics of peasant performance according to a well-known description by Yevgeniya Linyova, a Russian folk-song

collector, who pointed out the essentially emotionless quality of folk performance: "For Linyova, the folk singer was not a person at all while engaged in singing, but a vessel" (Taruskin, 1996: 731). Of course, the folk singer is here "not a person" in general, but only a being engaged in musicking (a Gilbert Rouget term, by the way, reintroduced by Christopher Small in 1998). This is a remarkable point. Paraphrasing it in my way, I can say that all basic regularities of traditional part singing exist as if apart from the performer's will—it is not he or she but **they** who conduct the music-making as a process of composing and structuring. At the very moment of rendering, a performer is but a means of implementation of some objective universals that constitute the essence of the oral tradition. (In this assumption I follow the basic idea of the late Russian folklorist Boris Putilov, 1919–97).

Choosing the one approach by no means leads to neglecting the other. On the contrary, it is important to confront them for the sake of the completeness of the final picture. For instance, if we are looking at part singing from the human-centered paradigm, we see the **cooperation** of different participants within a given group of musicians. If we are looking at the same object from the song-centered paradigm, we see a **coordination** of different parts within a given musical structure. As a result, the same musical text speaks to us in two dissimilar languages, and it makes us intellectually richer.

To apply both approaches to the same data is important in many ways, including the obscure question of the uneven distribution of world polyphony. From the human-centered point of view, we cannot explain, for instance, why some people who do have knowledge of collective music-making simultaneously have no knowledge of part singing. In such cases, the song-centered approach may tell us more—it will show, for example, some structural peculiarities of traditional melodies and rhythms that do not allow part singing to be developed. (An attempt to apply this approach to Yiddish folklore was undertaken in the 1940s by Moshe Beregovsky, but it was not published until 2002 in *Zemtsovsky-Festschrift*, in Russian translation. I foresee much more exciting research in this original direction that will use a variety of ethnic data).

Indeed, *Homo polyphonicus* is not a ubiquitous being. In order to be realized s/he needs not only a suitable social environment but also at least two more preliminary conditions—the melodic material of a particular organization and a specific "musical substance," so to speak. And if all three of these basic conditions do exist and are alive, we can encounter a

remarkable phenomenon—*Homo polyphonicus* can still be *Homo polyphonicus* even if, in an extreme case, s/he is the only representative of a given polyphonic tradition.

What does it mean that my so-called "part-singing hero" might be virtually alone and still be essentially polyphonic? I consider this exceptional case to be important, as I believe that here one can discover the essence of the phenomenon in question. The point is that part singing, as a mental and cognizable phenomenon, does not belong only to a choir or to a group of musicians. If part singing is indeed known to a given tradition and constitutes its vital part, it appears as an almost innate and integral attribute of every single *Homo polyphonicus* there—this is my main and initial premise. It appears that genuine vocal polyphony expresses, so to speak, the mental polyphony of everyone participating in the music-making of a polyphonic community of *Homines polyphonici*. This phenomenon is as much social as musical. It should be explained, even if briefly.

Polyphony as a way of creating musical form implies that basic kinds of folk music exist not so much in performance (such as work, ritual, dance, game, or contest songs) as in "musical hearing," which in turn could be called "musical thinking." There are cultures in which musical thinking is manifested exclusively in polyphonic hearing. In this particular case music exists in the mind of an individual (*Homo polyphonicus*) as part singing. Each member of a polyphonic community is able to hear music polyphonically. However, musical hearing involves much more than musical performance. For instance, such a person cannot physically **sing** several vocal parts at once, but none the less he or she can mentally anticipate part singing, that is, can **think** polyphonically. Part singing, both as a product and a process, simultaneously represents *co-singing* and *co-thinking*.

A part-singing ensemble consists of individuals each of whom possesses polyphonic inner hearing. I am inclined to agree with Anna Rudneva who claimed that while in actuality a singer in a group sings one part, simultaneously everyone in that group, being engaged in choral performance, "sings" the song entirely and polyphonically in his/her **inner hearing**. This is why during a collective rendering a good singer can easily change his/her part and support those co-singers who are tired or forgot the line (Rudneva, 1994: 201).

I remember an occurrence beautifully described by Yevgeniya Linyova to which she was a witness in a Russian village near Novgorod, with a blind

"daddy" named Zinovi (Linyova, 1911: xxxiv, lx). "The old men sang quite in a way of [his] own, and the leader's singing was especially interesting, whilst Daddy brought in a deal of originality by some peculiar additions,—flourishes and 'akhs,'—of his own. 'Daddy, do not sigh so,' said one of the young ones, who did not grasp the sense of his 'sighs.'—'Why not?' exclaimed an older singer. 'Sigh, Daddy, sigh!—He does it well, in accord with us, he helps us.' After this phrase, Daddy began 'sighing' more lustily than ever." Later, when Linyova worked on this material closely, she realized the musical gist of the occurrence. Normally, the choir waited while the leader, who begins the song, indicates the key and only after understanding it, joins in. In this particular case, the leader commenced his phrase not very clearly with regard to the tonality—the third that defines the key is not heard. Daddy Zinovi, being an expert in local part-songs, evidently awaited this sign defining the key, and not hearing it, gave vent to an "akh" himself, very energetically and decidedly, just on the minor third, whereupon the old woman also joined in and led the higher part, in Russian known as the *podgolosok* (a secondary part). This is an excellent example of creative cooperation in the context of oral tradition and specifically the coordination of polyphonic hearings in action. It is not enough to **know a song**—in order to "demonstrate" it chorally, as folk singers say, one needs **to hear** other voices, to be able **to listen** to the orally created "score," which goes on and on, and to navigate complex multi-part movement within this.

We see now, that to sing polyphonically means to think musically together and therefore to proceed musically together, i.e., to improvise collectively in order to "lift the song up," as Russian peasants say. Part singing requires not only a polyphonic "score," but also **polyphonic inner auditory perception** on the part of each individual. This musical phenomenon (the "inner aural, or inner auditory, tuning" that was developed by Boris Yavorsky, 1877–1942) is similar, in a way, to psychological "set theory" introduced by Dmitri Uznadze (1886–1950), founder of the Georgian school of psychology. A polyphonic text would be impossible without personal inner awareness, the inner willingness for co-operative musicking among all participants of a group. As Yevgeniya Linyova accentuated it, song polyphony "draws out all the voices in a free active, many-sided co-operation" (Linyova, 1911: lxxiv). To be an expert singer means to be "able to extemporize his/her part to any melody which s/he knows" (Linyova, 1912: 201).

As you see, I consider the phenomenon of part singing as it is, without raising any complicated and special question as to its genesis and development. The only thing I would like to point out hypothetically is that

polyphonic speech is probably mastered by a single singer to the extent to which this type of musical speech has first been cultivated **between** the members of a group that are used to singing together. Figuratively speaking, part singing as a language constitutes a net that connects and binds all members of this type of music-making, and all of them, along with their thinking and cognition, find themselves in this net forever.

Besides, the hearing of *Homo polyphonicus* exists in plural number because there are many types of coordination between musical parts during a collective improvisation: for instance, in sequences where choruses are divided into halves or into a leader and a choir, or simultaneously—with a drone, by chords or parallel intervals, or in free counterpoint. What is crucial for mutual understanding in the process of collective improvisation is the existence of some basic musical models that indicate where and how to proceed. Part singing is a collective realization of a polyphonic idea that is in the musical mind of all members of a group of musicians prepared for such a co-operative execution. Thus, the hearing of *Homo polyphonicus* always exists within the dynamic dimension of intrinsic coordination and of mutual interdependency.

The following examples are intended to confirm these rather theoretical statements.

2. Folk terminology

Boris Asafyev believed that "there is every reason to suppose that European voice-leading has firm roots in the folk consciousness" (Asafyev, 1971: 326). We continue to work with folk consciousness and particularly with the question of how this musical consciousness is mirrored in both music and music terminology.

If Merab Mamardashvili, the greatest Georgian philosopher of the twentieth century, was right, and interpretation does constitute a part of a work of art (Mamardashvili, 2000: 345), then folk terminology enters into the part-singing consciousness of folk musicians as its integral sphere.

There are various folk terms and expressions related to part singing—many, many more than I would be able to demonstrate today. What does that terminology address? In all languages and dialects these sayings and their etymologies are revealing in terms of people's intelligence. They allow us to more deeply understand how ethnophores' consciousnesses have to deal with this complicated world of collective musical expression and self-

realization, and in particular how these terms characterize the functions of different vocal parts and their coordination in the process of concerted singing.

I am certain that during the symposium [on traditional polyphony in Georgia] we will hear about relevant folk terminology in many papers. I am myself more familiar with the folk sayings of the Russians and Bulgarians, Serbs and Mordovians, and those of the Baltic peoples. An excellent description of South Albanian terminology can be found in an exemplary book by Jane Sugarman, *Engendering Song* (1997), to which I refer you.

Sometimes these sayings are not so explicit in wording but nevertheless can say a lot to those who know the tradition in question. For instance, the Mordva-Erzya singers used to talk about how they would perform winter carols—"as shepherds sang before," that is, heterophonically, or "as the youth sang it," that is, in the form of two–three-part singing (Boyarkina, 1983: 139). Thus, they were well aware of both the difference and co-existence of these two types of polyphony in their own tradition.

For the sake of simplicity, I will demonstrate now two tables. The first one shows Latvian folk terms (see table 1 in the appendix to this chapter).

This system of terms is well elaborated and at the same time has many typological parallels in other ethnic traditions of Eurasia, first of all in the Balkans, including its Slavic and non-Slavic peoples alike, and Georgia. In different ethnic traditions there are similar—in terms of meaning, of course—folk terms that are used for the activity of both the leader and the second soloist.

My next table contains three Russian folk expressions that are evidence of how deeply people conceptualize their part-singing consciousness in both its manifestations: practical and, so to speak, theoretical. In other words, these terms reflect folk polyphony as a way of creating and thinking together (see table 2 in the appendix to this chapter).

First, a few remarks on the table.

Artel'—This is neither a brigade nor a squadron. I will never forget how the members of a peasant's choral group I worked with changed their seats preparing themselves for the part-singing repertoire. Earlier, they had sat in a line. Now, they made a circle, joined hands, and immediately created one sort of part-singing body. This is the sung artel′.

To play a song—To improvise in parts. To try to build a song together. This is, in a sense, like a sports game—the result might be good or poor. I well remember the first rehearsals by the then-famous Dmitri Pokrovsky Ensemble for "Russian Song"—they did not know where the song would lead them, after all. They did not trust a written score—they confided in the living song itself, they **played** a song.

Pesnekhorka—I was told, during my field work in 1964 in the western sections of Russia (in particular, in the homeland of Modest Mussorgsky), that a female chorister, in contradistinction to a soloist, has to have not only *slukh* (i.e., hearing) but also *slykh* (i.e., in their dialect, the ability to listen to others). This dialectical term emphasizes the place of an individual in the singing *artel'*.

3. Notation and cognition

Max Weber (1864–1920) in his book *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music* connected the development of Western polyphony with the European system of notation. Although exaggerating the role of notation, he captured an essential link between polyphony and notation. To notate polyphony, especially in its oral forms, is a difficult task. Yet, while the current multi-microphone technique is very helpful in writing down the multi-voiced text, it is less good at understanding the singer's consciousness.

A special approach, which has become a classic, was introduced by Dr. Simha Arom. I refer to his revolutionary article "The Use of Play-Back Techniques in the Study of Oral Polyphonies" (1976) and the remarkable publications that followed. In order to facilitate transcription, Dr. Arom involved folk musicians as his collaborators in re-recordings made directly in the field and, crucially, through this opened the door into their musical consciousness and part-music-making awareness. Dr. Arom worked mainly with Central African instrumental polyphony, and his approach should be extremely effective in the case of such European traditions as Lithuanian *sutartines* on *skuduchyai* or Russian *kuvikls*, *Komi kuim-chipsan*, *polyan*, and the like. As for the rest of European vocal polyphony, I would say that, on the level of **language**, it uses polyphonic phrases rather than instrumental cells (which were discovered by Dr. Arom), and at the level of **speech**, it constitutes a mobile whole based on regularities that are probabilistic by nature. At least on the basis of so-called drawn-out long songs, including

Russian ones, we have to develop something else to be able to open the door into the musical consciousness of ethnophores.

For this purpose, I believe, it is appropriate and instructive to recall some historically early attempts at writing part singing down at a time when our scholarship had no technical tools for recording whatsoever. In particular, the longstanding Russian experience of notation of peasant part singing is able to demonstrate the extent to which folk singers themselves are aware of their part style and its constituent functions. Yuli Melgunov (1846–93), a Moscow pianist and theoretician, first proved that Russian folk singing was by nature polyphonic and first had discovered the most feasible means of fixing the extremely complicated polyphony of Russian lyric songs (1879). However, Melgunov was frequently reproached because not all the various secondary parts written down by him harmonize with the chief melody. The reason for this is that they were written down at different moments of the execution of the same song whereas during the real performance the secondary parts were not always alike. Being unable to write down from ear all of them at once, Melgunov gave an illustration of the great diversity of the variations of the main melody in a part song. It was already an important step forward. Vasily Prokunin, one of his outstanding followers of the 1880s, undertook another valuable experiment. Linyova rightly pointed out that "a most ingenious method for obtaining the correct highest and lowest parts, was devised by V.P. Prokunin."

Vasily Prokunin and his colleague Nikolai Lopatin (1956) came to the conclusion that folk singers involved in choral performance are well aware of the different role each of them has. When they were asked to sing a part-song individually, each of them sang that song differently in comparison to his own part in the choral rendering of the same song. Then Lopatin and Prokunin decided to look at a polyphonic performance not by a choir, which was, in their time, physically impossible to do in full, but by one singer who normally was able to sing chorally, that is, a *pesnekhor* or *pesnekhorka*, as we can say now that we have learned some folk terminology. They tried to reconcile part singing with the forced necessity of recording choral songs not by a choir but by a singer. As a result, they came up with excellently proven data about polyphony as a way of creating and thinking together and in this way helped us raise the question of the musical ability of *Homo polyphonicus*.

Here is Prokunin's resourceful method. To start with, he noted down the main melody from a chosen first-rate choral singer. Then he would begin singing that chief tune very low; thus, so to speak, barring the way for the

singer and driving him into the upper part. After that, in order to get the lowest part, he would sing, conversely, the main melody very high, thus forcing the same singer (or another singer from the same choir) to sing low. It is clear how much this was a difficult and complicated task that required an exceedingly fine ear from the collector and a no less fine ear as well as great knowledge of the part-singing tradition from a chosen folk singer. In this case, notation and cognition went together. Intentionally and unintentionally, the musical identity of *Homo polyphonicus* as exactly *polyphonicus* had been successfully proved.

4. Instead of conclusions

A part-singing event is a co-existence of personalities. (It sounds better in Russian: *sobytie* as ***so**-bytie*). From this point of view, polyphony can be considered as an ideal image of human life in general. Indeed, we cannot find this ideal in our everyday reality but in the process of singing together we are able to capture that perfection and become who we are.

Our hearing ability is much greater than our execution ability. To perform a part-song, one needs a group of singers, whereas to conceive the part-song idea one needs a special kind of inner hearing that I call **collective musical thinking**, i.e., something that does not exist in everyday life but might be realized only in concerted musicking. And that musicking, when properly heard, is capable of building or changing one's personality.

Ernst Klusen (1967, 1969) considered song as an instrument of group life, but we know that choral song might be instrumental for an individual life too. Group songs are created by a group of people but they create, in their turn, a special type of person who is able to think and to hear polyphonically. At any rate, if polyphony is a kind of thought, then it is capable of shaping and structuring a personality.

Merab Mamardashvili (1930–90) once said these incredible words: "I am Georgian because I, as a spiritual, moral being . . . am a product of the structure of Georgian part singing. . . . I mean, there are such causes—be it singing or some other ritual causes—which give birth to that very soul that they produce. . . . The destiny of some of my spiritual possibilities is set by the structure of Georgian music. . . . This music gave birth to me. I mean that ingredient of my personality which is called ethnic or national. . . . That is why when we sing Georgian songs or listen to them, a Georgian is reborn within each of us" (Mamardashvili, 2000a: 292, 293; my translation).

With this confession, Merab Mamardashvili gives us a task and a subject for the future: to study the very processes of becoming a personality structured by **part singing** as **part thinking**. The case of Georgian polyphony, which I did not dare to touch upon here, could be the best model for such a *part-thinking study*.

Appendix

Table 1: Three Latvian folk terms in three-part traditional polyphony (according to Karl Brambats, 1983)

1. *teiceēja* or *sauceēja—nomina agentis* from the verbs *teikt* (to tell, say, recite) and *sankt* (to call, cry, shout)—designates the first soloists, the leader of a traditional choir;
2. *loci ētaēja*—from *loci ēt* (to fold, bend [to and fro], bow, to let the voice twist, wind, meander)—designates the second soloist; 3. *vilceējas* (feminine plural)—from *vilkst* (to pull, drag, draw, trail)—designates the drone singers.

Table 2: Three folk terms in the oral polyphony of the Russian peasant (according partly to Yevgeniya Linyova, 1904, in my interpretation, and partly to my fieldwork)

1. *artél'*—literally, the co-operative association of workmen or peasants. "To sing by artel'" means to be based on particular collective principles and to become a six-voiced "gang"—as one music-making body of singers.
2. *igrát' pésniu*—literally, "to play a song"; it means a complete involvement in music-making as a process of collective interplaying when sung polyphony appears to be a role-playing game based on both artistic and sport-like types of improvisation and competitive inventiveness.
3. *pesnekhórka*, or *pesnekhóraia zhénshchina*—literally, a female chorister, a member of a women's choir, who possesses a special gift for collective music-making that allows her to sing along with others properly, that is, to be a role-oriented playfellow accordingly to her functional specificity in the joint performing *artel'*.

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