University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

Ensemble Basiani

Sunday, October 14, 2012, 2 p.m.

University Auditorium
Program

Mravalzhamier
Elea
Chona
Didebata
Kali gadmodga mtazeda
Guruli Ferkhuli
Shen khar venakhi — in the tradition of Kartli-Kakheti (eastern Georgia)
Shen khar venakhi — in the tradition of Guria (western Georgia)
Shen Gigalobt
Angelosi ghaghadebs
Ganatldi, ganatldi
Jvrsa shensa
Netar ars katsi
Odoia
Khasanbegura
Chela
Chakrulo
Naduri, Shemokmedura

Ensemble Basiani
Giorgi Khunashvili
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George Mekvabishvili
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Shota Abuladze
Irakli Tkvatsiria
George Gabunia
Sergo Urushadze
Lasha Metreveli
Batu Lominadze

About Ensemble Basiani

The patriarchate folk Ensemble Basiani was created in 2000, under the blessing of his holiness and beatitude Ilia II — Catholicos Patriarch of all Georgia. The Ensemble is part of the Tbilisi Holy Trinity Cathedral Church choir and it participates in services conducted by the patriarch.

Ensemble Basiani is comprised of singers from different parts of Georgia. Most members come from families that perform traditional singing and many members have sung folk songs in different ensembles since childhood.

The ensemble sings Georgian folk songs and chants by researching and reviving them from the ancient phonological and notated recordings, while studying songs directly from the famous singers and conductors of elder generations active in different regions of Georgia. It also works with many world-renowned ethno-musicians. In little more than a decade, Basiani has already performed at numerous international festivals and has visited some 20 countries. In that time, Basiani has also recorded and released seven CDs. In January 2012, Ocora Radio France released *Polyphonies vocales profanes et sacrees georgie*, the most recent album recorded by Basiani.
In recent years, Basiani has received international acclaim and recognition, giving performances in some of the world’s most well-known concert-halls and international festivals, including Auditorio Nacional de Musica (Madrid), The Gulbenkian Great Hall (Lisbon), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Aldeburgh Music Festival (Aldeburgh, England) and St. John’s, Smith Square (London).

In 2010, Basiani participated in the Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, performing for New York audiences on a program that presented traditional Georgian polyphony along with masterpieces of J.S. Bach and other European classic composers. This event was widely lauded by the American press, including The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. The ensemble will return to New York at the conclusion of their current American tour to perform in Lincoln Center’s White Light Festival.

“Basiani” is the name of one of the regions in Southwest Georgia (in what is now modern day Turkey, northwest of the town of Erzurum). In 1203, at this location, Georgian royal troops defeated the Turks with the victory consolidating Georgia’s position in Asia Minor.

Program Notes

Mravalzhamier — ‘long life’ — table song, Kakheti (eastern Georgia)
The Georgian supra (table party) usually begins with Mravalzhamier. This lifts the spirits of everyone at the table and creates a festive mood. As the voices rise, so does the collective enthusiasm and spirit of those sitting at the table, making them feel their meeting will become a celebration.

Let us sing together brothers while we see each other,
There will be time for mourning, when we will be lying under the ground
With earth on our chests.

I love you sweet Kakheti, big grove on the bank of the Alazani River
Deer on the pastures, straw on the banks of the Iori River.

Elesa — work song, Guria (western Georgia)

Elesa was sung in Guria while hauling a large log used for carving a wine press or
for lumber. The second part was sung after the weeding and hoeing of the corn had been completed.

When the nadi (an assembly of neighbors and villagers assisting in field work) performed Elesa, it signaled the completion of the work, and was a wish for bountiful harvest for the owner of the field.

Elesa-and let us sing, elesa, elesa, hey!
Elesa-and let us sing, elesa, kirio, hey!
   Elesa, hey
   Ei sai, eleso,
   Ei-sa kirio,
   Ei sai, eleso!

Each phrase is repeated several times. Only one understandable word (meaning “let us sing”) is discernible in the song, all the rest being interjections. However, two words — kirio and elesa — are clearly of Greek origin. Together, they are remarkably similar to the obligatory address in Christian divine service: Kyrie Eleison (Lord, have mercy upon us).

**Chona** — ritual song, Kartli (central eastern Georgia)

*Chona* was a ritual performed on the night before Easter. The singers would go through the village, visiting each household and congratulating everyone on the occasion of the brilliant holiday and the resurrection of Christ. Baskets of presents awaited them at each household. The host made preparations in advance; a festive table was laid heavy with food and with eggs dyed red on Good Friday.

Chona was an inseparable part of this ritual. The previously-mentioned tradition of its performance has been observed only in Eastern Georgia (Kartli).

   I was at Chona — I saw Chona, but I saw no profit.
   Alatasa-balatasa, I put my hand into the basket,
   Girl, put an egg in it, and God will give you bounty.
   We have come to congratulate you on Easter.

**Didebata** — circle dance, Svaneti (northwestern Georgia)

Circle dance songs are among the oldest surviving forms of Georgian musical folklore in traditional performance characteristics and form. This is corroborated by dances, which have become inseparable from their songs.

   Glory! May it have mercy on us!
   May the icons ornamented with gold and silver have mercy on us.
   They have oxen for sacrifice,
   Oxen with golden horns
   They had a young bull to sacrifice
   Let us beg for mercy.

**Kali gadmodga mtazeda** — lyric-love song

Songs of the lyric-love genre convey human spiritual experiences with extraordinary candidness and immediacy. This song is from Georgia’s northeastern mountain region, and lyric songs from different regions of Georgia differ significantly in their musical structure. Many lyric masterpieces created in the mountain regions of eastern Georgia are, as a rule, solo songs accompanied by the panduri, while Gurian lyric-love songs are structurally closer to Gurian drinking songs, characterized by polyphony, improvisation and dissonance.

This song has an amorous-natured text.
Guruli Ferkhuli — circle dance, Guria (western Georgia)
A circle dance genre song from the Guria region of western Georgia. No fixed text.

Shen khar venakhi — ‘You Are a Vineyard’ — The lambus of the Holy Virgin, Kartli-Kakheti (eastern Georgia)

You are a Vine, newly flourishing,  
Beautiful sapling, planted in Eden,  
A fragrant poplar, grown in Paradise,  
God has adorned you, there is none like you,  
And you yourself are the sun shining!

Shen khar venakhi — Guria (western Georgia), Shemokmedi School

Shen gigalobt — ‘We praise Thee’ — hymn of Liturgy, Imereti (western Georgia), Gelati School

We praise Thee, we bless Thee,  
We give thanks unto Thee, O Lord,  
and we pray unto Thee, O our God.

Angelosi ghagadebs — ‘The Angel cried’ — IV refrain to the IX canticle — The Easter

The Angel cried unto her who is full of grace:  
Hail, O Pure Virgin! And again, I say: Hail!  
Thy son is risen from his three days’ sojourn  
in the grave, and hath raised up the dead:  
Rejoice, O ye people!

Ganatldi, ganatldi — ‘Shine, shine the New Jerusalem’ — IX Irmos in tone I — The Easter

Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem  
for the glory of the glory of the Lord  
is risen upon Thee. Keep high holiday now  
and be glad, O Zion! And rejoice thou,  
O pure Birth-giver of God, in the rising again  
of him whom thou didst bear!

Jvarsa shensa — ‘Thy cross’ — in tune 6, Kartli-Kakheti (eastern Georgia)

Thy cross do we adore, O Master,  
and thy Holy Resurrection do we glorify.

Netar ars katsi — ‘Blessed is the man’ — The 1st Psalm — Hymn from Vespers, Gelati school

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither — whatever they do prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Odoia — work song, Samegrelo (western Georgia)
Popular nadi song, sung during hoeing and weeding a cornfield. No fixed text.

Khasanbegura — historical ballad, Guria (western Georgia)
In the second half of the nineteenth century, Georgia’s provinces of Guria and Achara were caught in a political conflict between Russia and Turkey. Some nobles
decided to use the conflict for their own advantages. One such figure is Khosro Tavdgiridze, who had a falling out with Prince Gurieli and emigrated to Turkey. There he was promoted, receiving the title of bey — Khasan-beg (bey) — and was appointed commander of a military unit. This song is told from the viewpoint of Khasan-beg’s brother:

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.

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

Chela — name of the bull — Bullock-cart-man’s song, Samegrelo (western Georgia)
While this is a Bullock-cart-man’s song, it should not be considered a work song. This is a typical sample of lyrical three-voiced song, which tells about cart-man’s thoughts and sorrows. Chela and Busca are bull’s names.

Here Chela! there Busca, you’re so used to the slavery
You poor, you weak-willed, you heartless, you neck-dropped.

Chakrulo — table song, Kakheti (eastern Georgia)
The crown of Georgian folk songs. Like Mravaljamier, It 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 the possible source: “As Chakrulo needs a strong resounding voice, in the same way, a load placed on an oxcart needs to be tightly bound.”

Hence, it is concluded that chakrulo means: strong, reliable, loud, charming song, requiring a singer with a high voice, which is certainly true of Chakrulo. In the view of some researchers such as Joseph Jordania, however, the name of the song implies strongly linked or intertwined voices.

Shalva Aslanishvili noted: “Chakrulo 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 from the tenth to twelfth centuries. Aslanishvili observed reflections of ancient traditions dating to feudal times in such table songs. Chakrulo has come down to us in several forms.

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”

Naduri, Shemokmedura — work song, Guria (western Georgia)

Shemokmedura is a work song — more precisely a Naduri. Nadi (hence naduri) is given special significance in Guria. If a family hoed its field without a nadi, it would be called inhospitable. If the village had no singers for the naduri, they were specially invited from other villages. The people gladly worked together with the singers of the nadi, as the work then became more 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 the churchyard after divine service.

Field naduris are the longest and most sophisticated antiphonal work songs, and they number in the dozens. Most antiphonal naduris of this region are four-part, an unusual phenomenon in world musical folklore. Their texts have nothing to do with the work process.

    I was a noble woman
    A peasant’s son took my hand in marriage
    I won’t go with him by choice unless he forces me

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