

“Conflict into Harmony” - “Lessons from the Republic of Georgia”

The Background.

The Georgian People are no strangers to invasion. Their small, richly abundant country located on the critical axis point between East and West, has known the suffering of conflict over millennia, as more powerful incumbents sought to exploit its potential for their own ends.

Yet the Georgians have maintained a deep love of humanity coupled with a fierce national identity, which has managed to maintain itself intact. Georgians have maintained human connection partly through the vehicle of polyphonic harmony song, described by UNESCO as “a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of Humanity”. This, coupled with the sacred ritual meal or “Supra”-often referred to as an “academy of life,” where shared blessings in the form of toasts are expressed and offered out as a collective blessing to the world, has served to resolve conflict and cement human relationships over generations.

The Dzegvi Inspiration.

The inspirational Street shelter for homeless children, pioneered in 1992, by Gia Razmadze after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, marked a turning point in the lives of many of Tbilisi’s dispossessed and orphaned children. Gia’s methodologies were based on a deep understanding of his culture’s own indigenous wisdom. He understood the power of the Georgian song and story tradition and its capacity to rebuild human harmony and restore inner peace. He was able to use the ritual contained in the Supra experience to resolve conflict between children and confirm the uniqueness of each child. He also held a deep appreciation of the healing power of the Natural Environment. It was in Dzegvi, an environment underpinned by these convictions that many street children made the transition from fear and mistrust, into social inclusion, and now lead fulfilling and successful lives.

Mamatsi Guli

“Mamatsi Guli”, which means “Heart of the Brave.” is a Georgian registered Charitable Union. It is run by Gia Razmadze, and supported by the Georgian Human Rights Ombudsman. Our centre is situated in an economically poor rural Georgian village of some 400 families. We are engaged in finding village families to offer foster care to some of the thousands of orphan children currently in state orphanages. Mamatsi Guli offers “fostering plus.” Village families, caring for children in this community will be offered Gia Razmadze’s experience and expertise, traditional song and story, English teaching from our volunteers, creative arts project participation, help with organic agricultural practices, and a cow per family, to augment the inadequate government fostering allowance and make fostering economically viable.

All proceeds from these workshops will go through the Scottish Charity “Ecologia Youth Trust” to support Mamatsi Guli.

Workshop Leaders..

Shorena Getiashvili.

Shorena studies Mathematics at Tbilisi State University,. A street child herself, with a mentally ill mother, she eventually found a home in Dzegvi, where she was brought up with Supra and song. Shorena is a singer and passionate advocate of social inclusion. She is now developing a project to document the experience of social stigmatization, and is helping initiate the groundbreaking “Mamatsi Guli” project.

Nana Mzavanadze.

Nana is a highly accomplished and experienced Georgian singer, from a traditional Georgian singing family in Guria Region ,where cultural traditional sound healing practices are still in daily use. She is a Tbilisi Music Conservatory trained musicologist and has taught and studied traditional music for 18 years. She prepared and led a T.V. series on Georgian polyphonic songs. Nana is instrumental in our work at Mamatsi Guli, where she both teaches, and develops our administration.

Madge Bray.

Madge Bray received a nomination as “European woman of the Year” in 2001 for her work with dispossessed children in Eastern Europe. Madge co- founded the Child Care Organization “SACCS,” and has pioneered creative approaches to enable young children to find a voice, thereby mobilizing their own healing potential, through non directive play, songs and stories. Madge is one of the founders of Mamatsi Guli, and now spends much of her time in Georgia, singing Georgian polyphony.

Proposed Workshops

(Unless requested to do so we will not seek to limit numbers)

Workshop 1: “Straight from the Heart” Lessons from the Republic of Georgia.

This is a one day workshop. It is designed to offer professionals and volunteers who work within the care professions in whatever capacity, an opportunity to examine their practice and learn new skills in their day to day work with children and adults. Through experiential exercises and an introduction to the unique and revealing Georgian harmony building practices for resolving conflict and restoring trust, participants will gain valuable insights into their own work in the relief of human suffering and trauma resolution.. The ability to sing is not essential.

Workshop 2: “A Taste of Georgia “ (Harmony Song, Supra, and Healing Traditions.)”

This is a one day workshop, which may if necessary be condensed into half a day, and /or can be adapted for children. No singing experience necessary.

This workshop is designed for all those who seek a deeper insight into the small corner of Europe which is current day Georgia.

Learning through talking, sharing song and story ,and opening our hearts in true Georgian style, we will learn how the Georgians use the experience of being together to enrich their own lives and those around them.

Workshop 3: “Sweetening the Soul- Healing Harmony Songs from Georgia.”

(This is a 2 day workshop experience, although it can be condensed into one day.)

It is designed to offer an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the Georgian “Batonebi “or Songs of the Spirits, and the Iavnana’s or lullabies. Nana will teach songs not familiar to Western singers, and will create a context where we can gain a deeper understanding of their use and application in her own life and that of her family. She will help us connect to the soul of her people through her own love of their ancient traditions.

This is a workshop which will appeal to those who simply love to sing and who may or may not be familiar with Georgian music. Nana will teach orally.

Concert (1hr): ‘The Georgian Woman’s Heart’

This is a Unique Sharing of Georgian Songs, from the Georgian Women’s Tradition moving through all aspects of women’s lives and sharing them in context in a way which does not belong in performance alone. We will share a cornucopia of songs from the cradle to the grave - love songs, work songs, lullabies and Batonebi songs, dirges, and women’s traditional prayers.

This concert can be arranged to run after a day workshop, in the evening.