

Hopkins Center for the Arts

at Dartmouth

presents

Tenores de Aterúe

Avery Book

Gideon Crevoshay

Carl Linich

Doug Paisley

Tuesday, April 29, 7:30 pm

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Program

Approximate duration: 75 minutes

Ottava del tre

Silanus medley

Kviria

Brevalo

Kvertkhi leses Dzirisagan

Lekebma Rom Damichires

Tota Pulchra es Maria

Bernardinu

Rundine passizera

Bellissimu unu nidu app'a formare

Libera me

La Puddedra

Cando l'happo conotta

Agnus Dei

Program Notes and Translations

Ottava del tre comes from the religious repertoire of the Tenore San Gavin di Oniferi. The text centers around the number three and its relationship to Jesus Christ.

Three hours lasted the agony of the Messiah.
Three nails pierced Him.
Three women wept over Him.

Silanus medley begins with verses in the *boghe sèria* form: the long introductory section, *sa istèrrida*, is followed by shorter solo verses interwoven with various rhythmic responses from the *tenore*. This song is philosophical:

What is life? Sometimes I ask myself...
A tree in a world of rare fruits
Or a phenomenon ever mysterious
That does not receive signals from the borders?
With the embrace of time it is formed.
Who knows, though, how and when?

They say that in every part of the earth
The lords make life with time
But I don't know if it's true, or if they can...

Today beneath the air in which I breathe
The smoke of days that pass...
These questions—my inquiries—
Find no peace in my mind
Since life is truly so
Among images that I observe but do not understand.

The second part of the medley, *su dillu*, is a dance song that cheerily talks about visiting towns in search of a girl to marry—so many to choose from! “I wish they all could be Bortigali girls...”

Kviria is a ritual hymn to the Svan fertility god, traditionally sung on the feast day of St. Kvirike, July 28. On this day hundreds of Georgians from Svaneti and elsewhere make a pilgrimage to the village of Kala, where they celebrate by hiking to the church at the top of the mountain, saying prayers, lighting candles and sacrificing animals. There are also boulders and a large bell which are intended for men to lift (the boulders should be lifted and tossed over the shoulder, and the bell should be lifted and rung). Any man who can perform one of these feats, it is said, will have a son. Kviria is among the oldest songs in Svaneti, and all meaning of the cryptically stretched-out text has been lost. Carl learned this song from Svan song master Islam Pilpani in 1995.

Brevalo comes from Georgia's western province of Guria, where the most complex polyphonic traditions are found. The text is constructed from morphed pieces of the word *mravalzhamier*, which means “long life” in Georgian. Traditionally sung at the banqueting table, it is most commonly sung by a trio, allowing each of the three singers to improvise on their part. Our variant is based on the teaching of Gurian song master Tristan Sikharulidze.

Program Notes and Translations *continued*

Kvertkhi Ieses Dzirisagan—Georgia has been an Orthodox Christian nation since the 4th century, when St. Nino, the patron saint of Georgia, brought Christianity to Georgia. This hymn comes from the traditional liturgy of western Georgia and is believed to have been composed in the Middle Ages at the Shemokmedi Monastery school of hymn composition. Carl learned this hymn from chant master David Shugliashvili.

Rod and root of Jesse and flower that blossomed from his stem,
O Christ, You have sprung from the Virgin.
From the mountain overshadowed by the forest
You have come, made flesh from her that knew not wedlock,
O God, You who are not formed from earthly matter.

Lekebma Rom Damichires tells the story of a man captured by invaders. It features the *chonguri*, a traditional fretless lute from western Georgia. Our variant here is based on recordings from the Anchiskhati Choir and from Trio Shalva Chemo.

When the Lezgin invaders captured me it was June.
They took me over a hundred mountains of the Caucasus.
I looked over the Circassian meadow and saw fog from the Black Sea.
Three women were cutting hay for three Circassian lords.
In their hands they held scythes with diamond-sharp tips.
With marble sharpeners they honed the edge.
The three called out like an angel in the sky.
I was surprised because I hadn't seen women work like that before.

Tota Pulchra es Maria is an unusual two-part Corsican chant from an 18th century Franciscan manuscript, “Cantilena del Convent di Nicolo,” arranged by early music specialist Marcel Pèrés. It has become popular, and several contemporary recordings have influenced our own interpretation, notably those of Tavagna, Ensemble Organum, and Donni Di L'esiliu. The text is a 4th century prayer sung during the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, including poetry from the book of Judith and Song of Solomon.

You are all beautiful, Mary, and the stain of original sin is not in you.
You are the glory of Jerusalem. You are the joy of Israel.
You give honor to our people. You are an advocate of sinners.
O Mary, Virgin most intelligent, Mother most merciful,
Pray for us, plead for us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bernardinu is a traditional song that we learned from the repertoire of two legends of the revival of Corsican folk polyphony—the late Jacky Micaelli and her ensemble, Donni di l'Esiliu; and from Jean-Etienne Langianni and his group Tavagna. The piece is in a poetic and musical form called *lamentu*, which often features themes of love and grief, both of which seem to be touched upon in the poetry.

Bernardinu is going far away, and I am left disconsolate...
My love, how will the bell toll without its crown?

Rundine passizera, a standard dance form called *ballu tondo*, with overlapping rhythms in 3/4 time, comes from the town of Orgosolo. Here the poet speaks to a passing bird, naming all the countries it may have flown over, and asking continually: “Did you see my sweetheart there?” We fell in love with a recording of this song performed by Tenore Untana Vona Orgosolo, featuring master singer Nicola Pira, who was considered one of the greatest living bearers of this tradition until his recent passing. We later had the great honor of meeting Nicola and his quartet partners—and even singing with them!—a memory we all treasure.

Bellissimu unu nidu app’a formare, a love song from the town of Orune, is another *boghe ‘e notte*. We learned this from a recording by Tenore S’Arborinu. These days, whenever singers get together, the first song is invariably a *boghe ‘e notte*, as they are much favored among contemporary *cantu a tenore* quartets. Until recent years, this type of song was connected with the custom of serenading; singers would situate themselves below the window of their intended listener, who might—or might not—reward their efforts.

Libera me (“Deliver me”) is recited after the Requiem mass in the Latin liturgy and has been set to music by countless composers. This particular setting comes from the village of Orosei, on the east coast of Sardinia, which lies outside the region known for *cantu a tenore* singing. The singers of Orosei have maintained another four-part singing tradition known as *cuncordu*, a kind of sacred music brotherhood, whose repertoire is usually sung in the context of feast days, funerals, festivals, and other religious contexts.

Deliver me, Lord, from eternal death, on that terrible day:
when the heavens and earth will be shaken;
when you will come to judge the age with fire.
I am made to tremble, and I am afraid, since trial and anger are coming.
That day, a day of anger, disaster and sorrow,
That day, a mighty day, and one exceedingly bitter.
Give them eternal rest, Lord, and may light perpetual shine upon them.

La Puddedra (“The Filly”) is another song that we learned from a recording by Tenore S’Arborinu di Orune; this one is in the standard *ballu lestru* dance form. Here, the tight rhythms and complex interplay between the *bogh’e* (soloist) and the *tenore* (ensemble) call on the skill and imagination of the singers to keep pace with a galloping sequence of cinematic jump-cuts provided by the text:

To all who see her she is an English mare that was tamed by Montesu.
Tell the jockey and run after her, saying, “Beautiful mare,
I tame this filly! Don’t break your back!” In one place I saw
four women who were talking and were saying Montesu arrived first.

Cando l’happo conotta (*passu torrau*) is a dance song from the town of Fonni. When we visited Fonni, our hosts, Davide Mureddu and his young singing partners, asked us why we didn’t have any Fonni songs in our repertoire. When we told them that we hadn’t, they immediately responded: “We know why. They’re too difficult.” Whereupon they introduced this version of *passu torrau*, which is indeed one of the most challenging songs we’ve attempted in our quartet.

Program Notes and Translations *continued*

When I met her, she was beautiful and seemed to be a saint,
Totally elegant, with a serene and sincere expression,
And I thought - if only such a goddess loved me!
She was tall, she was beautiful, superb when she passed close by.
And I said to her, “Good evening, kind Diana,”
But she kept right on going, acting like she hadn’t seen me.

Agnus Dei is from the town of Olli Cappella, in the northwestern region of Ghjunsani, Corsica. Many villages throughout the island had unique polyphonic masses that were sung for generations. Throughout the 20th century, however, various modernizing trends, such as superior economic prospects in mainland France and disproportionate conscription into the French army during World Wars I and II, led to the decline of these singing traditions. This chant is one that survived into the era of the folk revival of the 1970s, and has become a classic example of the liturgical style.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us,
Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, grant us peace.

Gideon Crevoshy, Carl Linich, Doug Paisley

About Tenores De Aterúe

The four members of **Tenores De Aterúe** met because of their common interest in group singing—especially a cappella polyphony. They had all sung different types of traditional music from various world traditions. It was actually their mutual interest in Georgian singing that first brought the four of them together as a quartet, though not with the idea of performing; they had gathered to learn more about Georgian songs from Carl. During their time together they discussed their mutual love for the other kinds of traditional polyphony that captivated them. One of these traditions was Sardinian *cantu a tenore*. After discovering a YouTube video with a “demo” of the unusual vocal techniques, Carl suggested they try it. Their first effort established their love for Sardinian

song—and their mission to learn and share its rich tradition. And as Corsica was so close, both geographically and culturally, they decided to include Corsican songs in their repertoire. Georgian, Sardinian, and Corsican? What do all these singing traditions have in common? They all create songs using voices alone; they can’t be sung by only one person, so they create community; they use natural vocal techniques as opposed to classical; and the songs all come from real people and reflect the real-life experiences of the people who have passed them down to us. For the Tenores De Aterúe, the most meaningful aspect is the connection they have to the sources—especially the singers they’ve met and worked with. Honoring their legacy is paramount.

About the Artists

Avery Book has been studying, performing and teaching traditional polyphonic vocal music from around the world for 25 years. A longtime instructor with world youth ensemble Village Harmony, he had studied with master singers and choir leaders from Sardinia, the Republic of Georgia, Corsica, Bosnia and South Africa. Most recently, Avery co-founded and led two chapters of the Vermont Solidarity Singers, bringing hardy and heartfelt polyphony to local, national, and international social movements. He currently lives up the road in Thetford with his partner and toddler, and works as a community and union organizer.

Gideon Crevosshay is a vocalist, teaching artist, composer, and facilitator from the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. He works with the countless dimensions that sound, improvisation, and deep listening can touch upon. Gideon has studied and taught myriad forms of vocal music from around the world, finding inspiration from the wisdom contained within these traditions and how they can inform ideas of music-making, communities of resilience, ritual, and explorations of consciousness. In addition to the Tenores de Aterúe, he has performed and recorded extensively, including recent work with Meredith Monk, Bread and Puppet Theater, Laurie Anderson, David Cieri, Redwing Blackbird Theater, Starry Mountain Singers, Catherine Brookman, Devin Greenwood, Sanaya Ardeshir (Sandunes), and Kaylynn Sullivan TwoTrees. He has been an artistic facilitator with the international music fellowship OneBeat since its inception in 2012, and has co-directed other Found Sound Nation projects abroad in the Balkans, Republic of Georgia, Turkey, and Russia. Along with his band, Briars of North America, Gideon is a recording artist on the Brooklyn label Brassland Records.

Carl Linich has been studying, singing and teaching traditional polyphonic folk and liturgical music from the Republic of Georgia since 1990. He first began learning Georgian songs in New York's Hudson Valley with The Kartuli Ensemble, and soon went on to form Trio Kavkasia. They traveled to Georgia in 1995 and 1997 for extended periods to immerse themselves in the culture, and Carl ended up living in Georgia for about a decade. He has traveled extensively around Georgia, meeting singers, making field recordings, and amassing a tremendous repertoire of songs. He has also worked on many Georgian folk music projects and publications. In recognition of his work to promote and preserve traditional Georgian culture, Carl is a Silver Medal State Laureate of Georgia (1995) and has been awarded the Georgian President's Order of Merit (2009). Since relocating back to the U.S., in addition to singing with Tenores de Aterúe, Carl has directed the Supruli Choir in New York City, the Bard College Georgian Choir, and his own family trio with his two sons. Carl holds an MFA (2004) in Music/Vocal Performance from Bennington College in Vermont.

Doug Paisley is an artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. From 1991 to 2001 he was a set painter, puppet maker, writer, performer, and artistic director of *Wassail*, a multigenerational musical theater troupe based in Williamstown, Massachusetts. His mania for singing with other people only intensified when he met (through Village Harmony) Carl, Gideon and Avery. As a member of Tenores de Aterúe, he worked closely with his son, Rufus Paisley, on the documentary film *Aterúe, the Singers from Elsewhere* (2019) and co-authored, with ethnomusicologist Corinna Campbell, "Between Respect and Impertinence: Cross-Cultural Engagement with Sardinian *Cantu a Tenore*" (2022).

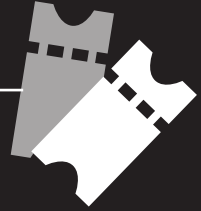
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