



First Australia-Georgia Symposium: Archaeology and Beyond

23 March 2024, University of Melbourne

პირველი ავსტრალიურ-ქართული სიმპოზიუმი: არქეოლოგია და მის მიღმა

2024 წლის 23 მარტი, მელბურნის უნივერსიტეტი

The University of Melbourne's Faculty of Arts [Research Initiative on Post-Soviet Space](#), in partnership with the Embassy of Georgia to the Commonwealth of Australia, the Honorary Consul of Georgia in Melbourne and the Georgian National Museum, is pleased to invite you to the First Australia-Georgia Symposium.

The symposium showcases and celebrates the work of Georgians and Australians, in both countries, on Georgian topics in the fields of science, business, music, arts and culture.

Date: Saturday 23 March 2024

Time: Presentations 2:00 to 6:00 pm, cocktail reception 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Venue: Forum Theatre and Atrium, Arts West Building, The University of Melbourne

Program

<i>Time</i>	<i>Session</i>
	Session 1
	Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, Welcomes and Introductions
2:00 pm	Andrew Jamieson , University of Melbourne
	Mark Edele , University of Melbourne
	H.E. Mr Beka Dvali , Ambassador of Georgia
	Peter McMullin , Honorary Consul of Georgia in Melbourne
	Paul Crawford , Department of Foreign Affairs Including a short video from H.E. Mr Miles Armitage , Australian Ambassador to Türkiye, Georgia and Azerbaijan
	Session 2
	GAIA (Georgian-Australian Investigations in Archaeology)
2:30	Andrew Jamieson, Martin Tomko and Brian Armstrong , University of Melbourne Recent Investigations at Rabati, southwest Georgia, and featuring various surveys conducted of the site and surrounding valley using a drone Including a short video from Giorgi Bedianashvili , Georgian National Museum, on the history of work at Rabati
2:50	Abby Robinson , University of Melbourne In Rabati's surrounds, a landscape of fortified settlements and fortress complexes
	Q&A
3:10	Coffee break
	Session 3
	Georgian Wine: Viticulture and Archaeology
3:30	Claudia Sagona , University of Melbourne Wine: Its ancient journey to your table from the land of the Golden Fleece
3:50	Lado Uzunashvili , Oenologist/Founder, Mukado Wines Georgia. Vintage 8000 Estates, Adelaide Sakartvelo/Georgia – 42 nd Parallel – Birthplace of <i>Vitis Vinifera</i> , grape wine and wine culture. Can Georgia's (Sakartvelo's) millennia-old genetic make-up of grape species help the world save existing famous winegrowing regions?
	Session 4
4:20	The Challenges of Global Warming: From Caucasus to Pacific
	Levan Tielidze , Research Fellow, School of Earth Atmosphere and Environment, Monash University, Melbourne

	Present state of glaciers of the Caucasus region and attempts of past glacier-climate reconstructions
	Q&A
4:40	Coffee break
	Session 5
	World Heritage of Georgian Folk Polyphonic Singing: From Ancient Roots to Interstellar
5:00	Nino Tsitsishvili , Ethnomusicologist, World Music Choir Director – The University of Melbourne; Georgian Choir Director – Melbourne Polytechnic Georgian polyphonic singing in a global context: Melbourne and beyond
5:20	Ramaz Bluashvili , Filmmaker, Researcher. Founder of the “NOVA” Foundation for promoting Science and Education How Voyager inspired a nation: A Georgian polyphonic contribution to Interstellar Message
5:40	Georgian choirs Live performance of Georgian polyphonic folk songs by Melbourne Georgian Choir and Tsinskaro
	Q&A
6:00 pm	Cocktail Reception Featuring Georgian wine and chacha (vodka/grappa) Atrium, Arts West Building (ground floor)
8:00 pm	End

Speaker Bios and Abstracts (listed in the order of the program)

Andrew Jamieson, University of Melbourne

Bio: Andrew Jamieson is Associate Professor in Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Melbourne. For more than three decades, he has participated in archaeological fieldwork, in Egypt, Georgia, Lebanon, Syria, and Australia. He has been especially active in preservation and salvage projects. In 2017, Andrew became the director of the Georgian-Australian Investigations in Archaeology (GAIA) project. He is also an award-winning teacher, whose work in the sphere of object-based learning has been influential in Australia and internationally. He is active in the field of community engagement, promoting the ancient world to the wider community and fostering interest in university activities. He is an elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, and in 2023 was the recipient of the Faculty of Arts Alumni Award for his contribution to the faculty and university.

Abstract: Andrew will discuss recent archaeological investigations at the ancient frontier fortress of Rabati, in southwest Georgia, a collaboration between the University of Melbourne and the Georgian National Museum. Key discoveries at the settlement of Rabati – stratigraphy, architecture, ceramics – with reference to its regional setting in the Southern Caucasus will be presented, including highlights from the 2023 season. Student involvement and the field school at Rabati will also be discussed. In addition, this presentation will feature various surveys of the site and surrounding valley using a drone conducted by Martin Tomko and Brian Armstrong from Infrastructure Engineering.

Mark Edele, University of Melbourne

Bio: Mark Edele is a historian of the Soviet Union and its successor states, in particular, Russia. A former Australian Research Council Future Fellow, he is the inaugural Hansen Professor in History as well as a Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Arts. Mark was instrumental in establishing the Research Initiative on Post-Soviet Space ([RIPSS](#)). This initiative provides knowledge and understanding of the region formerly dominated by the Soviet Union.

H.E. Mr Beka Dvali, Ambassador of Georgia

Bio: Since January 2023, Beka Dvali has been Ambassador of Georgia to the Commonwealth of Australia, also representing Georgia as Ambassador to New Zealand and other Nations in the Pacific region. Ambassador Dvali is a career diplomat and served Georgian diplomacy continuously for the last 24 years. At various times, Ambassador Dvali served as the Head of the United Nations Division as well as Deputy Director for European integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia. As for his foreign postings, during 2004-2004 he served in Washington DC as Senior Counsellor at the Embassy of Georgia to the United States, Canada and Mexico, during 2009–2012 in London – as Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Georgia to the United Kingdom and Ireland. From 2012 to 2022, as the first Ambassador of Georgia in Pretoria, he represented Georgia to South Africa and 12 other nations in Southern Africa – the Member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In 1999, Beka Dvali graduated from the law Faculty of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and then in 2002 was accorded the degree of Master of Comparative and European Law (Magister Iuris Communis) from the University of Maastricht, The Netherlands. Ambassador Dvali also has academic

experience and has published books and articles on various issues of constitutional and international law.

Peter McMullin, Honorary Consul of Georgia in Melbourne

Bio: Peter McMullin AM has served as the Honorary Consul of Georgia in Victoria since 2018. He is a member of the Board of the Melbourne Recital Centre since 2021 and a member of the Australian Chamber Orchestra Board since 2024. In his current role as Chairman and Director of McMullin Group, Peter leads a dedicated team of professionals, providing strategic direction and financial management across a range of industries. He also acts as Special Counsel for Cornwall Stodart Lawyers, specialising in improving outcomes for the firm and its clients by facilitating meaningful connections between like-minded people. Throughout Peter's career, he has had a deep-seated interest in community affairs. He has consistently used his professional experience and network to further causes that he feels deeply and passionately about. Peter's belief is that the private sector has an important role to play in the resolution of many of our pressing social issues. He has made a significant contribution throughout his career forging positive, constructive partnerships between the private sector and governments, the not-for-profit sector and educational institutions. As an active philanthropist, Peter seeks to collaborate with other individuals and organisations to maximise the impact of his contributions. A recent example is supporting the establishment of the world's first academic Centre dedicated to the issue of Statelessness at Melbourne University Law School, known as Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness.

Paul Crawford, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Bio: Paul Crawford is DFAT's Assistant Director, South-East Europe Section.

H.E. Mr Miles Armitage, Australian Ambassador to Türkiye, Georgia and Azerbaijan

Bio: Miles Armitage is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He has previously served overseas as Australia's Ambassador to Jordan and Timor-Leste, Deputy Head of Mission, Australian Embassy, Philippines as well as postings in New York and Islamabad. He also served as Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism. Mr Armitage holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours); Diploma of Museum Studies, from the University of Sydney; and a Diploma of Foreign Affairs and Trade from the Australian National University.

Martin Tomko, Department of Infrastructure Engineering, University of Melbourne

Bio: Associate Professor Martin Tomko is a Spatial Information Scientist and geographic information systems expert in the Department of Infrastructure Engineering and part of its Geomatics Discipline team.

Brian Armstrong, Department of Infrastructure Engineering, University of Melbourne

Bio: Dr Brian Armstrong is an archaeologist and researcher who specialises in various mapping and remote sensing technologies and their application to archaeological sites and landscapes in Australia and overseas.

Giorgi Bedianashvili, Georgian National Museum

Bio: Dr Giorgi Bedianashvili is a researcher at the Institute of Archaeological Studies at the Georgian National Museum. He is also co-director of GAIA, Georgian-Australian investigations in Archaeology. He received his degrees at the Sorbonne University (Masters) and the Ecole Pratique des Haute Etudes (PhD). He was a Carnegie Fellow at Purdue University in Indiana in 2010 and honorary fellow at the University of Melbourne (2015).

Abstract: Giorgi will talk on the history of work at Rabati, both survey and excavation, prior to the activities of the Georgian-Australian investigations in Archaeology that commenced in 2016.

Abby Robinson, University of Melbourne

Bio: Abby Robinson is a doctoral candidate at the University of Melbourne, who has taken part in archaeological fieldwork in Georgia and Turkey for more than a decade. Her PhD thesis is based on extensive archaeological field survey in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of southwest Georgia, where the excavations at Rabati are also located, with a focus on border formation and maintenance. As well as studying material culture, she incorporates ancient texts and GIS spatial analysis into her work. She also works for Cambridge University Press and the British Institute at Ankara.

Abstract: The pronounced topography of Rabati's surrounds is also home to many other fortified settlements and fortress complexes, most notable for their spectacular megalithic architecture and sometimes called "Cyclopean". Given their imposing size and prominent locations, looming over river valleys and mountain passes, these establishments seem surprisingly closely spaced. What were they doing and when? How were they connected with each other, if at all? Did they work together, or were they in competition? To address these questions, this presentation will draw upon archaeological evidence gathered during extensive survey by the author and her Georgian colleague, spatial analysis in ArcGIS, and a folktale about a very eventful journey that the famous poet Shota Rustaveli makes through this landscape to collect his new bride.

Claudia Sagona, University of Melbourne

Bio: Dr Claudia Sagona, MOM, FAHA, is an Honorary Principal Fellow in Archaeology in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies. Her archaeological fieldwork and research have taken her from the highlands of northeastern Turkey and the Caucasus to the Maltese Archipelago, and she has published widely concerning these regions. In Turkey, Claudia co-directed with Antonio Sagona[†], the North-East Anatolia Archaeological Project. She is currently co-directing the Georgian and Australian Investigations in Archaeology (GAIA), now focused on the site of Rabati. In Malta, she was a member of the excavations of the Phoenician Punic temple site at Tas-Silġ, conducted by the University of Malta, and has carried out substantial research on the extensive Phoenician-Punic burial sites in the islands. Her interest in Malta's rich archaeological record culminated in her comprehensive volume on *The*

Archaeology of Malta: From the Neolithic through the Roman Period (Cambridge University Press). In recognition of her contribution to Malta, she was made an honorary member of the National Order of Merit of Malta in 2007.

Abstract: Have you ever wondered who first discovered the art of making wine from grapes and where those first vines grew? In this talk, Dr Claudia Sagona will follow leads gained through archaeological discoveries to identify the very humble origins of wine production. This beverage drove Phoenicians to search for extensive markets and to colonise the western Mediterranean in the first millennium BC. Yet in the search for the origins of viticulture, the evidence leads to the remote highlands of Georgia, to a time long before Jason ventured to the Land of the Golden Fleece. In small hamlets, Neolithic communities, whose technology was simple, began to experiment with fermenting grapes. In time, wine became a highly prized commodity in the Caucasus, linked to elite societies who expressed their status through magnificent gold adornments, metalwork and monumental burials. Wine by-products may even have contributed to dyed textiles and the emergence of purple as a regal colour.

Lado Uzunashvili, Oenologist, Founder Vintage 8000 Estates, Adelaide, Australia

Bio: An eleventh-generation winemaker and a researcher with a PhD in Oenology, Lado has been a winemaker/consultant in Australia, France, Morocco, Ukraine and Georgia. His famous projects in Georgia are at Château Mukhrani, once a royal estate, and Vazisubani Estate, the historic vineyards of Mukuzani PDO and home to the last oenology school before the Soviet takeover. Lado's company, Mukado Wines LLC is a leader in quality in Georgia. Lado recently started a collaboration with the Microbiology Faculty of Tokyo University of Agriculture on genetic studies of the millennia-old Georgian microbiome at the root of national winemaking. The research aims to single out the most original genome in this field, with a possibility of involving bacteriophages in the winemaking process and fighting back against growing chemical and biochemical influences on wine quality. Actively involved in translating international winemaking technical literature into Georgian, Lado also provides his own course of lectures to winemakers in Georgia.

Abstract: Georgia, as the recognized source of *Vitis Vinifera* and the culture of winemaking, attracts attention for the unparalleled synergy between local grape cultivars and microbiome-delivering wines of a unique character both gustatorily and biochemically. To maintain this synergy, Georgian grape varieties have gone through multiple macro and micro climate changes and adaptations since the famous Younger Dryas. Observations show many Georgian varieties thriving in radically diverse climatic conditions. This, in turn, makes it possible to maintain historically famous viticulture regions, while also developing new ones with the best possible choices from among the Georgian grape varieties. Furthermore, Georgia has become a source of unique strains beneficial to human health in most types of fermentation, evoking a scientific interest in rediscovering strains that could be saved and brought back to produce wines with authentic taste profiles, as well as aspects beneficial to human health. Climate change looks irreversible, and we may have a key to solving some of the looming challenges.

Levan Tielidze, Research Fellow, School of Earth Atmosphere and Environment, Monash University

Bio: Dr Levan Tielidze is a Research Fellow at School of Earth Atmosphere and Environment, Monash University. Levan completed his PhD at the Antarctic Research Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He uses remote sensing and in situ methods to study modern glaciers in linkage to ongoing climate change. His research interests also include reconstructing the dynamics of

past glaciers through the tools of glacial geomorphology and cosmogenic nuclide dating. In particular, Levan is interested in the deglaciation dynamics of the Caucasus Mountains, the Southern Alps of New Zealand, and Antarctic ice sheets during the Late Pleistocene and Holocene.

Abstract: Glaciers are an important source of fresh water in countries of the Caucasus region, and runoff in large glacier-fed rivers supplies several hydroelectric power stations. They are also important reservoirs of water for the population living downstream, often providing meltwater during seasonal droughts. Furthermore, glaciers play a significant role in the economy of the Caucasus countries as a major tourist attraction with thousands of visitors each year. Finally, they are the source of, or contribute to, severe natural hazards in this region (complete detachment of ice and rock, glacier surging, glacier lake outburst floods), requiring a good understanding of related processes to reduce the impact of future events on human well-being. Thus, the comprehensive study of the Caucasus glaciers is crucial for the scientific study of climate change impacts but also for societal applications or sustainable regional development. Although the extent and chronology of the Late Pleistocene and Holocene glacier in the northern mid-latitudes are well studied, no published investigations containing absolute ages are available for the Caucasus Mountains. Previously, moraines and glacial stratigraphy were used for the reconstruction of past glaciations in this region, but in most cases, these studies lack hard chronological data, such that these moraines could be associated with a different stage. In this context, the Late Pleistocene and Holocene glacier-climate fluctuations are poorly understood in the Caucasus Mountains, providing an opportunity to develop new scientific hypotheses and determine the Late Pleistocene/Holocene climate and glacier chronological extent in this region.

Nino Tsitsishvili, Ethnomusicologist, Georgian Choir Director – Melbourne Polytechnic

Bio: Nino Tsitsishvili, PhD, Ethnomusicology, is an evolutionary musicologist, originally from Georgia, who earned her Masters and Doctorate degrees from Monash University, Australia. She is an author of books, as well as numerous articles and chapters in refereed journals, Encyclopedias, and edited collections. Tsitsishvili's publications take an evolutionary and multidisciplinary perspective on human social, cultural, and sexual behaviour, including the commissioned chapter for "Music in Human Experience: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Musical Species," and the authored book "Origins of the Love Song: Sexual Selection or Sexual Frustration?" published in 2022. She teaches World Music Choir at the University of Melbourne, and Georgian Choir at Melbourne Polytechnic.

Abstract: Georgian polyphony is believed to be as old as its archaeological culture and wine making. Ancient Greek writers described inhabitants of Georgia singing in many parts. Intriguingly, the richness of Georgian polyphony and differences between the two major polyphonic singing styles in Georgia, western and eastern, confirm the influx of ancient Mtkvari-Araxes and Trialeti archaeological cultures on the territory of southeastern Georgia. I focus particularly on a journey of Georgian rural polyphonic singing into a global world music scene, and how it survived Russian colonialism and Soviet cultural policies and proliferated into the post-Soviet times. I will show the ways in which Georgian polyphonic singing has infiltrated the choral scene in Australia and other countries, bringing an archaic sound, unique harmonies, and community spirit into predominantly modern western lifestyles. The presentation will be accompanied by photos, sound, video, and other media.

Ramaz Bluashvili, Filmmaker, Documentarian, Researcher

Bio: Ramaz Bluashvili is a Georgian filmmaker and researcher. In 2016, Ramaz established the “NOVA” foundation to promote science and education. In recent years, he has collaborated with engineers from NASA/JPL to encourage scientific interest and technological advancements among Georgian youth. The “NOVA” foundation has successfully completed several projects in Georgia, including the creation of a full-size replica of the Perseverance Rover at the University of Georgia. In collaboration with the renowned Georgian artist Muraz Murvanidze, Ramaz has also crafted a 7 m-tall sculpture dedicated to the Voyager Golden Record and Georgian polyphonic singing. Additionally, the foundation, in collaboration with the Alexander Kartveli Association, opened a permanent exhibition dedicated to the legendary Georgian-American aircraft designer Alexander Kartveli at the University of Georgia. Other notable accomplishments include the production of the documentary feature "The Song" and more. In September 2023, Ramaz received an invitation from the CALTECH Management Association and NASA/JPL to deliver a one-hour presentation on the Georgian contribution to the Voyager interstellar record.

Abstract: In 1977, NASA launched two spacecraft named Voyager 1 and Voyager 2. Both carried an interstellar message recorded onto golden disks. Along with pictures, information, and sounds from Earth, these disks included 27 examples of music from around the world. One of the musical pieces sent into space was the Georgian Polyphonic song “Chakrulo.” Ramaz Bluashvili has dedicated most of his life to researching how the Georgian song became part of the interstellar record in the late 70s, when Georgians were unaware of this fact. After more than 30 years of his quest, Ramaz brought back to Georgia an amazing true story about this historic event. Today, every Georgian is immensely proud of the fact that the Georgian polyphonic song is part of one of the most popular and important projects in history.

Choirs

Melbourne Georgian Choir

The Melbourne Georgian Choir (MGC) began in Georgia in 2010, merging the male voices of Gorani with the female voices of Breathing Space, both Australian ensembles. They journeyed to Georgia to study under master traditional singers Islam and Vakhtang Pilpani and to participate in the 5th International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony at the State Conservatoire in Tbilisi. Dr. Joseph Jordania, a renowned Georgian ethnomusicologist, initiator and key organiser of the biennial symposia, had been involved with Gorani since his arrival in Melbourne in 1995, encouraging Gorani to attend most symposia since 2002 and to travel widely in the country. Dr Nino Tsitsishvili, his wife, ethnomusicologist and writer, mentored Breathing Space.

Under Joseph and Nino’s musical direction, MGC met weekly in Melbourne, maintaining their passion. They visited Georgia in 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018, learning from various singers and participating in different symposia. In Australia, MGC showcased their talent at numerous festivals and venues, including the National Folk Festival, Cygnet Folk Festival, and numerous venues in Victoria, with ongoing support from The Boite. MGC is managed by Roger King, the former executive director of the Boite. Krzysztof Derwinski, a singer and educator, has led MGC since 2020.

Alice Bray
Lou Clayton
Belinda Cody
Miffy Edwards
Deidre Egan
Hannah Gauci
Lilliana Hajncs
Pauline Lucas
Jeremy Noble
Jules Ober
Elizabeth O'Connor
Liam O'Connor
Jahan Rezakhanlou
David Robinson
Joy Schornikow
Brock Spicer
Susan Turner
Robyn deVries
Therese Virtue
Ben Wurm

Tsinskaro Choir

Tsinskaro is a four-piece ensemble that has sung Georgian songs since 2018. The members, Gosia Kaszubska, Stewart Haines, Nick Weis and Krzysztof Derwinski met through their shared membership of Georgian singing groups in Melbourne.

The ensemble performance aims to honour the incredibly rich musical traditions of Georgia. The members of Tsinskaro have travelled to Georgia to collect exciting repertoire and to further research the tradition. They have sung to a sold-out Primrose Potter Salon in the Melbourne and have delighted in hosting traditional Georgian feasts (Supras) from Malmsbury to Bangalow.



Symbolism of the Australia-Georgia Symposium logo

At the heart of our conference logo is a con-joined cup from the ancient site of Bedeni in Georgia. It captures the sense of the enduring collaboration between Australia and Georgia, kindled through archaeological, scientific and cultural pursuits. The swirling green symbolises that, despite the oceans and distance between our countries, they have not formed a barrier to the strong ties of friendship we have forged.

Logo design, photography and conceptualisation courtesy Dr Claudia Sagona.