

Megruli alilo

Christmas wassailing song from Samegrelo, western Georgia

Translation and Pronunciation

[a-li-lo da]
Alilo da!

[wo ha-i ha-i a-li-lo da]
Vo hai, hai alililo da,

[krist-ε jo-ba gag-wi-tε-nos]
krist'e shoba gagvitenos

[wo i-o ho io ho ha-i a-li-lo da]
Vo io ho ho, io ho hai alilo da

[ot-sda-xu-tsa am twε-sa-o]
otsdakhutsa am tvesao

[krist-ε iʃ-wa bεt-lεm- sa-o]
krist'e ishva betlemsao

[krist-ε jo-bas mo-gi-lot-sawt]
krist'e shobas mogilotsavt

[mad-li ma-xa-ro-bεl-sa-wo]
madli makharobelsavo

[wo i-o ho io ho ha-i a-li-lo da]
Vo io ho ho, io ho hai alilo da

[a-kam ʃwi-do-a]
Aka mshvidoa!*

* Pronounce the consonant without aspiration (consonants followed with an apostrophe, such as *k'*).¹

*** The letter “*v*” is usually pronounced like a *w*, especially at the beginning of a word; prepare to make a normal *v* sound but don't allow your teeth to touch your lips.²

¹ Cuyler, Patty and Mollie Stone. *Raising the Bar: Music from the Republic of Georgia, Volume 1*. The Choral Imperative. 2013, p. 8.

² Cuyler, Patty and Mollie Stone. *Raising the Bar: Music from the Republic of Georgia, Volume 1*. The Choral Imperative. 2013, p. 8.

Poetic Translation

Alleluia!

Christ was born
on the 25th day of this month
Christ as born in Bethlehem
let us celebrate Christ's birth
we are the blessed messengers
Peace be to this place!³

Background

“The Christmas eve wassailing tradition of walking from house to house singing for neighbors was once common throughout Georgia. The tradition, like the song, was called *alilo*. Singers would carry baskets and jugs to collect gifts of food and wine. Largely forgotten during the 20th century, the *alilo* tradition has recently been revived in the form of extravagant religious processions preceding the Christmas service, with donations collected for the needy.”⁴

Program Notes

Wassailing is generally associated with the Christmas season. The custom involves groups of people going from house to house, singing and asking for food and drink in return. The English carols, *Here We Come a Wassailing* and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* (which references the custom in the lyrics “now bring us some figgy pudding” and “we won’t go until we get some”) are examples of carols born of this tradition. The Georgian tradition, known as *alilo*, is analogous to *wassailing*. Participants would carry baskets and jugs to gather treats along the way.⁵

Recordings

Rati Gogebashvili, 2016. This is a trio of men singing at the table. While this arrangement is not exactly what we are doing, it is pretty close, and it is a great example of style, especially vocal tone. <https://youtu.be/3OkazQOFtgs>

Darbazi Choir, 2017: https://youtu.be/ox_wpqbx9M Again, not exactly like our arrangement, but great for style.

Analysis

Key: B minor-ish
Meter: 4/4

Form: Modified strophic

Intro: The piece begins with a chant-like call from a solo voice.

³ Cuyler, Patty and Mollie Stone. *Raising the Bar: Music from the Republic of Georgia, Volume 1*. The Choral Imperative. 2013, p. 32.

⁴ Cuyler, Patty and Mollie Stone. *Raising the Bar: Music from the Republic of Georgia, Volume 1*. The Choral Imperative. 2013, p. 32.

⁵ Cuyler, Patty and Mollie Stone. *Raising the Bar: Music from the Republic of Georgia, Volume 1*. The Choral Imperative. 2013, p. 32.

Verses:

Each verse consists of a four-measure phrase in three-part harmony, melody in upper voice.

The first and last verses vary melodically from the remaining verses.

All verses, save the last, end the last two measures with the same melodic and harmonic material.

The remaining verses are identical melodically and harmonically.

Textually they all begin with the same two-measure vocables, followed by the verse text.

The form could be mapped in the following way:

Structure	Text	Melody
Introductory Call	Alilo da!	a
Verse 1	a	b
	b	c
Verse 2	c	d
	d	c
Verse 3	c	d
	e	c
Verse 4	c	d
	f	c etc
Last verse	c	d
	g	e