

{00:00:00}

{Greeting}

{Music}

George: Welcome to Conlangery, the podcast about constructed languages and the people who create them. I'm George Corley. With me in Hawaii, we have Margaret Ransdell-Green.

Margaret: Hello.

George: Also, Eric Barker.

Eric: Nice to be here.

George: Yes. All right. So, if you have listened to – what is it – Conlangery 140, I think, where we covered the 8th Language Creation Conference, we talked quite a bit about Margaret and Eric composing music in Margaret's conlangs. That's the subject for today is their use of conlang music and how that figures into Margaret's world-building – whatever sort of comes up in the conversation surrounding that. That is our topic for today.

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you pledge \$20.00 a month, you can get your name in the end credits of the show.

Full disclosure – Margaret is a patron, I believe, right?

Margaret: Yep. That’s right. I’ve been a patron for quite a while, I think.

George: Just to be clear, that is not a way to get you on the show, but it is a nice thing to do for us. Okay. Let’s get started here. Margaret, I just want to start with you because these are your conlangs and your world. You had had a talk at the previous Language Creation Conference about world-building in your languages – with your conlangs – and then you were on a world-building panel at this one and you did a performance with Eric doing music in your conlangs. I wanted to sort of – let’s just start with what got you into the idea of composing music in your conlangs?

Margaret: Well, I’ve always been really interested in music. I studied music for a long time as a teenager. I actually started that by studying opera for four years back when I lived in Alaska. I had always been really interested in music – singing in particular – but also composing and listening to all types of music that I could get my hands on.

I think over time, a lot of my different hobbies and interests kind of coalesced and came together and I thought, “Well, why can’t I create something that is musically creative as well as creative in terms of the conlang itself and use that to then flesh out these constructed cultures that correspond to the different constructed languages?”

That was how I got into doing this particular thing. It actually started a really long time ago. One of the songs, “Bve Pfa Rí,” is really, really old. I actually wrote when I was about 13 years old the melody for that. It’s been a very long process of a lot of my interests coming together pretty organically, I would say.

{Excerpt Bve Pfa Rí}

Bve Pfa Rí  
bve pfa ři  
tree blue yearns  
‘yearning green’

Goxe  
goxe  
stir.PRES  
‘stirring’

Bily  
bi-ly  
seed-push  
‘seeds springing forth’

Bili  
bil-i  
underground-wet  
‘damp soil’

Naqa rí  
naqa ři

gentle yearn  
'gentle yearning'

Na genk  
na genk  
INF sleep  
'to sleep'

Re kanad  
re 'kanad  
out.of forest  
'out of the forest'

Be  
be  
smile  
'a smile'

{End excerpt}

George: Eric, how did you get involved with this?

Eric: Well, I, too, have been involved in music most of my life. At a very young age I was composing and playing piano.

{00:05:00} When I met Margaret and we started doing various things, that was early on one of the things that we did. We performed a lot of covers and originals together for a while, but not very long into that, she brought forward a few of her conlang songs, and I wrote backing music for it and arrangement for it. That's where that began.

George: That's interesting. One thing that I heard is that for some of the cultures you used invented scales or at least different scales than we tend to use in western music.

Eric: That's right. If I'm gonna have a wholistic view into culture, you have to, to some degree, as best as you can, separate yourself from traditional western European music, which is what my basis is in. I've studied quite a bit of world music styles in college. I have a degree in music.

But composing, I end up being fairly solidly rooted in European culture, being American myself. A lot of that was exercising breaking away from that as best as I can. I'm still figuring that out and working as we go. Just as, I think, a parallel for Margaret is early conlangs that a lot of conlangers do are more rooted in languages they know, and as they start becoming more advanced is breaking out into non-traditional styles. That's what I'm attempting to do here.

George: Yeah. Margaret, did the choice of musical styles – rhythms, scales, those things – was that influenced by the particular language that you were composing for?

Margaret: I think I would say it's more influenced by the culture that's associated with the language. I wanted to make things that made sense to me and that aligned properly with my ideas of what those cultures are rather than the language themselves.

Of course, it would be a lot more difficult for me to write certain styles using languages that have certain phonemes just because of the nature

of the vocal style I use and the ease of singing different types of sounds, as far as the human mouth is concerned. For the most part what I used was inspiration from the cultures, histories, different kinds of cultural practices that were already existing in the constructed cultures.

Then, I kind of worked from there, and worked with Eric from there, to see what type of music or song, or what type of piece, would be appropriate for the type of people who would be speaking a language as well as performing the music.

Eric: Right. I'll kind of piggyback that, if you don't mind, is the songs that we've done have been created through various ways and means. Some of them began with thinking about the instruments that they would develop, especially culturally, as what their society is based on.

For instance, one society is very imperialistic, militaristic, and so I wanted to create instruments that would be used for battlefield, for marches, and drum stuff. So, I had them based around brass. Then, considering the limitations and pros and cons of various brass instruments – then kinda breaking that down into the music theories of that culture. There's been some of that along the way, too, is instruments get developed by the musical culture, and then culture is influenced by the technology of the musical instruments – and back and forth.

George: Could you give an example of how you determined what instruments – I understand that you used a synthesizer to simulate instruments that don't exist, but can you give me an example of how you came up with an instrument that people would create?

Eric: Okay. Well, for instance, I'll add to the one that I was talking about. The Tosi culture is a very imperialistic, colonial, militant authoritarian culture that's very, very structured and would have a lot of use for battlefield drum roll/drum core kinds of things.

{00:10:10} So, I wanted instruments that would project. They also had very advanced metallurgy. Taking these into account, it made sense for them to have brass instruments. It's actually probably some of the instruments that are closest to European cultures because of those aspects.

Curiously – and I'm not gonna get in deeply into the technical aspects of brass instruments – but there are some notes that would be more distant and would require either more metallurgy or higher technology or would be arrived at later in the process of an instrument's development. I purposefully downplayed those notes and then created scales off of those, with those limitations in mind. That would be the primary sounds that their music would be based off of. Not that they can't access now those other sounds, but that those kinds of notes would be the primary notes.

So, I based their music theory around that. Is that a good example of what you're talking about? I can go into more detail, but it might get a little more technical than you want.

George: Oh, no. That's fine. I mean, it's not a music podcast so {crosstalk - inaudible} {00:11:37} I might be able to understand some of it, but it wouldn't necessarily be good for all the listeners.

But that is interesting. It looks like you were doing research on the acoustics of the instruments that could be possibly made and then working out scales and things naturally from there. That's an interesting thought there. Let's –

Eric: Just to sum up, is I've kind of observed Margaret's process in her coming up with conlangs, and I feel very much a newcomer to this, in world-building. She's far more advanced in that sense of world-building than I am. So, I took a lot of cues on how she came up with and evolved cultural aspects and tried to apply that to my music theory background.

George: Right. In a way this is becoming a collaborative conworld.

Eric: Yes, absolutely.

George: Back to you, Margaret, because I wanna get into the language aspects. You have released – or at least to some people – a couple of recordings. Excuse me, “Bve Pfa Rí” and “Watakap Bí Xawét.” And you have more songs than that.

I wanted to talk about, what was your process for writing the songs and arranging the songs? I guess, working with Eric on the instrumental parts – what was your process for writing them?

Margaret: For writing them, for example, “Bve Pfa Rí,” it started as just a simple vocal melody line. I wrote it in an older version of one of the conlangs that I have called “Rílin,” so it's actually written in Old Rílin, which is the predecessor to the modern, current language.



I wrote several verses. It was kind of inspired by nature, in fact. I was in Georgia at the time – in southern Georgia – and I was looking at all the lush flora that was around me. And I wrote this song about these growing green things and forests. That was how that song got started.

But when we arranged it, it first was arranged with piano. When we modified it to include some of the native types of instruments, as Eric has mentioned, we thought about what kinds of materials they would use to build instruments and in what way they would arrange the song and some ways that were not necessarily identical to the typical western arrangements of verse plus chorus and things like that.

{00:14:56}

{Except piano Bve Pfa Rí}

Actually, when I wrote Bve Pfa Rí, it was written specifically in a type of Rílin poetry that I developed before that. Sometimes, when I write songs in Rílin in particular, they will follow a style of poetry. This is something that you can actually see with other Rílin songs is that they're not always necessarily ABAB pattern. There's definitely a distinct, I guess, pattern to Rílin poetry itself. You can see that in some of the songs that I've written that way.

There's other songs that we have, not from that culture. For example, the Tosi song, it's a military march because their culture puts a lot of focus on the importance of the military. We wanted something that would be very practical for an army on the move. We wanted something that would not be overly complicated so that all kinds of enlisted soldiers, for example, would be able to sing it without difficulty. We didn't want something that was super elaborate or had a

really wide range or anything like that. We wanted something that would really reflect the practical nature of a march.

Really, what its purpose was was getting everybody marching together and keeping everybody going over long distances. Like Eric said, a lot of the instrument design was also created with that in mind of what materials would be available to these cultures and what they really needed the music for and what their purposes were.

George:

That's very interesting because I think about – I don't think I've had this song in your stuff yet – yeah. If you get it before this episode posts, let me know, and I can try to add a snippet of that. I can sort of think about that because I was in marching band in high school. I've listened to enough marches to know they're gonna be simple melodies, 2/4 or cut time, usually, because you got two feet, and it's gonna be something –

{Excerpt Zhumzhum Zūr}

A:

Zhumzhum zūr o  
'zum-zum zu:r o  
creep.redup death and  
'Death is creeping'

Dez jo nar  
dez dʒo nar  
sand with fire  
'The sand on fire'

Mizu chi malimet tēngi  
'mizu tʃi ma'limet 'te:ŋ-i  
empress GEN numerous soldier-PL  
'The Empress' many soldiers'

A:

Tapi mas na i o rīy  
'tapi mas na i o ri:j  
IMP open earth OBJ and sky  
'Open the land and sky'

Tapi fedu rix hi jida i  
'tapi 'fedu rix hi 'dʒida i  
IMP bring pierce ADJ fate OBJ  
'Deliver a severe fate'

B:

Vil o tāv o,  
vil o ta:v o  
trial DAT weak and  
'A trial for the weak'

Vil o lu  
vil o lu  
trial DAT strong  
'A trial for the strong'

B:

Vil o han,  
vil o han  
trial DAT all  
'A trial for all'

Vil o mizu.  
vil o 'mizu  
trial DAT empress  
'A trial for the Empress'

A:

Namu zal ge,  
'namu zal ge  
1PL.FEM sing FUT  
'We will sing'

Namu han  
'namu han  
1PL.FEM all  
'We all'

Namu shof ret ber van chi mag  
'namu ʃof ret ber van tʃi mag  
1PL.FEM walk across wide world GEN mountain  
'We walk across the mountains of the wide world'

A:

Kal xot hi ga ghisu i

kal xot hi ga 'yis-u i  
take.up sting ADJ hot arrow-PL OBJ  
'Take up the stinging hot arrows'

Kal xot hi mā namu pa chi zau  
kal xot hi ma: 'namu pa tʃi za-u  
take.up sting ADJ mother 1PL.FEM GEN sword-PL  
'Take up the stinging swords' of our mothers'

{End excerpt}

So, that makes sense. Whereas, your other ones are more different forms that wouldn't be – like the *Watakap Bí Xawét* sounds more like a dancing song.

Eric: That's exactly right. The lyrics will reflect that, I guess. Margaret can go into that. But, yeah.

George: Yeah, and Bve Pfa *Ří* is – hm?

Margaret: Oh, no, yeah, I was just gonna confirm. Yeah. That was designed as a dance. Part of it is a sort of a story and then part of it is actually instructions to dance moves that don't actually exist, but they could.

George: Okay!

Eric: We should mention that one was kinda written specifically with the conference in mind. This is a little aside, is we knew that we were gonna be leading off the conference and we thought, "What better way than a group dance/sing-along to open the conference?" So, we

created, also, some ways in which, culturally, it would be a participatory thing because we wanted to have a participatory thing for the conference.

It kind of doubled as such. Before we actually performed it, we taught people how to say the group chorus – to sing the group chorus – along with us.

{00:20:00}

Then, we had these handclaps that were signals for everyone else to join in. We spent, like, 30 seconds teaching that, and then we went ahead, and everybody got into it, and figured that culturally it would be used for a similar kind of occasion. It worked out that way.

George:

Let's actually – I'm gonna put in a little snippet of the *Ŵatakap Bí Xawét* in here just about now.

{Excerpt *Ŵatakap Bí Xawét*}

*watakap bí xawét aés*

'*ɸatakap bi 'xaβet 'aes*

'The cold winds are blowing'

*watakap bí xawét nŷsa*

'*ɸatakap bi 'xaβet 'nusa*

'The warm winds are blowing'

*watakap bí xawét wansé*

'*ɸatakap bi 'xaβet 'ɸanse*

'The easterly winds are blowing.'

byrótalíniky  
byzɔtali' nɪky  
'Let's all dance'

mu sísésó  
mu si'seʃo  
'Again in a circle'

watakap bí xawét lünsé  
'ɸatakap bi 'xaβet 'lunse  
'The westerly winds are blowing.'

watakap bí xawét kiré  
'ɸatakap bi 'xaβet 'kɪre  
'The southern winds are blowing.'

watakap bí xawét móta  
'ɸatakap bi 'xaβet 'mota  
'The northern winds are blowing.'

byrótalíniky  
byzɔtali' nɪky  
'Let's all dance'

mu sísésó  
mu si'seʃo  
'Again in a circle'

{Repeat three times}  
tríeky a nímbaky

tríeky a nímbaky  
'tríeky a 'nímbaky  
'shimmy and jump'

byrótalíniky  
byzɔtali'níky  
'Let's all dance'

mu síséšó  
mu si'seʃo  
'Again in a circle'

{Repeat three times}  
feluíaky a zaíky  
feluíaky a zaíky  
fe'luiaky a 'zaiky  
'Spin and go'

{End excerpt}

Listening to that, the thing that struck me, Margaret, is you know that it's good conlanging and good writing music in a conlang when it's kind of difficult to translate it directly. Because you have English translations here on the lyrics sheet that you sent out to people, but the way that it's sung – the watakap bí xawét – that part is a chorus line, and then you have different words – “aés,” “nŭsa,” “wansé,” that's a single person.

From the way I can analyze it, it looks like when you're translating that in English, those words are the unique word that would be – like,



“The cold winds are blowing,” “aés” is “cold,” right? But when you’re translating it into English, it doesn’t work anymore.

Margaret: It doesn’t work anymore because you would not have – the word order is all wrong because Rílin is a verb-initial language. You have VERB SUBJECT and then the adjective following it. You can’t really have a differing word in the adjective at the end of the phrase in English because it wouldn’t be at the end of the phrase.

This is one song that it would be really hard to make work in English as a song and not just totally change everything. There’s some songs that are a little less difficult to do that with, but this one is one of the ones that just really was written in Rílin to be sung in Rílin and it doesn’t work in any other language that I’m aware of.

George: I just wanted to point that out because that happens with real world languages. We often rearrange elements when we’re translating because it doesn’t work the other way.

Margaret: Right. It’s kind of awkward to say, “Blowing are the winds, cold,” in English. It’s really weird. I wouldn’t say that.

George: That’s just, to me, a good thing. You mentioned these growing out of poetry traditions that you had already developed, which is an interesting thing because songs are basically a form of poetry. That makes a certain kind of sense.

You have these different songs. And I’m presuming you have different songs for different occasions. That’s a dance song. You have a military

march from a different culture. You've got [bve pfa .ii] – [bve pfa zi] – [bve pfa ši] {00:24:21} – right.

Eric: Just kind of a tone poem.

George: Yes. That's a good word for it. It just seems mournful and slow and calming sort of music. Was that a thing that was reflecting the cultural moment you were representing with each song or was it just you wanted a variety of different songs that fit the culture?

Margaret: We basically wanted to go to a few different cultures in what we did at the conference.

{00:24:59} I'd already written Bve Pfa Rí and I had already written the words and the melody for Emé Feréae, which is a Gotevian tune that we did.

{Excerpt Emé Feréae}

Emé feréae

'eme fɛr-'e-ae

across forest-ABL-PL

'Across the forests'

Té naeglian dlaer

te 'naeglia-n dlaer

inside sea-ABL deep

'Within the deep sea'

Kou m'halomae priné

'm-(h)al-om-ae 'pri-ne

on DEF.ART-mountain-GEN-PL top-ABL  
'Upon the mountains' great peaks'

Rifbaren laer moiova larel:  
ribar-en laer mo'j-ova 'larel  
world-ACC great can-1SG traverse  
'I could traverse the wide world'

Myna teino lar nirké.  
'myna 'tei-no lar 'nirke  
truth 2SG-ABL is only  
'Truth is only with you.'

M'ikfa wendolin  
m-ikfa wend-olin  
DEF.ART-sword wield-P.PART  
'The sword that is wielded'

Ma don eltelin  
ma don 'elte-lin  
DEF.ART arrow shoot-P.PART  
'The arrow that's shot'

Venir venkone sluaae  
ve'nir veŋ'ko-ne 'slwan-ae  
blood vein-ABL flow-PRES.PART  
'Blood that runs in our veins'

{End excerpt}

But Zhumzhum Zūr O, which is the march – the Tosi march – as well as Watakap Bí Xawét, the Rílin dance song, were much more recent. We actually created those farther down the line once we knew that we were gonna be performing songs for this occasion. We wanted to have a good range of cultural representation, I guess, from Aeniith, which is the constructed world setting.

We wanted to have, like, okay, well, don't wanna just do all Rílin songs, or whatever, because that would just be boring. There's, like, a million cultures in this world, so I have to get some variety going. Yeah. I did wanna make a variety of songs – a different variety of feelings to each song, not just the same type of things. I didn't want it to be, like, four military marches. That would be boring.

I did wanna have a different, I guess, ambiance for each one – a different sort of feeling – to represent the cultures and represent the different types of music that they would create.

Eric:

Let paint interesting aside here, in addendum to this, is that before the conference, about a month or so – a couple months – before the conference, Margaret and I were on a research trip of hers in Papua New Guinea, near Australia. We had large amounts of time where we were just held up in a room in between her doing her research sessions. We got very inspired, and we were looking forward toward the conference, so we spent most of our extra time developing these and writing new songs and getting into everything.

There was this burst of creative energy during that trip. The things that we did specifically to flesh out our existing material for the conference was all done there.

George: That's very interesting. It's interesting that there's this collaboration going on between the two of you with Margaret already having the languages and the cultures developed and you providing some of the information on the music and more music history and music theory stuff involved.

Eric, what was it like developing melodies – I know, Margaret, I'm sure that you had – you said you had some melodies sorted out and they changed as you collaborated. Well, maybe, to both of you, what was it like to be developing these songs from a constructed language? Eric, my question to you is, working from a language that you probably didn't understand so much?

Eric: Well, in many cases, especially the songs that I kind of spearheaded a little more, we'd come up with some of the music and melodies and arrangement even, sometimes, first and then the lyrics would be developed after that on top of the melody, just as a lot of music is – a lot of even modern pop music and various kinds of songs.

I wasn't concerned so much on the conlang aspect while I was writing the music itself. That was kind of Margaret – to try to parse my complicated musical phrases into conlang lyrics. I think it worked out very well in that regard. Those two particular songs are *Watakap* and the *Tosi* march.

{00:30:00} A lot of the melodies were – the second part of your question – a lot of the melodies just kinda came from playing around. As I said, I often would come up with the music theory via the instruments first. And I have a very curious instrument, synthesizer instrument, called a “ROLI

Seaboard,” which I like to describe as a fretless piano, which gets me away from a little bit more traditional keyboard style compositional techniques.

I would sit and play around with things. Sometimes, parts of melodies would come to me, and then I would play around with those using the existing instruments that I was synthesizing until things would develop. Then, at the very end, lyrics would be written on top of that.

George: I have to look up this ROLI Seaboard.

Eric: I can send you a link.

George: Okay. So, looking at it – so it’s a keyboard but the white and black keys are not white and black.

Eric: No, it’s all black. And it’s one – well, partially because I was travelling and it’s really hard to travel with a keyboard with all its moving parts. It was very convenient is it’s all one part. It’s actually a silicon gel surface. It’s actually very squishy. It’s surprisingly squishy when you play it. It’s very easily transportable but also, once you play note on it, you can do vibrato on it, slide down to other notes. It actually worked out beautifully when dealing with the slide brass of the Tosi cultural stuff. All of their stuff revolves around trombone-type of slide brass.

I really, really wanted to work with that. The pitches were all very relative and slippery and there’d be a lot of semi-tone – or quarter-tone – interplay. That was perfect for mocking up and synthesizing that type of –

George: Yeah. If you have a slide brass instrument – for our listeners, I’ll just try to clarify. Slide brass uses – you mentioned a trombone. I think that’s what you’re talking about is something that has a slider for the pitch. For that, you would need – you could not do that on a traditional keyboard because it’s just gonna ding one note every time you hit a key. That makes sense.

{Excerpt Zhumzhum Zūr}

B:

Vil o han,  
vil o han  
trial DAT all  
‘A trial for all’

Vil o mizu.  
vil o ‘mizu trial  
DAT empress  
‘A trial for the Empress’

A:

Zhumzhum zūr o  
'zum-zum zu:r o  
creep.redup death and  
‘Death is creeping’

Dez jo nar

dez dʒo nar  
sand with fire  
'The sand on fire'

{End excerpt}

Moving backwards, then. I'll redirect to Margaret. Was it a challenge to have these melodies that some of them were in unfamiliar scales and such and then try to fit your language onto those melodies in a satisfying way?

Margaret: At times it was, but I don't think the different scales was much of a challenge to me. The melodies came to me pretty easily when they were written. The issue of fitting the language – the lyrics – that took more time.

I can tell you that the main factor that determined how long it took was how well I speak or understand that particular conlang of mine or not. For example, I'm really good at Rílin. I know Rílin really well. I can just start writing in Rílin, and that's largely because I've written a lot of poetry in it. It made me learn the language. It made me learn the language really well, that I knew all the words and the grammar and everything, and I could just think of something.

Whereas, some of the other languages I haven't worked with in a long time and I had forgotten some of the words that I had made for it. It took a while to go back and be like, "Okay. Well, I dunno if that's gonna work," or, "What's a different word for this?" "This has too many syllables, but I can't remember the alternate word." Things like



that. I would have to just go and look things up and try to re-remember things that I had written maybe 15 years ago.

I think that that was actually just the biggest defining factor of why some things took longer and some things were really quick. I think the music factor – the different scales and stuff – was not a challenge for me at all. It came pretty naturally, I think.

George: Okay. That's interesting.

{00:35:00} I guess the scales would not necessarily be a big thing because the melody is the melody. Maybe rhythms could have some effect, but that – just the familiarity with your own language. I'm sure a lot of conlangers know well the idea of, "I created this language, but I cannot speak it in any way fluently." That makes a lot of sense, going through the dictionary –

Eric: I do remember there was – we were really going outside the box – and we will definitely record and have at least something for you for the Tosi march because that would be really – I'm blanking on the name, Margaret. That was kind of decided –

Margaret: Oh, the Tosi march is called "Zhumzhum Zūr O," which means "Death is Creeping."

Eric: Oh, that's right – Zhumzhum Zūr O. Yeah. The name came very, very late, and all of the files and everything that I was working with just say, "Tosi March."

I do remember that one very specifically and why it would be good to get a recording of that is that it uses a very different scale system. There was a few notes that we had to kind of work over. It's like, "Oh, they don't have that note. You can't do that."

{Excerpt Zhumzhum Zūr}

Mizu chi malimet tēngi  
'mizu tʃi ma'limet 'te:ŋ-i  
empress GEN numerous soldier-PL  
'The Empress' many soldiers'

A:

Tapi mas na i o rīy  
'tapi mas na i o ri:j  
IMP open earth OBJ and sky  
'Open the land and sky'

Tapi fedu rix hi jida i  
'tapi 'fedu rix hi 'dʒida i  
IMP bring pierce ADJ fate OBJ  
'Deliver a severe fate'

B:

Vil o tāv o,  
vil o ta:v o  
trial DAT weak and  
'A trial for the weak'

Vil o lu  
vil o lu  
trial DAT strong  
'A trial for the strong'

B:

Vil o han,  
vil o han  
trial DAT all  
'A trial for all'

Vil o mizu.  
vil o 'mizu  
trial DAT empress  
'A trial for the Empress'

Bridge:

Namu won za i  
'namu won za i  
1PL.FEM grab sword OBJ  
'We take up swords'

Es di karush i chungesh  
es di 'ka-ruf' i 'tʃuŋ-eʒ  
and lead GRP.PL-battalion OBJ great-mighty  
'And lead the mighty battalions'

Vitu vedi ge  
'vitu 'vedi ge  
3PL.FEM rise FUT  
'They will rise'

Es vitu pōv shof jo pred mur  
es 'vitu po:v ʃof dʒo pred mur  
and 3PL.FEM try walk with hard earth  
'And they will try to walk the solid earth.'

Namu won ghisu i  
'namu won 'γis-u i  
1PL.FEM grab arrow-PL OBJ  
'We take up arrows'

{End excerpt}

Margaret: {Indistinguishable} {00:37:17} There was one note that I would actually want to – like, I knew the melody already, in theory, but when I would go to sing it, my brain is so wired differently that I would wanna sing a note that actually wasn't in their scale at all. I dunno, I think it was like – they don't have a D or something, I think it is.

Eric: Yeah. I forget – they don't have a D.

Margaret: Yeah. It's like A, B, C, E, F#, G – is how it goes, I believe?

Eric: Yes. That's absolutely correct.

Margaret: I would wanna sing a D, and he was like, “You’re singing a D,” and I’d be like, “Oh, yep. Sorry. That doesn’t exist here. You can’t sing something that doesn’t exist.”

Eric: That’s right. You actually had to create some of the vocal melodies for that.

Margaret: I created, like, I think, all of it for Zhumzhum Zūr O. At parts, I was really struggling because you wrote this really great instrumental piece – background – and I was like, “I love this, but I don’t wanna ruin it with words,” or something. I felt like I didn’t wanna sing over it; I just didn’t wanna mess with it.

But, actually, what I came up with ended up being amazing in – I say that with no ego because it was hard for me to do. I was really surprised by how well it turned out, in my opinion.

Eric: There was a lot of work involved in that. That’s right! Yeah. I created – yeah. I should describe a little bit of the process for that. I spent quite a lot of time, probably more time than almost anything else, on that song and the music underpinning. Also, I created a notation system – not that I was reading from it – but I wrote it out in their notation system and then trying to figure out how to also – unlike a small tone poem or a folk melody is be able to perform an entire band, an entire marching band.

I did use some backing tracks. I finally just went ahead and started using some pre-recorded backing tracks that I had made and kind of looped sections of it.

George: You almost have to.

Eric: Yeah. I don't usually like backing tracks. I like to do either live looping or things like that, but it just ended up being much more necessary in this case.

Margaret: My looping program kept crashing, and we were worried that it was gonna crash when we were on stage. And we were like, "Okay. We have to do something that's not that risky."

Eric: Exactly. "Let's keep it simple." But then, I had a second mini Seaboard specifically there for the drum part.

{00:40:02} And I would get the drum part going, and then it would loop out, which was actually backing tracks. Anyway, back to the original point, I'm getting off topic here. So, I created all the instrumental sections. My thought was the melody would kind of float over top of that.

So, I'm handing her this pretty much composed piece. It had a lot of room for stuff in it, but it's a very set thing, and saying, "Here, Honey. Go ahead. Take it." And she's like {indistinguishable} {00:40:35} "And I have these notes to work with?" It was an amusing process. But she did an amazing job.

George: Right. That's the thing is speaking the language and also singing – performing – the thing is an interesting thing.

{Excerpt Zhumzhum Zūr}

Tapi fedu rix hi jida i

'tapi 'fedu rix hi 'dʒida i  
IMP bring pierce ADJ fate OBJ  
'Deliver a severe fate'

JIDA  
fate

JIDA  
fate

JIDA  
fate

JIDA  
fate

{End excerpt}

Before we go any further, I know that you have to leave very soon,  
Eric, and –

Eric: I've got 15 – 20 minutes left probably.

George: Okay. Well, there's another thing about this is that you'll have to leave  
your computer open to this for a few minutes to get it uploaded.

Eric: Ooo. And I need my computer with me. Okay.

George: Yeah. I'm thinking that we might want to wrap up pretty soon in order  
to get you out. But, yeah, that's the trouble with this program and

having a hard out. So, I guess – well, is there a place that I could share your music or anything?

Eric: When is this going to air?

George: Since I already have one for September – it's actually coming out early – this will be out on October 7th.

Eric: Then let's go ahead and I will send you that. If you can plug that in here – well, at this point, edit that in. We'll definitely have a bunch of things recorded and also a place that we can put more stuff because we have yet to add this to our website. But we will. I promise!

Margaret: If anybody's interested in being updated about Aeniith music or conlang music in any way, I have a mailing list. You can email me if you want to and I'll put you on the mailing list. That's something that is a temporary workaround that I've been doing with people for Aeniith-based music projects that we're doing.

Eric: Our apologies – ever since the conference, we've been travelling for various other things and I just haven't had the opportunity to put it online yet. We will put that up there because there's a number of visuals, there's a lot of creative renderings of instruments as well as the notation system and some discussion about the music theory. And that was given at the conference. I just need to reformat it for the web.

George: Well, I will link to whatever of that is available when we post, but I do believe I'm gonna have to stop it here so that we have time to upload our audio. Hopefully, people have inspiration. Just take a look into – if you're a music person, definitely look into what you can do with



music and your conlangs. Let me know what you do with music and your conlangs because that's an interesting – another aspect of the world-building and culture when you are doing the naturalistic artlang route.

Any last thoughts from either of you?

Eric: Well, I was just gonna wrap up by echoing what you just said and saying one of the wonderful things about music and conlangs is it's a doorway into a lot of aspects of the culture. Once you open that up and realize you're creating an artistic framework that also uses lyrics and a conlang, you're opening up all these different cultural aspects that you may not have considered before. It's a good way of actually developing from there. I think we've created a number of cultural aspects while composing these that probably weren't there before and added to the conworld.

{00:45:05}

Margaret: It's also a very good way of coming up with terminology that surrounds music and harmonics and different kinds of names for notes and scales and things like that – and terms for instruments and what they're based on and what they're used for and things like that. I think that it can actually enrich your conlanging as well as vice-versa.

George: Well, thank you, Margaret and Eric, for being on the show! This was a great conversation. I wish I could talk to you guys more about this, but I want to make sure that you can make your practice, Eric.

Get on that mailing list. I will have whatever links are available. Go out there and make some music for your conlangs and have some fun with it. I'm gonna say, "Happy Conlanging!"

{Excerpt Bve Pfa Rí}

Pilu ní

'pɪlu ni

center.of.flower clear

'clear center of a flower'

Uka

'uka

companion

'a companion'

Be fíky zöet

bɛ 'zɪ-ky 'zø-ɛt

NEG expel-IMP trust-ABS

'don't expel trust'

Despyxa

dɛ'spyxa

tissue.paper

'paper of tissue'

Moías

'moias

tapestry

'a tapestry'

Kaíkřũ šala

'kaikřuu 'ja-la

warmth.from.light petal-INSTR

'warm light through the petals'

{End excerpt}

{Music}

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{Music}

{00:48:13}