From the Steppes to the City: A Celebration of Music from Inner Mongolia

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Although Mongolians are a race of musicians, their kind of pseudo-folk music prohibited in nationally run theaters and auditoriums in Inner Mongolia is far from the long-song and horse-head fiddle music of the grasslands. AnDa Union is bound by a mission to promote the essence of this music, says, “Most of the band members have been playing together since childhood. As adults, we studied professional music instruments together. We are like a family.” Ten years ago, AnDa Union was forged, and we haven’t looked back.”

Follow AnDa Union on Facebook/anadaunion and Twitter/@andaunion.

**INSTRUMENTS**

**Hoomel** (throat/song singer): The singer manipulates the resonances created as air travels from the lungs past the vocal folds, and out the lips to produce a melody. This unique type of singing involves the production of a continuous melody without any pitch at the same time. There are many styles of hoomel from different parts of Mongolia. Tore, and AnDa Union, hoomel vocalists have been trained in a range of these methods, from very low singing to high pitched. The sound is reminiscent of the wind blowing through the grasses on the Mongolian grasslands.

**Madinchur** (Mongolian flute): A Mongolian flute made from a reed that is between 60 and 70 cm long and positioned under the top lip. The player plays the flute while singing hoomel (throat singing). Very few people are able to play this instrument, and Chinggel is one of four musicians in Inner Mongolia who knows how to do so.

**Morin huur** (horse-head fiddle): A two-stringed instrument played with a bow similar to that, which has a unique method of indicating its distinctive, beautiful sound with the player’s bow. Morin huur is synonymous with Mongolian culture.

The morin huur pays homage to the most important animal in the Mongol culture; almost all houses have a morin huur hanging in the hallway.

One legend about the origin of the morin huur comes from the myth of Killerbuck. Cuckoo received the gift of a flying horse, he would mount it at night and fly to meet his beloved Killerbuck. After four weeks, the horse wings cut off, so that the horse fell from the air and died. The grieving shepherd made a horse-head fiddle from the wingless horse’s skin and tail hair and used it to play poignant songs about his horse.

**Tobsurh** (Mongolian lute): This Mongolian lute also has only two strings and is primarily a solo instrument. The older singer AnDa Union uses the tobsurh as a vital melodic instrument to drive the rhythm of its music.

**Urtsyn duu** (long-song): Urtsyn duu’s name is derived not from the length of the song but rather from the long notes, which are held. Often a song has very few words; a three-minute song might only have 10 words. This style of song evolved in the grasslands as the Mongolians tended their sheep and was used to express their emotions and desires to the gods. Mongolian music records and maps the landscape, not merely in words but in the rise and fall of the melodic notes, suggesting the flow of the land itself. Long-song singers can call up the landscape of distant places with the special skill of their voices.

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Nars** (morin huur, tobsurh, hoomel): grew up in a village two hours from Ar Horqin, a town 880 kilometers northeast of the capital, Ulaanbaatar. His family is tradition herders. Nars grew up with his grandparents and spent summers on the grasslands in the Horsehead fiddle style. Nars is the director of a music company that has both music and live performance play a central role. His last project was restored and released with a new 16mm film projection and site-specific installation. He is represented by Danielle Arnaud contemporary art agency.

**Monkhjayaa** (morin huur, hoomel) grew up in Ongniud Qi, in the same region as Chinggel, with his parents and sister, following the traditional herding lifestyle. Monkhjayaa is a very accomplished horseback rider. He studied music in Chifeng, where he met Nars, Urn, Urgen, and Chinggel, and started to make his mark in the Inner Mongolian music world. He is based in Hohhot with his wife, and baby daughter.

**Otgobayar** (morin huur, tobsurh, hoomel) grew up in the grasslands an hour from the town of Ujin Qim. He is the youngest of seven children, all of whom are musical. His family is ‘navigators of the Mongolian music world. When Otgobayar was a little boy, his father made a morin huur for him to play and taught him the old ways of playing the horse-head fiddle. His father died while Otgobayar was still a boy, and his oldest brother became his father figure. They were a nomadic family, herding sheep and horses until 10 years ago, when laws were passed to restrict the movement of the grassland and restrict herders’ released in 2012. He lives in Hohhot with his wife, a children’s TV presenter for Mongol TV, and their baby girl.

**SAIKHANNAKHAA** (morin huur, tobsurh, vocalist) grew up near Ulaanbaatar, receiving her childhood holidays on her grandparent’s grasslands close to Tongliao in eastern Inner Mongolia. She learned the long-song from her paternal grandparent. She won a prize as the most talented female morin huur player and was invited to join the Inner Mongolian National Song and Dance Troupe, where she became the first professional female musician. She runs a very successful Mongolian bar in Hohhot with her mother, father, and uncle. She recently married a dancer from the Inner Mongolian National Song and Dance Troupe.

**Tsetsegmaa** (urtsyn duu), a Buria, grew up near Hulan Buir in the northwest of Inner Mongolia, near the border of Russia and Outer Mongolia. Hulan Buir is one of the remotest areas of the region and home to both Evenke and Buria people. Tsetsegmaa works within the Inner Mongolian National Song and Dance Troupe as a solo long-song singer. She has won many prizes and awards for her voice and has written a number of beautiful Buria songs, which she performs with AnDa Union. She is based in Hohhot.

**Uni** (morin huur, tobsurh, hoomel): grew up around Ar Horqin, where his father was a coach for the local government. He met Nars and Urgen at comprehensive school and learned music from a young age. Uni studied music at Chifeng Music College with Nars, Urgen, Chinggel, and Monkhjayaa. He went to Hohhot and joined the Inner Mongolian National Song and Dance Troupe. He is based in Hohhot with his wife, a children’s TV presenter for Mongol TV, and their baby girl.

**Tim Pearce** (Producer/Director) has a background in music and theater, so it was not only natural that as a film producer he would have both music and live performance play a central role. His last project was a 16mm film, ‘Sonic Zoo’, a silent movie, which was restored and released with a new 16mm projection and site-specific installation. He is represented by Danielle Arnaud contemporary art agency which organized exhibitions in the world. Pearce met AnDa Union five years ago in Shanghai. Bowlwer over by their music, he then invited the band to perform at the London Symphony Orchestra. The film was a success in cinemas and has been featured in music festivals around the world. Pearce was awarded the London Symphony Orchestra. The film was a success in cinemas and has been featured in music festivals around the world. Pearce was awarded the London Symphony Orchestra. The film was a success in cinemas and has been featured in music festivals around the world. Pearce was awarded the London Symphony Orchestra.
Peak Performances presents:

AnDa Union
From the Steppes to the City:
A Celebration of Music from Inner Mongolia

AnDa Union
Nars, morin huur, tabshur, hoomei
Biligbaatar, urtyn duu
Chingegel, moondchuur
Hadaniibasar, Mongolian drum
Mohnkhayaa, morin huur, hoomei
Otgobayar, marin huur, tabshur, hoomei
Saikhankhormaa, marin huur, tabshur, vocals, hoomei
Tsetegmaa, urtyn duu
Urin, marin huur, tabshur, hoomei
Urgen, marin huur, hoomei

All music arrangements by AnDa Union except “Heemoi,” composed by Ilata, and “Galloping Horses,” composed by Chi Bulag

Management: Tim Pearce and Sophie Lascelles
Education Assistant: Pascal Pearce
Translator: Tiancang (Jane) Zhang


Film (showing in lobby): AnDa Union: From the Steppes to the City
Directed by Tim Pearce, Sophie Lascelles, and Marc Tiley
Produced by Eye 4 Films Ltd.: Tim Pearce and Sophie Lascelles
Executive Producer: Suzanne Alizart
Edited by Richard Graham
Cinematography by Ula Pontikos
Film courtesy of Eye 4 Films Ltd.

The 2011/12 national tour of the AnDa Union is part of a major, multiyear cultural exchange with Minneapolis-based Arts Midwest, the Chinese Ministry of Culture, and the US Major University Presenters consortium. Support for the tour has been provided by the Ministry of Culture, People’s Republic of China.

Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

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