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

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

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## PROGRAM NOTES

*Anda* means a blood brother or sister. For Mongolians, an “Anda” is more important than a birth brother, as you choose a person to become an Anda, a lifelong blood brother. AnDa Union is a brotherhood of Andas.

Mongols have a strong musical tradition that is passed from generation to generation. The members of AnDa Union all took up music from an early age, most of them coming from musical families. They are part of a musical movement that is finding inspiration in old and forgotten songs, drawing on a repertoire of magical music that had all but disappeared during China’s recent tumultuous past. As a group, they hold onto the essence of Mongolian music while creating a new form. Traditionally, music would be played in the Mongol *ger* (yurt) or in the grasslands and would be informal, with the styles and instruments varying across the vast Inner Mongolian plains. AnDa Union combines a wide range of this diverse music into a unique feast of accessible Mongolian music.

At the music academy in Chifeng, where many of the group studied, they stood out for their musical dedication and obsessive *morin huur* practice. In the capital city of Hohhot, they became part of the Inner Mongolia National Song and Dance Troupe, where they discovered other young Mongols who shared the same musical passion and ideals. In 2001 AnDa Union was formed, and a unique style of Mongolian music was born. Nars, the group’s leader, says, “Our music draws from all the Mongol tribes that Genghis Khan (more properly known as Chinggis Khan) unified. We all have different ethnic backgrounds, and we bring these influences into our music. There is a wealth of folk music for us to learn; so far, our repertoire of songs is like a drop in the ocean.”

The group members describe themselves as music gatherers, digging deep into Mongol traditions and unearthing forgotten music. They are on a mission to stimulate their culture and reengage young Mongols, many of whom no longer speak their own language. Saikhannakhaa is fighting to reverse this trend by opening a bar in Hohhot, where she will promote music. She states, “I found an old golden wheel with half its spokes broken in an old dusty shop. It looks like a wheel that once turned the warrior carts of the great Mongol armies. I will hang this wheel in my bar as a warning to Mongolian people that our culture is broken and needs to be mended.” Hadanbaatar adds, “Young Mongolians like us now understand how important our culture is, but maybe the next generation won’t care, and we have to prevent this from happening.”

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

www.AnDaunion.com

Follow AnDa Union on Facebook/anda-union and Twitter@andaunion.

## INSTRUMENTS

**Hoomei** (Throat/overtone singing): 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 two distinctively audible pitches at the same time. There are many styles of *hoomei* from the different parts of Mongolia and Tuva, and AnDa Union’s 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.

**Moadinchur** (Mongolian flute): A Mongolian flute made from a reed that is played vertically, positioned under the top lip. The player plays the flute while singing *hoomei* (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.

**Mongolian Drum:** A double-sided sheepskin drum based on ancient designs. The drums are made by drummer Hadanbaatar. The skins he uses are from his family’s sheep in Ordos, western Inner Mongolia, and have been tanned by his father.

**Morin huur** (horse-head fiddle): A two-stringed instrument played with a bow, similar to a cello, that has a unique method of fingering. Its distinctive, beautiful sound with a hint of melancholy 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* is that a shepherd named Namjil the Cuckoo received the gift of a flying horse; he would mount it at night and fly to meet his beloved. A jealous woman had the horse’s wings cut off, so that the horse fell from the air and died. The grieving shepherd made a horse-head fiddle from the now-wingless horse’s skin and tail hair and used it to play poignant songs about his horse.

**Tobshur** (Mongolian lute): This Mongolian lute also has only two strings and is traditionally used to accompany a singer. AnDa Union uses the *tobshur* as a vital melodic instrument to drive the rhythm of its music.

**Urtyn duu** (long-song): *Urtyn duu*’s name is derived not from the length of the songs 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 singing evolved in the grasslands as the Mongolians tended their sheep and was used to sing to the animals, to call and to calm them. Mongolian music records and maps the landscape, not merely in words but in the rising and falling of notes corresponding to 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, tobshur, hoomei*) grew up in a village two hours from Ar Horqin, a town 880 kilometers northeast of the capital, Hohhot. His family members were traditionally herders. Nars grew up with his grandparents and spent summers on the grasslands living in a yurt. His grandfather is a musician who plays many instruments, including the accordion, *morin huur*, and other three-stringed fiddles, and became Nars’s teacher and mentor from an early age. Nars went to primary school with Urgen, who lived in a village nearby. At age 12, Nars boarded at the music college in the city of Chifeng, where he shared a room with Chinggel and met Monkhjayaa and Uni. After graduating, all five of them went to Hohhot and joined the Inner Mongolia National Song and Dance Troupe, where they met Saikhannakhaa, Otgonbayar, and Hadanbaatar. Nars also runs a music school, teaching *morin huur, tobshur*, and *hoomei* to young people. A visitor to his house is greeted with more than 20 students practicing the *morin huur*. His parents have now moved to Hohhot to help Nars run the school, and they all live together in a house filled with students, beds, and instruments.

**Billigbaatar** (*urtyn duu*) is a long-song singer and tours regularly with AnDa Union. He grew up in Hexigten. His mother, younger brother, and brother’s wife and daughter all live in the grasslands and herd the family livestock. Billigbaatar is an expert horseman. A long-song gold medalist, he honed his talent in the beauty of the grasslands. He is based in Hohhot with his wife, who is also a singer.

**Chinggel** (*moadinchur*) grew up in Ongniud Qi, in the same region as Monkhjayaa, in a family of herders. He went to music college in Chifeng, where he studied *morin huur*. He now mainly plays flute and is one of only four musicians in Inner Mongolia who can play the *moadinchur*. His passion for the *moadinchur* has led him to start making reed flutes as well as Mongolian metal flutes. He lives in Hohhot and has an older sister who is a dancer.

**Hadanbaatar** (Mongolian drum) grew up near Ordos City in the grasslands, where his parents were nomadic herders. The Ordos people are a large ethnic group within the Mongol population. The mausoleum of Genghis Khan is close to Ordos City. Hadanbaatar joined the Inner Mongolia National Song and Dance Troupe, where he met the rest of AnDa Union. He lives in Hohhot with his wife, a singer. He recently started a small business with a friend making traditional handmade Mongolian drums.

**Monkhjayaa** (*morin huur, hoomei*) 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, Uni, Urgen, and Chinggel. He joined the Inner Mongolia National Song and Dance Troupe and helped found AnDa Union. He lives in Hohhot with his wife and baby daughter.

**Otgonbayar** (*morin huur, tobshur, hoomei*) grew up in the grasslands an hour from the town of Ujim Qin. He is the youngest of seven children, all of whom are musical. His father was his inspiration to become a musician. When Otgonbayar 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 Otgonbayar 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 divide up the grasslands and restrict herders’ movements and livestock. Otgonbayar went to school in Ujim Qin. He now lives in Hohhot with his wife, a long-song singer.

**Saikhannakhaa** (*morin huur, tobshur*, vocals, *hoomei*) is from Tongliao and spent holidays with her grandparents on the grasslands close to Tongliao in eastern Inner Mongolia. She learned music from a young age from her paternal grandparents. She won a prize as the most talented female *morin huur* player and was invited to join the Inner Mongolia 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 Mongolia National Song and Dance Troupe.

**Tsetsegmaa** (*urtyn duu*), a Buriat, grew up near Hulun Buir in the northwest of Inner Mongolia, near the border of Russia and Outer Mongolia. Hulun Buir is one of the remotest areas of the region and home to both Ewenke and Buriat people. Tsetsegmaa works within the Inner Mongolia 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 Buriat songs, which she performs with AnDa Union. She is based in Hohhot.

**Uni** (*morin huur, tobshur, hoomei*) grew up around Ar Horqin, where his father was a councillor in the local Communist 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 to work with the Inner Mongolia National Song and Dance Troupe and was a founder of AnDa Union. He lives in Hohhot with his wife, a dancer.

**Urgen** (*morin huur, hoomei*) grew up in a village two hours from Ar Horqin, where he lived with his parents and two brothers in a traditional herder lifestyle. As a little boy, his job was to take the sheep into the fields to graze. When Urgen was 10, his older brother, Bagana, a musician, was killed by a drunk driver. Urgen was already a budding musician, but this tragic loss spurred him to become a top performer, striving to fulfill his brother’s dream. He went to school in Ar Horqin with Nars, where he met Uni, then went on to

Chifeng Music College and to Hohhot to join the Inner Mongolia National Song and Dance Troupe. He lives in Hohhot with his wife, a children’s TV presenter for Mongol TV, and their baby girl.

**Sophie Lascelles** (Producer/Director) grew up traveling the world with Footsbarn Travelling Theatre. Inspired by the many cultures and influences she encountered, her work encompasses many aspects of the visual and performing arts world. She collaborates with directors and theater companies, performing internationally at venues such as London’s Globe Theatre and the Edinburgh and Avignon festivals. Lascelles’s work as a visual artist focuses on 16mm film projection and site-specific installation. She is represented by Danielle Arnaud contemporary art and has exhibited extensively across the UK, with commissions from Harewood House, Tatton Biennial, and the Tate Gallery. In 2008 she met AnDa Union and fell in love with their music and culture. She went on to produce and co-direct the AnDa Union feature film.

**Tim Pearce** (Producer/Director) has a background in music and theater, so it was only natural that as a film producer he would have both music and live performance play a central role. His last project was *A Throw of Dice*, an Indian silent movie, which was restored and released with a new soundtrack by Nitin Sawhney and performed by the London Symphony Orchestra. The film was a success in cinemas and has been performed live with orchestras around the world. Pearce met AnDa Union five years ago in Shanghai. Bowled over by their music, he introduced them to Arts Midwest, which organized two US tours. He then co-produced and co-directed the AnDa Union feature film, which will be released in 2012. He lives in London with his family.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to David Fraher, Kat Duvic, Sanj Altan, Tim Wilson, Ken Carlson, Richard Lewis, and our friends and families in Inner Mongolia.

## Music

## Music

## Music

Dr. Susan A. Cole, President  
Dr. Geoffrey W. Newman, Dean, College of the Arts  
Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts & Cultural Programming

Peak Performances presents:

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

**AnDa Union**  
**Nars**, *morin huur, tobshur, hoomei*  
**Biligbaatar**, *urtyn duu*  
**Chinggel**, *moadinchur*  
**Hadanbaatar**, Mongolian drum  
**Monkhjayaa**, *morin huur, hoomei*  
**Otgonbayar**, *morin huur, tobshur, hoomei*  
**Saikhannakhaa**, *morin huur, tobshur, vocals, hoomei*  
**Tsetsegmaa**, *urtyn duu*  
**Uni**, *morin huur, tobshur, hoomei*  
**Urgen**, *morin huur, hoomei*

All music arrangements by **AnDa Union** except “Heemor,” composed by **Ilata**, and “Gallop ing Horses,” composed by **Chi Bulag**

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

Exclusive North American representation by 2Luck Concepts,  
www.2Luck.com.

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.

Office of Arts & Cultural Programming

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Alexander Kasser Theater

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