



Ayan-ool Sam, Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, Ayan Shirizhik  
(photo of ALASH by Matthew Yake)

**ALASH** are masters of Tuvan throat singing (xöömei), a remarkable technique for singing multiple pitches at the same time. What distinguishes this gifted trio from earlier generations of Tuvan throat singers is the subtle infusion of modern influences into their traditional music. One can find complex harmonies, western instruments, and contemporary song forms in Alash's music, but its overall sound and spirit remain decidedly Tuvan.

Trained in traditional Tuvan music since childhood, the Alash musicians studied at Kyzyl Arts College just as Tuva was beginning to open up to the West. They formed a traditional ensemble and won multiple awards for traditional throat singing in international xöömei competitions, both as an ensemble and as individuals. At the same time, they paid close attention to new trends coming out of the West. They have borrowed new ideas that mesh well with the sound and feel of traditional Tuvan music, but they have never sacrificed the integrity of their own heritage in an effort to make their music more hip.

Alash first toured the U.S. under the sponsorship of the Open World Leadership program of the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Arts. Since then they have returned many times, to the delight of American audiences. The *Washington Post* described their music as “utterly stunning,” quipping that after the performance “audience members picked their jaws up off the floor.”

Alash enjoys collaborating with musicians of all stripes. Since their early partnership with the legendary Sun Ra Arkestra, they have joined forces with musicians across the spectrum—from country to classical to jazz to beatboxing. When they toured with Béla Fleck & the Flecktones, the *Denver Post* remarked, “As electrifying as the Flecktones' performance was, the band were nearly upstaged by Alash Ensemble.” Alash appeared as guest artists on the Flecktones' holiday CD *Jingle All the Way* (2008), which won a Grammy. More recently, Alash joined Chicago's innovative Fifth House Ensemble in a groundbreaking concert series called Sonic Meditations.

Beyond performing, Alash has a passion for teaching and promoting understanding between cultures. Their tours often include workshops in which they introduce Tuvan music to students in primary, middle and high schools, colleges, universities, and music conservatories. Children as young as 8 and 9 have learned to throat-sing. As one student exclaimed, “Alash opened my eyes to a whole new world!”

Alash has released four CDs of its own: *Alash Live at the Enchanted Garden* (2006), *Alash* (2007), *Buura* (2011), and *Achai* (2015, re-released on Smithsonian Folkways in 2017). The members of Alash are:

**Bady-Dorzhu Ondar:** vocals, igil, guitar. Kyzyl Arts College, East Siberia State Academy of Culture and Art. Best soloist, 2005 All-Russian Festival of traditional ensembles and orchestras. Best in Maxim Dakpai xöömei competition, 2006. Named People's Xöömeizhi, 2007. Grand prize, International Xöömei Symposium, 2008.

**Ayan-ool Sam:** vocals, doshpuluur, igil, guitar. Republic School of the Arts, Kyzyl Arts College, Moscow State Pedagogical University. First prize, International Xöömei Symposium, 2008. Named People's Xöömeizhi, 2015.

**Ayan Shirizhik:** vocals, kengirge, shyngyrash, shoor, murgu, xomus. Kyzyl Arts College, East Siberia State Academy of Culture and Art. Second prize, International Xöömei Symposium, 2008. Named Distinguished Artist of Tuva, 2009.

**Sean Quirk:** interpreter and manager. Studied music in Tuva on a Fulbright fellowship. Named Distinguished Artist of Tuva, 2008.