



Smithsonian Folkways

ALASH ACHAI





ALASH
NEW-OLD TUVAN MUSIC



ALASH ACHAI

1. OGLUMGA (For My Son) 3:23
Alexander Sarzhat-ool
2. ODARLADYP SEMIRTIILI (Let's Fatten the Livestock) 4:23
Arranged by Bady-Dorzhu Ondar
3. DONGUP XONAR BOLDUM-NA BE (Don't Let Me Freeze) 4:44
Arranged by Bady-Dorzhu Ondar
4. FLUTE BOX 3:44
Ayan Shirizhik and Shodekeh
5. KARACHAL 2:42
Arranged by Alash
6. MEZHEGEI 4:22
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7. CHÜGLE SEN SEN (Only You) 3:07
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8. KO'SH-OI AND TORGALYG 5:59
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and arranged by Bady-Dorzhu Ondar
9. KARA KUSH (The Black Bird) 4:14
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11. MY THROAT, THE CUCKOO 3:57
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12. ACHAI (Father) 4:24
Semyon Mongush
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Bady-Dorzhu Ondar

Kongar-ool Ondar was a musical father not only for Alash, but also for an entire generation of Tuvan musicians who now range in age from 14 to 40 years old, and are among the finest current performers of Tuva's traditional music.





DEDICATED TO KONGAR-OOL ONDAR

Achai takes its name from the Tuvan word for father or more precisely dad. There are many songs about mothers in both traditional and contemporary Tuvan music, but very few about fathers. In this way, Alash seeks to represent the importance of passing down traditions—especially musical traditions—from fathers to sons. Reading the song texts, you will see that the album begins with a father addressing a son and ends with a son addressing the father. This is important in the context of the members of Alash as bearers of a tradition, whose early experiences were shaped at the feet of masters during the ascent of Tuvan music to global status, and who have grown to become fathers themselves, with their own sons following in their musical footsteps.

Kongar-ool Ondar was a musical father not only for Alash, but also for an entire generation of Tuvan musicians who now range in age from 14 to 40 years old, and are among the finest current performers of Tuva's traditional music. Ondar was a tireless promoter of Tuvan music both at home and abroad. He was known outside Tuva as a flashy and charming entertainer, appearing on late-night shows and collaborating with musicians such as Willie Nelson and Bela Fleck and the Flecktones. He excelled at presenting Tuvan music in a way that, while viewed by some as playing heavily on the novelty of Tuvan throat singing, was very effective in popularizing Tuva's music among non-Tuvan audiences. In Tuva, however, Ondar was best known and loved for his contributions to the preservation of Tuva's living music. He tirelessly taught young students about their culture's musical, spiritual, and social traditions.

Ondar's life work was brought to fruition when, after six years of constant effort plowing through mountains of bureaucracy and wrangling officials and ministers, the Center for Traditional Tuvan Culture and Crafts was completed in 2012 in the center of Kyzyl, Tuva's capital city. The center provides a much-needed home for traditional Tuvan musicians, craftspeople, and folklorists, and establishes a dedicated space for the celebration and transmission of Tuva's heritage by and for Tuvans.

Sadly, after only a year as leader of the center, Ondar passed away suddenly in the summer of 2013 from a stroke at age 51. Nevertheless, his legacy lives on; he remains the musical father of an entire generation of Tuvan musicians, many of whom are the finest current performers of Tuva's traditional music. It is to his memory that this album is dedicated.

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, one of Ondar's students and a member of Alash, explains the origins of this CD: "with the album *Achai*, what we were thinking, is to dedicate it to our teacher. He's the one who showed us the way from a very young age in the musical world, like a father for us. His participation in our musical upbringing was huge, with a great effect on our development into the future. So we recorded this album with him in mind, dedicating it to his memory. This album is for him. *Achai* has a deep meaning—our own fathers, men's participation in child-raising is so important, the children will be just like their father, they grow up watching them. So with regard to our language and music, we are always thinking about its preservation and transmission. It's so important for us that this tradition is passed on. Tuva is the land of *xöömei*, and we want so much for the young people of Tuva and our children to remember their culture and language, to continue to develop the art into the future so that it will echo throughout the world. We want them to grow up and pass it on to their own children."



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TUVA AND FOLKWAYS

In 1987, Theodore Levin, now a professor at Dartmouth College, became the first American researcher to conduct musical fieldwork in the Republic of Tuva, teaming up with Eduard Alekseev, Zoya Kyrgyz, and Karen Sherlock to make field recordings of Tuvan throat singing, long songs, animal domestication songs, and shamanic rituals. This work became Folkways' first Tuvan album, *Tuva: Voices from the Center of Asia* (SFW40017, 1990). For many listeners worldwide, this album was the first glimpse into the sound world of the Tuvans, a world based on listening timbrally to sounds created in an intimate mimetic interaction with the nomadic sound environment. It stands now as an absolutely essential body of work for those who would understand where Tuvan music comes from and its journey, which continues to this day. Rereading the liner notes for that album reveals only hints of the worldwide sensation that Tuvan music would soon become.

The Tuvan invasion was in full swing by 1995, when Levin and sound engineer Joel Gordon traveled to Tuva and the Northern Siberian Republic of Sakha-Yakutia to make the field recordings that became *Tuva, Among the Spirits: Sound, Music, and Nature in Sakha and Tuva* (SFW40452, 1999). While this second album sought to explore more fully the intricate relationship between timbral

listening, sound mimesis, lifeways, and the natural environment, Tuvan music was establishing itself as something more than a fascinating subject for musicologists. It was becoming a force in the world of music. Tuvan musicians were jamming with the Chieftains in Frank Zappa's kitchen. Tuvan musicians were picking up electric guitars and wowing rock clubs in the UK. Tuvan musicians were riding horses in the Rose Bowl Parade, flanked by Tuvan wrestlers. Tuvan musicians were traveling the world performing in different configurations, from soloists to large ensembles. At the vanguard of this Tuvan onslaught was Huun-Huur-Tu, a quartet of musicians whose interpretation of Tuvan music was so successful that its repertoire has become the standard for all young Tuvan groups since.

The music of Tuva has time and again shown amazing adaptability while maintaining a firm hold on its roots, managing the delicate balancing act of being simultaneously exotic and yet approachable for foreign listeners. Levin addressed this fact in Tuva in 2012 while being awarded the Order of Tuva medal by Tuva's head of government. "When this was all first starting," he told the crowd at the National Theater, "I thought that Tuvan music would be another musical fad, fading into obscurity in a couple of years. I am very happy to report that I was wrong."

For me, as a feckless 23-year-old cycling through the streets of Chicago in 2001, Tuva often seemed to be just on the other side of Lake Michigan, not far away, across an impassible gulf. As one of the many fans who had encountered Tuvan music in the 1990s, I was fascinated by it and its place of origin. A chance meeting at the wake of a close friend inspired me to apply for (and receive) a Fulbright Scholarship, with which I traveled to Tuva in 2003 to learn more about the music. During the course of that year, I learned Tuvan and became a student and then member of the Tuvan National Orchestra. By the end of that year, I realized that I had only trod the first steps on the path of learning about this place and its music, and returned on my own the next year.

Since then, 14 years of life in Tuva with the orchestra and 11 years of touring with Alash as their manager and interpreter, not to mention starting my own family there, have granted me a special perspective as both an insider and outsider relative to Tuvan music. I have not only participated in the growth and development of Alash and the Tuvan National Orchestra as musical ensembles, but have also watched Tuvans my own age grow and change as musicians, and as receivers, bearers, and transmitters of Tuva's fascinating musical culture.

PASSING ON THE TRADITION: TRANSMISSION OF TUVAN MUSIC

Alash's career as a band began in 1999 at the Kyzyl Music College, where Ayan Shirizhik, Ayan-ool Sam, and Bady-Dorzhu Ondar were entering as first-year students. Ayan-ool and Bady had been students at the Republic Arts School since early childhood, under the tutelage of Kongar-ool Ondar, master throat singer, teacher, and tireless musical ambassador for Tuva. Ayan was one of the first students of People's Xöömeyzhi Andrei Mongush.

When the band formed in the first semester, they called themselves Changy-Xaya (Echo Cliff) and had 12 members. By the second semester, 6 musicians remained, and over the next few years Kongar-ool Ondar continued to play an active role in their development by taking the young ensemble with him for various performances around Tuva and Russia, giving his protégés an opportunity to develop real-life stage experience as ambassadors of Tuva's culture and members of a proud tradition.

By their last year of school in 2003, the band had become an institution at the music college, choosing the name Alash. Their former name, Changy-Xaya, has become the official title of the school's traditional Tuvan music ensemble. Alash had already traveled to several cities in Russia and Europe to present their art, and they have toured intensively since then: following in their teacher's footsteps by playing and recording with a multitude of musicians, including Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, as well as forging new ground. In 2013, Alash became the first Tuvan ensemble to perform in Carnegie Hall.

Achai is the third studio album produced by Alash, as well as the third album of Tuvan music to appear on the Smithsonian Folkways label. It is an album about generations, fathers and sons, stability and change, depth and spontaneity, growth and loss, roots and breezes.

Unlike the first two albums of Tuvan music released on Folkways, this is a studio album, produced by a group of musicians with the intent of making an album, rather than ethnographic fieldwork or ethno-cultural sound. It therefore reflects the rapid rise of Tuva's music as a globally consumed—and often imitated—art form following the release of *Tuva: Voices from the Center of Asia*.

Alash's inclusion of master beatboxer and musical adventurer Shodekeh on the album represents a deliberate choice in their vision of the future development of Tuvan music. Since Alash's formation, the group members have sought to master the roots of their deep musical heritage and yet find



ways to participate in the interconnected sound world of the 21st century. Performing with Shodekeh, himself the bearer of a rich but often misunderstood vocal tradition, creates a real-time musical connection between living performers, organically created and deeply rooted, yet futuristic.

In addition to passing on their musical traditions to their own children, some of whom are already performing in their own ensembles, the members of Alash have brought the music and culture of Tuva to thousands of students and teachers at educational institutions ranging from pre-schools to high-tech research facilities. In this way, by dedicating their lives to performing, preserving, developing, and growing the Tuvan tradition, they are worthy bearers of the culture of their fathers and sons.

ALASH MEMBERS

AYAN SHIRIZHIK (left) was born in 1982 in the Tangdy district of central southern Tuva. He comes from a family of horse breeders. He was one of the first students of Andrei Mongush at School Number 5 in Kyzyl, and specialized in percussion at the Kyzyl Arts College, where he met Bady-Dorzhu and Ayan-ool to form Alash. He performs all styles of Tuvan throat singing, but is best known for his mastery of *sygyt* and *borbangnadyr*. Ayan was named a Distinguished Artist of Tuva in 2009. He sings and plays *kengirge*, *duyuglar*, *shoor*, and *murgu* on this album.

BADY-DORZHU ONDAR (center) has been throat singing since he was three or four years old. Born in 1984 in Kongar-ool Ondar's hometown of Lyme in the western district of Chöön-Xemchik, his formal education in Tuvan music began in first grade at the Republic Arts School as the youngest member of the elder Ondar's *xöömei* class. Accompanying Kongar-ool to the United States at age 9 and winning Russian national talent shows at age 15, he was already a stage veteran when Alash was formed in 1999. In 2007 Bady-Dorzhu became the youngest person to be named People's Xöömeizhi of the Republic of Tuva. He is best known for his *kargyraa* but is truly a master of all styles of *xöömei*, having shown his prowess in numerous throat-singing competitions. He sings and plays guitar, *doshpuluur*, *igil*, and *bayan* on this recording.

AYAN-OOL SAM (right) was born in 1983 in the Erzin district of southern Tuva. When his parents noticed his interest in *xöömei*, they moved to the city of Kyzyl so that he could attend Kongar-ool's class. There he became Bady's classmate, and the two musicians have now shared the stage for 25 years. Ayan-ool has won numerous competitions and was nicknamed "Golden Throat" by Bela Fleck during the groups' tours together. Ayan-ool was named People's Xöömeizhi of the Republic of Tuva in 2016. He sings and plays *igil*, *doshpuluur*, and *xomus* here.

SHODEKEH is a professional beatboxer, vocal percussionist, and hip hop-*xöömei* artist based in Baltimore, Maryland, whose deep interest in experimenting and collaborating with varying musical cultures and genres takes him to destinations worldwide. Shodekeh's first trip to Tuva was documented in the 2016 film *Shu-de!* From classical, jazz, and modern dance to reinterpretations of "The Star-Spangled Banner," Shodekeh's ability simultaneously to act as a preservationist and catalyst for change serves his many creative and rhythmic travels as an individual musician, and as founding director and lead curator of Embody, a festival of the vocal arts. About his work with Alash,



Shodekeh enthuses, “My experience working with Alash has been very organic, fluid, synchronistic. To be given a rare opportunity to add my sound in tribute not only to Tuva, but also to Kongar-ool Ondar, the musical father of the ensemble (which makes him one of my musical uncles), tells me that we’re the next generation of ambassadors, preservationists, and storytellers. The journey continues, as well as the culture and the music.”

TUVAN INSTRUMENTS PLAYED ON THIS ALBUM

IGIL—a bowed stringed instrument, with two strings tuned to the interval of a fifth, or sometimes a fourth. Bow and strings are made from horsehair, allowing for a wide range of timbres and harmonics.

DOSHPULUUR—traditionally a two-stringed plucked instrument tuned to a fourth. In recent decades Tuvan musicians have added a third string, tuned a fifth lower. Different styles of playing the *doshpuluur* have also evolved in recent years, much like bluegrass banjo.

KENGIRGE—a large drum, traditionally attributed to Tibetan Buddhist religious practice. Since the 1980s, the *kengirge* has evolved into a sort of wood-and-leather drum kit for Tuvan musicians that also includes *shynggyraash* (jingle bells), *duyuglar* (horse hooves), and *xapchyk* (rattle made from a bull scrotum and sheep ankle bones).

SHOOR—a type of end-blown, open-tube flute made from bark or wood that is common in the musical world of Central and Inner Asia. Analogs include the Mongolian *tsuur*, Bashkir *kurai*, and Kyrgyz *choor*.

MURGU—a fipple flute made traditionally from the stalk of the angelica plant. Like the *shoor*, the *murgu* is traditionally a seasonal instrument, easily made in the field.

DEMIR-XOMUS—the Tuvan version of the metal jaw harp, characterized by its small rectangular size and big sound.

Alash's instruments are made by Artysh Mongush, Aldar Tamdyn, and Möngün-ool Ondar.



TUVAN THROAT-SINGING TERMINOLOGY

The term “throat singing” is problematic for several reasons. First, most people use their throats to sing, whatever the tradition they represent. Second, Tuvans themselves don’t refer to “throat singing” as singing. Rather, they refer to it using the name of one or more specific styles. For example, *xöömei* can refer to a specific style or to the broader practice of what English speakers generically call “throat singing.”

XÖÖMEI (in the broad sense) is a rich and deeply rooted practice. As part of a cohesive musical idea that constitutes the Tuvan sound ideal, it has great diversity in performance practice. Each *xöömeizhi* learns from the example of the individuals he grows up hearing (*xöömei* has traditionally been overwhelmingly a male practice), but each also finds his own sound. This great diversity has led to different schools of thought on how to speak about and categorize *xöömei*.

TUVANS ACKNOWLEDGE FIVE PRINCIPAL “STYLES” OF TUVAN THROAT SINGING:

XÖÖMEI (in the narrower sense)—generally in a low-to-middle register, fundamental and overtones present at similar levels with multiple, distinct pitches, some moving, some vibrating or pulsing, over a drone.

SYGYT—generally a higher register, where an overtone melody is reinforced and the fundamental drone, while still audible, is significantly muted.

KARGYRAA—uses the false vocal folds to create a low drone while higher overtones are articulated by making different vowel shapes.

BORBANGNADYR—a warble. Can be produced in different ways, including with the lips (*byrlang*, *erin borbangy*) or tongue (*damyrak borbang*) and strongly associated with water. Can be used with all the above styles.

EZENGILEER—from the Tuvan word *ezengi* (stirrup). Uses the soft palate to create soft, metallic “clinking” sounds reminiscent of horseback riding.

SONG NOTES

1. **OGLUMGA** (For My Son)

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, lead vocals, *doshpuluur*; Ayan-ool Sam, back vocals, *doshpuluur*; Ayan Shirizhik, back vocals

Alexander Sarzhat-ool was a legendary Tuvan musician who wrote this song. Although little known outside Tuva, his impact on Tuvan music cannot be understated. Growing up in Aryskan, Ulug-Khem region, he played *byzaanchy* and performed *xöömei* before becoming interested in rock and roll. When he “borrowed” sound equipment to perform songs that were not regarded kindly by the authorities, he was incarcerated for 24 years. While in jail, his songs percolated to the listening public, and since his release in 2005, he has been viewed as a musical legend in Tuva, both for his creativity in blending old and modern sounds, as well as for the deep meaning of his songs. He passed away in 2013.

2. **ODARLADYP SEMIRTIILI** (Let’s Fatten the Livestock)

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, guitar, vocals; Ayan-ool Sam, *igil*, vocals; Ayan Shirizhik, *shoor*, vocals

Tuvan people are traditionally nomadic, moving from seasonal camp to seasonal camp in order to be in the right place at the right time for the survival of both livestock and humans in Tuva’s severe climate. In the Tuvans’ form of nomadism, they move to lower areas in the winter to escape the worst of the -40F cold, and move into the mountains during the hot summers to avoid heat and insects. This song relates with joy the process of ascending to the cool, refreshing summer camps.





3. DONGUP XONAR BOLDUM-NA BE (Don't Let Me Freeze)

Ayan Shirizhik, lead vocals, *kengirge*; Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, *doshpuluur*, vocals; Ayan-ool Sam, *igil*

The song of an orphan who is far from his home, wondering whether his ill-fitting clothing will be enough to survive a cold Tuvan night.

4. FLUTE BOX

Ayan Shirizhik, *murgu*, vocals; Shodekeh, beatbox

An improvisation between Ayan and Shodekeh captured in the studio.

5. KARACHAL

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, *doshpuluur*, vocals; Ayan-ool Sam, *doshpuluur*, vocals; Ayan Shirizhik, *duyuglar*, vocals

A song that compares the life of the *karachal* (common man) with that of the *xörengeti düzhümetter* (feudal bureaucrats). The *karachal* works hard for what little he has in life and he is jealous of the bureaucratic *düzhümetter*, who do very little work but enjoy much ill-gotten wealth.

6. MEZHEGEI

Ayan-ool Sam, *igil*, vocals; Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, guitar, vocals; Ayan Shirizhik, *shoor*, vocals

One of many Tuvan songs about the Tuvan landscape, this is about the river Mezhegei and locations around it. The singer wonders how this landscape looks in different lights of day.

7. CHÜGLE SEN SEN (Only You)

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, *bayan* accordion, vocals; Shodekeh, beatbox

The Tuvan musician Oidupaa created an entire genre of Tuvan music when he began playing both traditional and composed songs on his accordion, singing with a high, attenuated *kargyraa* style that has been imitated by many Tuvan musicians but mastered by few. Here Bady-Dorzhu demonstrates his talent by playing and singing one of Oidupaa's favorites, a song composed by Oidupaa's friend and relative Kaadyr-ool Begzi.



8. **KO'SH-OI AND TORGALYG**

Ayan-ool Sam, *igil*, vocals; Ayan Shirizhik, *shoor*, *kengirge*, vocals;
Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, guitar, vocals

Another Tuvan song about a place. Tuvans frequently use anthropomorphic terms to refer to natural phenomena. For example, mountains have heads, shoulders, livers, and hems. This song speaks anthropomorphically about two rivers, Ko'sh-oi and Torgalyg, comparing them to two sisters, with the grains that grow on their banks and wave in the wind like embroidered ornaments on the girls' dresses.

9. **KARA KUSH** (The Black Bird)

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, *doshpuluur*, vocals; Ayan-ool Sam, *doshpuluur*, vocals;
Ayan Shirizhik, *duyuglar*, vocals

People joke that songs about horses make up half of any concert of Tuvan music. This vividly reminds audiences that despite its often mysterious and cosmic sounds, Tuvan music is very much country music, connected with the concerns and cares of everyday human life. This song is a poem by Sayan Mongush set to music by Bady-Dorzhu Ondar about a horse from the Tangdy district that was well known not as a racer but for its prowess as a cutting horse, i.e., a horse that is used by herders to cut animals from the herd, and that must possess great agility and intelligence.

10. **IGIL/XÖÖMEI**

Ayan-ool Sam, solo

Ayan-ool Sam sings a traditional solo with new verses by Kaigal-ool Xovalyg and Xeimer-ool Xovalyg, eldest and youngest brothers of one of the finest musical families of Tuva.

11. MY THROAT, THE CUCKOO

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, *doshpuluur*, vocals; Ayan Shirizhik, vocals; Ayan-ool Sam, vocals

This arrangement is based on traditional Tuvan *kozhamyk* (quatrains), which compare the singer's voice to the sounds of morning birds. Alash's version of this song has won multiple first and grand prizes in various throat-singing competitions, as Bady-Dorzhu's arrangement skillfully showcases how the many various styles of throat singing can be woven together as a composed musical whole. Listen, for instance, towards the end as Ayan-ool holds the middle while Bady's *kargyraa* moves lower and Ayan's *sygyt* moves higher.

0:17–0:44 Bady, *xöömei* and *xöömei/borbang*

0:45–1:00 Ayan, *xöömei*

1:00–1:21 Ayan, *sygyt*

1:21–1:41 Bady, *xöömei/borbang*; Ayan, *xöömei*

1:41–1:58 Ayan-ool, *xöömei* (lead); Ayan, *xöömei* (back)

1:58–2:20 Ayan-ool, *sygyt* + *ezengi*

2:20–2:38 Ayan-ool, *sygyt* + *ezengi*; Bady, *ezengi*

2:38–2:45 Ayan, *xöömei* + *borbang*

2:45–3:04 Ayan, *sygyt* + *borbang*

3:04–3:10 Bady, *kargyraa*; Ayan, *xöömei*

3:10–3:28 Bady, *kargyraa* + *borbang*; Ayan, *xöömei* + *borbang*; Ayan-ool, *xöömei*

3:28–3:48 Bady, *kargyraa*; Ayan, *sygyt*; Ayan-ool, *xöömei*

3:48–3:57 All, *xöömei*

12. ACHAI (Father)

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar, *igil*, vocals; Ayan-ool Sam, *igil*, vocals; Ayan Shirizhik, *shoor*, vocals

The title track of the album is foremost a tribute to Kongar-ool Ondar as musical father to Alash and many generations of Tuvan musicians. It also recognizes the importance of fathers in passing along traditions, as well as Alash's own place in the continuum as fathers who share the music and its spirit with their own children.



13. SULA SALYP BEEREEL CHONUM

(Let's Relax)

Ayan-ool Sam, *igil*, vocals, *xomus*;
Ayan Shirizhik, *kengirge*, *shoor*,
whistling, vocal; Bady-Dorzhu Ondar,
guitar, vocals

Many people are curious about how exactly Alash pushes the music in new directions while maintaining their hold on its roots. Alash does this in many subtle ways that can be heard throughout this album and in their other music, but it is perhaps with this song that this solidly rooted movement to the future can best be heard. The sung parts use the words and melodies of traditional *kozhamyk*, but the instrumental melodies are new compositions. Alash uses minimal resources—*igil*, guitar, *kengirge*, *xomus*, and voices—to create a sonic landscape that grows, changes, and evolves over the course of the piece, painting a picture of Tuvan music and its landscapes as they existed in 2016.

CREDITS

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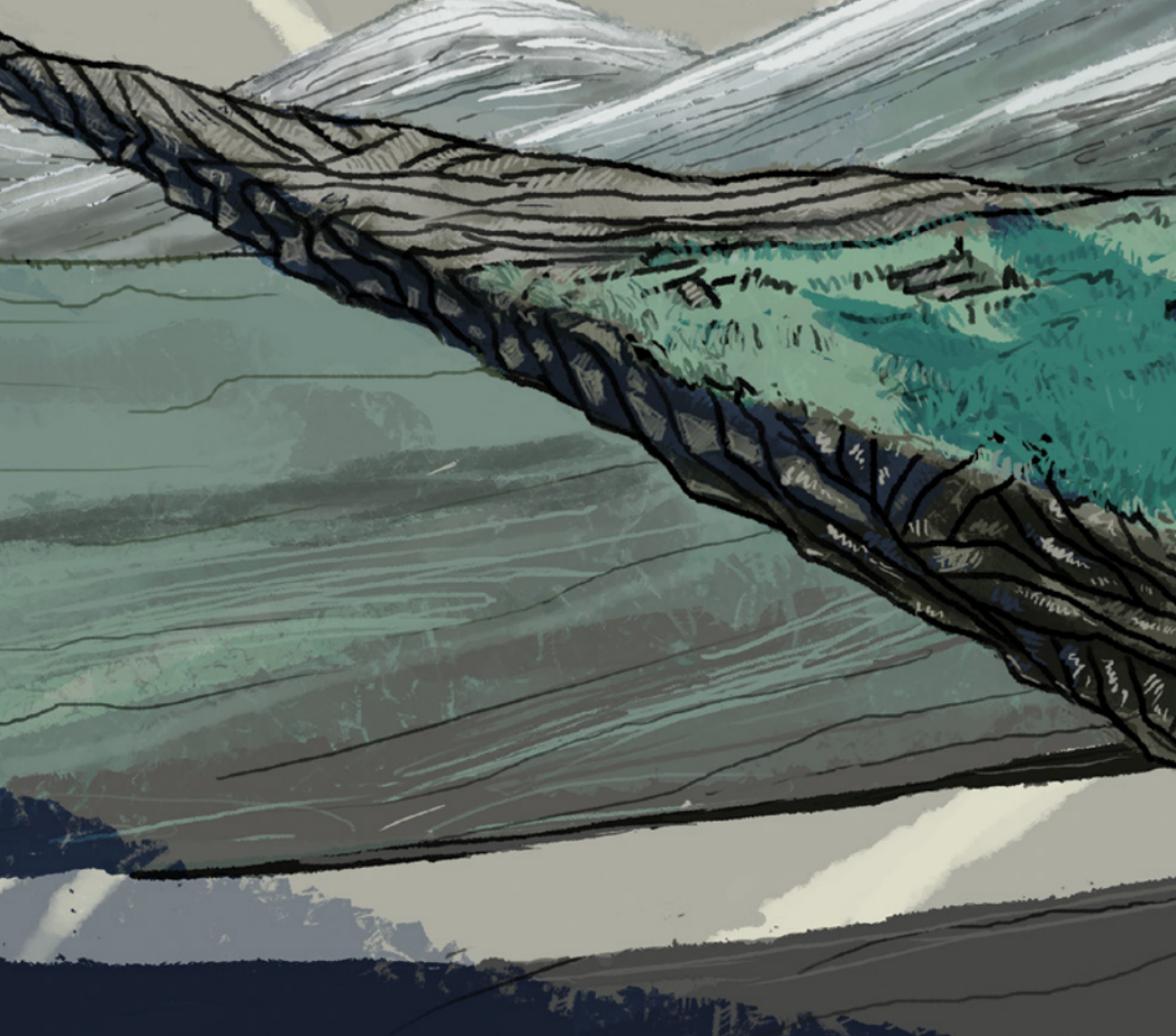
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1. OGLUMGA (For My Son) 3:23
2. ODARLADYP SEMIRTIILI (Let's Fatten the Livestock) 4:23
3. DONGUP XONAR BOLDUM-NA BE (Don't Let Me Freeze) 4:44
4. FLUTE BOX 3:44
5. KARACHAL 2:42
6. MEZHEGEI 4:22
7. CHÜGLE SEN SEN (Only You) 3:07
8. KO'SH-OI AND TORGALYG 5:59
9. KARA KUSH (The Black Bird) 4:14
10. IGIL / XÖÖMEI 4:23
11. MY THROAT, THE CUCKOO 3:57
12. ACHAI (Father) 4:24
13. SULA SALYP BEEREEL CHONUM (Let's Relax) 8:30

ACHAI, the Tuvan word for *father*, describes a deep paternal participation in the upbringing and growth of a new generation. It is also a fitting title for Alash's new album to honor Kongar-ool Ondar, who served not only as a musical father for the ensemble, but also for an entire generation of Tuvan musicians. As Ondar shared memory and tradition, so too does Alash with spirited performances and forward-thinking collaborations. In the group's first studio album for Smithsonian Folkways, *Achai* beautifully illustrates the adaptability of Tuvan music—organically created and deeply rooted, yet still interconnected with the sound world of the 21st century. Featuring master beatboxer Shodekeh, alongside time-honored Tuvan throat-singing styles, the album demonstrates how members of Alash have dedicated their lives to performing, preserving, developing, and growing the Tuvan tradition. They are worthy bearers of the culture of their fathers and sons. 57 minutes, 24-page booklet.

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