EDMONDS CENTER for the ARTS

2024 | 2025
Digital Patron Program

Alash
with special guest
Rahzel

Thursday, February 20

ABOUT ALASH
(from left to right)

Kang-Khüler Saala
vocals, byzaanchy, chadagan

Ayan-ool Sam
vocals, doshpuluur,
igil, xomus, guitar

Bady-Dorzhu Ondar
vocals, igil, doshpuluur, bayan, guitar

Ayan Shirizhik
vocals, kengirge, shoor, shynggyrash, murgu

ALASH ensemble is a quartet of master throat singers *(xöömeizhi)* from Tuva, a tiny republic in the heart of Central Asia. The ancient art of throat singing *(xöömei)* developed among the nomadic herdsmen of this region. Alash remains grounded in this tradition while expanding its musical vocabulary with new ideas from the West.

The ensemble is named for the Alash River, which runs through the northwestern region of Tuva. The Alash River has also inspired a couple of Tuvan songs which carry on its legacy.

All members of Alash were trained in traditional Tuvan music since childhood, first learning from their families, and later becoming students of master throat singers. In 1999, as students at Kyzyl Arts College, they formed a group called Changy-Xaya and soon became the resident traditional ensemble on campus. At the same time they learned about western music, practiced on hybrid Tuvan-European instruments, and listened to new trends coming out of America.

Under the guidance of Kongar-ool Ondar (best known to western audiences for his role in the film *Genghis Blues*), Alash began to forge a new musical identity. They introduced the guitar and sometimes even the Russian bayan (accordion) into their arrangements, alongside their traditional Tuvan instruments. They experimented with new harmonies and song structures. The effect is an intriguing mixture of old and new.

The musicians are inspired by the music of their grandparents, great-grandparents, and the great musicians of Tuva and Central Asia. At the same time they are influenced by such western artists as Sun Ra and Jimi Hendrix. Yet the Alash musicians never sacrifice the integrity of their heritage in an effort to make their music more hip for an American audience. Rather they look for contemporary ideas that mesh well with the sound and feel of traditional Tuvan music.

Alash's inaugural U.S. tour was sponsored in 2006 by the Open World Leadership program of the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Washington Post described their music as "utterly stunning," quipping that after the performance "audience members picked their jaws up off the floor."

Since then, Alash has returned to the U.S. every year, playing to enthusiastic audiences and presenting workshops to students of all ages. Alash is now in high demand internationally, performing in concert halls and festivals in Europe and Asia as well as North and South America.

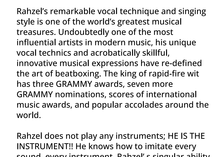
Members of Alash enjoy working across musical genres. They have collaborated with such diverse musicians as the innovative jazz ensemble Sun Ra Arkestra, the bluegrass/fusion/jazz band Béla Fleck and Flecktones (whose Grammy-winning holiday CD "Jingle All the Way" features Alash as guest artists), the virtuoso beatboxer Shodekeh, and the pioneering classical chamber music group Fifth House Ensemble. Alash was part of composer Austin Wintory's "global jam band" which recorded the soundtrack for the videogame The Pathless. Most recently, Alash's Bady-Dorzhu Ondar collaborated with Shodekeh's Embody project to record the album Embodiments, bringing the American hip hop vibe into the performance of original Tuvan music.

Learn more about Alash and the various Tuvan instruments on their website.

Alash Website

Andrew Hamlin from NW Asian Weekly recently interviewed Bady-Dorzhu Ondar about how he became a throat singer, and how Alash began collaborating with Rahzel.

Read the Article



ABOUT RAHZEL

Rahzel is considered one of the founders of beatboxing as we know it today; he has been beatboxing since the early 1980's and released his iconic debut album "Make the Music 2000" in 1999, which is known as one of the most influential beatboxing albums of all time.

Rahzel's remarkable vocal technique and singing style is one of the world's greatest musical treasures. Undoubtedly one of the most influential artists in modern music, his unique vocal technics and acrobatically skillful, innovative musical expressions have re-defined the art of beatboxing. The king of rapid-fire wit has three GRAMMY awards, seven more GRAMMY nominations, scores of international music awards, and popular accolades around the world.

Rahzel does not play any instruments; HE IS THE INSTRUMENT! He knows how to imitate every sound, every instrument. Rahzel' s singular ability to re-create full songs without instrumentation, sing a chorus and provide the musical melody simultaneously, all while invoking a plethora of sound effects on a whim creates an inimitable visual and sound experience.

He mimics the sounds of all manner of instruments with uncanny accuracy. His improvisations cover everything from Hip Hop, Pop, R&B, Jazz, and electronic music which has won over audiences around the world.

Rahzel is most popularly known as a member one of the greatest Hip Hop acts of all time and one of the best live bands of any genre: *The Roots*. This has lent his talents to musical artists of all genres. He is also a member of Mike Patton's (Faith No More) *Peeping Tom*. A highly sought after vocalist, Rahzel has written, collaborated, toured and performed with artists such as: Beastie Boys, Beck, Bjork (co-produced and featured on her Medulla album), Bobby McFerrin, Erykah Badu, Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, Bootsy Collins, Branford Marsalis, Christina Aguilera, Cee Lo Green, Dave Chappelle, Faith no More, John Legend, Lou Reed, Michelle N'Degeocello, Maroon 5, Norah Jones, Patti Smith, Phillip Glass, Snoop Dogg, Roni Size, world-renowned electronic visual artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Toots and the Maytals, The Crystal Method, and The Who.

All stage work performed by employees represented by I.A.T.S.E., Local No. 15