

Anda Union review – glorious evocations of the Mongolian steppe

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Anda Union are from Hohhot, the capital of the Inner Mongolia region of northern China, but their roots are out in the empty grasslands where many of their families still live, and their aim is to rework the region's traditional music, with its stories of herdsmen and ancient nomadic customs and beliefs. Their gloriously atmospheric songs are based on melodies that are as memorable and accessible as any great western folk songs, and they deserve success well beyond their homeland.

Playing on the final night of the Songlines Encounters festival, the group sported an exotic array of headgear, including hats with spikes, but made it immediately clear that they are no novelty band. At first there were seven, and then nine, musicians on stage, and they played traditional acoustic instruments that included the *morin huur* fiddle, decorated with a horse head, the *tobshur* Mongolian lute, and *moadinchur* flute, along with percussion and a box-shaped double bass. They all sang, swapping lead vocals and harmony work between them in a widescreen style that evoked the lonely grandeur of the steppe.

In an impressively varied set, they switched from the jaunty opener, Drinking Song, to Hometown, a lament for those cut off from their families, to the poignant Mother, sung unaccompanied by their female lead vocalist, Tsetsegmaa. Then there were eerie demonstrations of *hoomei*, overtone or throat singing, with two or more notes sung simultaneously, and an exuberant finale of Galloping Horses, with the percussion now sounding like pounding hooves and the fiddles producing whinnying effects. This was a rousing masterclass in folk revivalism.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/jun/07/anda-union-review-kings-place-london-mongolia>