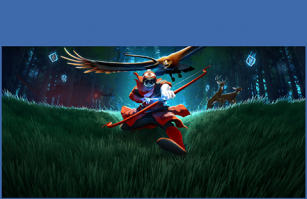


Adding to the Discussion of Multicultural Music: Austin Wintory's Use of Traditional Tuvan Music Within The Pathless



The Pathless is an action-adventure game developed by Giant Squid. It was released November 12, 2021. Austin Wintory, the music composer for the game, stated that he "recorded 104 musicians and created the score built around a 'global jam band'" (Wintory, "Charting the Pathless, part 2" Youtube.com). It can be difficult to incorporate just one outside cultural influence into a music composer's work, but to take on this many different cultural influences is quite a challenge. Each different instrument and culture needs that much more research and collaboration between the composer and performers to create multicultural music that is authentic and respectful.

There are many schools of thought surrounding how a music composer should incorporate multicultural influences. One was brought to the table by Harm Langenkamp who moderated a discussion between composers Ton De Leeuw, Taro Takekatsu, and Chou Wen-chung beginning in the 1970s. (Langenkamp, "Close Encounters of Another Kind: Strategies of Intercultural Compositions, 1960s-2000s", 180-183) What these four composers and scholars asserted, especially in the blending of western and eastern cultures, is that incorporating differential sound worlds properly must have the correct mindset and intentions of the composer. According to them, the composer must realize that all music comes from the first peoples (or a spiritual source). To combine different cultural styles, composers should not focus on the hard divisions that our societies have created between contrasting cultures, but rather remerge them through their similarities. (Langenkamp, 183)

Another aspect concerning blending cultural musics that these composers emphasized was the importance for the composer to realize they were not the creators but should act "as mediators between the sounding and unsounding world." (Langenkamp, 183) They also stressed the importance of always collaborating with the performers and experts in the other culture and for the composer to be willing to shape their music around the other cultures' needs. (Langenkamp, 183)

Studying Wintory's musind listening to him discuss his music, I have found that his method of incorporating different cultural influences and instruments is similar to De Leeuw, Takemitsu, and Chung's proposed mindset. He expressed the view that his main themes and the overall music he writes are influenced by the other creators he works with, along with the world around him. For him, the music he composes is something pre-existent that he captures (Wintory, 2020). "Crafting the 'Familiar New' for the Pathless (feat. Serjany)", Wintory has also expressed his views on the importance of researching all the different instruments he hopes to use and collaborating with musical experts to create the most authentic final product (Wintory, "Composer Workshop: Austin Wintory").

Another key aspect within Wintory's compositional method is described in the following quotation: "The point of the score was to create music that was simultaneously from everywhere and nowhere. It should feel folk-like and cultural, but not connected to an actual culture in our world. Rather than try to go whole cloth and invent something new completely from scratch... I consciously decided to blend a lot of different cultures." (8-bit Music Theory, "Austin Wintory's Newest Theme is Also Simple, but Sophisticated.")

Though his point cannot be proven accurate in terms of bringing different cultural influences together as to create a new unidentifiable culture, he does successfully blend these cultural influences into a new and unheard soundscape. To create this new soundscape, Wintory incorporated many different traditional styles and instruments into the score for *The Pathless*, but the most essential were the traditional instruments and musical styles from Tuva recorded by the *Alash Ensemble*.



The Alash Ensemble are a Tuvan traditional ensemble founded in the 1990's who are still active today. They identify themselves as,

"Masters of traditional Tuvan instruments as well as the art of throat singing, Alash are deeply committed to traditional Tuvan music and culture, at the same time, they are fans of western music. Believing that traditional music must constantly evolve, the musicians subtly infuse their songs with western elements, creating their own unique style that is fresh and new, yet true to their Tuvan musical heritage." (website linked below)

They were one of the first Tuvan traditional ensembles to be recognized globally and are considered extremely important in many anthropology, musicology, science, and medical research communities for their contributions and willingness to share their traditional artform.



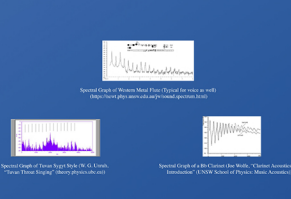
The Alash Ensemble, but on what Wintory was requesting and what they felt appropriate, improvised over the main theme Wintory designed with Bady-Dorzhuu Oiaa's personal prayer in the xöömei style. Traditionally, there are certain shamanistic prayers with similar themes within Tuvan culture referred to as the "Four Lines of Common," but each prayer is unique to the individual shaman, the situation in which they find they need to pray, and which spirits the shaman wishes to evoke through that prayer first by calling the shaman's familiar spirit, telling them to eat their fill, and then go away. This is generally used during a ceremony where they burn offerings on a fire to feed ethereal beings. They feed off the smoke of food and juniper." (Sean Quirk, Interview 1/12/2022)

The lyrics chosen were as such:

Tuvan:
Azalarym ei, chetkerlerim oo, Ashtanyngar ei, chemneninger ooi Ashtangashtyng-oo,
chemnengeshtyng eei, A'tannyngar ooi, choruulangar eei

English Translation:

*My spirits, my familiars, come and eat, come and fill yourselves, Having gotten full and having eaten,
Get on your horses, let's go*



An example of Wintoo's Tuvaan influence is in the background music, or as he categorizes it, "meditation" music, which gives respect to Tuvaan overtone vocal stylings *öömei* and *kargyraa* in their original cultural context. (Theodore Craig Levin and Valentina Süzukei, 2006: "Where Rivers and Mountains Sing: Sound, Music, and Nomadism in Tuva and Beyond.") This music will unfortunately go mostly unnoticed because it occurs as the player is running, jumping, and frolicking through the gorgeous digital landscape. If the player does take a moment to stop and listen, they'll hear incredible moments of soundscape music that plays with the harmonic overtone series created by *öömei* and *kargyraa*.

Overtone vocalizations: the oscillation of the vocal folds (found within the throat) along with the ventricular folds (found within the chest) at different speeds. To be exact, the ventricular folds oscillate at half the speed of the vocal folds. This not only creates the multiple pitches and extreme vocal range that is signature of this style, but it also creates a unique timbre. This is caused when the different folds connect on their different oscillation rates. The result is a complex sound, where, when you listen to the song, you hear the *overtone* parts are more pronounced in vocal music. There is around an $(1/2)$ second transition in which the vocal folds and ventricular folds activate (with the vocal folds enacting first) creating that signature glip at the beginning of the Tuvan technique. During each waveform the *overtone*'s reach expands and oscillates between frequencies ranging from 100kHz to 3500Hz. The lowest note that this technique has been recorded to reach is 21.8kHz (19V).

Source Characteristics in Mongolian "Throat Singing" Studied with High-Speed Imaging Technique, Acoustic Spectra, and Inverse Filtering.

It may seem that the more physics-oriented side of overtone vocalization would be unrelated to Wintory's composition, however, this knowledge leads to a fuller appreciation of what he has done within this atmospheric music. Along with the voice, most western instruments also follow the spectral rule of having emphasis on even partials. One key orchestral instrument does not though and instead follows the same spectral mapping as Tuvan overtone vocalization which is emphasizing the odd partials. This instrument is the Clarinet.

Throughout the entire game's music, whether intentional or not, Wintory uses this relationship in partials to highlight the Tuvan vocalizations' unique timbral quality and as a mechanism to create smooth transitions between the different traditional soundscapes.

 **SCAN ME** SCAN ME