

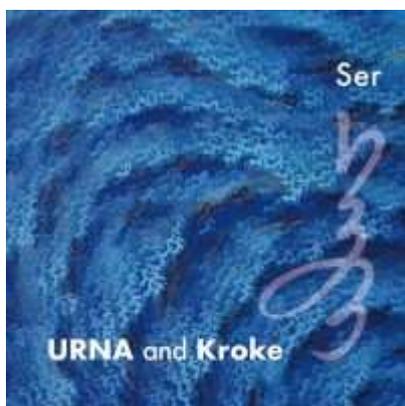


## URNA and Kroke, Ser

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by J. Pepper



URNA Chahar-Tugchi was born into a family of nomadic herders in the Ordos grasslands of Inner Mongolia, URNA carries the spirit of her homeland in her music as she performs around the world. While rooted in the traditional music of her homeland, URNA continues to take her music to new directions, which is richly represented in her latest compositions. A commixture of her many years of encounters with other cultures and their indigenous music.

On URNA's latest endeavor, *Ser (Awakening)*, she enlists the seasoned virtuosity of Polish band Kroke. The compositions are based in a beauty of ethnic music, with transcends the spirit to a higher plane. The ensemble features: URNA Chahar-Tugchi: vocals, composer; Tomasz Kukurba: viola, percussion, vocal, flute; Jerzy Bawoł: accordion; and Tomasz Lato: double bass.

URNA's vocals are stirring, her voice resonates a shimmering beauty that is transcendent. The buoyancy and versatility of her voice is equally in balance with the free improvisational compositional style depicted on *Ser*.

The first composition "Zandan Hureng," which translates to my sandalwood brown, is a hauntingly beautiful tune. URNA's voice is front and center, with its virtuosic qualities. At times she invokes a softer fragility in her upper register, while at other times her voice inflects a commanding prowess. Accordionist Jerzy Bawoł provides a colorization to the track, while viola master Tomasz Kukurba applies a plucking sound to establish the rhythm before being joined by bassist Tomasz Lato who enhances the overall ensemble sound. Kukurba then uses an electrified effect to create a swirling resonate sound for the solo section of the tune. Once again URNA enters and her voice exhibits even more resolve. Joined by Kukurba, who invokes his voice for a soaring tribal effect. Both vocalists are enthused in their performances.

Another highlight on the album is "Jigder Nana," a Mongolian folk rhythm is utilized to propel the songs melody. The tune is taken at a lively pace, a double time approach is taken on the final form, which adds excitement to the tune. On, "Jergelgeen / Kukurna" URNA elongates each note with a purity of voice that feels angelic in nature. Her head voice soars with clarity and control. When she reaches into her chest voice the resonating sound is inimitable.

Closing the album is "Beleg," which translates to The Gift. A somber piece that utilizes accordion as an expansive support sound. Once again URNA effortlessly reaches into her highest head voice tones. Her voice is so moving, even if you do not understand the native tongue of the lyric, you are moved by the astounding oscillation of her prodigious voice.

Overall, *Ser* is truly an awakening and aptly titled. The awakening of your soul that will feel touched by the beauty created by URNA and Kroke. Together they have created a masterful listen. Fortuitously paired in a rapturous sound that is URNA's songwriting that offers a cultured mastery.