



From Tundra to Grasslands

从苔原到草原

A MUSICAL AND MULTICULTURAL JOURNEY, DRAMA AND LOVE STORY

音乐与多元文化之旅，戏剧和爱的故事

FILM PRODUCTION FOR INTERNATIONAL RELEASE

中国 - 挪威电影制作

Created and Written by Torkel Snellingen (Studio Uno)

作者 Torkel Snellingen (工作室宇野)

Musical Arrangement by Bian Liunian

with

Mari Boine , Teng Ge Er and Placido Domingo

编曲卞留念.

马里冯波，滕盖而与多明戈

Production Details

Producers

New Culture Production (HK) & Grand China International Film and TV (HK)
(<http://www.grandchinafilm.com>)

Kautokeino Film (NO)
(www.kautokeinofilm.no)

Music

Bian Liunian Studio
(www.bianliunian.com)

Directors

Weng Liang He
Nils Gaup

Languages

In order of importance
English, Chinese, Mongolian, Sami, , Norwegian, Italian, French, Latin, Nepali and Sherpa

Main Locations

Italy
Italian Alps, Udine, Venice.

Norway

Troms: Tromsø , Kvaløya and Lyngen ; Eastern Finnmark: Alta, Kautokeino and Karasjok.

China

Beijing ; Inner Mongolia: Erenhot, Xilinhot and *Ujimqin* Grasslands.

Nepal

Kathmandu , Solu Khumbu: Lukla, Phakding, Namche Bazaar, Amadablam Mountain and Tyangboche Monastery.

The East has known three great men

*Sakayamuni was born a prince around 500 BC in what is now Nepal
Distressed by human suffering, he left his family,
achieved enlightenment through meditation and
became the Buddha*

*Kong Qiu was born at around the same time as the Buddha, into China's lower aristocracy
He wanted to restore China to a golden age of peace and
became Confucius*

*Temujin was born on the sixteenth day of the fourth lunar month in the year of 1162 into the
family of a tribal leader,
he united the Mongolian tribes and
became Chenghis Kahn*

from the opening of
The Secret History of the Mongols

*Genghis Kahn's grandson Kublai as the first emperor of the Chinese Yuan Dynasty, commanding all China and
exerting influence over much of Eurasia, would be the wealthiest and most powerful man in the 13th Century world –
perhaps the most powerful ever since the emergence of today's superpowers.*

Synopsis

From Tundra to Grasslands is a love story and drama set in 2018 and centered around the life and fate of the two main Characters both in their mid 20s: (1) a Sami Female Vocalist (SC) and (2) the Mongolian Male Vocalist (MC). They first meet in June of 2018 north of Venice where they have been invited to perform at the *Udine Music Festival*. MC is seen on stage singing for his longing of the Grasslands as we flash back in time to his childhood and to his fate which brings him to Beijing as a street musician. Here he is discovered by the Chairman of a large business conglomerate that invites him to sing at the audition of the annual Asia Youth Musical Talent Event that he sponsors. He (MC) receives a scholarship to attend the Bachelors Program of the Opera Department of the China Central Conservatory of Music soon followed by a scholarship to attend the Juilliard School of Music in NY. While studying in Beijing he is introduced to Rock Climbing by a Tibetan Scholar of Chinese Ancient History who also introduces him to interwoven history of the Han and Mongolian People by relating the intricate history of the Yuan Dynasty (1260-1357) illustrated with flashbacks in time.

We are then brought back to the Concert in Udine and then, immediately after, to Venice with the main characters taking in the scene of St Marks Square as they enjoy the coffee and cakes of the Caffi Quaddra. Here a Chinese tourist guide brings us back to ancient scenes from Marco Polo's Venice and to his travels to the court of Kublai Kahn. This brings the SC to introduce the ancient history of the Sami people from that same period (Marco Polo Travels). Subsequently she (SC) invites him (MC) to be her guest in the planned gala concert for the 30 years anniversary of the Northern Lights Music Festival held in Tromsø, the regional capital of northern Norway. The concert is scheduled seven months later in the month of January. Their meet in Northern Norway now leads to a passionate love affair and their fate is sealed when they meet an acquaintance of the SC, a Nepali Mountaineering Instructor (NC). After the concert in Tromsø, MC is invited to join SC and NC on a winter climb on a coastal mountain peak west on one of the islands (Kvaløya) west of the city. While resting on the peak NC introduces MC and SC to the great Himalayan Mountains of his homeland and subsequently invites them to climb the Amadablam Mountain in the Solu Khumbu of eastern Nepal (Mahalangur Himal). But first they will travel to the homeland of the SC and of the Sami Reindeer Herders of the arctic tundra where MC and SC are introduced to the culture and history of the Sami people through flash backs in time from to the arrival of the Christian mission to present day. She reveals how the ancient animistic mind set and shamanistic practices were replaced by the Christian belief system but without compromising the healing powers still found amongst her people to present day.

Three months later, arriving Nepal, SC and MC first take in the sights and sounds of the streets and spiritual places of worship of Kathmandu. They then proceed by plane to Solu Khumbu region of eastern Nepal home of Mt Everest. Arriving NC's Home Village Namche Bazaar they are introduced to the interwoven history and culture of the Nepali Sherpa People that originate from the Kham region of Tibet. The ancient Kham people were nomadic people practicing a pre Buddhist belief system called Bon .

These three main characters: a Sami, Mongolian and Sherpa with their supporting characters, through their travels and dialogues, visually illustrated by flash backs into the over 700 years history of their ancestors, reveals their cultural (nomadic) and spiritual linkages (animistic) as they approach their destiny and the climax set in a drama during the descent of the Amadablam, a sacred mountain with cosmic power facing the village of the NC in the Solu Khumbu of eastern Nepal. Here SC is the sole survivor of a catastrophic avalanche after a sudden ferocious snowstorm. Totally devastated and barely managing to find her way to the main trail she arrives at the Tyengboche Monastery; the story continues as she passes several days at the monastery in grief observing the prayers and funeral rites of the Buddhist monks. She then befriends a Tibetan Rinpoche with whom she contemplates the fate of her comrades and lover (contemplation of death). SC is now reminded that

she must bring a letter from MC to the father that he (MC) had formulated before the climb and that she (SC) was requested to deliver personally should he (MC) succumb on the mountain.

On her stopover in Beijing she meets the MC's Tibetan friend who now further reveals the relationship between the Yuan Dynasty and the Tibetan Buddhism. She (SC) also befriends a female student from the Chinese Muslim Ningxia minority a English Major Student at the Beijing International Studies University. The Hui Student guides her to different sites of spiritual worship illustrating the diversity of China's ethnic and religious minorities. . The fourth day she starts her journey to Inner Mongolia and the Family Camp of MC. After a 10 hour train journey to the border to Outer Mongolia – the town of Erenhot, Inner Mongolia, she takes a bus to Xilinhot and then by car to the Ujimqin Grasslands where she hopes to deliver the letter entrusted to her by her lover. During the course of the journey her health rapidly deteriorates as she develops bouts of fever chills, severe headache and stiffness of the neck - all signs and symptoms of an infectious meningitis. Upon arrival to MC's family camp SC has contracted a severe viral meningitis and arrives in a semi-comatose state. The father reads the devastating letter from his son. Realizing the life threatening state of the SC the Mongolian Shaman Healer is summoned to drive away the evil causative spirits from their unexpected guest. This is the same Shaman Healer that is revealed in the opening scene of the film. He was then called to try to save the mother of the MC 15 years before (when the MC was 10 years old) as his mother was dying of a post partum hemorrhage (bleeding from the womb after delivery) while giving birth to her second child. Both the mother and child died. The father is now remarried and has a child (now 5 years old) with his new wife.

SC gradually recovers. Now the SC decides to stay on at the camp to recuperate. She also discovers that she is pregnant but chooses to remain with the MC family in their camp awaiting her term. Their in that same Yurt where MC was born and where MC's mother with baby died and SC barely survived she now gives birth to a healthy boy thereby cementing not only their spiritual but also the biological bond between the Mongolian and Sami characters; the former represented by their sacred drums. Throughout the story we are reminded of the current environmental challenges due to urbanization and dependence on fossil fuels. The film concludes 25 years (2045) after with a introduction to the son of MC and SC born on the grasslands that winter day in 2019 and now, 25 years after, his reflections upon his story, life and work - which brings the story to full circle.

From Tundra to Grasslands opening is cast with the magnificent scenery of the Friuli Alps of Northern Italy with flashback to the intense green Summer Grasslands and winter scenes from Inner Mongolia. The story then brings us to northern Norway's beautiful arctic region with its dramatic coastal mountains and the enchanting arctic tundra of Eastern Finnmark . The arctic scenes, shot in mid January, shows the Magnificent Northern Lights. We are then brought to the Solu Khumbu Valley of Eastern Nepal and the majestic Himalayan mountains (Mahalangur Himal). Throughout the film we learn through dialogues and flashbacks the cultural and spiritual commonalities of the Sami , Mongolian and Sherpa People and of the interwoven history of the Chinese Han, Mongolians and Tibetans. The scenery is supported by traditional and world music from Sami, Mongolian, Tibetan and Chinese cultures that are brought together through the sacred drums which symbolizes the common animist-shamanistic roots - the unifying symbol of the main characters' destinies.

Main Characters and their Homelands

1. The Male Mongolian Character (MC)

The male Mongolian character will be partially based on the story of Altaburged born on the *Ujimqin* Xiling Gol inner Mongolian grasslands, a son of a Mongolian Shepherd, he grew up in a Mongolian Yurt and cattle wagon. His childhood was dominated by his mother's singing, hunting dogs, and sheep chasing. Singing was the first thing he learned in his life and led him further to pursue his musical career. Burged studied music at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music and pursued a musical career as a singer in the Mongolian Popular Folk Music Group Black Steed (Hei Jun Ma) See [here](#).

Mongolian music conveys this deep appreciation that Mongolians have for their country, its natural beauty and the inspiring deep blue sky above the vast Mongolian landscape. Mongolian songs are often about beloved horses and the beauty of the Mongolian countryside. Herders sing while riding their horses and most Mongolians are expected to know at least one song to be shared with others on special occasions or just to lighten the heart. Khoomi Singing which also known as Throat Singing, allows the singer to produce harmonic tones that can mirror the sounds of waterfalls, the steppe winds blowing, and the chants of Buddhist monks. Khoomi singers use their diaphragms like a bellows on a bagpipe to emit a steady bass note while simultaneously producing a higher nasal tone and essentially carrying two tunes at the same time. The traditional Long Song is the great Mongolian classical form of singing and is a powerful way of musically expressing deep emotions for loved ones, the land, nature and beloved horses. Of all the Mongolian musical instruments the Morin Khurr (Horse Head Fiddle) has the most prominent place in Mongolian musical forms. Legend has it that a long time ago when the beloved horse of a young Mongolian died, he made a musical instrument from its hair and hide to remind him of his dear friend. The Morin Khurr can produce the rich varied tones of a cello or be coaxed to sound like a horse neighing and galloping.

Mongolian culture and history has been formed in large part by the dynamic forces of nature and struggle that are embodied in the ancient nomadic existence of the Mongol peoples. From the time of the earliest known signs of human presence in the Mongolian heartland till today, the area we call Mongolia has been the birthplace of many famous tribes like the Huns, Scythians, Mongols and Turks that went on to become powerful catalysts for change in world history under Genghis Khan and his grandson Kublai Khan (Chinese Yuan Dynasty).

Ujimqin Grasslands

The MC comes from the the *Ujimqin* (wū zhū mù qìn 乌珠穆沁) grasslands located east and north of Xilin Hot. The *Ujimqin* grassland with numerous rivers and small lakes is considered the best grassland in China. The most beautiful place is the bend on the *Xilin River* (xī lín hé 锡林河), the soul of the grassland. The meandering river is like a silver ribbon conjuring up visions of the remote past. Originating in *Chifeng City* (chì fēng shì 赤峰市), the 270 kilometers river winds like a *Hada* (hǎ dá 哈达) (a long piece of silk used as a greeting gift among the

Mongolian and Tibetan people) a stunning attraction to people from far and near. Volcano lava is witness to the enormous geological changes, which have taken place on the Xilin Gol Grassland.

The extreme climactic conditions of Mongolia brings enormous fluctuations of weather with very hot, parched summers and winters with temperatures of 60 degrees below. The sustained severe cold causes massive loss of livestock herds almost every year. This very difficult environment requires great strength and deep reserves of will to survive and thrive in. Mongolian people have lived and thrived in this unforgiving environment and have a deep enduring fondness for their homeland. The last decade has also seen a new phenomenon of which is the encroachment from the modern society especially with the massive development of the energy sector including the traditional coal mining and the more recent alternative energy in the form of wind farms that increasingly encroach the grasslands and threaten the traditional herding.

2. The Female Sami Character (SC)

The female character will be partially based on the story of Mari Boine' (*Fly Med Meg*, Author = Pers Lars Tonstad, Kage Publishing House)- Norway's leading Sami vocalist, and Internationally acclaimed World Music performer - Mari Boine, from the Sami indigenous folk group, was born and raised in Gámehisnjárga, a village on the river Anarjohka in Karasjok municipality in Finnmark, in the far north of Norway.

The **Sami people**, also spelled **Sámi**, or **Saami**, are the arctic indigenous people inhabiting Sápmi, which today encompasses parts of far northern Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Kola Peninsula of Russia, and the border area between south and middle Sweden and Norway. Their traditional languages are the Sami languages and are classified as a branch of the Uralic language family. This region is famous for its Northern lights. Traditionally, the Sami have pursued a variety of livelihoods, including coastal fishing, fur trapping and sheep herding. Their best known means of livelihood is semi-nomadic reindeer herding, with which about 10% of the Sami are connected and 2,800 actively involved on a full-time basis. *The Samis like the mongolians have music as an important part of their daily culture.* The joik is a unique form of cultural expression for the Sami people in "Sápmi". Each joik is meant to reflect a person or place. It usually has short lyrics or no lyrics at all. This type of song can be deeply personal or spiritual in nature. Improvisation is not unusual. Before the arrival of the Scandinavian missionaries and settlers some 400 years ago the Sami were strongly attached to animistic beliefs which circles around that of an immaterial force that animates the universe through the existence of individual spirits and beings that inhabit natural objects. These were stones or pieces of wood called "Seidi". These inanimate objects were considered to harbor spirits and hence to harbor supernatural powers. In some sense we were closer to the Vikings where ideas about principal gods like thunder, the sun, the moon and the wind and hunting, in their closeness and familiarity with the Sami beliefs. High mountains were often considered sacred and called "saivo". Through these beliefs was practiced a form of Shamanism by the healers called "noaidi" who through the use of their drums called "runebomma" they came in contact with the spirits.

Boine's parents made a living from salmon fishing and farming. She grew up steeped in the region's natural environment, but also amidst the strict form of Christianity based on teachings of Laestadius¹. Singing in the

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lars_Levi_Laestadius

traditional Sami joik style was considered 'the devil's work'. The local school that Boine attended reflected a very different world from her family's. All the teaching was in Norwegian. As Boine grew up, she started to rebel against being an inferior Lappish woman in Norwegian society. For instance, the booklet accompanying the CD 'Leahkastin' (Unfolding) is illustrated with photographs with racist captions like "*Lapps report for anthropological measurement*", "*Typical female Lapp*", "*A well-nourished Lapp*"; and it ends with a photo of Boine herself as a girl, captioned "*Mari, one of the rugged Lapp-girl types*" and attributed "*(Photo: Unidentified priest)*".

When Boine's album *Gula Gula* was first released on Peter Gabriel's Real World label in July 1990, its front cover showed an iconic image of the tundra of the far north, the eye of a Snowy Owl. The front cover curiously did not show the name of the album, or the name or face of Marie Boine herself; the back cover printed the name 'Mari Boine Persen', the Persen surname identifying her as a Norwegian rather than a Sami. On the release on her own Lean label, the album cover explicitly names Mari Boine with her Sami surname, and shows her in full Sami costume as a shamanistic dancer of her own people, while the white background, like the Snowy Owl of the original release, hints at the snows of the north. Boine's other songs are more positive, often singing of the beauty and wildness of Sapmi (Lapland). The title track of 'Gula Gula' asks the listener to remember 'that the earth is our mother'. Boine sings in a traditional folk style, using the yodelling 'yoik' voice, with a range of accompanying instruments and percussion. For example, on 'Gula Gula' the instruments used are drum, guitar, electric bass clarinet, dozo n'koni, ganga, claypot, darboka, tambourine, seed rattles, cymbal, clarinet, piano, frame drum, saz, drone drum, hammered dulcimer, bosoki, overtone flute, bells, bass, quena, charango and antara.

Tromsø, Capital of Northern Norway

Tromsø is the eighth-largest municipality in Norway with a population 69,116, and the centre of the ninth-largest urban area, with a population of 58,486. Located over 300 kilometres (190 miles) inside the Arctic Circle at 69°40'33"N 18°55'10"E. the city is home to the world's most northerly university and also houses the most northerly botanical garden and planetarium and is notable for its magnificent Northern Lights which brings over 50 000 tourists in the darkest winter months from November to February. There are many mountains surrounding the Tromsø island and beyond of which the most magnificent are The Lyngen Alps mountain range lies along the Tromsø-Lyngen municipal border.

Eastern Finnmark - Kautokeino and Karasjok

Eastern Finnmark is home to the Norwegian reindeer herders with Kautokeino (Guovdageaidnu) and Karasjok (Kárásjohka=) being the two cultural and administrative centres. The physiography is that of vast prairies and mountains. Karasjok hosts the Sami Parliament.

3. The Nepali Mountaineering Instructor (NC)

The story of the *Nepali Character* will be partially built on the life of Tashi Jangbu Sherpa a mountaineering instructor and the owner and operator of Everest Trekking. Tashi a Sherpa he grew up in the village of Namche Bazaar. **Namche Bazaar** (also Nemche Bazaar or Namche Baza; Nepali) is a village in Solu Khumbu District in the Sagarmatha Zone of north-eastern Nepal. The name of the Sherpa ancestors was presumed to be called “Shyar Khamba” meaning the People who came from eastern Kham, and the place where they settled was called “Syar Khumbu”. As the time passed the “Shyar Khamba”, inhabitants of shyar Khumbu, were called Sherpa. This was several 100 years before the Gurkha King of Nepal united the different tribes to a nation state now Nepal. The Sherpa like the Sami and Mongolians peoples have had a strong animistic belief and also hold the mountains sacred of which the Amadablam mountain is of special significance embodying special cosmic powers. Amadablam is clearly visible from Namche and facing the great Chomolungma (Everest Mountain) seen further to the north.

Tashi was born and raised in Namche. In 1979, while a student of engineering, Tashi was selected for Nepal's first-ever mountaineering training course in Manang. After several years of climbing including Mt. Everest, he was chosen to go to ENSA (Ecole Nationale de Ski et d'Alpinisme) in Chamonix to be certified as a guide, and decided not to go Russia to study engineering as originally planned but to become a professional mountain instructor. In addition to climbing extensively in the Swiss, French and Italian Alps, as well as in Dolomites, he was also an instructor at the Norwegian Mountaineering School in Hemsedal. Tashi started Everest Trekking in 1982. Tashi made the first ascents of Mt. Bhrikuti, Yak Khawa, and Naur Peak, and has led a number of other noteworthy expeditions, such as the 1988 Tri-National (Nepal, Japan, China) Everest Traverse Expedition, which was first such endeavor to be broadcasted live on television worldwide. It was Tashi's brainchild project to organize the first Sherpa Mt. Everest speed climb to set a world record by Kaji Sherpa. Tashi, who speaks seven languages, has always built long term relationships with his fellow mountaineers, including Sir Edmund Hillary, Maurice Herzog, Reinhold Messner, Hans Kammerlander, Kurt Diemberger, Dr Oswald Oelz, Darko Berljak, Pierre Beghin and Ales Kunaver.

Namche Bazaar Village , Amadablam Mountain and Tengboche Monastery of the Solu Khumbu, Nepal

Namche Bazaar² is a Village Development Committee (Namche) in Solukhumbu District in the Sagarmatha Zone of northeastern Nepal home to Mountain Everest. It is located within the Solu Khumbu area at 3,440 metres (11,286 ft) at its low point, populating the sides of a hill. Namche is the main trading center and tourist hub for the Solu Khumbu region with many Nepalese officials, a police check, post and a bank.

Ama Dablam is known as one of the most impressive mountains in the world, not for its altitude, but for its beauty, aesthetics and the pure exposure encountered high on its flanks. ""Ama" means mother, grandmother or even world. "Dablam" means charm box, and is a special pendant worn by elder Sherpa women that holds precious items. The mountain has a hanging glacier that resembles a dablam and the two extending ridges are outstretched like a maternal embrace. The trek to Ama Dablam Base Camp is one of the classic treks of the

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Namche_Bazaar

world. It follows the standard Everest Base camp trek route up the Khumbu Valley, through Namche Bazaar and detours to Ama Dablam base camp just outside of Tyangboche Monastery . Most parties attempt the SW ridge, climbing expedition style, fixing ropes, ferrying loads, and acclimatizing slowly.

Tengboche Monastery (or **Thyangboche Monastery**), also known as **Dawa Choling Gompa**, located in the Tengboche village in Khumjung in the Khumbu region of eastern Nepal is a Tibetan Buddhist monastery of the Sherpa community.³ Situated at 3,867 metres (12,687 ft), the monastery is the largest gompa in the Khumbu region of Nepal. The monastery was built in 1916 by Lama Gulu with strong links to its mother monastery known as the Rongbuk Monastery in Tibet. However, in 1934, it was destroyed by an earthquake and was subsequently rebuilt. In 1989, it was destroyed for a second time by a fire and then rebuilt with the help of volunteers and international assistance.

Tengboche monastery located amidst the Sagarmatha National Park (a UNESCO World Heritage Site of "outstanding universal value"), is draped with a panoramic view of the Himalayan Mountains, including the well known peaks of Tawache, Everest, Nuptse, Lhotse, Ama Dablam, and Thamserku. Tengboche is also the terminus site of the "Sacred Sites Trail Project" of the Sagarmatha National Park that attracts large number of tourists for trekking and mountaineering. It is a circular trail that covers 10 monasteries in a clockwise direction terminating in the Tengboche Monastery.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tengboche_Monastery