

**levinson concerts**

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## **TUBA TUBA** **Transatlantic Tandem by Tobias Schumacher**

Godard and Bargeron met for the first time in 2000 in a band formed by Rabih Abou-Kahlil for his Cactus of Knowledge production. The two got on like a house on fire right from the start, and they decided spontaneously to set up the band "Tuba!Tuba!". They brought in drummer Kenwood Dennard, an old friend of Dave's who had previously played with such jazz names as Charles Mingus, Chick Corea, Maceo Parker and Quincy Jones. The second European was the accordion virtuoso Luciano Biondini who played with Michel in Rabih's band.

Tuba!Tuba! is one of those rare jazz formations in which two soloists have dedicated themselves to the same instrument, discovering suprising synergies during playing. When the two play together, the result is a powerpack of virtuosity and wit, whether live or on a recording.

From 1970-1978 Dave Bargeron belonged to the horn section of the jazz-rock legend, Blood Sweat & Tears where he played alongside Tom Malone, Lou Marini and Lou Soloff. 'I loved being with that band, but rock-and-roll was certainly not my first love in music. I have always had a tendency towards jazz'.

In the 80s, Dave played with the Word of Mouth Big Band of bass player Jaco Pastorius, the Gil Evans Orchestra; with Jerry Mulligan, Pat Methany and with the tuba sextet Gravity. Even today, he is a member of the George Russell Living Time Orchestra, George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band and incidentally, one of the most sought after studio musicians in New York. His jazz affinity did not prevent Bargeron from putting his stamp on Paul Simon's seminal album "Graceland". Eric Clapton and Mick Jagger, with whom he made albums, are among the admirers of his Tuba, Trombone and Euphonium playing. These days he has also mastered the Sakbut, the ancient precursor of the trombone.

Michel Godard underwent a completely different development through classical training. Born in 1960 in Belfort eastern France, Godard was admitted to the Philharmonic Orchestra of

Radio-France although he had started on the trumpet at the age of 13 and did not start playing Tuba (and later also the Serpent) until he was 17. Soon afterwards he joined the National Orchestra of France, Ensemble Musique Vivante, Ensemble Jacque Moderne and La Venice Baroque Ensemble, Arban Chamber Brass Quintet. Little wonder that, with recourse to such a fund of experience, he gives International Master Classes, and has been discovered by European Jazz fans as well as the Avant Garde.

Like Bargeron, Godard found the traditional world of music too claustrophobic: "I was always looking for new kinds of expression for my instrument. The tuba is just as interesting for creating new things as the saxophone. But the history of the Tuba is far too short. There are wonderful stories about the flute and trumpet, while the tuba as an instrument lacks any real history. This is the horizon I share with Dave. We have set out to learn many new things and we hope to have infinite possibilities ahead of us. What we would like to prove is that the Tuba has a future as a solo instrument. There is a lot we would like to do."

Godard's solo in the current live program is an adaptation of tunes played by Tibetan shepards on their long horns. For a good four minutes, he holds out on the tuba without interrupting the impressively fast flow of notes, by pausing for a breath. He does get into a sweat though. Dave Bargeron counters this effort with a classic from American jazz literature, John Coltrane's Giant Steps. Bargeron meticulously sings the melody and plays the bass line through his tuba simultaneously and goes on to improvise using the same technique.

Dave muses: "What we have in common is our love for the tuba. Musically speaking, I much prefer new Jazz compositions, whereas Michel loves music and arrangements that go back as far as the Renaissance." Michel adds: "

The exciting thing about us is the different way we play the Tuba, giving the audience a chance to compare the French and the American school on stage and get to know two styles of working on our instrument. We can demonstrate to the audience how different two people's improvisation can sound on the same instrument. That's got to be interesting!" "