



# TOM BECKHAM / BRAD SHEPIK DUO

VIBRAPHONE GUITAR

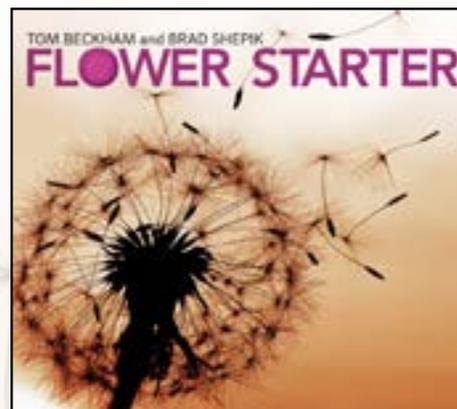
The unique duo of vibraphonist Tom Beckham and guitarist Brad Shepik is a collaborative effort which seeks to explore a mutual language. These two diverse musicians have been writing pieces that highlight the wide range of stylistic nuances and high-wire delicacy available in the vibes-guitar duo format. Drawing upon influences of jazz, folk, and modern classical the duo creates an intimate and dynamic music that is sophisticated, lyrical, and richly layered.

Their debut recording entitled *Flower Starter* (2015) documents their unique interplay and features seven tracks of original tunes, plus the George Coleman tune "Blues Inside Out."

Beckham and Shepik have been playing together for more than 10 years—first as sidemen in George Schuller's Circle Wide band, then later as bandmates in Shepik's own quartet, resulting in the release of Shepik's own critically acclaimed release *Across The Way* (Songlines Recordings). With *Flower Starter*, Shepik and Beckham continue to explore new ground, each contributing material for this dynamic new collaboration.

Beckham explains: "The inspiration for this collaboration with Brad came to me one night while packing up the vibes after a Circle Wide gig, and the sounds and phrases of what we had just played were still percolating in my head—especially a couple of duet interactions we got into during the set. I started to wonder what it would sound like if we were able to do a whole concert featuring just the two of us. Since we already seemed to be finishing each other's phrases in the large group, the idea of a duo seemed like it could offer an even greater chance to explore our language."

"For me the process of this group has been an ear opening experience," agrees Shepik. "Not just for the fact of getting to play Tom's tunes which are really inspiring in the degree to which they reflect his original voice and in how fun they are to play, but also this group has turned my focus to the sound of the guitar by itself and really opened up some new avenues in



The new recording *Flower Starter* is available at [www.beckhamshepik.com](http://www.beckhamshepik.com)

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"Initially, we started to explore the duo just playing on standard jazz tunes that we know well," says Beckham, "plus I had some tunes that I had written specifically for vibes and another chordal instrument that had yet to find a home, so we looked at those. Brad is always writing things and he brought some of his music to play—we even tried duo versions of tunes that we would usually play with his quartet. Soon a program seemed to emerge, as well as the joy from musically experimenting in this configuration."

"What is so interesting to me about pairing the vibraphone and the guitar is the great range of dynamics you can achieve on both instruments. I want us to explore all these possibilities with our instruments, whether it's over a jazz classic, an intricately composed piece, a blues drone, or a completely spontaneous statement. With *Flower Starter*, I think we've just begun to scratch the surface."

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**ARTIST WEBSITE:** [www.beckhamshepik.com](http://www.beckhamshepik.com)

**FLOWER STARTER**  
**AUDIO SAMPLES:** [click here >>](#) 

**PURCHASE MUSIC:** [beckhamshepik.com](http://beckhamshepik.com) [iTunes](#) [CDBaby](#) **VIDEO:** [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

## Guitarist Brad Shepik

In addition to performing with his own groups, The Brad Shepik Trio, The Brad Shepik Quartet and Human Activity Suite, across Europe and North America, Shepik has performed and/or recorded with Paul Motian, Joey Baron, Bob Brookmeyer, Carla Bley, Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra, Dave Douglas' Tiny Bell Trio as well as oud/violin virtuoso Simon Shaheen's Quantara and Bulgarian saxophone legend Yuri Yunakov. Shepik also continues to perform with the Balkan/jazz groups- Matt Darriau's Paradox Trio and Pachora with Chris Speed, Jim Black and Skuli Sverrisson. He has recorded 8 albums as a leader and appears on over 70 recordings as a sideman. Currently, he performs solo guitar concerts as well as leading a quartet and a trio. As a sideman he is touring with Paradox Trio, Jamie Baum, Combo Nuvo, George Schuller and Arthur Kell.

"Shepik's got the mind of a pioneer. The rhythmic complexity of his compositions has few parallels in jazz -or any other genre, for that matter. With all his exotic influences, and all his different axes, he makes us rethink what it means to be a guitarist and a musician. There's no telling where he'll go next." —*allaboutjazz*

"Shepik is one of the new jazz players who have redefined the "creative" or avant-garde side of the music in a way that is challenging but also beautiful and fun."—*Will Layman, Popmatters Music Review*

## Vibraphonist Tom Beckham

Leading his own groups, The Tom Beckham Trio, Norville Trio, and his quartet SLICE, Tom Beckham has released three CD's to date: "Suspicious" (Fresh Sound New Talent, 1999) "Center Songs" (Sunnyside, 2006), and "Rebound" (2008). He also performs on solo vibraphone.

As a versatile sideman in New York for more than 20 years, Beckham has toured with/performed and/or recorded with a diverse list of groups and musicians including George Schuller's Circle Wide, the JC Sanford Jazz Orchestra, jazz guitarist Rale Micic, Betty Black/Sylvia Black, jazz vocalist Jaclyn Guillou; the swing-era ensembles of Lapis Luna, Flying Home, and Bliss Blood; 'New Music' ensembles the Joseph C. Phillips' Numinous Ensemble, cellist Jody Redhage's Fire In July, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP), as well as session work for PBS and HBO.

"Here's someone who makes the vibraphone sound like the most grand of jazz instruments."—*John Book/thisisbooksmusic.com*

"Beckham's approach is reminiscent of older band leaders like Paul Motian and Chico Hamilton, but Beckham's work has a sound all its own—which is what jazz is really about."—*Rhapsody.com*

"...the hidden treasure."—*The NYC Jazz Record*

"...the secret star of an outstanding team with his symphonic way of unfolding sound and his subtle blends."—*Südkurier Constance*



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## REVIEWS

Time and again, I'm mesmerized by the lovely pairing of guitar and vibes. I love the way vibraphone's icy elegance and guitar's radiant warmth mesh conflicting qualities into a singular characteristic. I adore the way in which the two instruments are able to exist in both melodic and rhythmic states simultaneously, and the appealing similarities in how it manifests. And I'm transfixed by the sense of perpetual motion, of an endless dance these two instruments can conjure up when locked in conversation. *Flower Starter*, the 2015 release from guitarist Brad Shepik and vibraphonist Tom Beckham gets that instrumental collaboration all alone in the spotlight where it's appealing facets and enviable connectivity points can shine brightly.

Opening tracks "Rumor" and "Medium" have an airy ambiance, as the endless possibilities for melodic expansion are carried away on rhythmic currents as varied as sunlight glowing on the surface of a river, whereas "Duet One" takes a more methodical approach to motion, and the dividends paid are the greater detail in which the melody is shaped and expanded. And all three, with their airy motion and melodic depth, are strongly reminiscent of a previous collaboration on Brad Shepik's excellent 2011 quartet date *Across the Way*.

Title-track "Flower Starter" is about as gorgeous as a song can get. It begins with one melodic thread, then proceeds to unravel it and unleash a seemingly endless cascade of reflections of that original statement. "Episode" works a thick line of melodic thought, but lets little tangles and filaments peel off from the center. The groovy "Blues Inside Out" adds a playful touch to the recording, as well as structure to its up-tempo mode. "Duet 2" is a conversation parsed together from crossed wires and intertwining lines of communication, and the meaning is found in the emergent patterns. "Duet 3" is a catchy little song.

Just a beautiful album.

—*Dave Sumner, [www.birdistheworm.com](http://www.birdistheworm.com)*

## SIMPLE TEXT BIOS

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