

# gangbé brass band

“In the band’s dizzyingly gorgeous horn lines, rolling vamps carry sunny African chorales, and polyrhythmic voodoo grooves host harmonies that slide in all directions at once. The music just plain sings.”

TIME OUT

“New Orleans and Lagos both seemed equally close to Benin when the Gangbé Brass Band made its euphoric New York debut... The band has the world in its grasp; its music leaps among the many ethnic traditions of its home, Benin, and beyond to Africa and the New World’s African diasporas, segueing from traditional voodoo rhythms to jazz without missing a syncopated beat.”

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Benin’s explosive and colorful Gangbé Brass Band explore the rich voodoo culture and ancient songs of their country, the legendary Dahomey, combined with jazz melodies to produce an ecstatic contemporary sound. The Gangbé Brass Band was created in 1994 when eight musicians, all from Cotonou-Benin, came together. These young jazz musicians had been playing in different groups before creating this unusual fusion of traditional styles. Gangbé Brass Band’s vision is to promote the originality of the music of Benin around the world.

Their playfulness is front and center in their live performance. They often start a concert from off stage, sometimes seated in the audience. One percussionist can be seen playing a large metal bell balanced on his head. It will take a few minutes for audiences to readjust their eyes and ears to the bright colors of their traditional garb, the unexpected combinations of timbres, and the happy but serious playing. Adept listeners might catch familiar musical references, from New Orleans marching bands to Afrobeat riffs.

The juxtaposition of sounds of Gangbé Brass Band—at once hard-hitting and sweet, simultaneously mischievous and soulful—catches listeners off guard, making it hard for them to decide whether to stare in awe or step onto the dance floor. Either way, Gangbé conjures up a place and time that is both real and magical.

This exotic ensemble is inspired by traditional songs and rhythms featuring saxophone, and trumpets, fused with euphonium, African percussion and warm, melodic vocals. The fusion reveals as much as possible of the musical tradition, while including a Western tone, to link the past and the future. Their energetic and vibrant performances create trance-inducing rhythms that are as powerful on the dance floor and concert hall as at traditional African funerals and weddings.



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