



This much-garlanded South African pianist is a legend in his own country, where he began his career under the name Dollar Brand at the dawn of the 1960s before leaving for Europe, and later, the USA, where he established himself as a leading jazz musician and worked with the likes of Duke Ellington, Max Roach and Randy Weston. At 84, **Abdullah Ibrahim** is still going strong, and although he doesn't say much on stage - he didn't speak to the audience throughout the entire concert - when it comes to music, he's supremely eloquent.

He came out on the stage alone at first, and sat at the piano to play a lovely wistful piece of solo extemporisation full of beguiling melodies and opulent harmonies. Ten minutes elapsed before his six-piece band, Ekaya, took to the stage. The group, comprising a four-piece brass section (piccolo/flute, tenor sax, trombone and baritone sax) plus bass and drums, offered some wonderfully-arranged music, with Ibrahim offering delicate piano asides. As well as providing some sonorous horn charts, Ekaya's individual members also proved to be first class soloists as well. Even so, the afternoon belonged to Abdullah Ibrahim, whose gentle music - refined and elegant - held the audience captive for 75 enthralling minutes.

(Charles Waring) □