

# ABDULLAH IBRAHIM TRIO

**PIANO** Abdullah Ibrahim

**FLUTE, PICCOLO, CLARINET AND SAXOPHONE** Cleave Guyton

**BASS AND CELLO** Noah Jackson

Zellerbach Theatre

Sunday, November 10 @ 7 PM

There will be no intermission.

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### **Abdullah Ibrahim** (Piano)

Ibrahim is South Africa's most distinguished pianist and a world-respected master musician. Born in Cape Town, he became known as Dollar Brand and was exposed to a melting pot of influences: African traditional music, Christian hymns, gospel tunes and spirituals, as well as American jazz, township and classical music. Out of this blend of the secular and religious, the traditional and the modern, Ibrahim's distinctive sound and musical vocabulary was born. His grandmother, a founding member of the AME church, a branch of the original church in Philadelphia, arranged for him to have piano lessons at the age of six.

Ibrahim made his professional debut at age 15, playing and later recording with the Tuxedo Slickers, a big band in Cape Town inspired by Erskine Hawkins from Birmingham, Alabama. In 1958, he created his own Dollar Brand Trio to showcase original compositions and those of jazz masters. His groundbreaking septet, the Jazz Epistles, formed in 1959 in Johannesburg with co-leader Kippie Moeketsi, the brilliant classically trained clarinetist and jazz saxophone player. They recorded *Jazz Epistle, Verse 1* – the first jazz album by Black South African musicians.

Due to the strict apartheid laws and increased government harassment of musicians, as well as the notorious Sharpeville massacre 1960 and subsequent imprisonment of Nelson Mandela, Dollar Brand left the country with his partner and vocalist Sathima Bea Benjamin and moved to Switzerland. There, Benjamin convinced Duke Ellington to listen to the Dollar Brand Trio at the Club Africana in Zürich, leading to *Duke Ellington presents the Dollar Brand Trio* and Benjamin's recording, *A Morning in Paris*, which was released years later. A move to New York City in 1965 further cemented his career as a leading musician, interacting with contemporaries such as Don Cherry, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Carlos Ward and Billy Higgins. In 1967, he received a Rockefeller Foundation grant to study privately with Professor Hall Overton of the Julliard Music School.

Searching for spiritual harmony, Dollar Brand returned to Cape Town, where he converted to Islam, taking the name Abdullah Ibrahim. In 1974, he recorded *Mannenberg – Is Where It's Happening*, which became the unofficial national anthem for Black South Africans. In

the 1980's, Ibrahim and Ekaya, his newly formed band, had residency performances at New York's Sweet Basil Jazz Club. Ibrahim played African National Congress international solidarity events, the highlight of which being a Central Park concert commemorating the 70th birthday of Nelson Mandela who was still imprisoned. In 1990, Mandela, freed from prison, invited Ibrahim to come home to South Africa. He memorably performed at Mandela's inauguration in 1994, where Mandela said about Ibrahim: "Bach, Beethoven, we have better!"

Ibrahim has composed several scores for film including the award-winning soundtracks for Claire Denis's *Chocolat* (1998), *No Fear, No Die* (1990) and Idrissa Quedraogo's *Tilai* (1990). He was featured in the 2002 documentary *Amandla!: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*.

For over half a century, Ibrahim has toured the world, appearing at major concert halls, clubs and festivals, giving sell-out performances as a soloist, trio or septet (Ekaya). He collaborated with classical orchestras, notably the European Youth Orchestra, Munich Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Babelsberg Film Orchestra Berlin, Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra and Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra. Big band projects include working with Danish Radio and Germany's NDR and WDR.

Ibrahim has received many acknowledgments and honorary doctorates for his life's work, including NEA Jazz Master 2019. He remains at his zenith as a musician and as a tireless initiator of new projects and currently resides in South Africa and Germany with his partner, Dr. Marina Umari. Ibrahim has over 100 albums and over 300 compositions to his name.

### **Cleave Guyton** (Flute, Piccolo, Clarinet and Saxophone)

Guyton is a professional musician who plays saxophones, flutes and the clarinet. He has been fortunate to have worked with artists such as Aretha Franklin, Abdullah Ibrahim, Joe Henderson, Stanley Turrentine, Nat Adderley, Abby Lincoln, The Duke Ellington Orchestra, Jon Hendricks, The Ray Charles Orchestra, Lionel Hampton, The Count Basie Orchestra, The Cab Calloway Orchestra, Little Jimmy Scott, Spike Lee, Joe Williams, *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Ronny Jordan, The Mingus Big Band, Cleo Laine and Chaka Khan. Guyton also has a master's degree in music from the Aaron Copland School of Music in New York City.

### **Noah Jackson** (Bass and Cello)

Jackson is a Grammy® Award-nominated bassist, cellist, composer and curator from Detroit, Michigan. As a member of NEA Jazz Master Abdullah Ibrahim's ensemble, Ekaya, since 2010, Jackson has performed internationally to critical acclaim and is also a member of the Recording Academy. A recipient of the Creative Engagement and UMEZ grants from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the state of New York, he produced *On A Turquoise Cloud*, a work based on the music of Duke Ellington at the Schomburg Center in September 2019 and performed at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra @ The Cube in February 2020. His group also recorded an album, *Contemplations: A Suite*, in 2011, which has garnered critical praise. As a leader, Jackson was commissioned to compose and direct his Asé Quartet in a multidisciplinary collaborative art project, *Practicing: Silence*, at Grace Farms under the direction of Kenyon Adams as part of its *Practicing* series alongside featured dancers from the American Ballet Theatre. He has also led his Detroit-based Tangent String Quartet in a rare performance of *String Quartet No. 2* by Black composer Florence B. Price as part of a video series presented by the Detroit Institute of the Arts in February 2021. A graduate of Michigan State University (BM) under the direction of Rodney Whitaker, and Manhattan School of Music (MM) with Dr. Larry Ridley, Jackson currently resides in Detroit, MI.