



# Trio on song and in synch

**CONCERT**

Brad Mehldau Trio  
 Becks Music Box  
 Review: Rosalind Appleby

You know you're cool when you can rework a tune from *The Sound of Music* and have a hip jazz audience transfixed.

Brad Mehldau fears no boundaries. His trio's coming gigs include London's Wigmore Hall, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and collaborating with opera star Anne Sofie von Otter.

At the beginning of their Australian tour Mehldau (piano), Larry Grenadier (bass) and Jeff Ballard (drums) demonstrated the synchronised intimacy of the jazz piano trio.

They opened with a set of original Mehldau tunes, delivered with a quiet confidence that made it easy to relax into their expressive world.

The bossa nova groove of *Twiggy* was a display of rhythmic elasticity while Mehldau put his classical training to work in *Be Blues*, his increasingly contrapuntal solo



**The Brad Mehldau Trio**

executed with smooth lyricism. A composition from the movie *Easy Rider* built an impressive crescendo from a series of slow-moving chords.

The set peaked with a fast, fragmented number that featured Ballard in a drum solo that eschewed

the typical fortissimo climax for an intensity created instead from textures and layers. It was dense and impulsive improvisation.

*Something Good*, from *The Sound of Music*, came as a complete contrast. Mehldau's semi reharmonised arrangement was in triple time, the familiar melody picked out on piano with a sweetness that took the breath away. Mehldau ventured unaccompanied into an increasingly dissonant piano solo held steady by an incessantly repeated anchor note, the percussive throb reminiscent of Ballard's drum solo earlier in the night.

And that's when I realised the essence of what makes this trio so good.

Whether it's the percussive groove generated from Mehldau at the piano, Grenadier's nimble fingers suddenly taking over the melody on the bass, or the tones of a chord that resonate from Ballard's cymbals; the group have begun to share each other's DNA. It's a conversation where they finish each other's sentences. This is trio playing at its very best.