

BROTHERHOOD OF BREATH

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M.M.

THE Brotherhood Of Breath's concert at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall last Wednesday was not, by their own high standards, one of their most successful gigs. But then they had much to contend with — new material, in the shape of Chris McGregor's suite "Our God Is A Consuming Fire," a rather sparse audience, the stiff formality of South Bank architecture and a drummer who didn't show until after the interval.

Louis Moholo's wife had been taken ill, so the Brotherhood's driving force couldn't make the first half of the programme.

Fortunately, Anthony Braxton's drummer Barry Altschul was in town and agreed to sit in, thus saving the band

some embarrassment. However, Altschul, who has specialised in more cerebral forms of jazz (as with Paul Bley, Circle etc), seemed reluctant to apply the necessary muscle to get the Brotherhood off the ground and the first half was consequently uneven in quality.

Part two was another matter altogether, however, as the new, improved Brotherhood took the stage — Chris McGregor (piano), Harry Miller and Johnny Dyani (basses), Moholo (drums), Dudu Pukwana (alto sax), Elton Dean (alto, saxello), Mike Osborne (alto, clarinet), Evan Parker (tenor), Joachim van der Grant (baritone, flute), Mark Charig (cornet, tenor horn) and Radu Malfatti (trombone).

Any disappointment felt in the first half was more than compensated for the moment Moholo got behind the drums.

Resisting the temptation to rock out in traditional kwela fashion until the final moments, the Brotherhood stretched out in a long series of inter-related themes, solos and duets. I always enjoy hearing Evan Parker play melodically, and his solo, working from reserved beginnings steadily out into the unknown where he was eventually joined by Mike Osborne, was remarkable. There's something strangely reassuring about free music played on top of conventional rhythms.

The highlight of the whole show, however, was a stunning bass duet between Harry Miller and Johnny Dyani, punctuated by snare explosions from the mighty Moholo.

South Bank jobsworths ruled

out the possibility of an encore by turning up the house-lights while the band were still playing, which was a drag. I could have listened at least a couple of hours longer. Would that they had hit that grave earlier. — STEVE LAKE.