

Entertainment

WEEKEND CONCERT REVIEWS

A creative musical tribute
to Black History Month

Reviews by Peter Lefevre

Programming is always a chore for the civic-minded orchestra. If box office-minded impresarios had their way, we'd never hear anything but Mozart and Tchaikovsky.

If theory snobs had theirs, we'd get nothing but Schoenberg, Cage and Philip Glass, Philip Glass, Philip Glass.

A champagne toast, then, to the Carson-Dominguez Hills Symphony Orchestra and the Dominguez Hills Jazz Ensemble, which on Sunday afternoon presented a wonderfully creative musical tribute to Black History Month.

Granted, the usual crowd was represented: Joplin, Still, Ellington and Strayhorn. The selections were witty and unexpected, though and tossed into the middle of the mix was a strikingly apropos work of Milhaud's.

Hector Salazar took the baton for the introductory piec-

es: four of Joplin's rags. Salazar paid close attention to the composer's omnipresent warning to "Never play ragtime fast!" as a result, Joplin's fecund compositional mind was displayed with verve and charm.

The crafty arrangements, edited by ragmeister Gunther Schuller, offered each section a chance to join in. Despite a shaky trumpet solo during "The Easy Winners," the performances were grand, full and high-spirited.

Milhaud's jazz-inspired "Creation of the World" followed. Composed in 1923, it bears similarities to Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" in its harmonic attempts to synthesize the African and European traditions.

Music director Frances Steiner took the helm and

guided her charges through the one-movement work with a steady hand.

The second half began with Still's "Dances of Panama." Of the four episodes, the third was most evocative. Titled "Punto," it floated along breezily. Also effective was the speedy, articulate "Cumbia y Congo."

The symphony then left the stage, and the remainder of the afternoon was given over to the Dominguez Hills Jazz Ensemble under the direction of Rod Butler.

"Satin Doll" and "Take the A Train" may not be the most original of choices, but the performances were a fine tribute to the composers. Solos by tenor saxophonist Chris Rice and trumpeter David Champion added some much-welcomed pizzazz.

CARSON-DH SYMPHONY/
DH JAZZ ENSEMBLE