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CALENDAR

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Brazen Overtures! in a Mostly American Program

After one got through wincing at its name, Brazen Overtures! proved to be a polished and thoroughly enjoyable ensemble, Los Angeles' only professional symphonic band.

Its Sunday afternoon concert, led by music director Héctor G. Salazar in the comfortable, acoustically friendly James R. Armstrong Theatre in Torrance, featured a mostly American and unhackneyed program.

Still, one could envision a more satisfying selection of pieces. On this occasion there seemed a couple too many works couched in the grayish academese so typical of much band music, and it was therefore the transcriptions that impressed most.

Chief among them, not surprisingly, was William Schaefer's sensitive and splashy transcription of Debussy's "Fêtes," which used the symphonic band's potential array of color better than anything else on the program. And Brazen Overtures!, which includes in its large arsenal of instruments a harp, two cellos and three double basses, met its timbral demands handily.

The ensemble consists of a strong group of individual musicians who play in tune and in

balance with each other and who execute their parts gracefully. They may not always play perfectly in time together, but this is still a new group, founded in late 1990. Salazar reveals a fluid and clear baton technique and an intelligent sensibility.

The concert opened with a solid account of Bernstein's "Candide" Overture, followed by Copland's brief "Letter From Home," highlighted by a richly intoned, uncredited trumpet solo.

A robust and appropriately dramatic performance of Norman Delio Joio's Hindemithian "Songs of Abelard," with forthright singing from baritone Ralph Cato, proved the most inspired of the original band works. Roger Nixon's "Elegy and Fanfare-March," neatly led by assistant conductor Douglas Bedell, and the Armenian Dances, Part 1 by Alfred Reed, rounded out the program.

—TIMOTHY MANGAN