

MUSIC REVIEW

Latin and classical, with jazz accompaniment

By JOSEF WOODARD

Special to The Times

During the Hollywood Bowl's summer season, jazz and classical components in the programming are traditionally granted visiting rights on different evenings, with little intermingling of idioms. That general rule was bent, though not broken, at Thursday night's Los Angeles Philharmonic concert with the arrival of pianist Michel Camilo.

Best known as a jazz player, the Dominican-born Camilo is also a classically trained musician and composer. He makes a valiant — if not entirely convincing — attempt to stitch together jazz, classical and Latin elements in his Piano Concerto, around which Thursday's invitingly offbeat program of Latin American and Spanish music was built.

Camilo has a strong ally in the Philharmonic's summer maestro, Leonard Slatkin, who has led the BBC Symphony in a recording of the 1998 concerto. It's a composition that showcases the pianist setting his dynamic spirit busily to work, putting fairly simple themes through variations and injecting a few jazz chords into the orchestration. The Andante falls somewhere between Liszt and a jazz ballad, and the

final Allegro is a thrilling ride, including a whirring unison line toward the finish.

Sometimes, as both soloist and composer, Camilo seems unsure which side of the stylistic fence to favor, although classical manners prevail. Overall, this is accessible, romantically fueled music, agreeably flavored by jazz and Latin elements. It plays well in a casual outdoor setting where between-movement applause and baby noises are part of the ambient landscape.

Later, two brief solo piano pieces allowed Camilo's virtuosic jazz voice to emerge with a crisp, percussive touch reminiscent of Chick Corea. The pieces, though, seemed more flashily fragmentary than cohesive.

It was also a pleasure to hear lesser-known Latin American composers Thursday — Brazilians Oscar Lorenzo Fernandez and Camargo Guarnieri — even if in bite-sized portions. The evening's most substantial scores supplied a solid framing: Alberto Ginastera's "Estancia" Suite to open and Manuel de Falla's Three Dances from "The Three-Cornered Hat." Under Slatkin's assured guidance, both works were delivered with vigor, clarity and a critical pinch of Modernist mischief, giving the music its proper integrity and tang.