

Break

by KJthesleepdeprived

1. Clear and inventive deviation from the shared material between movements, all with an obviously repeated introduction. /20

Can someone say "Copland"? There were some great moments that very obviously transformed the opening material. The break between the shared material and the rest of the movement was nice in that it served as a low point in the dramatic arc every time, but strange in that it seemed to be walled off, almost to the point where it wouldn't be needed and the audience would recognize its repetition regardless; that is to say, a separation in separate movements wouldn't be totally necessary. The theme is so very long as well, that it really brings down the large-scale dramatic arc every time it opens.

What happens afterwards though is where the piece gets going. Sometimes I get the feeling the specific process of each movement isn't totally clear, but they eventually do come into their own, especially Break II, which I think is my favorite. Sometimes I feel as though the composer is trying to have it both ways with the references they make mid-movement, which was a nice touch, but sometimes extended a little long. In addition, a lot of the pauses between phrases, could have been smoothed over with another process to continue building upon the <D, F, C, A> motive. That being said, the sound world of this piece was varied and the pacing of the significant chord changes was extremely satisfying. **16/20**

2. A conclusive and satisfying, yet creatively combined final movement. /10

As a note to the composer, I'm writing this section first since it got the most varied reactions out of me of all the movements. The previous process blending was pretty apparent and I was a fan of some of the slight changes like the pizz. from Break III to arco, as well as the fragmented iteration of the main theme in the strings, most notably the first violin. Those things did not go over my head, and they were welcome additions to the sound. Those and more examples I won't use up space to list contributed to the marks in this category.

While it wasn't too much of a good thing, I question a few artistic choices, such as the extended horn solo, which while a drop in energy was initially a little strange, could have been an excellent way to work in counterpoint of the countermelody, especially since the cello solo later doesn't add much new in comparison to that horn solo. The movement was also very understated which is great, but some points that seemed to be climactic lacked some power that I was expecting, at least from a normal dramatic arc. Most notably this took place after the awesome build from m. 53 where two instruments are left out, and the counterpoint is undersold by the strings sustaining. Shortly thereafter, m. 62 is a great little section, but having only one instrument play that main melody was a little bit of a let down, though an intriguing idea on paper. The arc of the movement overall was very jumpy as a result, once it gets going past the build at the beginning; a pleasure to listen to but requiring some extra intellect to understand its flow. **8/10**

3. A good, semi-professional score and audio rendition of the work. /10

Score is very clean, although some markings could be shifted over to be more direct, like the arco markings in the first Break. Articulations were very welcome, and I'm glad the composer didn't assume that things would be consistent and marked the differences they wanted to be highlighted. The sound file was a little unbalanced whenever the horn came in, but a lot of things were very smooth and overall gave a nice and delightful, if not sometimes downplayed sound. **8.5/10**

4. Sound and realistic instrumentation and orchestration. /10

There are a lot of isolations in this piece, not only from the intro, but during. It seemed to be orchestrated in little pockets throughout the movement, forgoing a standard arc in favor of various similar moments. This isn't an issue in and of itself, but places heavy burden on the composer to make those changes meaningful. Sometimes I got it like in Break II, but other times it seemed unfortunately disjointed, like in Break I. The choices made to invert certain chords were nice from a voice leading perspective, but sometimes created unfavorable articulation mixes between voices. An example of this would be Break II, where there, instead of a voice exchange, seemed to be an orchestrational exchange, which ended up nullifying the exchange a little bit (mm. 34-41), almost as though the composer was trying to have it (like I said before) both ways. Overall, though, a very good job writing for the chosen instruments, making good use of ranges to achieve certain effects. **7.5/10**

TOTAL: 40/50