

Five Sententiae for Viola, Op. 324
by luderart

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

The literal repetition of the shared material is very welcome and obvious. The spanning arc of the main theme is clear and creates a satisfying contour-based connection for the audience, even spanning over different time signatures. In No. 1, for example, in m. 6, the highest note of every beat obviously creates a reference to that opening material. My biggest hope for these movements, however, was for something consistently distinct as opposed to movements that have neat little references in different places. I struggle to hear the specific difference between the processes in No. 1 and No. 4, and while both a musically cohesive, that strand of connection is tenuous. No. 3 is the most different, with its articulation differences and a parallel key, though the inverted figure starting m. 39 (like m. 22) is not so obviously connected to anything before without analysis of the related triad, and No. 2's running figures seem to be more related to *that* than the opening material. In its totality, I did wish for more phrase connection, and while I do recognize that that is a thematic element in and of itself, the very expressive lines that are used feel truncated and unfulfilling sometimes. The same goes for the lack of clear difference between the processes of, say, No. 2 and No. 3, where the gimmick of the movement are interspersed with material that struggles to stay in the foreground in comparison to the touch of the alterations. Overall, this creates music that to me is inconsistent enough to have the narrative be slightly out of touch with the audience, but all stylistically connected nonetheless. **17/20**

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

The final movement is a bit of an odd case for me. Transitory sections are for the most part absent; however, this could easily be due to the previous works' tendency of stopping between phrases. Despite this, I really do think some more overlapping processes could have been employed to create a sense of movement cohesion as opposed to movement cut-and-paste-ing. mm. 81-84 were a very clever instance of this: the two high notes of the contour matched the opening four bars's diatonic structure (though not chromatic, the relation was clear). More little touches like this would have been appreciated or even small connecting passages that make use of a similar contour or diatonic set/order. An example of this is found at the end of the movement's severe diminution of the opening material. This connection is great, but is separated from the previous music, making it more audible, yes, but disjointed and somewhat unnecessarily so. That being said, however, the processes that are used consistently (i.e. the process-spanning arc of a sixth in either direction) are nice touches that, despite not being totally blended, make for a fitting finale to the set. **7.5/10**

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

Score is clean, with little to no overlapping elements (though see the below category for extra written points). My main issue, as discussed previously before, is the lack of dynamics or expressive markings for performers. Even if an interpretive stance is to be placed on the writing, direction is always helpful as a guide. The audio file is also clean with good articulation distinctions, if not a little plain sounding throughout, most likely caused by the aforementioned issue. **8/10**

4. Sound and realistic instrumentation and orchestration. /10

The main thing that seems to keep showing up as a distinct problem are the written double stops. As no performance fingerings or markings are added, it really does *feel* like the composer wasn't sure on how performance practice would affect the resulting sound from a performer. Parallel motion most often caused this issue, particularly in thirds and fourths, where string crossings would force a performer to jump, likely inaccurately, to the pitches written, or start in an awkward to reach position. This problem is not present with pizzicati, but places like mm. 8-12 in Sententia No. 1 force difficult choices on the performer on whether to keep the position-transformational model consistent or practical.

Everything was nicely in range with moments of deviation clearly deviated from the rest of the texture. Bow markings would have been useful, as some of the resulting directions become unnatural; spaces between phrases is often not enough of a distinction. Overall, very good. **7/10**

TOTAL: 39.5/50