

HoYin Cheung

Sententia for Solo Cello and Orchestra

<https://www.youngcomposers.com/t38712/sententia-for-solo-cello-and-orchestra-poor-form-entry/>

Clear/inventive material / 20	18
Creative final movement / 10	8
Score and audio / 10	7
Realistic instrum/ orchestr / 10	6
<i>Total</i>	39

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

The shared material consists in 12-15 measures which take more than 5% in each part. Solo cello has been used in the first and third part, with some interventions in the second part. The texture is mainly monodic. In this case, it changes in some Sententiae, partially or in some isolated double stops. I consider the work and difficulty that is providing high interest in a coherent set like this one, based on homophony. This starting material is complex, rich in dynamics and range.

Born in chaos

The piece is written in a very chromatic style, almost free atonal. The timbral set is dominated by the strings with some intervention by light percussion and horns. The arch of this part is good, beginning with the shared material and going into the first pointillistic part naturally. At 2:00 we have a first climax ornamented with the snare drum. After that (2:30) the moment becomes lyrical with the cello standing out. Increasing force at 3:10 until the ultimate climax with block and dark chords about 3:40 and resolution in tranquility.

Prince's Troops

This part is also developed naturally from the shared material. The design is not so contrasting in intensities but in colors, as happens with the coming in of drums in m. 27 or the horns later. The chordal texture from

2:00, the solo cello, etc... The reminder of the main motive in a more joyful way...

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

Let's consider the third part as the final one, although there are less parts than expected.

Rite of the Dead

The third part starts also in heavy pointillism with no effort, that leads to complex polyphony in 1:00... (nice transition)... This part is richer in orchestration incorporating not heard before instruments, but in some sort of "little order".

As it says in the score in the final part "short moment of joy from flashbacks". In fact, many developing methods have been used in the three parts (pointillism, counterpoint, polyphony, homophony, block chords, planning, etc.) and this last one could well be the final blend one, as it incorporates those techniques.

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

The score is clean.

I would like to see a reference of the instruments used, not seeing it appear suddenly.

I think no key signature would have been better. There is a key signature (Amaj / F#m) not leading exactly to any place.

I'm not an expert in cello but I don't see long impossible expression slurs, which is good.

Sometimes a change of clef for the cello is needed.

The audio is correct but the contrast in dynamics is not well defined, which makes the climax weaker than expected.

Sound and realistic instrumentation and orchestration. /10

It is not easy to manage an orchestra. Here one of the main goals has been achieved: the solo cello is never obscured by the rest of the instruments. Well balance in this case, and big textural climax, with complex counterpoint resembling R. Strauss. The variety and constant changes in textures and colors make me think of a good use of the orchestra, however, there are some issues to take into account.

Instrumentation is increasingly in disarray. Starting with, mainly, string orchestra, cello solo and some percussion, a series of instruments are added in parts II and III. Sometimes we don't know how many instruments there are.

How many trombones are there (see m. 5 in part II)? Five?

Allegro Appassionato (♩ = 112)

Instruments added:

Part II: Eb Clarinet, Bassoon, Flute, C trumpet.

Part III: Two flutes, oboe, 1 Bb clarinet, 2 trombones, harp, 4 french horns (always unison?)

The “problem” is that many of these instruments appear for just a moment, a phrase, showing more an intention of change the color of the sound over and over than a supporting strong orchestration. Both things are desirable. But the work relies on the first fact. Just an ordered use of the sections (even in those different textures) could have enforced parts (climax) in many ways. This contemporary language doesn’t have to exclude the orchestration itself.

The other main concern is one of the cornerstones of many of us: double, triple, quadruple stops in the strings. Not being an expert, I find difficult to play some chords in the cello (even a solo player, and even rolling).

But more problematic is this fact in the sections. I think parts like this one for the Violin I section (for example). This is the case where the orchestrator has to come in, perhaps a divisi with support (if needed) from other sections would do it more realistic.

Observations or suggestions:

The work is very colorful, I would say in a free atonal style with touches of impressionism. In that sense, the orchestra has been used.

I would focus a little on the instrumentation first (what instruments are we going to work with exactly), and the playability.

Also, observe in some spots the heavy densities brought by the orchestration at that moment (brass chords), or big chords in the low range.