

Comment on *Theme and Variations* by virtualshock
// by jujimufu

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I. Marking

Grade: 46% - My marking for Dargan Wetmoreby's *HELLO HONEY, BRING OUT THE BACON CAUSE WE'RE COMIN HOOOMMMMEEE!* is as follows* :

Notation: 1/5

Notation in this piece is less than essential and very fundamental aspects of the music haven't been notated, including a passage in the recording which does not appear on the score.

Instrumentation: 1.5/5

First of all, there is no indication about what instruments are playing the piece. I had to go back to your post and see that you actually wrote there it is for two recorders. Still, the use of recorders is not quite justified by the harmony or articulation or even range of the material.

Development: 2/5

The theme is varied a few times, but the variations are very limited.

Form: 2/5

The repetitions are not justified and make the piece sound dull and boring. The piece in general didn't seem to have been conceived as a whole idea, but rather written out as progressed, which made it lack coherence and unity. There is more in the recording than there is on the score, so it is not clear whether the piece ends where the score ends or if there is more.

Compliance to the rules: 5/5

Just like the rest of the participants, you adhered to all the rules, so you get maximum points for this criterion :)

*Marks: 0/5 = Unacceptable; non-existent elements of music or inadequate to be clear as a score/piece.
1/5 = The piece has only met the absolutely necessary elements on that criterion to be considered a proper score/piece.
2/5 = The piece has achieved a better form on its own, but still there is a lot of room for improvement.
3/5 = The piece can be considered a fine piece on its own, but that area wouldn't be described as professional.
4/5 = Great strengths with only a few weaknesses are shown throughout that judging criterion.
5/5 = Outstanding work, I have nothing to correct, maybe there's an area about which I know less than the composer.

II. Analytical Commentaries

1. Notation

General

Notation is a very important skill that one must develop as a composer. Your score contains way less information to the performers than they actually expect or should have. To begin with, your score doesn't contain a title or a composer's name (your name, that is), so how is someone supposed to know who wrote this piece and what it is called?

Then, the next thing that is missing is instrumentation. What are the two instruments that this piece was written for? Do the slurs indicate bowing, breathing or phrasing?

Furthermore, and most importantly, on hearing the recording, after 4 mins and 8 secs of the recording, the music continues but there is nothing more on the score. So, which one is the correct version? The score or the music? Normally, I would assume it is the score, as the score is basically what you want to hear, and the recording is simply one realisation of the score.

Also, if you could tell me which program you're using it would be really helpful for me to understand how you work and help you with notation in any further projects/compositions, if you want me to :)

Bottom line, if you want your music to be taken more seriously, you must take it seriously yourself. And by seriously I mean take care of the score and the music in general (but above all the score). You should definitely read the other reviews to get an idea of what I am talking about, and you should also read the book by Gardner Read I mention in the other reviews, it will be tremendously good for you :)

Articulation:

There are absolutely no markings for articulation (such as staccato, legato etc) in your score whatsoever. Since many aspects of notation are missing, I don't know if that is because of choice or because of ignorance/boredom/uninterest in writing this piece.

Dynamics:

All the dynamics in the piece consist of a single *p* in the beginning of the score. If a piece of music was played constantly at the same volume, it would sound quite boring. This is the same as with human speech: if you try and speak keeping your voice's volume the same, you will notice it starts getting a bit boring and sound like a robot :) You should indicate more dynamics as we don't live in the 15th century now, but 600 years after that, and people actually notate many elements of their music, many more than they used to anyway.

Staves:

Since you're writing for two instruments of the same, you should have a bracket around them in the beginning of each system (like this:)



2. Instrumentation

General

You chose to use only 2 staves out of the 6 allowed, which is perfectly fine, but it seems you didn't utilise these two staves as much as you could.

In any case, why didn't you write for flute? This piece is definitely within the range of the flute, and you have many more effects, techniques and versatility with the flute, as well as a much richer sound.

3. Development

General

In general, the theme is not varied too much. The rhythmic values (apart from IV) are mainly crochets and minims, so there is not much going on in terms of rhythm throughout the piece.

You could have done much more in terms of variations: you could have changed the tempo, invert the material, fragment it and develop it in different ways, change mode/key, use more interesting rhythms, and a thousand other things, but all you did is have it played from the two recorders alternating between melody and accompaniment here and there, and then some minor rhythmic changes in IV, but then you went back to what was done before. Also I don't quite feel the "theme", as it is not something solid, something that says "listen to me, I am a THEME". It sounds just like a few notes played on the recorders, which then are played in a different order, or in a different register, or maybe they are played by the other instrument etc.

You should definitely take a look at some Beethoven/Schumann variations, as well as the 24th Caprice by Paganini, which is a theme and variations.

4. Form

General

In terms of harmony the piece seems to be in the D dorian mode, and there isn't much going on in terms of harmony changes, as the mode stays the same throughout all the variations. Furthermore, there are quite a few parallel fourths and fifths, which, if you were trying to write a piece in the classical/baroque/renaissance style you should avoid. As I've said to other contestants, if the use of parallel fourths and fifths is because you know how to write following contrapuntal rules but you chose not to do so in the piece, then it's fine, but if it's because of ignorance, then you shouldn't do it and you should learn about the contrapuntal rules of the mid/late 18th century (a very good book on this is J.J. Fux's "Study of Counterpoint" from his "Gradus ad Parnassum", and the book on counterpoint by Dubois, although I don't think there is an English translation of it)

The repeated sections start to bore the listener (apart from the repeat of IV, which is quite short) the sections are quite slow and long and the listener realises it's a repeat and there isn't much to notice other than what he has already noticed on the first listen. So basically the repeats seem as if they were only put there to make the piece longer.

5. Compliance to the rules

no comments