

Review

Christopher Wiggins' *Six Miniatures for Solo Viola* is an entertaining collection, characterised by unconventional harmonies and unpredictable time signatures. Each piece is short and distinct - a performance of the whole set would last about 12 minutes. Wiggins liberally uses double stops and open strings to take advantage of the natural resonance of the viola... but beware of various technically demanding moments that will make performing these pieces quite a challenge.

The 'Intrada' starts and ends very quietly with a distinctive dotted motif, the dark harmonies creating a mysterious atmosphere with occasional rays of sunshine that unexpectedly break through in the form of major chords. 'Dance' is fun and lively - reminiscent of Vaughan William's 'Christmas Dance' from his *Suite for Viola and Orchestra*. The 6/8 time signature interspersed with the occasional 5/8 bar will keep both performer and listener on their toes. The continuous semiquaver movement with accented melody notes in the aptly named 'Moto Perpetuo' must be likened to the fourth movement of Hindemith's *Sonata for Solo Viola Op. 25 No. 1*. There are some devilishly tricky corners involving big string crossings and requiring unusual fingerings that will likely trip up the unwary player. The fourth movement - 'Intermezzo' - is the most challenging. It is grand and beautiful, yet there is a plethora of technical difficulties that are difficult to pull off whilst maintaining the gentle character of the movement. 'Pizzicato (Spaniola)' mimics a Spanish guitar: the directional *pizzicato* chords sound just like strumming. The opening chords are magnificently resonant, but the challenge in this piece lies in the chords in the middle section that will be hard to make resonate due to the double stopped 5ths on the C and G string. The 'Finale' is energetic, swift and punchy - a satisfactory end to the vibrant collection.

A highly attractive set of pieces, but you will need to have your wits about you to perform them. These pieces are ideally suited to players with a good level of technical ability who enjoy a challenge, but might have limited performing experience, as the short nature of the set will result in the performance not being too taxing.

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