

THE ART MUSIC LOUNGE – 1/31/20

By Lynn René Bayley

<https://artmusiclounge.wordpress.com/2020/01/31/trio-accentos-extant-blues/>

California-based Trio Accento consists of violinist Limor Toren Immerman, cellist Garik Terzian and pianist Nora Chiang Wrobel. The CD booklet contains biographical information on each of them individually, but there is no information on how long they have been working as a unit. They do, however, tend to specialize in contemporary music, and this is the focus of this CD.

Russell Steinberg, a composer whose works Trio Accento has played in live concerto, contributes *Paleface: Piano Trio (with kazoos)*, surely one of the strangest pieces on the album. The galloping of horses is simulated in the opening before the music hurtles into its theme-and-development sections; a bit of hoedown fiddle is heard, then Western barroom piano. The violin plays, very high and on the edge of the strings, a bit of *Home on the Range*, then, lower down in its range, *Calling in the Sheep*. I really enjoyed this piece tremendously, as it had not only energy but imagination and, yes, a sense of humor, all of which appealed to me. There's not a dull moment in this opening movement; you feel completely engaged in the composer's quick wit from start to finish. There's even a passage where it almost sounds as if the violinist's strings are snapping, calling for the player to make quick upward *glissandi* to simulate that effect.

In the second movement we finally hear the kazoos, and even knowing they were coming they made me laugh. This movement features a fast, almost choppy *ostinato* beat propelled by the piano, but more importantly is Steinberg's ever-quick wit and his ability to blend in elements of jazz (very well executed by the trio, by the way) and, despite all the odd effects (and kazoos), a good sense of development. No matter what Steinberg throws into this trio, no matter how incongruous the sounds produced, everything seems to fit like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle, and always there is that strong sense of humor.

Surprisingly, the third movement starts off with somber, slow chords on the piano, but the strings play weird tremolos that bob in and out of the music; then the pianist plays the inside strings of her instrument. This movement, for some reason, sounds much more serious and, unlike the other two, has more of a stop-and-go movement, yet one can tell that it's by the same composer. Eventually, the violin plays a rather sad and plaintive "Western" sort of theme, joined later by the cello. The liner notes explain that the "Western" heroes of the first movement and the "pulp fiction" heroes of the second are, here, "struggling in the night to cohere and make sense of a world they no longer can possibly describe. They ultimately all go to church and fade away to a ghost gospel choir." A weird piece!