

CINEMUSICAL WEBSITE – 2/11/20

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<http://maestrosteve.xanga.com/2020/02/11/a-quintet-of-trios/>

A Quintet of Trios

Extant Blues is a collection of new music for piano trio by five California-based composers. The Trio Accento has chosen these works for their exploration of a common parallel to popular music styles filtered through the unique lenses of each of the composer's represented here.

Russell Steinberg's *Paleface* found its inspiration in the pop art of Jerry Kearns who explores hero myths in the work chosen here (nicely reprinted in the booklet notes!). Each movement tackles one aspect of these American heroes beginning with the "Wild West" with its advanced contemporary techniques for piano to add special effects and folkish, Americana references (and a host of quotations in an Ives-ian approach). It is interesting to hear the piano shift from a classical to more saloon hall style too. The "Action Hero" is an exciting scherzo taking its inspiration from Hollywood and secret agent and superhero music. It even has a little surprise for listeners when kazoos appear. It is a more cerebral and intense section. The final movement, "Into the Night" is a contemplation of what a "hero" is in the shadow of historical events such as 9-11. The music references hymn-like music in a reflective opening that moves into touches of pop gospel before dying away, in a way, echoing the earlier 19th-century hymnody of the opening movement. With these various musical ideas, what really stands out is that one can approach this music with this sometimes humorous quality, but it as it plays out, there is an often darker, sardonic quality that makes the listener further reflect on these images and expectations of what these symbols really mean and how they impact the culture.