

Cubist Blues  
program note

Cubist Blues was composed in 1991 for the Golub-Kaplan-Carr Trio. The piece, says the composer, is "all about jazz, but it isn't a jazz piece", a statement which both reflects the title as well as poses a provocative enigma. Much as the Cubist painters would dissect an object (Braque's violin, for example) and then, in a single painting, portray the segments from a variety of perspectives, Hoffman incorporates musical elements derived from jazz in a treatment which is at once kaleidoscopic and highly organized. In taking jazz as the point of departure, he feels that his trio has roots in its (our) own time and place which are analogous to, and part of the practice which has for centuries been part and parcel of the evolutionary path of music.

A key segment is set forth in the Prologue, for piano solo. Then, Blues I opens with a hard-driving figure for the entire trio, which is quickly replaced by a shifting mix of textures and dynamics--all of which gives the entire movement a decidedly enigmatic character. The following brief Interlude is a quasi-improvisatory solo for the cello. In Blues II, we reach the epitome of the "Cubist" approach, as the movement's 12-bar blues theme is handled concurrently in two speeds and in two different keys-- which alternates with a more flowing theme which is given exciting canonic treatment and a big, highly virtuosic climax. A poignant close is quickly challenged by an energetic solo violin Interlude, which actually recalls music embedded in a full trio texture from the previous movement. Blues III is the wildest, most intense blues of the whole work, and explores a variety of brilliant and virtuosic textures. As the music winds down, the final Blues IV emerges, reflective in nature, with the instruments in turn playing with increasing freedom before the Epilogue's piano solo finally brings the piece full circle.

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