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BURLINGTON - Vermont is enjoying a new wealth of fine professional classical music instrumentalists, and that is spawning some excellent new chamber music ensembles. One of the most recently created proved itself Friday in a particularly substantial program at the College Street Congregational Church.

The Stellaria Trio - pianist Claire Black, violinist Letitia Quante and cellist John Dunlop - performed music of Beethoven, Brahms and Ernest Bloch, reflecting the ensemble's virtuosity, maturity and depth. It was a largely a rewarding performance, suggesting an excellent future for the Burlington area trio. (The program was also performed in Montpelier April 28 and Richmond April 30.)

The major work on the program, and the major success was Johannes Brahms' Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8 (the composer's usually played 1889 revision). This is glorious Brahms, full of youthful passion and lyricism, as well as a meaty grandeur - and these fine musicians milked it for all it was worth.

Notable was both the rich sound and musical cohesion. Their playing intertwined and came together with power and intensity, leavened by interspersed lighter moments. The virtuosic precision was there, but the performance reveled in the work's grand lyricism. This was fine Brahms.

Black, who started the group last fall, is a fine pianist who also frequently plays with Barre's Vermont Virtuosi and other ensembles. Her performance in the Brahms revealed a substantial technique, and the ability to mix clarity and the work's rhapsodizing building to its ultimate grandeur.

Quante, a violinist in the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, proved the soul of passion. Happiest when delivering fiery virtuosity, she also warmed with her rich sound tenderness.

The Brahms also served as reminder that Dunlop, the VSO's longtime principal cellist, is the quintessential chamber music player, one of Vermont's very best. Control marked his every effort Saturday yet, not only was there nary a musical misstep, his playing revealed an expert and deep musicality, and real warmth.

Beethoven's Piano Trio No. 1 in E-flat Major, Op. 1, No. 1, was certainly well played. But it took until the final Presto to achieve the cohesiveness of the Brahms. That was due to some laxness in the rhythm, which can sap Classical era music of some of its power.

That said, the playing was quite beautiful. Black managed the concerto-like piano part with clarity and lyricism. Quante's passion and Dunlop's security and warmth balanced Black's brilliance in this classical masterpiece.

The program opened with Three Nocturnes for piano trio by the Swiss-born American Bloch (1880-1959). They reflected early modernism with haunting lyricism, lyrical passion, and restless rhapsody, respectively. Except for some minor intonation problems, Friday's rewarding performance reflected those qualities.

The Stellaria Trio has all the ingredients to become a fine ensemble of depth and musical refinement. It's already exciting - even stellar.

The Stellaria Trio's next Vermont performance will be at 7:30 p.m. Friday, July 28, at the Perkins Music Room of the University of Vermont Alumni House in Burlington.