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Last weekend, a relatively new Vermont classical music ensemble presented a performance that proved it was a force to be reckoned with. Not only were the individual players fine, their depth and cohesiveness as an ensemble made a strong statement, particularly in a state that has had a dearth of established chamber music ensembles.

The Stellaria Trio – pianist Claire Black, violinist Letitia Quante and cellist John Dunlop – performed a substantial program of Beethoven and Dvorak in concerts March 9 to June 10 in Barre, Richmond, Brandon, Hanover, New Hampshire, Burlington and Shelburne. In addition to continuing to tour off and on, the Stellaria is scheduled to perform as soloists in Beethoven’s “Triple Concerto” with the Vermont Philharmonic in February 2019.

Not much more than a year old, the Stellaria Trio proved its mettle in a May 18 performance at St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral in Burlington. In Beethoven’s Trio No. 6 in E-flat, Op. 70, No. 2, the three enjoyed the work’s virtuosity without defying its Classical era form, and the result was brilliant.

Black delivered the virtuoso piano part, with all its runs and flourishes, with clarity and a sense of joy. Quante and Dunlop enjoyed the rich expressiveness with deft execution, tonal warmth and barely (but appropriately) restrained passion. It was real Beethoven.

For Dvorak’s Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65, the three loosened the rhythm just a little, and the passion more, to create the work’s rich Romantic tapestry. Here, the sound took on a more lush quality, the lyricism was more overt and the excitement grew to grandeur. This is what Romantic era music is all about.

To succeed, an ensemble must be more than the sum of its parts – but its parts are important, too. Black and Quante are relative newcomers to Vermont, but Dunlop is a native. Longtime principal cellist of the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, he is the backbone of any ensemble he plays with, and there are many. Like the other two, he teaches privately. (He’s also one of the few Vermont musicians who have played under both of my teachers and mentors, Blanche and Louis Moyse).

Quante is one of the state’s up-and-coming virtuoso violinists. She’s a first violinist with the VSO, but also the paid concertmaster of the volunteer Vermont Philharmonic. She, too, can be found in myriad ensembles around the state.

Since moving to Vermont a few years ago, Black has also appeared in many ensembles, including flutist Laurel Ann Maurer's Vermont Virtuosi, but her virtuosity and musicality have blossomed with the Stellaria Trio. The result was revealed in the inspired performance of May 18.

The Stellaria three have a ways to go before they achieve the musical cohesiveness of a long-lasting ensemble, however they do have the inspiration of two of the world's greatest piano trios, both with strong Vermont connections. The stellar Paris Piano Trio played regularly at the former Vermont Mozart Festival and on Montpelier's Capital City Concerts, and the virtuosic Kalichtsten-Laredo-Robinson Trio – with Vermont residents Jaime Laredo and Sharon Robinson – continues to play there.

The Stellaria isn't the only established ensemble in Vermont. Dunlop is also a member of the Northern Third Piano Quartet, which plays less frequently, but will be performing at Brandon Music June 16. The Heliand Consort, woodwinds and piano, also plays clusters of concerts. And there are ensembles that vary personnel with programs like Steven Klmowski's venerable Vermont Contemporary Music Ensemble and Anne Decker's newer and "hipper" TURNmusic Ensemble.

The most venerated ensemble in classical chamber music is the string quartet but, as far as I know, Vermont hasn't had one since Brattleboro's Wantastiquet Quartet and central Vermont's 802 Quartet. But, for now, we can be happy with the likes of the fine Stellaria Trio.

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