

Violin-piano duo light a cool fire

By Stephen Pedersen
Arts Reporter

REVIEW CORNER

À Deux
Duo Concertante.
ATMA ACD 2 2185

Here's a real contender for ECMA 2000 Best Classical recording. A meticulously played Beethoven Kreutzer Sonata by the Newfoundland-based duo of violinist Nancy Dahn and pianist Timothy Steeves leads off a well-balanced program that includes Stravinsky (*Danse russe*), Ravel (Sonata) and Brahms (Scherzo WoO2).

There is a cool fire in Duo Concertante's Beethoven, fire in the playing, coolness in the sound. Dahn can't play a single thirty-second note without making it sing as if it thought it was the Queen of the Universe. After three years of this musical partnership, she and Steeves have reached that enviable plateau in any chamber music collaboration where each thinks each other's thoughts.

Their Kreutzer Sonata is both traditional and fresh, a difficult combination of felicities in a work which has been played and recorded within an inch of its life. Their personal involvement in the music restores its marvelous vitality.

Stravinsky's *Danse russe* is the composer's own tantalizingly short transcription of the first tableau from his Petrushka ballet music. Dahn's crisp attacks, energetic rhythm and what in jazz we would call the duo's deep groove, make the notes leap and fly off the page.

There is no lessening of their clarity, musical exuberance and technical integrity in the blues-inspired Ravel Sonate and the party piece scherzo by Brahms.