

Dearing concert duo is classical success for couple

BY DIANE GALE ANDREAS
SPECIAL WRITER

One way to get your fill of classical music now that WQRS is defunct is to find an itinerant of The Dearing Concert Duo or tune into their recently released CD, "Take One."

The serene, peaceful and relaxed music that Steven and Abha Dearing create draws a limited audience. They know that if they played popular music their following would be much larger, but they refuse to compromise the integrity of their work.

"There's so many vocalists who don't sing in tune and instrumentalists who aren't that good," Abha said. "Playing this music is a matter of ethics. We know it's of a higher context and substance. We find it more challenging and we want to be able to bring that to people."

Flute and guitar

With Abha on the flute and Steve playing the guitar, the couple specializes in classic, Latin, chamber, modern and folk music and they tend to draw a middle aged audience.

"It's usually a forties and up kind of crowd and young parents who are trying to expose their kids to classical music," she added. "It's exciting for some parents to see young people doing music of a higher quality."

We want people to try something new and see if they like it."

Sitting at the kitchen table of their Plymouth apartment, Steven, 33 and Abha, 24, seem to be performing a duet as they take turns filling in the story of how they met at Wayne State University.

How they met

He was working on his master's degree in music and she was completing her bachelor's degree in music. Both were there on full scholarships.

That was five years ago and three weeks ago they hit the biggest milestones of their careers when their first CD was released earlier this month with a spattering of Latin music and a repertoire of Ravel and Bizet, as well as an original piece by Wayne State University professor James Lentini.

It is the first time Lentini's "Fantasy for Flute and Guitar" was recorded. "The CD is really an introduction to us," Abha said. "It shows snippets of what we can do. Our next CD will explore more deeply." Looking at Steve and smiling broadly, Abha explains that their career was born out of a crush.

"I always thought he was really cute," Abha explained. "Steve was in the music lab and I pretended to need to listen to a dreadful piece. He asked if I'd

like to do a duet."

Married for a year, Abha is choir director at Mary High School and directs the Mercycare, a prestigious vocal group. In fact, Abha grew up in Farmington Hills and was a Mercycare herself. She graduated high school in 1992. Steve, who was born and raised in Windsor, is guitar instructor at the University of Windsor and teaches guitar at Macomb County Community College.

While many of their interests and talents dovetail neatly, their music backgrounds couldn't be more different. Steve began playing classical music when he was 21. Abha has been at it since she was a toddler. She started playing the flute when she was in the fourth grade. "I loved it, but I was horrible," she said. "My parents sent me to Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp when I was 12 and it was a wonderful experience."

Ever since then she knew she wanted music to be her life's work. But she credits her comfortable stage presence to her father, Ramesh Mangrulkar, a musician. When she was 3 years old, he'd put her on stage at Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit during the East Indian Festival.

"I got confident on stage, because my parents would be at parties and people would say: 'She can sing.'"

In fact, her first duets were at

family parties with her brother

Aashish. "Oh yeah, she's a ham,"

Steve added. This symbiotic relationship between Steve and Abha brings warmth and comfort to their performances that range from wedding ceremonies and parties to concerts. Most recently they played at Nardin Park Methodist Church in Farmington Hills "Wednesdays at Eight" series; the Ann Arbor Art Fair; for the Plymouth Community Arts Council; for the Birmingham-Bloomfield Arts Council and at a church series in Stratford, Ontario.

Never the same twice

"It's more exciting to see us live," Steve said. "People are surprised when they see that there's only two people making all that music and there's a lot of interplay between us. I can tell what she's going to do before she does it. We never play the same thing twice the same way."

Unfortunately, he added, a lot of people won't go to concerts unless the performers are known stars, "because they won't take a chance."

They hope that "Take One" will introduce more people to their talent and will be their ticket to international tours.

"We want to meet new people and cultures and expose them to our kind of music," Steve said,



Dearing duo: Abha on flute and her husband Steven on guitar just released their first CD, "Take One."

adding that the people who do attend their concerts appreciate fine music. "I feel a little more validated when someone comes to a concert and says something

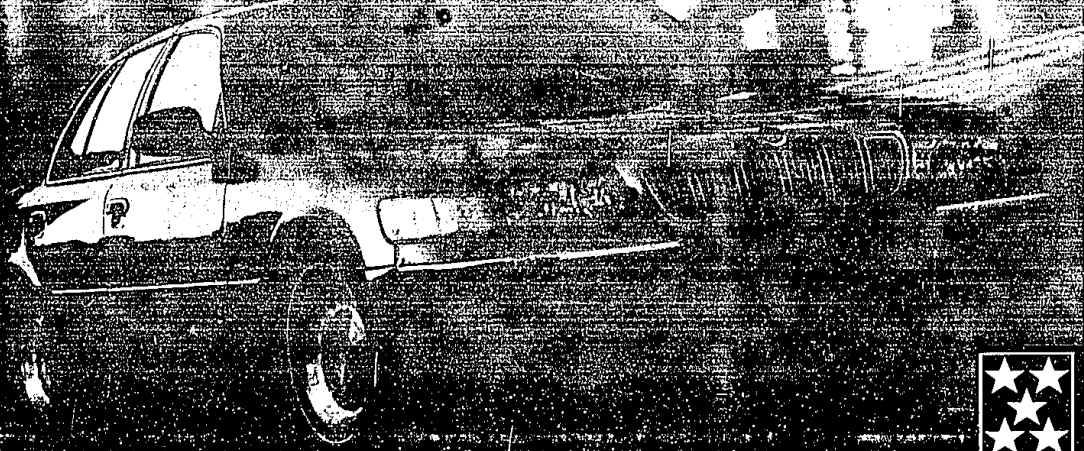
to us, because they have a higher standard and have listened to a lot of music," he said. "There's so much to do."

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