

# CONCERT REVIEW: Naughton sisters upstage Mozart October 9 at Symphony Hall

by [David Noel Edwards](#)

If you missed the Boston Symphony Orchestra's first 2021-22 BSO NOW livestream from Symphony Hall on October 9, then you are now bereft of something critically important in your life. You are missing a species of musical pleasure that, thus far, has come along only once per century, a piece by Richard Strauss that in some circles is considered too risqué for polite company. You are also missing the memory of what must be one of few times in the orchestra's history where a concert's encore seemed to eclipse everything that had preceded it. I mean the encore given by Christina and Michelle Naughton after performing Mozart's concerto for two pianos.

Andris Nelsons bowed his head at the end of Richard Strauss's "Death and Transfiguration." When he raised his eyes, you could see he was genuinely moved. The piece resonates with him. And when the applause began, Nelsons joined in. But he looked over to first associate concertmaster Tamara Smirnova with an almost apologetic

expression, as though loud applause at that moment would be unseemly, considering the journey the orchestra had just taken.

Nelsons and the orchestra approached this piece with painstaking attention to detail, as they do with everything they play. But when 100 musicians occupy the stage, and you get close-up views of every move they make, then the detail in a Strauss orchestration is all the more sumptuous in a way that startles the senses.

The BSO has so much experience with Strauss that when they play a piece like his “Love Scene” from his early opera “Feuersnot,” they make it sound like part of their standard repertoire. Now it is.

Everything in this concert — the Strauss and the Mozart — was beautiful and orderly, until the encore, which was beautiful and disorderly. Not chaotic, but deliberately and provocatively out of order. But what else would you expect from a piece for piano-two-hands titled “Five Days in the Life of a Manic Depressive”? It was on this piece (by Paul Schoenfeld) that the Naughton Sisters showed the stuff that got them signed to Warner Classics. “Five Days” is some of the wildest music you’ll ever hear careening off the hallowed walls of Symphony Hall, and it’s a rollicking thrill ride — kind of like Conrad Tao on steroids. And it is incredibly demanding music.

When you hear the brief snippets of Brian McCreath’s interview with the Naughtons at the beginning and middle of the broadcast, you immediately get the sense these young women are probably

disinclined to take prisoners once they have taken the stage. And by the time they finish their wildly entertaining encore, you will be convinced of it.

Will the Naughton sisters be back to Symphony Hall? Watch the on-demand stream of this concert when it is released at BSO NOW, about 30 days after the live concert. You'll have your answer.