

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA

Thomas Søndergård, conductor

Christina Naughton, piano

Michelle Naughton, piano

Thursday, June 20, 2024 11AM

Friday, June 21, 2024 8PM

Saturday, June 22, 2024 7PM

Orchestra Hall

For this week's performances, piano soloists Christina and Michelle Naughton are replacing Francesco Piemontesi, who is recovering from a recent bicycle accident in which he was hit by a car and broke his collarbone. We wish him a speedy recovery.

To conclude the concert's first half, the Naughtons will perform Francis Poulenc's Concerto in D minor for Two Pianos and Orchestra, instead of the previously scheduled Karol Szymanowski Symphony No. 4 (Symphonie concertante) for Piano and Orchestra. The rest of the program remains unchanged.

Francis Poulenc

Concerto in D minor for Two Pianos and Orchestra

CA. 19'

Allegro ma non troppo

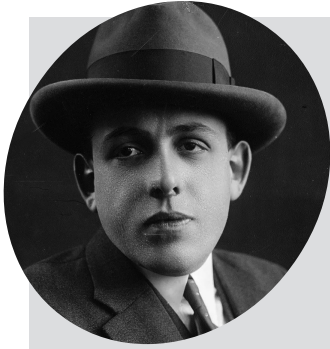
Larghetto

Finale: Allegro molto



CHRISTINA AND MICHELLE NAUGHTON, PIANO

Christina and Michelle Naughton have captivated audiences throughout the globe with the unity created by their mystical communication. Their career was launched in 2009 with a recital debut at the Kennedy Center and an orchestral debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Other highlights include concerts with the Baltimore, Detroit, Nashville, San Diego and New Zealand symphonies, as well as the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. In recital they have appeared at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and Walt Disney Concert Hall, as well as on the Schubert Club, Philharmonic Society of Orange County, Chamber Music San Francisco and Cliburn series, among other venues and presenters. Frequent guests at festivals around the world, the Naughtons have appeared at La Jolla Music Society, Ravinia Festival, the Grand Teton Music Festival and the Virginia Arts Festival, among others. The Naughtons are exclusive Warner Classics artists. Their debut on the label, *Visions*, was chosen as "Editor's Choice" by *Gramophone* magazine. Their 2019 album, *American Postcard*, showcases 20th-century American compositions. The Naughton's passion for 20th-century American music has led to premieres of commissions by the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Green Umbrella series and the world premiere of John Adams' *Roll Over Beethoven* at New York City's WQXR Greene Space. Born in Princeton, New Jersey to parents of European and Chinese descent, Steinway artists Christina and Michelle are graduates of the Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute of Music, where they were each awarded the Festorazzi Prize. In 2019 they became the first piano duo to receive an Avery Fisher Career Grant. More: opus3artists.com, christinaandmichellenaughton.com.



FRANCIS POULENC

B: January 7, 1899
Paris, France

D: January 30, 1963
Paris, France

**Concerto in D minor for
Two Pianos and Orchestra**
PREMIERED: September 5, 1932

— Born and raised in Paris, the home of his maternal family for several generations, Francis Poulenc grew up with two music-loving parents, one of whom, his mother, played the piano “with impeccable musical sensibility and a delightful touch,” according to her son. She recognized the boy’s attraction to the instrument and, when he was 4, began to teach him. By the time he was only 14, Poulenc was in the hands of one of the great piano virtuosos of that era, Ricardo Viñes.

The time with Viñes became even more important in light of the fact that in spite of his extraordinary musical gifts, Poulenc never attended a conservatory. His education was interrupted by World War I and his conscription into the army, and upon his release from that service, Poulenc studied composition from 1921 to 1924 under the influential guidance of Charles Koechlin. And that was the sum total of his formal education in music.

In his personal life, Poulenc navigated conflicted feelings as a gay man. Although he briefly contemplated marriage with a female friend, his life was enriched by several romantic relationships with men, some brief and others more lengthy. Platonic friends, such as his longtime collaborator, the baritone Pierre Bernac, were also a source of fulfillment.

PROFESSIONAL BEGINNINGS

Composing chamber music and spending a great deal of time with the major musicians, poets and artists in Paris in the 1920s, Poulenc became known as an innovative and imaginative composer. The great Russian ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev heard of him and commissioned the young composer to create a ballet for his company. The success of that work, *Les Biches*, first performed in 1923, was a turning point for Poulenc. (Minnesota Orchestra audiences can look forward to hearing a suite from that ballet on July 26 and 27 as part of the 1920s-themed Summer at Orchestra Hall festival.)

Moving in those artistic circles, Poulenc inevitably made the acquaintance of a great patron of the arts, Winnaretta Singer—heir to Singer sewing machine fortune and wife of Prince Edmond de Polignac. The princess was

a gifted painter, pianist and organist herself, and she generously supported and commissioned such composers as Gabriel Fauré, Emmanuel Chabrier, Maurice Ravel, Igor Stravinsky, Erik Satie and Manuel de Falla. Twice she commissioned Poulenc for keyboard works. One was his Concerto for Organ, and the other a Concerto for Two Pianos. Both are dedicated to her.

THE TWO-PIANO CONCERTO

In September 1932, the princess invited Poulenc and many other illustrious guests—including Falla and the pianist Arthur Rubinstein—to her home in Venice, the Palazzo Polignac on the Grand Canal, in order to attend the first performance of Poulenc’s new two-piano concerto. The occasion was the ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music) Festival, at which Poulenc and the French piano virtuoso Jacques Février performed as soloists with the orchestra of La Scala conducted by Désiré Defauw. Poulenc had written the Concerto for Two Pianos with Février in mind as the second soloist, and the two remarkable pianists swept the audience away with their brilliant performance.

From that moment the concerto has never been out of the public ear, either in concert halls or in the many recordings that have been made over the years. Poulenc himself continued to perform it for the rest of his life. Poulenc’s crystalline writing in this concerto makes analysis superfluous—as the composer himself would have preferred. He once stated: “Above all do not analyze my music—love it!” The many facets and the changeable moods of this concerto are sheer delight.

Instrumentation: solo piano with orchestra comprising flute, piccolo, 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, shallow snare drum, military drum, bass drum, castanets, cymbals, triangle and strings

PROGRAM NOTE BY SANDRA HYSLOP.