

NEWS

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**Santa Rosa Symphony presents Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's World Premiere,
Concerto for Two Pianos. Performed by Christina and Michelle Naughton**

With legendary works, Night on Bald Mountain and Alpine Symphony

May 6, 7 & 8, 2023, Weill Hall, Green Music Center

(Santa Rosa, Calif.) — Santa Rosa Symphony presents the rousing season finale, Two Piano World Premiere, conducted by Francesco Lecce-Chong and performed by the virtuosic sisters Christina and Michelle Naughton. The program includes monumental masterworks: Rimsky-Korsakov's beautiful arrangement of Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, and the bucolic sounds of nature and its thunderous fury in Richard Strauss' sublime *Alpine Symphony*. Performances are May 6, 7 & 8, 2023 at Weill Hall, Green Music Center.

"We are delighted and honored to present the world premiere of the latest work by one of the most important composers of our day, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. This new two-piano concerto will be brought to life by the brilliant duo, Michelle and Christina Naughton. We close out our season with epic works inspired by mountains: audience favorite, *Night on Bald Mountain*, and Strauss' *Alpine Symphony* - featuring one of the largest orchestras ever on our stage." *Francesco Lecce-Chong*

Program at a glance:

MODEST MUSSORGSKY, Rimsky-Korsakov, arranger: *Night on Bald Mountain*

ELLEN TAAFFE ZWILICH: Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra (World Premiere)

RICHARD STRAUSS: *Eine Alpensinfonie [Alpine Symphony]* for Orchestra, Opus 64

BIOGRAPHIES:

Christina and Michelle Naughton, piano

"Indeed, I'm ready to put them on a level with some of the greatest piano duos of our time...They have to be heard to be believed," said the *Washington Post* of Christina and Michelle Naughton. They have captivated audiences throughout the globe with the unity created by their mystical communication, as reported by the *Wall Street Journal*, in Christina's own words, "There are times I forget we are two people playing together." The Naughton's work as a duo was recently recognized in 2019 as they became the first piano duo to receive the Avery Fisher Career Grant presented by Lincoln Center.

Christina and Michelle Naughton's career was launched in 2009 with a recital debut at Kennedy Center; and an orchestral debut at the Mann Center with the Philadelphia Orchestra, which led the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to characterize their playing as "paired to perfection." Subsequently, they began their careers in Europe and Asia; at Munich's Herkulesaal and with the Hong Kong Philharmonic respectively. These appearances were met with much critical acclaim, with the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* proclaiming the Naughtons an "outstanding piano duo" and the

Sing Tao Daily responding with the description “Joining two hearts and four hands at two grand pianos, the Naughton sisters created an electrifying and moving musical performance.”

Especially passionate about American 20th-century music, Christina and Michelle have immersed themselves in several projects devoted to this theme. “American Postcard,” (2019), the second album of their exclusive signing with Warner Classics, showcases a variety of 20th-century American compositions and commissions by composers such as John Adams, Aaron Copland, Conlon Nancarrow, and Paul Schoenfield. Additionally, they have done several premieres of works in capacities such as commissions by the LA Phil’s Green Umbrella series, a world premiere of John Adams’ *Roll Over Beethoven* at NYC’s WQXR Greenspace, a European premiere of Paul Lansky’s *Shapeshifters* with Solistes Européens Luxembourg, a weeklong American chamber music residency with musicians of the New World Symphony, and several concerts devoted to 20th-century American music at Germany’s Klavierfestival Ruhr.

Born in Princeton, New Jersey, to parents of European and Chinese descent; Christina and Michelle are graduates of The Juilliard School and the Curtis Institute of Music, where they were each awarded the Festorazzi Prize. They are Steinway Artists and currently reside in New York City.

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, composer
Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra

Few composers have emerged with the unique personality of Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. Her music is widely known because it is performed, recorded, broadcast, and – above all – listened to and liked by all kinds of audiences the world over. Zwilich combines craft and inspiration, reflecting an optimistic and humanistic spirit.

Zwilich is the recipient of numerous prizes and honors, including the 1983 Pulitzer Prize in Music (the first woman ever to receive this coveted award). She holds a doctorate from The Juilliard School and has received numerous honorary doctorates.

A prolific composer in virtually all media, Zwilich’s works have been performed by leading American orchestras and by major ensembles abroad. Zwilich’s orchestral essay *Symbolon* was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, and her chamber works by the Boston Musica Viva, the Abe Fortas Memorial Fund of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and others. SRS was honored to have her as the Artistic Partner during the virtual 2020-2021 season.

Zwilich has been the subject of two cartoons in the late Charles Schulz’s celebrated Peanuts® series. The first, in which the Peanuts® characters attend the premiere of Zwilich’s *Concerto for Flute*, eventually led to the completion of Zwilich’s *Peanuts® Gallery* for piano and orchestra, which was also featured in Schulz’s comic strip. Santa Rosa Symphony performed this piece in May 2021 as part of the SRS@Home Series.

Many of Zwilich’s works have been issued on recordings, and Baker’s Biographical Dictionary of Musicians states: "There are not many composers in the modern world who possess the lucky combination of writing music of substance and at the same time exercising an immediate appeal to mixed audiences. Zwilich offers this happy combination of purely technical excellence and distinct power of communication."

Interview opportunities and high-res photos available: **Francesco Lecce-Chong, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Christina and Michelle Naughton**

ENHANCEMENTS:

[Concert Program books](#) are available to view online.

[Concert Program notes](#) can be read on the concert event page.

Francesco Lecce-Chong provides a 30-minute pre-concert talk one hour prior to each performance.

SPONSORS: We gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions from the following:

Sponsored **in memory of Jim and Charlotte Lamb**

Conductor Francesco Lecce-Chong sponsored by **David and Corinne Byrd**

Guest Artist Christina Naughton sponsored by **Sara and Edward Kozel**
Guest Artist Michelle Naughton sponsored by **Nancy and Robert Novak**
Commissioned Work Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich (World Premiere)
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Season Media Sponsor: *The Press Democrat*

AT A GLANCE / CALENDAR LISTING:

WHAT: [Santa Rosa Symphony “Two Piano World Premiere”](#)

WHO: [Santa Rosa Symphony](#)

WHEN: Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 2:00 pm – Discovery Open Rehearsal, no talk
Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)
Sunday, May 7, 2023 at 3:00 pm (Doors at 1:30 pm, Pre-concert talk 2:00 pm - 2:30 pm)
Monday, May 8, 2023 at 7:30 pm (Doors at 6:00 pm, Pre-concert talk 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm)

WHERE: Weill Hall, Green Music Center, Sonoma State University

TICKET PRICES:

\$18 / adult; \$10 / youth (7-17 years of age) for Discovery Open Rehearsal
\$32-\$105 for Classical Series performances
Youths 7-17 may receive one complimentary ticket with every paid adult. Request tickets through Patron Services at (707) 546-8742. Classical Series concerts only
\$10 student rush tickets for college students with a valid student ID. Available at the door only

TICKETS: srsymphony.org or (707) 546-8742 (Weekdays 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, opening at 10:30 am Wednesday, closed Saturday & Sunday)

FREE YOUTH TICKETS:

To encourage their exposure to classical music and to transform Symphony attendance into a family outing, youths 7-17 years of age may attend the Symphony for free with a paid adult. These two-for-one tickets are not available for purchase online and only applies to Classical Series concerts.

ABOUT SANTA ROSA SYMPHONY:

Santa Rosa Symphony, the Resident Orchestra of the Green Music Center, is the third-oldest professional orchestra in California, and the largest regional symphony north of Los Angeles. Francesco Lecce-Chong, the Symphony's fifth music director in its 95 years, began his tenure in 2018. Alan Silow, President & CEO, began his tenure in 2002. The Symphony is committed to the core values of artistic excellence, innovative programming, comprehensive music education and community service.

The Symphony's performance schedule includes 21 Classical Series concerts (seven sets), seven Discovery Dress Rehearsal concerts, a three-concert Family Series and a four-concert Pops Series, as well as special concerts.

Awards include an American Symphony Orchestra League MetLife Award for Community Engagement and a first-place award for adventurous programming in the 2012-2013 season from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

The Symphony is recognized as having one of California's most comprehensive music education programs, serving nearly 20,000 youths annually. Collaborations with schools and organizations across Sonoma County have gained the Santa Rosa Symphony national attention and support.

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