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CLASSICAL

Twice as good: The Naughton piano duo at the Kammermusiksaal in Berlin.

When it comes to marketing, piano duos made up of two twins certainly have an advantage. But while most duos are faced with the almost impossible challenge of putting themselves in the place of a their partner and learning to imitate that person, for twins, there is a much greater risk that the players will lose their individuality when harmonizing with each other, or that the players will not stray far from the comfort zone offered by their synchronicity.

However, the 24-year-old twin sisters Christina and Michelle Naughton have masterfully overcome these artistic and personal obstacles to create their professional duo, ensuring that their "Debut on Deutschlandradio" performance at the Berlin Kammermusiksaal was a complete joy (broadcast on 28 September at 20:03 by German national radio station "Deutschlandradio").

Effortlessness, clearly defined emotions, cat-like virtuosity and the presence of humor characterize the duo's style, which did just as much justice to Mendelssohn's op. 83a version for four hands as it did to Brahms' Variations on a Theme of Haydn for two pianos, or to William Bolcom's pastiches of dances in the style of 19th century Latin American composers.

The highlight of the evening was Mozart's D major Sonata for two pianos: While there was earlier a subtle hint of a division of roles between the somewhat more assertive style favored by Michelle and the more introspective Christina, at this point both musicians fully emerged to create a tantalizing musical marvel that saw the sisters alternately capture, reflect and enhance the unique character of their partner, which by the end moved even the twins in the audience. Carsten Niemann