



**National Symphony Orchestra**  
The Kennedy Center

Press Release

February 11, 2019

**Sarah Silverman, Julien Baker,  
Danay Suarez, And Leah Hawkins Join The  
National Symphony Orchestra On March 8  
For *DECLASSIFIED: BEN FOLDS PRESENTS***

**Tickets On Sale Now to Members; February 13 to General Public**

(WASHINGTON)—The National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) and Artistic Advisor Ben Folds welcome comedian and vocalist **Sarah Silverman**; songwriter **Julien Baker**; Cuban singer-songwriter **Danay Suarez**, who appeared on the first *DECLASSIFIED: BEN FOLDS PRESENTS* in 2017; and soprano **Leah Hawkins**, a former WNO Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist; as the featured guest artists for its upcoming *DECLASSIFIED: BEN FOLDS PRESENTS* concert on Friday, March 8, at 9 p.m. in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. **Akiko Fujimoto** conducts the program that celebrates International Women's Day.

The evening includes pre and post-concert events. Tickets (\$25–\$75) are on sale now to Kennedy Center members, and are available to the general public beginning February 13 at 10 a.m.

Folds, who in his role as Artistic Advisor curates all the featured artists and works closely with the orchestra on every facet of each performance, said his *DECLASSIFIED: BEN FOLDS PRESENTS* series defies the traditional classical music presentation by offering great live music in a casual and relaxed setting, with many songs that are newly composed or arranged specifically for this event.

“This show lands on International Women’s Day and so I will recuse myself of my usual emcee duties and my deputy Sarah Silverman will handle this one. I’ll be there to add piano to the evening’s selections,” said Ben Folds.

“Julien Baker, who you may know from boygenius or her own solo work will perform with the NSO, and Danay Suarez, Cuban badass and one of my favorite new voices will return for her second *DECLASSIFIED* performance. Leah Hawkins, who has an absolutely stunning soprano is risking her reputation to join our motley crew.”

Folds said that all the shows in this NSO series strictly adhere to a set of principles that set it apart from other kinds of orchestra performances. “There’s no rock band on stage,” Folds said. “The NSO is the band. We play by the orchestra’s rules, placing them in their natural environment, rather than using them to ornament. We create context that gives both the discerning veteran of the symphony hall as well as the newcomer a musical human experience, drawing a thread between the old and new. You don’t have to have been to the symphony before. Bring ears and hearts. No need to worry about how you dress. It’s just music. Trust me, when you hear good stuff, with friends in context, you get it. This is a safe space. It’s like dropping by my house with a drink and listening to records.”

Throughout the concert series, Folds serves as host, occasionally sitting in with the Orchestra and the featured guests.

The first *DECLASSIFIED: BEN FOLDS PRESENTS* concert was in June 2017, and featured artist/composer/producer Blake Mills, along with [Latin Grammy®-nominated Cuban artist Danay Suarez](#). Last season’s NSO *DECLASSIFIED* performances featured multi Grammy® and Tony®-nominated vocalist and composer [Sara Bareilles](#) with [Pulitzer Prize-winning composer and singer Caroline Shaw](#) and [bandleader and composer Jon Batiste](#) with [singer/songwriter Kishi Bashi](#), and composer and pianist Joachim Horsley. This past fall’s program featured Indie singer-songwriter [Regina Spektor](#).

#### **ABOUT BEN FOLDS**

Ben Folds is widely regarded as one of the major music influencers of our generation.

He's created an enormous body of genre-bending music that includes pop albums with Ben Folds Five, multiple solo albums, and collaborative records with artists from Sara Bareilles and Regina Spektor, to William Shatner. His last album was a blend of pop songs and his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra that soared to #1 on both the *Billboard* classical and classical crossover charts.

For over a decade he's performed with some of the world's greatest symphony orchestras, and in 2017 was named as the first ever Artistic Advisor to the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center. Folds continues to perform with symphonies and also recently returned to solo touring around the globe reminiscent of his earliest years, delivering a high energy rock performance using the intimacy of just a piano.

In addition to touring, Folds has also recently been tapped by Ballantine Bantam Dell, a division of Penguin Random House publishing, to write his first book, described as a collection of interrelated essays and anecdotes about art, life, and music. Release is tentatively slated for late 2019.

He is also no stranger to television, having been featured for five seasons as a judge on NBC's critically-acclaimed a capella show *The Sing Off*. He continues to appear in cameo roles on cable and network TV shows from *Billions*, to *You're The Worst* and *Community*, and recently composed the soundtrack for the Netflix show *Handsome*.

An avid photographer, Folds is a member of the prestigious Sony Artisans of Imagery, completed an assignment in 2017 as a photo editor for National Geographic, and was recently featured in a mini-documentary by the Kennedy Center's Digital Project on his photographic work.

An outspoken champion for arts education and music therapy funding in our nation's public schools, in 2016 Ben held the distinction as the only artist to appear at both national political conventions advocating for arts education, and has served for over five years as an active member of the distinguished Artist Committee of Americans for the Arts.

### **ABOUT SARAH SILVERMAN**

Two-time Emmy® Award-winner SARAH SILVERMAN is one of the most versatile talents in entertainment. She recently served as creator, executive producer, and host of the Emmy-nominated *I Love You, America*. The weekly show sees her looking to connect with people who may not agree with her personal opinions through honesty, humor, genuine interest, and not taking herself too seriously. Additionally, she returned as the voice of "Vanellope" in *Ralph Breaks The Internet: Wreck It Ralph 2*, and continues to lend her voice to the Emmy Award-winning Fox animated series *Bob's Burgers* and is a part of JASH, a YouTube comedy collective featuring original content by Silverman and friends Michael Cera, Tim & Eric, and Reggie Watts.

Silverman continues to cement her status as a force in standup comedy. In May 2017, she released her standup special *A Speck of Dust* on Netflix, which culminated in two Emmy Award nominations and a Grammy Award nomination. Her hour-long HBO standup special *Sarah Silverman: We Are Miracles* earned her the 2014 Primetime Emmy Award for "Outstanding Writing for a Variety Special."

On screen, Silverman was also recently seen opposite Emma Stone and Steve Carell in the critically-acclaimed film *Battle of the Sexes*. She also starred in *I Smile Back*, the film adaptation of Amy Koppelman's novel. Her portrayal as "Laney Brooks" culminated in a 2016 Screen Actors Guild Award nomination. Other film credits include *The Book of Henry*, *A Million Ways to Die in the West*, *Take This Waltz*, *The School of Rock*, and *There's Something About Mary*.

Silverman was nominated for a 2009 Primetime Emmy Award for her role in *The Sarah Silverman Program*, which marked Comedy Central's first ever Emmy nomination in a scripted acting category. In 2008,

Silverman won a Primetime Emmy Award for “Outstanding Original Music and Lyrics” for her musical collaboration with Matt Damon.

Silverman has made memorable guest appearances on a number of acclaimed and notable television shows, including *Masters of Sex*, *The Good Wife*, *The Larry Sanders Show*, and *Seinfeld*. Her *Monk* appearance earned her a 2008 Primetime Emmy Awards nomination. In 1993, she joined *Saturday Night Live* as a writer and feature performer and has not stopped working since.

### **ABOUT JULIEN BAKER**

### **ABOUT DANAY SUAREZ**

### **ABOUT LEAH HAWKINS**

### **ABOUT AKIKO FUJIMOTO**

### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

The 2018–2019 season marks the National Symphony Orchestra’s 88th, and Gianandrea Noseda’s second as its music director. The Italian conductor serves as the Orchestra’s seventh music director, joining the NSO’s legacy of such distinguished leaders. Its artistic leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke and Artistic Advisor Ben Folds.

Founded in 1931, the Orchestra has always been committed to artistic excellence and music education. In 1986, the National Symphony became an artistic affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where it performs year-round. The NSO’s community engagement projects are nationally recognized, including NSO In Your Neighborhood, an annual week of approximately 50 performances in schools, churches, community centers, and other unexpected venues; Notes of Honor, which offers free performances for active, veteran, prior service, and retired members of the military and their families; and Sound Health, a collaboration with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and its affiliated organizations. Career development opportunities for young musicians include the NSO Youth Fellowship Program and its tuition-free Summer Music Institute. For more information, visit [nationalsymphony.org](http://nationalsymphony.org).

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Tickets (\$25–\$75) are available at the Kennedy Center Box Office, online at [kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org), and via phone through Instant Charge, (202) 467-4700; toll-free at (800) 444-1324. For all other ticket-related customer service inquiries, call the Advance Sales Box Office at (202) 416-8540.

### **FUNDING CREDITS**

Ford Motor Company is the Presenting Sponsor of *DECLASSIFIED*.

**David M. Rubenstein** is the Presenting Underwriter of the NSO.

*DECLASSIFIED* is presented as part of The Irene Pollin Audience Development and Community Engagement Initiatives.

Additional support for *DECLASSIFIED* is provided by Ann B. and Thomas L. Friedman, and Admiral Jay L. Johnson and Sydney McNiff Johnson.

**For more information about the NSO, visit [nationalsymphony.org](http://nationalsymphony.org).**

**For more information about the Kennedy Center, visit [kennedy-center.org](https://www.kennedy-center.org).**

Patrons 30 and under and active-duty members of the military are invited to join the Kennedy Center's *MyTix* program for special discount offers and chances to win free tickets. For more information, visit [kennedy-center.org/mytix](https://www.kennedy-center.org/mytix)



**#NSOrch**

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**MEDIA CONTACTS**

Rachelle Roe  
(202) 416-8443  
[rbroe@kennedy-center.org](mailto:rbroe@kennedy-center.org)

Iain Higgins  
(202) 416-8442  
[imhiggins@kennedy-center.org](mailto:imhiggins@kennedy-center.org)