



# WILLIAM SHATNER

SO FRAGILE,  
SO BLUE



National  
Symphony  
Orchestra  
The  
Kennedy  
Center



# WILLIAM SHATNER

## SO FRAGILE, SO BLUE

BEN FOLDS, ARTISTIC ADVISOR

STEVEN REINEKE, PRINCIPAL POPS CONDUCTOR

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

*So Fragile, So Blue* was recorded live on April 29, 2022, in the Concert Hall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.

**Executive Producers** William Shatner, Ben Folds, Robert Sharenow, and Daniel Miller.

**Recording producer** Blanton Alspaugh, *Soundmirror*.

**Recording engineer** John Newton, *Soundmirror*. **Mixing and Mastering engineer** Mark Donahue, *Soundmirror*.

**Producers** Genevieve Twomey and Justin Ellis, *National Symphony Orchestra*.

**Cover design** Olivia Deslandes, *The Kennedy Center*.

**Cover photo and live concert photos** Jati Lindsay. **National Symphony Orchestra photo** Scott Suchman.



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*Star Trek theme: Alexander Courage \**  
*Lyrics: Robert Sharenow and William Shatner*..... 8:46

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# INTRODUCTION

## William Shatner

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This album is about something we all have in common; this beautiful planet Earth that we all call home.

### **It's also about friends. Old friends and new friends.**

Ben Folds came into my life many years ago. I received a letter from a guy named Ben Folds and it says, you know, “I heard this album you had made” (It was the first one I made called *The Transformed Man*.) He had found it in a garage sale, played it and he liked it. He wrote to me saying he would like to work with me. Ben wrote a song for me and he put it on his album. The album was *Fear of Pop*. The song he wrote was called “In Love” and I performed it. Thusly began my relationship with Ben Folds. Another friend of mine is a gentleman

named Robert Sharenow. Over the years we used to meet for dinner. We established a friendship over these dinners; we were both interested in what each other had to say and became quite wonderful friends. One day, Robert brought Dan Miller. Dan Miller turned out to be a university friend of his. Dan was into music and Robert was interested in writing. They had a musical group at university.

Then, Dan went his way, Robert went his way and they remained friends, but it was quite separate. Dan was doing his music, which I think culminated in They Might be Giants, which was a very popular group. Robert went into show business. One day at dinner Robert brings Dan and the three of us are having fun, eating and talking and Dan says, “You know, we should do an album together” And we all decide it's a great idea. And Robert said, let's do it about Bill's stories because I always have a story of some kind.

Then COVID hits and we couldn't go to dinner anymore, but we could communicate by Zoom. I would tell a story and Robert would start to write it. We sent messages back and forth about the lyrics of the particular story and then finally we establish what the lyrics are. Then, we would send it to Dan who put the lyrics to a musical track. It was so beautiful for us that we continued writing songs even removed by COVID and by 3,000 miles. We wrote maybe 20-25 songs in this way.

In 2021 I went up into space. I happened to be in New York, doing some work before I went to the desert where the rocket was. I met Robert and Dan for dinner and of course began to talk about writing a song about going up into space and made some notes.

But then I went up and I came down and then I made some phone calls. One of the phone calls was to Robert and Dan. I said “You know, that song we started to write about space? Forget about it. It doesn’t work.” The experience was beyond anything we could have imagined. We have to write a song about it, but it’s not the one we jotted down that Sunday. So we started to write a song, encapsulating, distilling what I experienced going up into space. We called it “So Fragile, So Blue” and it does distill everything I felt and saw.

Being a friend of his for all these years, Ben Folds followed my journey and was fascinated by my experience going to space. He called me and invited me to come to the National Symphony Orchestra to perform. It was Earth Week and I said, “Well, I have a half a dozen songs that would work for Earth Week. Some of them are really good. I mean, they’re all really good, but some are really meaningful songs that we wrote out of our heart.”

Ben brought new friends to the project, the wonderful composer and orchestrator Jherik Bischoff and bluegrass violin virtuoso and composer Gabe Witcher. They wrote original underscoring for our lyrics to create these new orchestral works. All of these friends together with conductor Steven Reineke and the musicians of the National Symphony Orchestra made this project a reality.

**So these are those songs and this is the story of how this album came to be made.**



# EIGHT DAYS ON THE WATER

On the verge of manhood  
Just sixteen years old  
Signed onto adventure  
That seemed brave and bold

A perilous journey  
Few others might do  
To travel eight days  
In an eight-man canoe

The plan seemed mythic  
Manly and gritty  
To paddle from Canada  
To New York City

Champlain we cast off  
Clearer than glass  
Then no one in sight  
Once a few days had passed

Surrounded by nature  
Feeling wild and free  
The hint of real danger  
Appealing to me

Through ice crystal lakes  
Raging rivers and streams  
Level five rapids  
And dense evergreens

(chorus)

Eight days on the water  
Alive in my mind

Eight days on the water  
Frozen in time

(verse 2)

We felt small and yet large  
Thinking that when  
We reached that far shore  
It would define us as men

Sixteen arms paddled  
Through all types of weather  
And as the days passed  
We bonded together

We dove in the water  
To keep us refreshed  
Sensing new muscles  
On our shoulders and chests

We moved north to south  
And the landscape devolved  
The mountains less fearsome  
The trees not as tall

More and more houses  
Dotted the shore  
And large motorboats  
That we couldn't ignore

But we paddled on  
With undaunted might  
Feeling our victory  
Was finally in sight

Eight days on the water  
Alive in my mind  
Eight days on the water  
Frozen in time

(verse 3)

And after a week  
Our battle seemed won  
When Manhattan's skyline  
Loomed in the sun

The buildings of Wall Street  
Denser than forests  
And millions of people  
Moving around us

Yet, the Hudson and East  
Were sad shades of brown  
And just as much garbage  
As fish floated 'round

The conquest of nature  
Which we thought was good fun  
Was a zero sum game  
That humans had won

I wish I could say  
I had these deep thoughts  
But nothing was noticed  
So nothing forgot

I was blinded by youth  
As most of us are  
Awed by the structures  
The bridges and cars

(chorus)

Eight days on the water  
Alive in my mind  
Eight days on the water  
Frozen in time

Now 60 years later  
I stand on a shore  
Older and wiser  
I can no longer ignore

I think of that journey  
And now understand  
My innocence lost  
And nature's command

Both gone forever  
And not to return  
Our abuse of the planet  
We still haven't learned

To return to an Eden  
May seem like a dream  
But I still believe  
Because I've already been

Yes, I still believe  
Because I've already been

(chorus)

Eight days on the water  
Alive in my mind  
Eight days on the water  
Frozen in time  
Eight days on the water  
Alive in my mind  
Eight days on the water  
Frozen in time

# THE MEANING

It was a scientific mission  
But not to outer space  
A documentary tv show  
The earth's decline to trace

From melting polar ice caps  
To soil scorched by the sun  
The theme was grim and simple  
Trace the damage that we'd done  
The purpose wasn't hopeless  
We all held the belief  
That scientific knowledge  
Could provide relief

So we crossed polluted oceans  
Followed geo tracks  
Measuring and filming  
All the flaws and cracks  
I was searching for  
The meaning  
A proof of greater plans  
Some elevated vision  
Beyond the reach of man

Searching for the meaning  
Before it was too late  
To save myself or anyone  
From cruel or random fate

Eventually we trekked  
Where many came to seek

The very highest highs  
The Himalayan peaks

Everest like a god  
Stood challenging and cold  
But my journey took a different turn  
Toward the center of the soul

Among the craggy hills  
Forged from weathered wood  
Ancient and majestic  
A monastery stood

A thousand tiny rooms  
The dimensions all the same  
The walls scarred,  
black with carbon  
From a million candle flames

And there devoted monks  
Of every age on end  
Would mediate both day and night  
Hoping to transcend

We had come with science  
Technology in hand  
They used only spirit  
In the attempt to understand

Transfixed by the chanting  
Their holy mission clear  
I longed to join the monks  
To have meaning appear  
I was searching for  
The meaning  
A proof of greater plans

Some elevated vision  
Beyond the reach of man

Searching for the meaning  
Before it was too late  
To save myself or anyone  
From cruel or random fate

The film crew kept their pace  
And we watched the sad parade  
Of endless climbers from the west  
Trails of litter that they made

At night we slept in tents  
Yet my thoughts were drawn afar  
So I took my sleeping bag outside  
And lay under the stars

I wanted to be closer  
To some celestial dance  
Or the spiritual vibrations  
That kept the monks entranced

Seven nights I slept there  
Staring at the sky  
No animals disturbed my peace  
For none could live that high

I listened to the wind  
Searching for a clue  
And tried to hear a message  
That never did come through

I opened up my soul  
But every night the same  
I woke up in frustration  
Because nothing ever came

I was searching for  
The meaning  
A proof of greater plans  
Some elevated vision  
Beyond the reach of man

Searching for the meaning  
Before it was too late  
To save myself or anyone  
From cruel or random fate

On the final morning  
I still had found no peace  
So I packed up my belongings  
To head back down the crease

But by a twist of fate  
It landed in my hand  
Falling off my backpack  
Some simple grains of sand

It struck me dumb with wonder  
Like sun after the rain  
I saw the entire universe  
In each and every grain

Yes each grain was a diamond  
Unique, precious, and rare  
And countless years and miracles  
Conspired to bring them there

The wholeness of the planet  
Like a flash it came  
We all were grains of sand  
All different, yet the same



Yes every human soul  
Every atom that persists  
Bound up in the journey  
The journey to exist

There was no separation  
There were no prison walls  
The meaning of the meaning  
Lived inside it all

I didn't need a mantra  
Or set of magic prayers  
I just needed open eyes  
To notice what was there  
Holy are the mountains  
Holy is the sand

Holy are the human beings  
Trying to understand  
Holy are the whispers  
Holy are the screams  
Holy are the nightmares  
Holy are the dreams  
Holy is the seedcake  
Holy is the rot  
Holy are the written words  
Holy those forgot  
Holy is the order  
Holy is the mess  
Holy are the modest ones  
Holy the undressed  
Holy is the garbage

Holy is the gold  
Holy are the infants  
Holy are the old  
Holy is the poverty  
Holy is the wealth  
Holy are the unions  
Holy is the self  
Holy are the unions  
Holy is the self  
Holy are the unions  
Holy is the self

# ARE YOU THE BAYOU?

The stillness is deceptive  
Mirrored water, dangling vines  
I'm drawn in by the mystery  
A dream to make you mine

Lilies on the surface  
Marsh marigolds above  
Shrouding you in beauty  
The faintest scent of love

(chorus)

Are you the Bayou?  
Pray my soul to keep  
Are you the Bayou?  
I'm diving in too deep

I slip into the water  
A thrill runs through my bones  
Driven by desire  
Of getting you alone

Transfixed by your gaze  
Your hair like layered gold  
Barely feel my body  
Slowly growing cold

(chorus)

Are you the Bayou?  
Pray my soul to keep  
Are you the Bayou?  
I'm diving in too deep

The light is disappearing  
Your lips they taste like wine  
Sweet but slightly bitter  
They leave a mark on mine

I dip below the surface  
Beneath the leafy crown  
Your wicked smile reveals itself  
As I sink farther down

(chorus)

Are you the Bayou?  
Pray my soul to keep  
Are you the Bayou?  
I'm diving in too deep

(bridge)

The beauty on the outside hid the view  
Of deeper darkness finally seeping through

(chorus)

Are you the Bayou?  
Pray my soul to keep  
Are you the Bayou?  
I'm diving in too deep

Are you the Bayou?  
Breath is coming slow  
Are you the Bayou?  
Or what I'll never know  
Or what I'll never know  
Or what I'll never know



# I'LL BE WITH YOU

We walk together through  
the woods  
Just as we have for years  
Side by side, slow but sure  
Your eyes betraying fears

I know you wonder what will be  
In times when I am gone  
If you listen to the wind  
You'll always hear my song

(chorus)

I'll be with you at dawn  
When sunlight warms your face  
As your feet touch morning dew  
That leaves the coolest trace  
I'll be with you at night  
In stars that fill the sky  
And all the colors nature ever  
Puts before your eyes  
Every leaf on every tree  
Winter spring and fall  
My breath will be the air  
I'll be with you in all

(verse 2)

When you hear the whippoorwill  
While lying in our bed  
Or in the fine complexity  
Of every spider's web

The smell of fresh cut grass  
The jasmine from a tree  
The warmth of glowing embers  
The snow beneath your ski

The silence of the forest  
The buzzing of the bees  
The whisper of a baby's breath  
The roar of pounding seas

(chorus)

I'll be with you at dawn  
When sunlight warms your face  
As your feet touch morning dew  
That leaves the coolest trace  
I'll be with you at night  
In stars that fill the sky  
And all the colors nature ever  
Puts before your eyes  
Every leaf on every tree  
Winter spring and fall  
My breath will be the air  
I'll be with you in all

(bridge)

You stare up in the night  
As stars ignite the sky  
Then feel a butterfly  
Caress your cheek

You turn to find me there  
A moment that we share  
And need no words  
To find a way to speak

(final chorus)

I'll be with you at dawn  
When sunlight warms your face  
As your feet touch morning dew  
That leaves the coolest trace  
I'll be with you at night  
In stars that fill the sky  
And all the colors nature ever  
Puts before your eyes  
Every leaf on every tree  
Winter spring and fall  
My breath will be the air  
I'll be with you in all

# I WANT TO BE A TREE

When my time has come  
Don't put me in a box  
And skip the fancy shiva  
No platters of bagels and lox

Lay down that spike and chisel  
No headstone will I need  
Yeah when I die my wish is clear  
Just plant me like a seed

'Cause I want to be a tree  
Yes, I want to be a tree  
With plenty of leaves and bark to spare  
For everyone to see

I want to be a tree  
Yes, I want to be a tree  
You can sit right down under my shade  
That'll be enough for me

I read it and it's true  
Make a pod from my remains  
Then stick me in the ground  
And pray for sun and rain

The richness from my body  
Will supercharge the earth  
And like a natural maternity ward  
To a sapling I'll give birth

So I want to be a tree  
Yes, I want to be a tree  
With plenty of leaves and bark to spare  
For everyone to see

I want to be a tree  
Yeah, I want to be a tree  
You can sit right down under my shade  
That'll be enough for me

Don't stick me in an urn  
For some relative to keep  
And please don't throw me overboard  
To the bottom of the deep

No twenty-one-gun salute  
So just put those guns to bed  
I've got a much more peaceful wish  
Bring the garden tools instead

'Cause I want to be a tree  
Yeah, I want to be a tree  
With plenty of leaves and bark to spare  
For everyone to see

I want to be a tree  
Yes, I want to be a tree  
Standing, swaying firm and tall  
Glorious and free

I want to be a tree  
Yes, I want to be a tree  
You can sit right down under my shade  
That'll be enough for me  
You can sit right down under my shade  
That'll be enough for me



# SO FRAGILE, SO BLUE

## *(Part 1: Lifting Off)*

How many times did I hear  
Space the final frontier  
Like a punchline or jeer  
Used to pull me apart

Now at 90 years old  
Could I be that bold  
A dream packaged and sold  
Life to imitate art

The press devoured the story  
Of my potential glory  
To make some sort of history  
But how did I feel

Potential explosions filled me  
with dread  
Dozens of ways I could wind  
up dead  
Danced in my head  
The fear was real

Strapped into the craft in my seat  
Just like Star Fleet  
My heart skipped a beat  
And in the blink of an eye

It all happened so fast  
A thunderous blast  
Shot up as clouds passed  
Punched a hole in the sky

Through the earth's atmosphere  
Feeling the fear  
Receding once we were clear  
And continued to climb

Every sense was awake  
No move did we make  
Till fifty miles up - the break  
The Kármán line

So fragile, so blue  
What can we do?  
What can we do?  
So fragile, so blue  
What can we do?  
What can we do?

## *(Part 2: Space)*

Once beyond gravity  
We unlocked the key  
And set ourselves free  
Floating around the inside

While some tumbled and danced  
In that weightless trance  
I had to take my chance  
To the window to witness the ride

I needed to see  
What was out there for me  
In the endless sea  
To meet my fate  
I could never anticipate

What I saw filled me with awe  
But also something cold, pitiless  
and raw

An instinct to withdraw  
A hot coal to be dropped

Relentless blackness was all I  
could see

Like a depthless eternity  
A malevolent mystery  
That could never be stopped

Endless darkness  
No twinkling stars  
No magical lights  
That call from afar  
No breathable air  
Nothing to care

No message to send  
No beginnings or ends  
No life could sustain  
No dreams could remain  
Nearly drove me insane  
And I felt a deep pain  
What I saw stopped me cold  
Collapsed all my breath  
All I could see was death  
Yes, all I could see was death  
And a death with no sight,  
smell, or sound  
That's what I found  
That's what I found

## *(Part 3: The Blue Dot)*

Then from the corner of my eye  
Looking back I could spy  
Something that made me cry  
Under a yellow, blue dome

Sagan called it a pale blue dot  
But until then I'd forgot  
On my moonshot  
Earth is our home

Space has no people, passion or love  
An endless question that hangs  
from above  
We know almost nothing of  
Where only death waits

We live on the edge of a pin  
Our air is cellophane thin  
But it's where life begins  
It's what's at stake

So fragile, so blue  
What can we do?  
What can we do?  
So fragile, so blue  
What can we do?  
What can we do?

## *(Part 4: Touching Down)*

When I finally touched down  
Finding my feet on solid ground  
A feeling so profound  
That I'd never had

No triumph or joy  
Not like a little boy  
Who had finally played with a toy  
I felt deeply, deeply sad

A sadness so real and so deep  
That I might never sleep  
But I just have to keep

And let people know

Boldly go  
Boldly go  
Boldly go

Boldly go means to love  
To take responsibility of  
What's below and above  
And never live to regret

I hope I never recover  
From what I discovered  
Like a long-lost lover  
I had left to neglect

Mountains, trees, birds, beasts  
Life-giving water, magnificent feasts  
North, south, west, east  
All human reactions from terror to fun  
All that breathes, swims, flies or runs  
Literally everything under the sun

Every ant that crawls  
Every ocean squall  
Snails, lions, sand,  
The tiniest creatures we don't understand  
Redwoods touching the sky  
A cat's glassy eyes  
The plains waving grass  
The miracle of glass

A beautiful child  
Gray wolves running wild  
Every smell fine or foul  
Every howl, song, or growl  
The fire, wind and rain  
Purest pleasure, piercing pain  
The heat of our skin  
All original sin  
Bound up together  
Built to last forever  
Connected as one  
But coming undone  
It's all ours to lose  
A fate that we choose

So fragile, so blue  
What can we do?  
So fragile, so blue  
What can we do?  
What can we do?  
What can we do?





**William Shatner** has cultivated a career spanning over 70 years as an award-winning actor, director, producer, writer, recording artist, and equestrian. He is one of Hollywood's most recognizable figures and a major philanthropist.

His accomplishments in television, film, and stage would take a great deal of time and more space than allotted here.

In 1966, Shatner originated the role of Captain James T. Kirk in the television series *Star Trek*. The series spawned a feature film franchise where Shatner returned as Captain Kirk in seven of the *Star Trek* movies, one of which he directed.

Shatner played the title role in the hit television series *T.J. Hooker* before hosting television's first reality-based series, *Rescue 911*.

He won Emmys and his first Golden Globe® for his portrayal of eccentric lawyer Denny Crane on both *The Practice* and *Boston Legal*. Shatner has received four more Emmy® nominations as well as other Golden Globe® and SAG Award® nods.

In April 2011, Shatner launched his hugely popular one-man show, *Shatner's World* on Broadway. He toured in Australia and New Zealand, followed by tours in Canada and over 50 cities in the United States.

Shatner currently is the host and executive producer of *The UnXplained* on the History Channel. From the producers of *Ancient Aliens* and *The Curse of Oak Island*, the one-hour, non-fiction series explores the world's most fascinating, strange and inexplicable mysteries.

His love of music inspired him to record the critically acclaimed album *Has Been*. In September 2021, Shatner released the autobiographical album titled *Bill* with tracks featuring Joe Jonas, Brad Paisley, and Joe Walsh to name a few. In October 2020, *The Blues* album quickly reached number one on *Billboard's* Blues chart. Shatner previously released the country music album, *Why Not Me*, in August 2018 with Jeff Cook and Heartland Records. Quickly following that, Shatner experienced much success with *Shatner Clause*, a holiday album released in October 2018 which peaked at number two on the *Billboard* chart.

Off the screen and broadcast waves, Shatner has authored nearly 30 best-sellers in both the fiction and non-fiction genres. His autobiography, *Up Till Now*, was a *New York Times* best-seller and was followed by *Shatner Rules* which was released in October 2011. William Shatner's book, *Leonard: My Fifty-Year Friendship with a Remarkable Man*, was released in February 2016 appearing on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Shatner also released *Live Long And... What I Might Have Learned Along the Way* in September 2018 and most recently, *Boldly Go*, a fascinating and timely collection of essays in which Shatner reflects on key events from his 90-years of life, was released in October 2022.

Shatner has been successful in another area—horse breeding. A longtime dedicated breeder of American Quarter Horses, he has also experienced enormous success with the American Saddlebred, developing and riding world champions and has won numerous world championships in several equine events. His passions for horses and philanthropy were united when he started the Hollywood Charity Horse Show in 1990, which benefits childrens' and veterans' charities in Southern California.

Shatner continues to act, write, produce, and direct while still making time to work with charities and further his passion in equestrian sports. He lives in Los Angeles, CA.



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

The Emmy®-nominated singer-songwriter-composer has created an enormous body of genre-bending music that includes pop albums with Ben Folds Five, multiple solo albums, and numerous collaborative records.

For the past three decades, he's toured as a pop artist, while also performing with some of the world's greatest symphony orchestras. A New York Times Best Selling author and podcast host, Ben also composes for film, tv, and theatre, guest stars in films and tv, and serves as the Artistic Advisor to the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

A longtime advocate for arts and music education funding, Ben launched a music education charitable initiative in his native state of North Carolina entitled "Keys For Keys," which provides funds and keyboards to existing nonprofits that provide free or affordable music lessons to interested school-age children. On the national level, he's active as a member of Americans For The Arts and the Arts Action Fund.



**Steven Reineke** is one of North America's leading conductors of popular music and is in his second decade as music director of The New York Pops at Carnegie Hall. Additionally, he is Principal Pops Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Principal Pops Conductor of the Houston and Toronto Symphony Orchestras.

Reineke is a frequent guest conductor and can be seen on the podium with the Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, San Francisco, and Detroit Symphony Orchestras.

On stage, Reineke creates and collaborates with a range of leading artists including Maxwell, Common, Kendrick Lamar, Nas, Ne-Yo, Barry Manilow, Cynthia Erivo, Sutton Foster, Ben Rector, Cody Fry, and Ben Folds, among others.

As the creator of hundreds of orchestral arrangements, Reineke's work is performed worldwide and can be heard on numerous Cincinnati Pops Orchestra recordings. His wind ensemble compositions are published by the C.L. Barnhouse Company and are performed by concert bands perennially.



## Robert Sharenow

is an Emmy®-winning television producer, award-winning author, and songwriter.

His book *The Berlin Boxing Club* was awarded the Sydney Taylor Prize, was a finalist for the Walden Award, and has been published in several languages. His first novel, *My Mother the Cheerleader*, was named an ALA Best Book and is being developed into a feature film.

He currently serves as president of programming for A&E Networks, overseeing the development and production of all content for their brands, including History Channel, A&E, and Lifetime. His first job in television was writing for Michael Moore's Emmy®-winning series, *TV Nation*.

As a songwriter and lyricist, his work has been recorded by a diverse array of artists, including They Might Be Giants and hip-hop legend Grandmaster Caz. He previously collaborated with William Shatner and Daniel Miller on the album *Bill*, released by Republic Records and featuring musical guests, including, Joe Jonas, Brad Paisley, Joe Walsh, Robert Randolph, John Lurie, and Joan As Police Woman.



## Daniel Miller

is a Brooklyn-based, Grammy Award®-winning musician, composer, and producer. He has been a member of the band They Might Be Giants for over 20 years.

In 2020 he teamed up with William Shatner and Robert Sharenow to create the album *Bill*, an autobiographical, spoken-word song cycle that explores Shatner's life

and events. The album was the first release on the Joe Jonas/Republic label, Let's Get It Records, and enjoyed critical and commercial success.

His scoring work can be heard across a variety of mediums, most recently *American Rust*: seasons 1 and 2 (Showtime, Amazon Prime).

Miller tours the world with TMBG. When not on the road, he can be found in his Brooklyn sub-basement studio, happily working on music, and wishing he had a window.



## Jherek Bischoff

is an American composer, arranger, producer, and multi-instrumentalist.

Hailed a “polymath” (The New York Times), a “visionary” (SPIN) and a “formidable force in orchestral music” (NPR), his singular voice is informed by his roots in alt-rock and experimental bands, his love of old Hollywood movie soundtracks, and the

orchestrations of 60s pop music.

Bischoff’s credits include music for symphony orchestra, opera, film, theater and ballet (*Exhibiting Forgiveness*, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, *Organ Trail*), over a dozen albums as a solo artist or band member (The Dead Science, Parenthetical Girls, Xiu Xiu), and over sixty albums as a writer, musician, arranger, producer, or engineer (Kassa Overall, Angel Olsen, Regina Spektor).

Bischoff’s prolific career includes collaborations with Neil Gaiman, David Byrne, and Kronos Quartet; commissions by Lincoln Center, The Royal Conservatory, and St Ann’s Warehouse; performances by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and Nashville Symphony; and performances at Carnegie Hall, Royal Albert Hall, and in Times Square.

*So Fragile, So Blue* marks Bischoff’s first commission by the National Symphony Orchestra and sixth collaboration for Ben Folds’ Declassified Series.



## Gabe Witcher

is a Grammy®-winning multi-instrumentalist, producer, composer, and arranger best known for his work with the genre-bending acoustic quintet, Punch Brothers.

Throughout his nearly 40-year career, he has worked with a wide range of artistic luminaries including Paul Simon, Elton John, Yo-Yo Ma, Willie Nelson, the Coen

Brothers, William Shatner, Jon Batiste, and Béla Fleck.

Witcher frequently appears as a featured soloist on many award-winning film and television scores including Oscar® winners *Brokeback Mountain*, *Babel*, and *Toy Story*, *Cars*, *The Good Dinosaur*, *Inside Llewyn Davis*, and *Better Call Saul*.

Over the past decade Witcher has premiered works with the San Francisco Symphony, Boston Pops, and the National Symphony Orchestra among others. His ongoing collaboration as orchestral arranger for MacArthur Award-winner Rhiannon Giddens continues to delight audiences around the world.

In the fall of 2023 Witcher premiered an adaptation of Copland’s *Rodeo* for bluegrass ensemble, commissioned by the Martha Graham Dance Company to commemorate their 100th anniversary.



## Eric Allen

is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, and arranger living in Brooklyn.

Allen has created arrangements for Regina Spektor, Cynthia Erivo, Diana Ross, William Shatner, Ben Folds, Bun B, and many other professional artists. His arrangements have been performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Cincinnati Pops, and Oregon

Symphony, and have been broadcast on ABC and PBS.

Allen has performed in venues all over New York City, including Carnegie Hall, Dizzy's Club, National Sawdust, Nederlander Theatre, and Brooks Atkinson Theatre. He has performed with Courtney Love, LCD Soundsystem, and many others. He can be seen in the orchestras of shows *Mozart in the Jungle* and *Dickinson*.

Allen was a member of both the BMI Jazz Composers Workshop and the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop, where he received the Jean Banks Musical Theatre Award in 2016.

Allen earned his master's degree at Indiana University and his bachelor's at Portland State University. He has studied Arabic music with oud and violin master Simon Shaheen and sarangi with the late Ramesh Mishra.



# NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The 2023–2024 season is the National Symphony Orchestra’s 93rd season. Gianandrea Noseda serves as the Orchestra’s seventh Music Director, joining the NSO’s legacy of distinguished leaders: Christoph Eschenbach, Leonard Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Antal Doráti, Howard Mitchell, and Hans Kindler. Its artistic leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke and Artistic Advisor Ben Folds.

Since its founding in 1931, the NSO has been committed to performances that enrich the lives of its audience and community members. In 1986, the National Symphony became an artistic affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where it has performed since the Center opened in 1971. The 96-member NSO participates in events of national and international importance, including the annual nationally televised concerts on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol, live-streamed performances from the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on medici.tv, and local radio broadcasts on Classical WETA 90.9 FM.

The NSO builds on its recording legacy with its eponymous label that launched in 2020. Since launching, the National Symphony Orchestra has garnered praise for its ambitious recording projects including the orchestra’s first complete Beethoven Symphony cycle and the release of the first-ever cycle of George Walker’s *Sinfonias*, both led by Music Director Gianandrea Noseda.

Additionally, the NSO’s community engagement and education projects are nationally recognized, including NSO *In Your Neighborhood*, an annual week of 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 other medical partners, that works to raise awareness of the impact music, and particularly live music, can have on health outcomes. Career development opportunities for young musicians include the NSO Youth Fellowship Program and its acclaimed, tuition-free Summer Music Institute.

For more information, visit [nationalsymphony.org](https://nationalsymphony.org)

# NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## **Violins**

Nurit Bar-Josef, *Concertmaster*  
Ying Fu, *Associate Concertmaster*  
Ricardo Cyncynates,  
*Assistant Concertmaster*  
Jane Bowyer Stewart  
Teri Hopkins Lee  
Pavel Pekarsky  
Heather LeDoux Green  
Joel Fuller  
Lisa-Beth Lambert  
Jing Qiao  
Angelia Cho

Marissa Regni, *Principal*  
Dayna Hepler, *Assistant Principal*  
Desimont Alston  
Cynthia R. Finks  
Deanna Lee Bien  
Glenn Donnellan  
Natasha Bogachek  
Carole Tafoya Evans  
Jae-Yeon Kim  
Wanzhen Li  
Hanna Lee  
Benjamin Scott

Malorie Blake Shin  
Marina Aikawa  
Peiming Lin  
Derek Powell  
Meredith Riley \*\*

## **Violas**

Daniel Foster, *Principal*  
Abigail Evans Kreuzer,  
*Assistant Principal*  
Lynne Edelson Levine  
Denise Wilkinson  
James Francis Deighan  
Nancy Thomas  
Jennifer Mondie  
Tsunaka Sakamoto  
Ruth Wicker  
Mahoko Eguchi  
Rebecca Epperson

## **Cellos**

David Hardy, *Principal*  
Glenn Garlick, *Assistant Principal*  
Steven Honigberg  
David Teie  
James Lee

Rachel Young  
Mark Evans  
Eugena Chang Riley  
Loewi Lin  
Britton Riley

## **Basses**

Robert Oppelt, *Principal*  
Richard Barber, *Assistant Principal*  
Jeffrey Weisner  
Ira Gold  
Paul DeNola  
Charles Nilles  
Alexander Jacobsen  
Michael Marks

## **Harp**

Adriana Horne, *Principal*

## **Flutes**

Aaron Goldman, *Principal*  
Leah Arsenault Barrick,  
*Assistant Principal*  
Alice Kogan Weintreb  
Carole Bean, *Piccolo*

## **Oboes**

Nicholas Stovall, *Principal*  
Jamie Roberts, *Assistant Principal*  
Harrison Linsey  
Kathryn Meany Wilson,  
*English Horn*

## **Clarinets**

Lin Ma, *Principal*  
Eugene Mondie, *Assistant Principal*  
Paul Cigan  
Peter Cain, *Bass Clarinet*

## **Bassoons**

Sue Heineman, *Principal*  
David Young, *Assistant Principal*  
Steven Wilson  
Samuel Blair, *Contrabassoon* \*\*

## **Horns**

Abel Pereira, *Principal*  
Laurel Bennert Ohlson,  
*Associate Principal*  
Markus Osterlund  
James Nickel  
Robert Rearden  
Scott Fearing

## **Trumpets**

William Gerlach, *Principal*  
Thomas Cupples  
Keith Jones

## **Trombones**

Craig Mulcahy, *Principal*  
Evelyn Carlson, *Assistant Principal*  
David Murray  
Matthew Guilford, *Bass Trombone*

## **Tuba**

Stephen Dumaine, *Principal*

## **Timpani**

Jauvon Gilliam, *Principal*  
Scott Christian, *Assistant Principal*

## **Percussion**

Eric Shin, *Principal*  
Scott Christian  
Joseph Connell \*

## **Keyboards**

Lambert Orkis, *Principal*  
Lisa Emenheiser \*

## **Librarians**

Elizabeth Cusato Schnobrick,  
*Principal*  
Zen Stokdyk, *Associate*  
Karen Lee, *Assistant*

\* Regularly engaged extra

\*\* Temporary position

