



## COUNTRY ROADS: The Music of John Denver & Dan Fogelberg

~ PRESS/REVIEWS/ENDORSEMENTS ~



### Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

JoAnn Falletta, Music Director | Matthew Kraemer, Associate Conductor

Daniel Hart  
Executive Director  
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

9-November-2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Our orchestra just premiered "Country Roads: The Music of John Denver & Dan Fogelberg," a brand new Symphony Pops concert that was extremely successful with our audience, at the box office, and with the critics like The Buffalo News who published a review of the performance this week (click here to read "[BPO Pays Classy Tribute to Denver](#)").

You may recall I wrote to many of you in the fall of 2009 expressing my enthusiasm for a similar new Symphony Pops concert we premiered, titled "[Sweet Baby James: The Music of James Taylor](#)." Both shows are produced by Ligeti Artists in New York City, and feature two-time Tony nominated performer, Bob Stillman, with additional vocals and five piece back-up band from first rate New York and Nashville based performers and musicians, and have superbly crafted arrangements for full orchestra.

I urge you to consider adding either one of these fabulous shows to your Symphony Pops line-up. If you present one of them, I guarantee you'll be on the phone immediately after it's presented to book the next one, as we have done!

To preview these productions, please go to the following links:

[Sweet Baby James: The Music of James Taylor](#)

[Country Roads: The Music of John Denver & Dan Fogelberg](#)

Both shows are represented by John Schimmelman at SRO Artists, Inc. Please contact him for booking information. Reply to this message, and your note will go to John at [jschimmelman@sroartists.com](mailto:jschimmelman@sroartists.com) or call 608-664-8160.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me by email at [dhart@BPO.org](mailto:dhart@BPO.org) or call 716-885-0331 ext 407.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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### THE BUFFALO NEWS

GUSTO > Concert Review

#### *BPO pays classy tribute to Denver*

By Joe Sweeney | NEWS CONTRIBUTING REVIEWER  
*Published: October 31, 2010, 12:00 AM || Updated: October 31, 2010, 6:38 AM*

When a musician sits down to write a song, there must be a temptation to get wordy. To go on a wild adjective bender, stringing the syllables together for maximum dramatic effect. Which makes artists like John Denver truly marvelous. The earnest country-pop superstar would never have scrawled down lyrics like, "The roiling, fiery orb rains phosphorescent kisses upon me." Instead, he went with "Sunshine on my shoulders/Makes me happy."

The man was given supremely classy treatment by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra on Saturday night, as part of a theme concert called "Country Roads," focusing on Denver and wuss rock icon Dan Fogelberg. A five-piece band, led by singer/ songwriter and Broadway vet Bob Stillman, added the necessary polish and twang to the proceedings.

"Sunshine On My Shoulders" was indeed a high point of the evening. Prefaced by a loving description of the tune by Stillman, in which he compared it to "Bolero," the arrangement began with a tasteful mix of congas and strings. And as the orchestra slowly filled out the circular melody, with the violin and clarinet passages floating among the dobro licks and acoustic chords, the Ravel comparison was an apt one.

Denver's music, while firmly rooted in his beloved regions of Colorado and West Virginia, lent itself beautifully to the orchestral approach. There's a soaring majesty to his melodies, whether it's the campfire country of "Take Me Home Country Roads," the yodel-pop balladry of "Calyпсо" or the grand romantic gesture of "Annie's Song." All three tunes benefited greatly from the arrangements, with brass, strings and woodwinds providing beautiful counterpoints to the Denverlike warmth of Stillman's voice. Not quite everything was hunky dory — a duet take on "Leaving On A Jet Plane" was so gussied up, it sounded like something off the "Aladdin" soundtrack. But whenever things got a little too adult contemporary, there were Denver's words to fall back on.

Unfortunately, Stillman seemed to be more excited about the ensuing Dan Fogelberg set, which was far less interesting. Fogelberg's songs are simple and confessional, but far drippier than Denver's and bereft of any real melodic kick. And instead of grand statements about the environment, Fogelberg writes about crying. The first three songs of the set referenced the shedding of tears, as well as the song "Same Old Lang Syne," which is about running into an ex-girlfriend at the grocery store. Guess what happens? They cry.

The band and orchestra performed Fogelberg's hits well, loyally recreating his inoffensive folk and soft rock sound-scapes. But after the Denver set, which had the Kleinhans faithful roused throughout, having to sit through a rendition of "Longer" just felt unfair.

**Concert Review**  
**Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra**  
**"Country Roads" with Bob Stillman. Part of the BPO Pops series. Saturday evening in Kleinhans Music Hall.**



## COUNTRY ROADS: The Music of John Denver & Dan Fogelberg

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## THE BUFFALO NEWS

### Rocky Mountain high

*Bob Stillman returns to perform songs of John Denver and Dan Fogelberg with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra*

By Mary Kunz Goldman | NEWS CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC  
Published: October 24, 2010, 12:00 AM || Updated: October 24, 2010, 9:29 AM

Can classic rock become classical rock?

Over the last few years, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra has been suggesting that it can. The orchestra has brought in arranger Brent Havens, who has designed shows around Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd and the Doors. Last year, along came Bob Stillman, performing "Sweet Baby James," an evening of the songs of James Taylor.

The concerts draw big crowds. It's fun to hear songs everyone knows interpreted by a symphony orchestra, and new audiences discover what the Philharmonic and Kleinhans Music Hall have to offer.

Saturday, the orchestra is welcoming Stillman back, this time for "Country Roads: The Music of John Denver and Dan Fogelberg."

As a Broadway singer, Stillman has been featured in "Kiss of the Spider Woman" and "Grand Hotel."

His piano skills, honed at Juilliard, also led to a gig in the play "33 Variations," about a musicologist studying Beethoven's "Diabelli" Variations. Stillman played Beethoven. No, really, he played Beethoven – the man himself.

He relished it. "I read a lot about him," he says. "He was a very difficult person. He was a very hot-tempered, vibrant, mischievous, plain-spoken, irascible, wonderful, interesting, vivid person. And a lot of what, the way the play was written, he's yelling a lot of the time, which is really fun. He's that sort of a guy. He's not a shrinking violet."

"I'm kind of a laid-back person, I give off a lot of easygoing laid-back vibes, I tend to get cast in laid-back roles. So this was really fun, not just because I got to play this stuff at the piano. I got to shake my fists at the heavens a lot."

#### John Denver's greatness

John Denver and Dan Fogelberg were not known for shaking their fists at the heavens. They could be considered a closer fit for the laid-back Stillman.

But they were legends in their time, Stillman points out.

Denver, the subject of a recent documentary shown on public television, embodied the spirit of his era, the 1970s. "It's easy to forget how huge he was," Stillman says.

"I think it had a lot to do with that moment in time, when people were sort of discovering environmental concerns. He was so identified with that, and it came out of the folk music. The children of the folk music scene – Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, John Denver – they had very different styles, but they went on to tap into that sensitivity, finding your niche."

Stillman appreciates the quality of Denver's melodies, which lend themselves well to strings and other orchestral trimmings.

"The arrangements of something like 'Sunshine on My Shoulders,' or 'Annie's Song,' these are beautiful symphonic arrangements," he explains. "There's a lot of instruments on those tracks – a lot of strings, and some horns."

Fogelberg, Stillman continues, was lesser known than Denver.

"One thing about this concert I find interesting, the two of them are so different, but they're both identified with the Rocky Mountains, and also, they both died very young." Fogelberg died at 56 of prostate cancer. Denver was 53 when he was killed in a plane crash.

"Both died way too young," Stillman says. "It makes sense to have them on the same bill. It also provides this great variety, this shift in tone when you get into the Fogelberg stuff." The concert's first half will be Denver, he explains, and the second half will be Fogelberg.

#### Doing it his way

It's hard to step into a pop star's shoes. When Stillman's producers asked him to tackle Bob Dylan, he worried it was impossible.

"When I was given that assignment, I agonized over it. I agonized over whether I was the right person to do it," he says. "I certainly wasn't going to give a Dylan impersonation. I don't sing like him. Nobody



*Bob Stillman has also performed the songs of James Taylor and Bob Dylan. "My instinct is always to tell the story of a song – beginning, middle and end," Stillman says.*

sings like him except maybe Tom Petty. But that show turned out to be incredibly great. I listened to everything and picked songs that spoke to me, either musically, lyrically or both. And I approached them my way. I'm a piano player and I hired a woman to sing with me, a black woman who was just the best singer I ever worked with in my life. I had a lot of trepidation, and yet it turned out to be fantastic."

He learned from that experience.

"I am able to approach that stuff very much as myself, but still capture the essence of the style," Stillman explains.

Now, his imagination is fired by other songwriters whose songs he would like to tackle.

"I'd like to do a Paul Simon show," Stillman muses. "I'd like to do a Randy Newman show." Stillman is a longtime Newman fan. "If you listen to his solo albums, he's just so biting and funny. He's one of my all-time heroes."

"The curse of Randy Newman's life is that he has a very fanatic but limited fan base. To do a Randy Newman tribute show might not attract the same kind of crowd that John Denver would."

Denver and Fogelberg pose their own challenges—one of which is that everyone in the audience will know most of their recordings by heart.

"I think the challenge, especially with Fogelberg, is to avoid trying to copy the surface mannerisms," Stillman says. "Because he has certain very distinct ways of pronouncing things, a certain kind of using the break in his voice—that is part of the style, but if you do it too much, it becomes too much of a slavish re-creation."

Saturday's songwriters lend themselves more easily to orchestra than did the James Taylor songs Stillman brought to Buffalo last year.

"Their music lives in those lush arrangements more than, say, James Taylor or Bob Dylan or Joni Mitchell," Stillman says. "Especially John Denver, because there's tons of strings on his albums. Fogelberg, while he doesn't have those arrangements, there's a lot of synthesizer on those tracks. I think it'll be a natural."

Whatever the accompaniment, a singer's job is the same – to get to the heart of the song.

Describing Denver, Stillman uses the word "balladeer." His songs were often intensely personal. Fogelberg, too, wrote songs about his life. "The Leader of the Band," for instance, was a tribute to Fogelberg's father, a high school band director in Peoria, Ill.

"My instinct is always to tell the story of a song – beginning, middle and end," Stillman says. "You do it in pops style, not the way you would in a Broadway show. I try to focus on what the song's about, telling that story. If you've got a good voice and you can move people with that voice, that would take care of itself."

"Each song is a little one-act play."



# cover*stories*

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"This is great show, with an excellent band. Between songs, we really enjoyed Bob Stillman's personalization and history of both Denver and Fogelberg. With a little massaging and growth of Bob's name, this is poised for an excellent PBS concert."

Michael COOL

Director of the Performing Arts Center  
RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NJ  
<http://www.stockton.edu/pac>



## **COUNTRY ROADS: The Music of John Denver & Dan Fogelberg**

### **~ BIOS ~**

**Bob Stillman (Lead Vocalist, Band Arrangements)** – The Sweet Baby James concert stars the multi-talented and multifaceted Bob Stillman who has lit up some of New York’s best-known stages as writer, musician and actor. He’s been nominated twice for Tony Awards--first as actor, composer and onstage pianist in “Dirty Blonde,” and later as one of the songwriters for “Urban Cowboy.” Bob has also brought his uniquely soulful original songs to such popular New York venues as Joe’s Pub, The Cutting Room, Wilson’s and Elaine’s. His just released debut CD “Come Down Angel,” co-produced with Tom Corwin (whose credits include work with Bonnie Raitt and Stevie Wonder) has been steadily attracting listeners, and was selected as one of host Zoe Montana’s “Essentials” on radioio.com’s Acoustic channel. Featuring solid grooves, soaring melodies and biting lyrics, Bob’s songs combine folk-rock, jazz, pop and classical influences to create a style that is deeply personal, intimate, sophisticated and emotionally rich. Last season Bob co-starred with Christine Ebersole in the acclaimed Broadway musical “Grey Gardens.” As George Gold Strong, real life friend and accompanist to Big Edie Beale, Bob once again has the opportunity to combine his piano playing, acting and singing in a brilliant new piece of theater. Born in New York City, Bob studied piano and composition at the Juilliard and Manhattan Schools beginning at age 9. He went on to graduate with honors in music from Princeton. His other New York stage credits include Molina in “Kiss of the Spider Woman” (opposite Vanessa Williams), and the dying singer/songwriter in the cult off-Broadway hit “The Last Session.” He’s also been featured in some of the coolest new musical theater pieces by such new-wave composers as Adam Guettel (“Saturn Returns” at the Public Theater, released on Nonesuch as “Myths and Hymns”) and Michael John LaChiusa (“Hello Again” at Lincoln) Kids of a certain age (and possibly their parents) will remember Bob as Reed on Nickelodeon’s “Allegra’s Window,” where he learned not only how to talk to puppets, but how to write songs for them as well. (They sing funny...but then, that’s the point.)

**Le Ann Etheridge** is recognized in Nashville circles as a talented singer, bass player and songwriter. Soon after her arrival in Nashville, Vassar Clements chose her to sing with his Hillbilly Jazz Band. A former member of Nanci Griffith’s Blue Moon Orchestra, she sang harmony, played bass and rhythm guitar in the band and sometimes opened the show. Etheridge performed on six of Griffith’s projects, and on *Hearts in Mind*, her songwriting talents were in evidence with two songs: *Back When Ted Loved Sylvia* and *Before*. A native of northeastern North Carolina, Etheridge has released two albums, *Half a World Away* (2001) and *Farmer’s Daughter* (2005, Currituck Sound Music), each to critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. Currently polishing up a batch of new songs, she looks forward to recording in the near future. Her live and studio credits include David Olney, Allison Moorer, Pat Alger, Ian Gomm, Richard Dobson, Charly McClain, Michael Johnson and Mark Germino.



## COUNTRY ROADS: The Music of John Denver & Dan Fogelberg

### ~ BIOS ~

**Casey Kelly** grew up in Baton Rouge. While attending Louisiana State University, he became one of the founding members of the legendary local rock band, the Greek Fountains. He moved to New York City, where he worked as a session musician and singer, a songwriter, an arranger, a music publisher, a record producer and a record company executive. He moved on to tour with Tom Rush, playing guitar, harmonica, piano and singing and then jumped to Los Angeles, where he signed a recording deal with producer Joe Wissert who took him to Warner Brothers Records. At A&M Records, he formed the Luziana Band, which was recorded by Jim Hilton. Then at Elektra Records, Kelly recorded two more LPs, produced by Richard Sanford Orshoff, and toured extensively in support of that product opening shows and performing with virtually every popular music act there was, including everyone from America to Frank Zappa. Recruited by publisher/producer Bob Montgomery, Kelly moved to Nashville, where he has lived ever since writing top-selling songs for most of the major publishers and recording artists. His many hit songs include No. 1's: *Anyone Who Isn't Me Tonight*, by Kenny Rogers and Dottie West; *Soon* by Tanya Tucker; *Somewhere Down the Line* by T.G. Shepherd; and country music standard *The Cowboy Rides Away*, by George Strait. He works as a session player and singer and performs in clubs and concerts in Europe and throughout the United States. A frequent panelist and workshop contributor, Kelly is a member of ASCAP, NARAS and NSAI. He mentors the NSAI Regional Workshops in Providence, R.I.; Atlanta; Greenville, S.C., and Pensacola. He is board secretary of the Songwriters Guild of America's Board of Councilors.

**Pat McInerney**, drummer/percussionist, has structured a substantial career as a studio and touring musician on both sides of the Atlantic. A founding member of Nanci Griffith's Blue Moon Orchestra for the last 20 years, McInerney co-produced her projects *Hearts in Mind* [New Door/Universal] and the soon-to-be released *The Loving Kind* [Rounder Records]. McInerney also spent eight years in Don Williams' backing group *The Scratch Band*. London-born of Irish parents, McInerney formed his first band, *The Stormbeats*, at age 11. After graduation from Manchester University and spending four years as a teacher moonlighting in a country/rock band, he came to Nashville in 1978 at Williams' invitation. McInerney has since participated in worldwide touring and recording for numerous American and European favorites, including Doc & Merle Watson, Carl Perkins, Mary Chapin Carpenter, John Prine, Jerry Lee Lewis, Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, Del Shannon, Richard Thompson, Ian Gomm, The Crickets, Ricky Skaggs, *The Seldom Scene*, Chip Taylor, Tom Paxton, Suzy Bogguss, Robin and Linda Williams and Kevin Welch.

**Troy Engle** discovered the guitar when he was ten years old. By the time he had graduated from high school, he had already become very proficient on mandolin, fiddle, banjo, dobro, and pedal steel. He and his wife relocated to Nashville, TN in 2003. Not long after the move he toured with country artist Buddy Jewell, and played Buddy's Columbia Records release, "Times Like These". In 2005 Troy was invited to go on the road with country legend Patty Loveless. They performed on several television shows including, *Grand Ole Opry Live*, *Emeril*, *Martha*, *Fox and Friends*, and a special for GAC entitled "Patty Loveless: Dreamin' My Dreams." Since then he has toured with artists like Eric Church, Jimmy Wayne, The Oak Ridge Boys, Dale Ann Bradley, and The Isaacs, Troy is currently an in demand studio musician around Nashville, and enjoys golfing and spending time with his family.



## **COUNTRY ROADS: The Music of John Denver & Dan Fogelberg** **~ BOB STILLMAN ON BROADWAY ~**

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### *for GREY GARDENS*

"In a pitch-perfect supporting cast, Bob Stillman deserves a special shoutout as George Gould Strong, whose song, "Drift Away," brings depth to what could have been a stock character." -Travers, Rolling Stone

"Stunning...First-rate" -Feingold, Village Voice

"Sterling" -Dziemianowicz, NY Daily News

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### *for DIRTY BLONDE*

"Excellent...invaluable...a dream of a chameleon" -Brantley, NY Times

"Awe-inspiring" -Variety

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### *for THE LAST SESSION*

"Bob Stillman's nery performance is like a live wire that both holds the show together and electrifies it." -Feingold, Village Voice

"The standout performance comes from a multi-talented Bob Stillman, whose skills both as actor and musician not only make the death-bent musician credible but enable you to care about him as much as the fictional people around him do." -Barnes, NY Post

"Performs with unusual power and grace" -Kissel, NY Daily News

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### *for AS YOU LIKE IT*

"Bob Stillman sings the play's songs with great eloquence" -Daily News

.'...It's a pleasure to hear a true singer, Bob Stillman as Amiens, handling Shakespeare's songs.' -Backstage

"But perhaps the most striking element in this production is the music composed by William Finn for the songs. As sweetly rendered by Bob Stillman's engaging Amiens, Shakespeare's lyrics at last sing." -Hartford Courant