



Sunday, March 6, 2016, 7pm
Zellerbach Hall

Berkeley RADICAL: ReVisions

Binge-Worthy Journalism
*Backstage with the Creators of Serial,
Sarah Koenig & Julie Snyder*



Elise Bergerson

Cal Performances' 2015–2016 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

PROGRAM NOTES

Launched in 2014, *Serial* became the fastest podcast to reach five million downloads in iTunes history. The first season of the podcast presented a 12-part series on one legal case, captivating an audience that downloaded the episodes more than 100 million times (and counting).

In their live presentation, co-creators Sarah Koenig and Julie Snyder take the audience backstage in this cultural phenomenon, using some of their favorite recordings to narrate personal stories about the ups and downs of creating a new form of modern storytelling.

Serial's second season, which deals with Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, an American soldier who was held for five years by the Taliban and then arrested for desertion, began airing in December.



Meredith Heuer

Sarah Koenig is the host and co-creator of *Serial*. Launched in 2014, *Serial* is credited with bringing wide attention to the podcast format, and Koenig was named one of *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People" in 2015. Koenig began

her career as a newspaper reporter—her first reporting job was at her weekly hometown paper. She lived in Moscow for several years, where she worked for *The New York Times*. After returning to the United States, she joined the staff at the *Concord Monitor* in New Hampshire. Koenig worked as a crime reporter and then as a political reporter—the same beats she would go on to cover at the *Baltimore Sun*.

In 2004, Koenig became a producer at the radio show *This American Life* (TAL). She has guest-hosted TAL several times, most memorably for the "No Coincidence, No Story" episode, and she has produced and reported some of TAL's most popular shows, including "Switched at Birth," "Dr. Gilmer and Mr. Hyde," and "Habeas Schmabeas," a Peabody Award-winning broadcast about Guantanamo Bay. In 2015, it was announced that *Serial* was awarded a 2014 Peabody Award.



Julie Snyder has been the guiding force behind two of the most successful ventures in audio broadcasting. She is the co-creator of the podcast *Serial*, which debuted in October 2014 and has been downloaded more than 100 million times,

the most listened-to podcast in the history of the form. She is also the senior producer of the public radio show *This American Life*, heard by more than four million listeners a week.

Snyder began working at *This American Life* in 1997—almost from its inception—and along with host Ira Glass, has set the editorial agenda for the program, winning four Peabody Awards along the way. She has produced many of TAL's most entertaining and memorable episodes, including "24 Hours at the Golden Apple" and "Notes on Camp," while also heading up the program's most ambitious and topical programs, notably shows covering the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, health care reform, and urban violence in Chicago.

In 2013, Snyder began talking with her TAL colleague Sarah Koenig about trying something new: creating a program that doesn't follow the usual format of a different story every week, but instead covers one story over the course of an entire season. At the time, smart phone technology was making podcasts more accessible for the public and the on-demand nature of podcast listening meant listeners could follow a story in a serialized way, experiencing each chapter of the story as it unfolded week by week. The format was appealing to both Koenig and Snyder, because it meant they could use all the tools of narrative journalism to report an in-depth story that featured twists, turns, tangents, and suspense along the way.

After a year of reporting, with Koenig as host/reporter and Snyder as editor, *Serial* became an overnight sensation. *Slate* headlined a story "Serial is Like Nothing I've Ever Heard or Watched Before." *Buzzfeed* wrote "Serial is the year's best new crime drama (and it's not on TV)." *The New Yorker* called *Serial* "the podcast we've been waiting for." In 2015, it was announced that *Serial* was awarded a 2014 Peabody Award.