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Windham Hill artist Barbara Higbie has rolled with the changes

By **Randall G. Mielke**

Aurora Beacon-News

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Windham Hill artist Barbara Higbie has rolled with the changes

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The record label Windham Hill Records no longer exists in its original form, but the impact it left is legendary.

"I always thought that Windham Hill was a simple form, but it was always high quality," said composer, pianist, fiddler, singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Barbara Higbie, who first recorded on the label in 1982. "A person with a good acoustic instrument can really move people. The Windham Hill music offers real intimacy and universality at the same time."

Higbie, along with pianist Liz Story and guitarist Sean Harkness, will present Windham Hill's Winter Solstice Concert at 8 p.m. Saturday at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia, and at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at College of Lake County in Grayslake.

Windham Hill Records was founded in 1976 as an independent record label that specialized in acoustic, new age and folk music. Higbie was the first female instrumentalist to compose and record for Windham Hill Records with the 1982 album "Tideline," a duet project with violinist Darol Anger.

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Today, Windham Hill Records is a subsidiary of Sony Music Entertainment, and Windham Hills' releases are distributed through the Legacy Recordings branch of Sony, which continues to reissue albums and compilations.

The Windham Hill Winter Solstice CDs began in 1986, and continued at roughly a new volume every two or three years until the mid-2000s. Each CD usually contained a mixture of classical music, hymns, carols and atmospheric entries. The Winter Solstice recording series has sold more than eight million copies. The series celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2016.

"I believe I am on every Winter Solstice CD but the first one and maybe the sixth one," Higbie said.

Higbie has toured nationally and internationally since the early 1980s. She has performed with such musicians as Bonnie Raitt, [Carlos Santana](#), Terry Riley, the Kronos Quartet, Pete Seeger, Holly Near, Will Ackerman, Bobby McFerrin, Spyro Gyra, Teresa Trull, Darol Anger and Mike Marshall, among others, and has performed on more than 100 albums. Her latest solo release was 2014's "Scenes from Life."

Higbie enjoys working with Story and Harkness.

"Liz and I have been touring for 30 years," she said. "Sean, Liz and I have been touring off and on for about 10 years. It's great to work with them. There is good balance, a lot of variety, different styles of music and great camaraderie.

"Liz does a beautiful interpretation of 'Greensleeves,'" said Higbie about the Winter Solstice show. "We try to get in a little Hanukkah music. We do some Celtic-sounding songs. Also, Sean does some great jazz arrangements."

Higbie said the show has a warm feeling and is great family fun.

"Music in general is uplifting," she said. "I lost both my parents in the last couple of years. Music really connects you to the cycles of life. With all of today's technology, we get so jittery. This is the time to drop into the bigger picture."

Randall G. Mielke is a freelance writer.

Windham Hill's Winter Solstice Concert

When: Saturday

Where: Ramsey Auditorium at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, Kirk Road and Pine Street, Batavia

Tickets: \$14-\$28

Information: 630-840-2787 or fnal.gov/culture

When: Tuesday

Where: James Lumber Center for the Performing Arts at the College of Lake County, 19351 West Washington Street, Grayslake.

Tickets: \$12-\$40

Information: 847-543-2300 or jlc.clcillinois.edu

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