

Judy Collins – Bio

Judy Collins is the eldest of Charles “Chuck” Thomas Collins and Marjorie Collins five children, and was born in Seattle, Washington on 1st May 1939. “Chuck” was a professional musician and the family later lived in Boulder and Los Angeles, and eventually Denver, Colorado. Her father was a singer and broadcaster, and, by the age of five, Judy’s began taking piano lessons. In Denver, aged ten, and already considered a *prodigy* Collins music teacher became the charismatic Dr. Antonia Brico, a woman who had conducted orchestras in Europe prior to WWII. Collins made her public debut at the age of thirteen, performing Mozart’s “*Concerto For Two Pianos*” with Danno Guerrero. Aged fifteen she was the vocalist, for a short time, with Denver’s Jack Blue Dance Band. Much to the chagrin of Dr. Brico, the following year Judy abandoned her classical studies having discovered folk music and the joys of playing guitar.

Through the late fifties Collins performed traditional material as a solo act in local venues such as The Gilded Garter [Central City] and The Exodus [Denver]. With the commercial popularity of traditional folk music that ensued late that decade, which then began to focus upon contemporary original material in the early sixties, Collins began playing further afield, initially in Chicago at The Gate Of Horn. I believe those appearances were at the behest of the late Bob Gibson. In 1958 Judy Collins married her *childhood sweetheart*, later a college lecturer, Peter Taylor, and they had one son. The couple parted in 1965.

In time Collins had played all the major clubs, on all the coasts, and following a television appearance at New York’s Village Gate, Jac Holzman, the owner of Elektra Records approached her with a recording contract. It was the beginning of a relationship that would last for nearly forty years. Her debut album, “**A Maid Of Constant Sorrow**,” was issued in October 1961, and a year later “**The Golden Apples Of The Sun**” arrived. Although those discs included [a few] songs by acknowledged writers such as Ewan MacColl and Sidney Carter, on “**# 3**” Judy began covering songs by younger, contemporary writers – Dylan’s “Masters Of War” and the Shel Silverstein/Jim Friedman co-write “In The Hills Of Shiloh.” “**Wildflowers**,” became Collins’ first gold selling album and featured the Top 10 hit single “Both Sides Now” as well as her initial attempts as a composer “Sky Fell,” “Albatross” and “Since You Asked.” The latter, she acknowledges as the first song “*she ever wrote*.” In truth, after that initial spurt, Collins continued to mainly be an interpreter of the work of other writers. Collins was awarded the Best Folk Performance Grammy for “Both Sides Now” the following year, and in 1970 the song charted in the UK reaching # 14.

Her next album “**Who Knows Where The Time Goes**” remains one of the finest folk/rock albums of all time. The session players included Stephen Stills, formerly of Buffalo Springfield who was in the process of forming Crosby, Stills & Nash. That trio’s self-titled debut collection, led with the Stills composition and tribute, “Suite : Judy Blue Eyes.” Lovers for a time, they eventually parted. Collins’ *a cappella* reading of the traditional hymn “Amazing Grace,” was released as a single in late 1970, and logged 67 weeks on the British charts peaking at # 5, a duration beaten only by Frank Sinatra’s single “My Way.” A track from the album “**Whales & Nightingales**,” in the States the single reached # 15. The *in concert* disc “**Living**” included “Easy Times,” Judy’s collaboration with actor Stacy Keach, a song that had featured in the latter’s short film “**The Repeater**” [1971]. Initially intended as an article for Ms magazine, Collins interviewed Dr. Brico in the early seventies, an encounter that was filmed by Jill Godmilow. Collins and Godmilow later collaborated on the documentary “**Antonia : Portrait Of The Woman**” [1974]. Although nominated it failed to win the Best Documentary Oscar, but picked up a Christopher Award and an Independent Film Critics Award. The film helped revive Dr. Brico’s career. “Send In The Clowns,” penned by Stephen Sondheim, a track from “**Judith**,” gave Collins a 1975 Top 20 hit in the States. In the UK the single reached # 6. A UK only release, on the Telstar label, “**Amazing Grace**,” featured contemporary and religious songs.

In 1987, Houghton Mifflin published. “**Trust Your Heart : An Autobiography**” [ISBN 0-395-41285-4]. Collins’ son Clark passed in January 1992, a suicide. “**Voices**” was a Judy Collins collection that included a songbook [with arrangements for piano], a book and CD, and was published by Clarkson Potter [ISBN 0-517-70092-1]. In the accompanying book, Collins talked about her thirteen songs on the disc, composed between 1967 and 1995. Having begun working for UNICEF [United Nations Children’s Fund], in 1995 Judy became one of their Special Representatives for the Arts.

Louis Nelson and Judy Collins were married on April 16th 1996, having met eighteen years earlier, to the day, at a fundraiser for the Equal Rights Amendment. Louis Nelson, an industrial designer, has worked on projects as diverse as pantyhose packaging and the mural on the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. The latter was dedicated in the summer of 1995. Collins' first novel, **"Shameless,"** [ISBN 0-671-89234-7] was published that year and an *accompanying* album released. The collection included "Song For Sarajevo," written by Collins following a UNICEF sponsored visit to war torn Yugoslavia. In 1998, Pocket Books published another biographically slanted tome, **"Singing Lessons : A Memoir Of Love, Loss, Hope And Healing"** [1998 ; ISBN 0-671-02745-X] and the package included a four song CD. Collins' fifth book, **"Sanity & Grace"** [ISBN 1-58542-261-4] was published in 2003.

Collins' more recent album and DVD releases have been on her own Wildflower label, commencing with the 1999 Wolf Trap disc and also now includes reissues, on CD, of her first four recordings. In late August 2004, Rhino Records issued **"Sings Leonard Cohen : Democracy"** which featured eleven old recordings and three new ones. **"Portrait Of An American Girl,"** Collins first Wildflower studio release to feature new material appeared in the early summer of 2005.

A New York resident since the mid sixties, Judy's 9/11 song "Kingdom Come" is available as a download at <http://www.judycollins.com/9-11-mp3Download.html> The proceeds go to the Uniformed Fire Fighters Scholarship Association Fund.

Discography [excludes children's albums] :

CD's

"A Maid Of Constant Sorrow" [1961] ; **"The Golden Apples Of The Sun"** [1962] ; **"Judy Collins # 3"** reissued on CD in 2004 [1963] ; **"The Judy Collins Concert"** reissued on CD in 2004 [1964] ; **"Judy Collins Fifth Album"** [1965] ; **"In My Life"** [1966] ; **"Wildflowers"** [1967] ; **"Who Knows Where The Time Goes"** [1968] ; **"Recollections"** compilation [1969] ; **"Whales And Nightingales"** [1970] ; **"Living"** [1972] ; **"Colours Of The Day"** compilation [1972] ; **"True Stories And Other Dreams"** [1973] ; **"Judith"** [1975] ; **"Bread And Roses"** [1976] ; **"So Early In The Spring"** compilation [1977] ; **"Hard Times For Lovers"** [1979] ; **"Running For My Life"** [1980] ; **"Times of Our Lives"** [1982] ; **"Home Again"** [1984] ; **"Amazing Grace"** UK only compilation [1985] ; **"Trust Your Heart"** [1987] ; **"Sanity And Grace"** [1989] ; **"Innervoces"** with Richard Stoltzman [1989] ; **"Fires Of Eden"** [1990] ; **"Just Like A Woman"** [1993] ; **"Live At Newport"** [1994] ; **"Come Rejoice ! A Judy Collins Christmas"** [1994] ; **"Shameless"** [1995] ; **"Voices"** songbook, book and CD [1995] ; **"Forever : An Anthology"** 2CD compilation [1997] ; **"Christmas At The Biltmore Estate"** [1997] ; **"Both Sides Now"** [1998] ; **"Classic Broadway"** [1999] ; **"Live At Wolf Trap"** from 1999 Barns concert [1999] ; ; **"Live At Wolf Trap"** from 2000 Barns concert [2000] ; **"All On A Wintry Night"** similar to 1994 Xmas release with a few different tracks [2000] ; **"Maids & Golden Apples"** 2 for 1 single CD release of 1961 and 1962 albums [2001] ; **"Judy Collins' Wildflower Festival"** [2003] ; **"Judy Collins # 3 & The Judy Collins Concert"** 2 for 1 single CD release of 1963 and 1964 albums [2004] ; **"Sings Leonard Cohen : Democracy"** [2004] ; **"Portrait Of An American Girl"** [2005] :

Video and DVD :

"Best of Judy Collins" [1993] ; **"Antonia : A Portrait Of The Woman"** DVD released in 2003 [19??] ; **"Christmas At The Biltmore Estate"** [1997] ; **"Live At Wolf Trap"** DVD released in 2003 [2000] ; **"Judy Collins' Wildflower Festival"** also feat. Arlo Guthrie, Eric Andersen and Tom Rush [2003] :

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 06/03, 08/03, 02/04, 11/04 & 05/05.

[1030 words]