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MUSIC

A voice for song and social change

American folk legend **Judy Collins** plays Wingate's Batts Center

BY PAGE LEGGETT

Judy Collins' voice is still as angelic as it was when she got her start. Those famous eyes — the ones that inspired then-boyfriend Stephen Stills to write "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" — are still as intense. And 54 years after she began recording, she's still agitating for social change.

"This ferocious anger over immigration is so upsetting to me," she said in a phone interview shortly after Donald Trump's vow to deport undocumented immigrants. "Most of us come from immigrants. It might be time to set 'Give me your tired, your poor ...' to music again."

The American legend's sweet soprano belies her fierce social conscience. Asked about her Vietnam-era protest songs, she replied with a rhetorical question: "It took too long for that war to end, didn't it?"

Today, at 76, Collins

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Judy Collins

advocates for "climate change: We're destroying the planet — this gorgeous planet of ours. That's the first thing we have to consider. Are we even going to have a place to live?"

And though the world still faces some of the same ills she spoke out against in the 1960s, she remains hopeful. Asked if the 1960s were the golden age of folk music, she offers a gentle correction. "This is the golden age. We're living in it now. "Pete Seeger would be

the first person to say: 'Look at the present.' I asked him before he died how he felt about the world, and he said he'd never been so optimistic."

Collins, too, sounds optimistic. And she's not content to stay home and polish her Grammy (for "Both Sides, Now" in 1969). She maintains a busy recording and touring schedule. "I get around," she said with a laugh.

Her travels on this tour and in the past couple of years have often taken her to Ireland. "I appreciate a great melody and a great story," she said. "The Irish have both. And I'm Irish myself. I was raised on that music and those stories."

She put out a CD called "Live in Ireland" last year. It contains the great Irish ballad "Danny Boy," as well as "Granddaddy," a song Collins wrote about her paternal Irish grandfather.

Her current release, "Strangers Again," is a collection of duets with old male friends: "Belfast to Boston" with Marc Cohn, "Feels Like Home" with Jackson Browne, and "Someday Soon" — a song she recorded decades ago — features Jimmy Buffett. The final track, "Races,"



Courtesy of Judy Collins

Singer Judy Collins is known for her beautiful soprano voice and her fierce social conscience.

Suite: Judy Collins

Judy Collins plays Wingate University's Batts Center on Saturday, Oct. 3, at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$42 and are available at carolinax.org and 704-372-1000.

is a duet with Irish singer Glen Hansard, who starred in, and wrote an Oscar-winning song for,

the film "Once." She'll perform Oct. 3 in Wingate, in a venue just half a mile from the Jesse Helms Center. In 1966 — the year Collins first recorded songs by then-virtually-unknown Leonard Cohen and Randy Newman — Helms said: "The guy who works for a living has neither the time nor inclination to march in protest movements." Collins plans a mix of old hits and new songs at this show — and guarantees she'll get political.



From left, William Grant, Edward Patten, Judy Collins, Gladys Knight and Bubba Knight at the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles in 1976.