

# HOLLY NEAR

SINGER □ ACTIVIST □ TEACHER  
AUTHOR □ PRODUCER □ ACTOR

Holly Near is a unique combination of entertainer, teacher, and activist. An immense vocal talent, Near's career as a singer has been defined by an unwillingness to separate her passion for music from her passion for human dignity. She is a skilled performer and an outspoken ambassador for peace who brings to the stage an integration of world consciousness, spiritual discovery, and theatricality.

Although she sang in public from the age of eight, Ms. Near's professional career began with numerous performances in film and television, and a run in the Broadway production of Hair. Torn between a career as an actor or a singer, Ms. Near chose to pursue her love of music, especially that music which articulated the social conditions of the world community.

Ms. Near's historic papers are housed at Radcliffe's Schlesinger Library and are regarded as an informative look at the last 40 years of social change movements as experienced by a singer/songwriter/activist. Near's participation crosses over many cultures and countries. Some samples of her work in the last few years include:

- One of the "1000 Women for Peace" nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2005
- Presented at the National Women's History Project's 2003 conference at Smith College
- Spoke to workers at Intel's Albuquerque, NM facility about tolerance and diversity
- Delivered the prestigious Ware Lecture for the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in 2005
- Invited to sing her song Hay Una Mujer Decaparecida at Villa Grimaldi in Santiago, Chile. The villa, an infamous prison of torture and death, has been reclaimed by survivors and families and turned into a peace park.
- Joined Eve Ensler, Jane Fonda, Sally Fields, Christine Lahti, and noted Mexican performers in Juarez, Mexico to protest the uninvestigated killing of hundreds of young women
- Sat witness to the testimony of women reporting rape and other violence against women in Toledo, OH
- Participated in a two-day discussion with Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, Harry Belafonte, and Pete Seeger that focused on political song, responsible citizenship and the effect that protest music has had on public policy
- Met with Mohawk and European-American women to invite spiritual healing
- Has received numerous awards including honors from the A.C.L.U., the National Lawyers Guild, the National Organization for Women, National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences, Ms. Magazine (Woman of the Year), the Legends of Women's Music Award, and Impact Fund

Near's portrait hangs at The Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio along with those of other social change artists including Paul Robeson, Marion Anderson, Pete Seeger, Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, Joan Baez, Harry Belafonte, and Woody Guthrie.

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In 1972, Holly Near was one of the first women to create an independent record company. Although unusual then, many artists now follow that path of independence. Near's vision was to promote and produce music by politically conscious artists from around the world—a mission that Redwood Records fulfilled for nearly 20 years. Often cited as one of the founders of the “women's music” movement, Holly not only led the way for outspoken women into the music world, but also worked for peace and multicultural consciousness.

A natural teacher, Holly presents master classes in performance craft and songwriting to a wide array of audiences. Laughing, she says “I'm old enough now to be an expert!” Both as a participant and a leader, she bears personal witness to the hugely important role that music plays in political action movements. Holly's unique personal perspective, which makes the subject matter leap out of the books and into the classroom, draws praise from college faculties around the country.

A prolific writer and recording artist, Near has released 26 recordings of her own, including the seminal *Imagine My Surprise*, and performs as a guest on many others. In the past few years, Near has been busy re-releasing much of her early material. She continues to write and sing political songs with grace and humor, and her integrity earns her the reputation as one of the most articulate social change artists working today, with a power and maturity that may only come from decades of love and fear, despair, and inspiration. In 2007, she released *Sing To Me The Dream*, an extended and remastered version of her 1984 live concert tour with Inti Illimani. A new collaborative recording with emma's revolution, *We Came To Sing!*, which was born of the 2008 Sing Out the Vote tour, was released in August 2009. Holly and emma's revolution put their unique vocal stamp on songs from Holly's repertoire in eleven tracks that include old favorites such as *Listen to the Voices*, *Sky Dances*, and *Fired Up* along with new arrangements of *Study War No More* and *Sail Away Lady*, Pat Humphries' *Swimming to the Other Side*, and Rick Burkhardt's (The Prince Myshkins) *Ministry of Oil*.

“It is a tribute to a movement, a music and a time to have in our midst artists who carry with them 30 years of experience and activism. Holly Near holds global vision and artistic integrity with grace and wisdom. Her music is a collective memory of a time when we changed the world forever.” — *Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, 2002*

“Holly spoke about those difficult areas in life, how to dream our dreams, theorize our concepts, pursue our own talents and interests, and somehow integrate the whole into the action of our lives. Moreover, she has the ability to draw her listeners into active interchange with her. She displayed that rare gift of speaking to several hundred people and touching them individually. The audience was captivated. She was truly a high point in our lecture series.” — *Linda Jean May, Ph. D., Program Coordinator, Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Stanford University*

Students were clearly impressed that in Holly they were dealing with the real thing, that is, with someone who not only professes her beliefs but who has also lived them and continues to do so. They listened attentively as she recounted her own struggles to make a meaningful life without compromising more than she had to. I think we all came away inspired by the story of someone who, with humor and humility, has tried to do something fine, and managed to sustain it over a very long haul.” — *Eileen Bresnahan, Ph.D., Assistant Professor and Director, Women’s Studies, Colorado College*

“I can’t imagine a lecture program that wouldn’t be greatly enriched and enlivened by Holly Near. I bring her to UC Santa Cruz every chance I get. Students, staff and faculty beat down the doors, for they appreciate her not only as a great performer but a stirring educator and radiant human being. I always learn from her” — *Professor Marge Frantz, University of California, Santa Cruz*

“It’s a deeply moving inspiration to be in an audience that spontaneously stands up, en masse, and chooses to be counted among the growing numbers of people who, like Holly, thrive on the personal satisfaction and joy that come with living our lives on the cutting edge. I’ve watched her do it time and time again, her powerful presence is a call to courage; combined with her personal warmth, she’s irresistible.” — *John Mifsud, Coordinator, Thirtieth National Conference on Men and Masculinity, Seattle University*

“Very few have the ability to blend courage and talent so well. She talked & sang about issues that ring true to many people all over the world. I am not American, but for the first time I felt like I’ve truly understood two hours of anything an American has ever said...completely.” — *Berea College, Kentucky, Senior student from India (Tibetan)*

“I thought I was coming to a workshop on song writing. I found I was at a workshop on life and love. And of course, my song writing improved immensely. I was writing shallow. Holly showed me how to write deep.” — *A workshop participant*

“Holly is a delightful combination of Judy Garland and Pete Seeger!” — *A fan*

### CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

#### **WE CAME TO SING!**

Holly Near with emma's revolution  
Calico Tracks Music, 2009

#### **SING TO ME THE DREAM**

Calico Tracks Music, 2007

#### **SHOW UP**

Calico Tracks Music, 2006

#### **CRIS & HOLLY**

*with* Cris Williamson  
H&C Records, 2003

#### **LIFELINE EXTENDED**

Appleseed Recordings, 2002

#### **CRUSHED!: THE LOVE SONG COLLECTION**

Calico Tracks Music, 2002

#### **AND STILL WE SING: THE OUTSPOKEN COLLECTION**

Calico Tracks Music, 2002

#### **HARP: A TIME TO SING**

Appleseed Recordings, 2001

#### **EARLY WARNINGS**

Selections from Sky Dances and Watch Out!  
Appleseed Recordings, 2002

#### **EDGE**

Calico Tracks Music, 2000

#### **SIMPLY LOVE: THE WOMEN'S MUSIC COLLECTION**

Calico Tracks Music, 2000

#### **MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS**

*from the play Fire In The Rain*  
Calico Tracks Music 2000

#### **WITH A SONG IN MY HEART**

*with* pianist John Bucchino  
Calico Tracks Music, 1997

#### **THIS TRAIN STILL RUNS**

*with* Ronnie Gilbert  
Abbe Alice Music, 1996

### ARCHIVAL RECORDINGS

#### **SKY DANCES**

Redwood Records, 1989

#### **DON'T HOLD BACK**

Redwood Records, 1987

#### **SINGING WITH YOU**

*with* Ronnie Gilbert  
Redwood Records, 1987

#### **HARP**

*with* Arlo Guthrie, Ronnie Gilbert and Pete Seeger  
Redwood Records, 1985

#### **SING TO ME THE DREAM**

*with* Inti Illimani  
Redwood Records, 1984

#### **WATCH OUT!**

*with* John McCutcheon and Trapezoid  
Redwood Records, 1984

#### **LIFELINE**

*with* Ronnie Gilbert  
Redwood Records, 1984

#### **JOURNEYS – A Retrospective, 1972-1983**

Redwood Records, 1983

#### **SPEED OF LIGHT**

Redwood Records, 1982

#### **FIRE IN THE RAIN**

Redwood Records, 1981

#### **IMAGINE MY SURPRISE**

*with* Meg Christian  
Redwood Records, 1978

#### **YOU CAN KNOW ALL I AM**

Redwood Records, 1976

#### **A LIVE ALBUM**

Redwood Records, 1975

#### **HANG IN THERE**

Redwood Records, 1973