NEW RELEASE

Liz Story Live 1983

More Than Four Decades After the Release of Liz Story's Solid Colors*, an Astounding Live Performance Comes Back to Life*



LIZ STORY LIVE 1983 — TRACKLISTING

1. Bradley's Dream
2. *Introduction to Unaccountable Effect*
3. Unaccountable Effect (Live 1983)
4. *Introduction to Things With Wings*
5. Things With Wings (Live 1983)
6. *Introduction to Without You*
7. Without You (Live 1983)
8. *Introduction to Hymn*
9. Hymn (Live 1983)
10. Water Caves
11. *Introduction to Rope Trick*
12. Rope Trick (Live 1983)
13. *Introduction to Pacheco Pass*
14. Pacheco Pass (Live 1983)
15. *Introduction to Wedding Rain*
16. Wedding Rain (Live 1983)
17. *Introduction to Solid Colors*
18. Solid Colors (Live 1983)
19. *Ending Remarks*

NEW YORK, NY — On November 3, 1983, pianist and composer Liz Story performed a solo concert at Boston's Wentworth Institute of Technology, the same year she released her celebrated Windham Hill debut, *Solid Colors*. College administrator Jay Munsey, who had booked the performance, recorded the evening on cassette and kept the tape for decades. Now, more than 40 years later, the concert comes to light in its entirety.

On November 13, 2026, Sony Music Entertainment releases the complete performance as *Liz Story Live 1983*, one of only two complete concert recordings known to survive from Story's 1983–2005 studio-album years. Timed to coincide with Windham Hill Records' 50th anniversary, the approximately 45-minute recording captures all ten compositions from the evening, along with Story's spoken introductions. Eight pieces appeared on *Solid Colors*, while two others would emerge in different arrangements on her 1985 follow-up, *Unaccountable Effect*. The concert reveals the harmonic imagination, melodic invention and improvisational freedom that would distinguish Story's subsequent recordings.

The Road to *Solid Colors*

Story grew up studying classical music, but after attending a Bill Evans concert in her mid-twenties, she embarked on a serious study of jazz. She took a job playing background piano at a Los Angeles restaurant to develop her skills, and with three hours to fill each night, began improvising. "That's how I started writing music," Story recalls, "just making shit up."

As a birthday gift, her then-husband arranged a recording studio session. At a friend's suggestion, Story sent the resulting cassette to Windham Hill, the California label founded by guitarist Will Ackerman in 1976, which had become known for its carefully produced acoustic recordings and minimalist album covers. Ackerman heard Story's original compositions and signed her to the label.

"I was just amazed that Will wanted to record me," Story recalls. The resulting *Solid Colors* launched a recording career that would encompass ten studio albums through 2005, establishing her as one of the most distinctive pianists and composers associated with Windham Hill.

Jay Munsey Popped In a Cassette Tape

Jay Munsey still keeps his original Windham Hill albums in protective plastic sleeves. An avid listener of the California label, he was drawn to its distinctive sound. "I was so impressed with the Windham Hill music at that time," Munsey recalls. "It was so different, so refreshing."

As Wentworth's director of housing and student activities, Munsey had permission to organize one concert each year introducing students to music they might not otherwise encounter. At the 1983 National Association for Campus Activities convention, he met Story and booked her for the series' inaugural performance.

Years earlier, while studying at the University of Vermont, Munsey had helped organize a concert by folk duo Aztec Two-Step. Afterward, he told guitarist Rex Fowler that he wished he'd recorded the performance. "All you had to do was ask," Fowler replied.

At Wentworth, Munsey took the opportunity. He and his colleagues arranged small tables in the auditorium, dimmed the lights and served wine and cheese, creating an intimate setting for Story's solo piano. Munsey recorded the performance directly through the auditorium's sound system onto cassette.

"I don't know if she made one misnote during that whole performance," he recalls. "I thought it was just phenomenal."

A Historic Live Performance from a Musician in Her Prime

Story opened with "Bradley's Dream," the composition that had first attracted Ackerman's attention on her original demo cassette. Next came "Unaccountable Effect," which she told the audience she found vaguely titled and was considering renaming "Aquarium." Her expansive solo interpretation differs considerably from the 1985 studio recording, which features synthesist Mark Isham.

"Things With Wings," "Without You," "Hymn" and "Water Caves" followed. Story introduced "Without You," originally titled "With You," as a tribute to Bill Evans, whose "Peace Piece" she interpreted on *Solid Colors*. She then evoked snake charmers and cowboys before performing an early version of

"Rope Trick," markedly different from the arrangement that would appear on *Unaccountable Effect*.

After "Pacheco Pass," Story introduced "Wedding Rain," written for a friend's wedding around the time their friendship was ending. Archival producer Geoffrey Hoefer initially heard rainfall in the repeated notes of her right hand and a dissonant interval he describes as "jarring like lightning." After hearing Story's introduction, "Suddenly, I feel like I'm listening to a heartbeat," he recalls. The concert closes with "Solid Colors," the title composition of her debut.

Hearing the Wentworth performance decades later, Story laughed at the liberties she'd taken with "Unaccountable Effect," a piece she recalls largely setting aside after recording it in the studio. "I'm blown away by it," she says.

The Rediscovered Cassette

For decades, Munsey's recording remained in his possession. While sorting through his belongings ahead of retirement, he found the cassette in a box, its handwritten label identifying Story, Wentworth College and 1983.



Munsey's cassette tape, and a photo taken of Story the night of the performance.

The rediscovery came during a period of renewed attention to Story's music and legacy. In 2019, she suffered a life-threatening brain hematoma during a performance, followed by a lengthy rehabilitation that included relearning her own music. Fans rallied around her with emotional and financial support, while efforts to preserve and restore her recorded catalog gained momentum.

In 2020, the New York-based nonprofit Omomuki Foundation and its Jazz Bird Records label launched an extensive project to preserve Story's catalog and introduce her music to new audiences. The effort ultimately helped make her sheet music and recorded works available digitally to listeners and musicians worldwide.

Having noticed renewed activity surrounding Story's music, Munsey contacted Geoffrey Hoefer, Jazz Bird's founder and a longtime admirer of her work, about the cassette. Hoefer immediately recognized its historical significance. The only other complete concert recording known to survive from Story's studio-album years dates to 1986. Munsey mailed him the original tape.

"I was amazed by so many things about this tape," Hoefer recalls. "For one, it's a standard cassette tape, just like the ones we used to put in our car cassette deck. It's incredible that it survived forty years."

Hoefer was particularly fascinated by the opportunity to hear Story revisit the music of *Solid Colors* and explore compositions that would not reach studio recordings until *Unaccountable Effect* two years later.

"Most Liz Story fans only have access to the takes that ended up on her studio albums," Hoefer explains. "But her live performances are peppered with delightful improvisations, variations, and embellishments that have great depth and beauty."

When Hoefer began working with Story, four of her ten studio albums — *Unaccountable Effect*, *Part of Fortune*, *Speechless* and *Escape of the Circus Ponies* — were unavailable on streaming services, placing much of her catalog beyond the reach of listeners without physical copies. After more than a year of seeking a contact at Sony Music, Hoefer connected with Timothy J. Smith of its Legacy Recordings division, which oversees the Windham Hill catalog.

Smith, himself a Windham Hill enthusiast, had independently recognized the gaps in Story's digital discography. In 2023, he helped bring the missing albums to streaming services. Sony's partnership with Jazz Bird Records also produced three retrospectives between 2023 and 2024, beginning with *The Essential Liz Story*, which included Munsey's live recording of "Unaccountable Effect," followed by *Liz Story Songs of Christmas* and *Liz Story Jazz Standards & Originals*.

The complete Wentworth concert, however, remained unreleased. In early 2026, with Windham Hill's 50th anniversary approaching, Smith, who had left Sony the previous year, suggested another Liz Story release. Hoefer proposed issuing the entire performance, finally making the recording available beyond the handful of people who had heard it since 1983.

Restoring the Recording

Preparing Munsey's cassette for release presented substantial technical challenges. An initial digital transfer sounded warped and distorted, prompting Hoefer to hand-deliver the tape to audio engineer Juan Carlos Andrews at Jazz at Lincoln Center's studios in New York City. Andrews carefully digitized the recording, producing a clearer, more faithful transfer that became the foundation of *Liz Story Live 1983*.

Hoefer first asked pianist, producer and engineer Tom Eaton, a longtime collaborator of Windham Hill founder Will Ackerman, to repair several difficult passages. Impressed by the results, he entrusted Eaton with the concert's complete editing and mastering.

A musician deeply familiar with Windham Hill's recording aesthetic, Eaton worked to remove distracting noises, including audience coughing, a slamming door and a distant siren, while preserving Story's dynamic range and the piano's natural tone. Magnetic print-through, in which signals from adjacent layers of analog tape become faintly audible, presented another challenge, as did the persistent hiss of the original cassette.

Throughout the restoration, Eaton prioritized the integrity of Story's performance over excessive noise reduction. "If that comes at the expense of a little more hiss, I'm good with that because the music is better," he says.

An Astounding Recording, More Than Forty Years Later

Eaton was struck by Story's incisive staccato attack, harmonic imagination and movement between delicate passages and sudden bursts of force. He describes the performance as "a moment in time where she was just locked in."

As Smith puts it, "It's just Liz and a piano and an audience."

For longtime Story fan Laura Hidden, the recording offers a rare glimpse of compositions still taking shape. "She played two pieces at Wentworth that were works in progress, and it was a treat to be able to hear what those pieces were and how she was working out those ideas," she says. "She had a lot of ideas. You could hear those ideas in that live recording."

For Munsey, the release carries a significance he could scarcely have anticipated when he pressed record that November evening.

"I don't think to this day I have my arms around the importance of this recording," he says. "At the end of the day, I'm just a fan who wanted to listen to her performance over and over again privately. Now, I get to share it."

— Morgan Enos for Jazz Bird Records

RELEASE NOTES

PERSONNEL

Liz Story, solo piano
Geoffrey Hoefer, Producer
Digital Editing and Mastering by Tom Eaton at Sounds & Substance
Analog Tape Transfer and Restoration by Juan Carlos Andrews

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

All songs composed and performed by Liz Story
Recorded live at Watson Auditorium at the Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston, MA on November 3, 1983
Album cover photo circa 1983 courtesy of Windham Hill Records
Album cover design and layout by John Sellards
Special thanks to Timothy J. Smith, SuperVisible Multi Media
Special thanks to Breck Shisler

Produced by Jazz Bird Records for Sony Music Entertainment

This album is dedicated to Jay Munsey

ABOUT LIZ STORY

Liz Story is an American pianist and composer whose distinctive approach to solo piano has made her one of the defining artists of contemporary instrumental music. Combining classical technique, sophisticated jazz harmony and a deeply personal improvisational language, she emerged as a leading voice on Windham Hill Records with her 1983 debut, *Solid Colors*. Her compositions are characterized by lyrical melodies, unexpected harmonic turns, rhythmic freedom and an unusually expressive dynamic range.

A native of San Diego, California, Story studied classical piano from childhood, later pursuing music studies in New York and Southern California. Her discovery of jazz pianist Bill Evans led her to study improvisation with Sanford Gold, while further training at the Dick Grove Music Workshops expanded her compositional vocabulary. Guitarist and Windham Hill founder Will Ackerman discovered her music through a cassette of original compositions and signed her to the label, launching a recording career that would encompass ten studio albums between 1983 and 2005.

Story's discography includes *Solid Colors* (1983), *Unaccountable Effect* (1985), *Part of Fortune* (1988), *Speechless* (1989), *Escape of the Circus Ponies* (1991), *My Foolish Heart* (1992), *The Gift* (1994), *Liz Story With Joel DiBartolo* (1996), *17 Seconds to Anywhere* (1998) and *Night Sky Essays* (2005). She has received three GRAMMY nominations and contributed recordings to numerous Windham Hill releases.

In recent years, Story has returned to prominent concert stages, including a sold-out 2023 performance at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall and a sold-out 2025 appearance at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Her catalog has also received renewed attention through Sony Music's *The Essential Liz Story* (2023), *Liz Story Songs of Christmas* (2023) and *Liz Story Jazz Standards & Originals* (2024), alongside the digital release of her complete studio discography.

With an extensive body of original music and a continuing presence on the concert stage, Story remains a distinctive voice in contemporary piano music.