

—Slug:.....COMM-0844.arts.Low_Lilly_Colonial
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—For section.....The Arts
—Format.....News - byline and dateline
—Dateline.....
—Article Number:.....42745

Notes from editor (not for publication):

Hi, Sheryl — “We Sing Hallelujah” looks like it’s credited to Richard and Linda Thompson. Please let me know if I’m wrong about this.

I’m formatting this as a column — it’s right on the edge of a feature, but I do like to differentiate news and commentary, and you have some lovely analysis of this music, so let’s lean into it all the way. If you’d like a head shot with it, please send to me at jeff@commonsnews.org. Thanks so much. —Jeff

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Bringing the light

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Low Lily’s annual Winter Solstice concert comes to The
Colonial on Dec. 12

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TEXT BODY:

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AS THE DAYS grow shorter through December, the
Americana roots trio Low Lily seeks to add some light to this

7 season of darkness with the group's annual Winter Solstice
8 Celebration tour, which comes to The Showroom at the Colonial
9 Theatre in Keene on Friday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m.

10 The Brattleboro-based band is Liz Simmons, who plays
11 guitar; her husband, Flynn Cohen, on guitar and mandolin, and
12 Natalie Padilla on fiddle and banjo.

13 Low Lily's music is best described as a folk/Americana
14 mix, deeply rooted in Celtic and Appalachian sounds, enriched
15 by the group's beautiful three-part harmonies. Low Lily formed in
16 2014 and has released three albums and toured extensively
17 throughout the U.S. and the U.K.

18 Their Winter Solstice celebrations, which they began
19 performing in 2019, are among the most anticipated and popular
20 shows on their schedule.

21 "We had been doing holiday shows for a long time, then
22 we realized we wanted to try something different," explained Liz
23 Simmons about the origin of the show. "We wanted to center it
24 around the Winter Solstice."

25 The idea was to create a show centered around the idea
26 of bringing some light into what is the darkest and coldest time of
27 the year. The show highlights the days leading up to the Winter
28 Solstice and celebrates the return of the sun. These concerts also
29 provide an alternative to the usual holiday fare.

30 The annual shows feature original and traditional songs
31 and covers that capture the beauty, joy, and challenges we
32 experience around this time in December. You can expect to hear
33 everything from thought-provoking ballads to the kind of up-
34 tempo, foot-stomping instrumentals that we've come to expect
35 from a Low Lily concert.

36 "It's a fun challenge to find material because we are very
37 loose in our interpretation," said Simmons in explaining the
38 group's choice of material for this show. "Anything that's sort of
39 speaking to light and dark or the turning of the seasons works.
40 We also focus on hopeful or uplifting songs, or songs that speak
41 to coming together as a community."

42 And there's a good chance you'll hear the trio play some
43 familiar songs.

44 "We have our song that everybody always requests
45 called 'Hope Lingers On,' and that's always a good one to
46 include," said Simmons. "It's hopeful and it's got a great message
47 about peace and justice, and that's just the kind of uplifting
48 message people need this time of year."

49 The band also toss in some fun covers, including "Ring
50 Out, Solstice Bells" by Jethro Tull, and Low Lily recently started
51 performing the obscure ABBA holiday tune "The Piper."

52 And since all three band members are songwriters, they
53 have written a few songs specifically for this project.

54 "When all is cold and the Earth is still / in the dark, we
55 bring the light," sings Simmons in her melodic, smooth voice on
56 one such song, "We Bring the Light," a number that beautifully
57 captures the essence of these shows.

58 In 2021, the band released the song as a single to
59 accompany the tour, as well as a cover of Richard and Linda
60 Thompson's dark song of hope "We Sing Hallelujah." They have
61 considered releasing a full-length album of Solstice songs, but
62 given the cost and time commitment necessary to recording, they
63 are currently focusing only on singles.

64 "My bandmate Natalie just wrote a new song, which she
65 wrote with an eye for performing at this show," Simmons said.
66 "And we have a new release coming out on the Solstice — it's
67 called 'Night Lament,' written by a great singer-songwriter named
68 Kate Rusby. I'm excited about this one. We gave it the Low Lily
69 treatment with three-part harmonies, strings, and a lot of
70 instruments. We are really proud of it."

71 You can hear the new song performed at the shows
72 before its official release.

73 * * *

74 THE WINTER SOLSTICE TOUR takes place every December
75 through the Northeast and, depending on when the dates fall,
76 usually ends on the Solstice, this year on Sunday, Dec. 21.

77 This year's tour launched with a sold-out show in
78 Northampton, Massachusetts, and will conclude in Westford,
79 Massachusetts, on the night of the Solstice.

80 "Whatever venue gets that date is lucky, as it feels extra
81 special," said Simmons of the final tour stop.

82 December is a slow time of year for touring musicians
83 like Low Lily, and even though each member teaches and has
84 their own career, these shows have helped them keep
85 performing. "The other piece of that is that our audiences need
86 something too," Simmons added.

87 And the audiences have demonstrated that they need the
88 Winter Solstice Celebration. The shows usually sell out, and the
89 band reports seeing the same faces return year after year, singing
90 along and enjoying themselves.

91 "It brings us so much hope to know that we have
92 something that resonates with people this time of year," said
93 Simmons. "When people come to us after a show and say 'I
94 almost didn't leave the house tonight, but now I'm glad I did
95 because this was wonderful, and I feel uplifted,' that is the kind of
96 comment that keeps us wanting to do this every year."

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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97 **SHERYL HUNTER** is a freelance writer from
98 Easthampton, Massachusetts. Her work has appeared in various
99 regional and national publications. As of press time, some tickets
100 remain for the show at The Colonial's Showroom, 20 Commercial
101 St., in Keene, New Hampshire. Contact the box office at 603-
102 352-2033 or boxoffice@thecolonial.org.

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