

BRANCHES

WHOLE LIFE LIVING FOR INDIANA

November / December 1995

In the Heart of Winter

Robin Spielberg
North Star Records

Festival of the Heart

John Boswell
Hearts of Space Records

*Wrapped in White, Visions of
Christmas Past*

John Doan
Hearts of Space Records

One of the pleasures of the time surrounding Winter Solstice is the festive holiday music that fills the air. During this period we fill the CD player with our favorites: Leon Redbone's *Christmas Island*, the *Blue Yule* compilation, *An Austin Rhythm and Blues Christmas*, *Vision, the music of Hildegard von Bingen* and George Winston's *December*.

We're going to have to make room for a new crop of CDs this holiday season and I, for one, can hardly wait.

For starters there's Robin Spielberg's *In the Heart of Winter*. Spielberg's piano playing is graceful and deft. Her original compositions are evocative of the season, especially "Solstice Celebration," which is sure to become a holiday standard. When joined by string, flute and percussion accompaniment the music assumes a festive air, as

in "Christmas Day in the Morning" and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," which feature various Celtic musicians.

Another solo pianist who has a holiday offering is John Boswell. His *Festival of the Heart* makes the perfect stocking stuffer for the music lover on your gift list. The two original offerings, "Festival of the Heart" and "Eastern Star," fit nicely with traditional odes like "Greensleeves," "Silent Night" and "Angels We Have Heard on High." The accompaniment is sublimely understated and avoids rank sentimentality.

On *Wrapped in White, Visions of Christmas Past*, John Doan uses authentic 19th century instruments to conjure a romantic vision of the season. Harp guitar, harmonium, Mandobass and Ukelin (!) are some of the instruments used. Doan's treatments of favorite carols include "O Christmas Tree," "Silent Night" and "Auld Lang Syne."

— Thomas P. Healy