

KATHY MATTEA

“Songs and the Season”

Ten years after winning a Grammy award for *Good News*, her first collection of Christmas songs, Kathy Mattea returned to the subject with a second holiday album, *Joy For Christmas Day*, which adds a new layer of artistic and spiritual growth to the tradition. She’s crafted a wide-ranging yet coherent set that highlights the “good news” of the holiday and its spiritual message with a thoughtful blend of old favorites and new songs, while ranging even more widely across musical boundaries. From the organic reinvention of traditional carols like “O Come, All Ye Faithful” and “I Saw Three Ships”, to the Celtic harmonies of “Christ Child’s Lullaby,” to the dramatic “Mary Did You Know?”, Mattea’s “*Songs and the Season*” program displays her natural flexibility and hard-won artistic integrity. Whether she’s adapting the classic “Do You Hear What I Hear?” or arranging “There’s Still My Joy,” a new contribution from award-winning writers Melissa Manchester and Beth Nielsen-Chapman, Kathy brings a fresh ear and a natural, unforced eclecticism to this holiday musical experience. Her Christmas concerts are, she says, “more about the spiritual side of Christmas, and not so much about the holiday” – and the result is a performance that will bring both joy and reverence to the Christmas celebration.

Twice named Female Vocalist of the Year by the Country Music Association, Kathy Mattea carved out a role for herself in the late 1980s and 1990s as a sensitive yet energetic artist at ease both with country tradition and free-ranging innovation. The West Virginia native won her first Grammy in 1990, earning the Best Female Country Vocal Performance award for her moving “Where’ve You Been,” co-written by husband Jon Vezner. With close to thirty Top 40 country hits, including 15 Top 10s and 4 Number One entries, and five gold albums and a platinum-selling greatest hits compilation, she is among the most successful women in the genre’s history, yet her creative spirit has led her to explore musical territory extending well beyond its confines.

An early spokesperson and advocate for AIDS awareness and research, Kathy’s long history of activism has led her to bring public attention to several current environmental issues, including global warming and some mining practices in her native Appalachia.

The work and the music have joined together to produce her latest CD, “COAL”, featuring songs from the coal country and culture of “her place and her people”.

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