

Karen Mal & Will Taylor

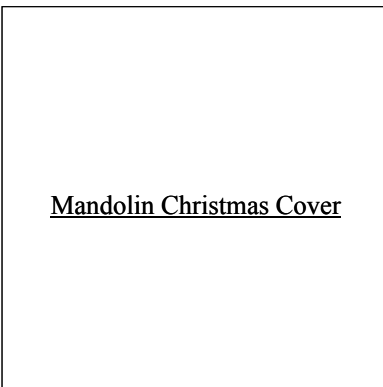


Song Samples:

Dance of the Sugarplum Fairy	Instrumental	Play Song	Download
O Holy Night	Holiday	Play Song	Download
Good King Wenceslas / Go Tell it on the Mountain	Instrumental	Play Song	Download
The Story of A Mandolin Christmas	Folk	Play Song	Download
The Story of a Coventry Carol	Folk	Play Song	Download
Wexford Carol / Oh Shenandoah	Instrumental	Play Song	Download
Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella / Simple Gifts	Holiday	Play Song	Download
Gabriel's Message	Instrumental	Play Song	Download
Gesu Bambino	Holiday	Play Song	Download

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NEW in 2018! Mandolin Christmas, Vol. 2



The 3rd in a series of [acoustic holiday recordings](#) from Karen Mal & Will Taylor including: *AUSTIN FOR CHRISTMAS* and *A Mandolin Christmas*

Volume Two of "A Mandolin Christmas" digs a bit deeper into the traditional Christmas canon, and reaches a little farther back in time. Some of these velvety melodies are centuries old. There's a remarkable, almost mystical quality in these ancient carols: they carry the mood of Christmas, even the less widely-known ones, embedded in their very fabric somehow.

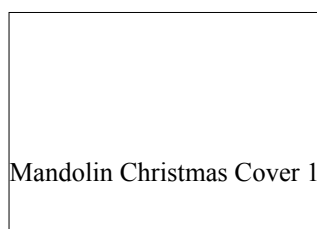
In our modern high-speed digital culture, Christmas music is maybe the only "popular music" still rooted in the Middle Ages, and also in acoustic instruments. These arrangements are at once simple and yet sophisticated. The crystalline tone of Karen's mandolin with Will's jazz-infused classical guitar serve the music so elegantly. You can almost hear the fire crackling and see the lights twinkling on the tree. There's a wealth of fantastic, more modern Christmas music as well,

but no matter how progressive we are in our other musical tastes, there's still a wide appeal for these old carols. They immediately invoke all Christmases past. They remind us and inspire us of the sense of well-being from our own childhoods, and that of our children's.

This is a record that will be a lovely accompaniment to any holiday atmosphere. It has a sound that warms up a room instantly and still leaves space in the air for both lively conversation, and the serenity that comes from taking a break from the bustle of our everyday lives.

Will recorded, mixed, mastered and generally magicked this recording into life. .

Will plays guitar, Karen plays mandolin: it doesn't get any more "duo" than this. Together we came up with arrangements, harmonies, design ideas and the mission of sharing the beauty of acoustic Christmas music, and the sense of well-being it inspires and reminds us of.



About "**Austin for Christmas**"
Release Dec. 2017

All of the songs in this collection were favorites of my mother. She loved filling the house with Christmas decorations, smells of many varieties of cookies baking, which she'd arrange in spectacular colorful gift trays, and of course Christmas music draped over the top of everything. She'd play the vinyl records on our massive stereo which was as long as our dining room table, and she'd be as happy as we'd ever see her all year. Her happiness in itself was the best part of the season. It was contagious and it was fleeting. In our household, Christmas music represented the hope of another year, maybe a better year, and a momentary suspension of all things worrisome or sorrowful.

"Yuletide by the fireside and joyful memories there." We chose the songs with an underlying theme of togetherness. No matter where you fall on the religious/ spiritual spectrum, holidays are a time of connection. Of reunion and reflection

and gratitude. And being together as the bustling world mercifully grinds to a halt, creating a glow in the darkness of the long nights of winter. - KAREN MAL

A jazz musician, a folk artist, 20 fingers pulling 14 strings & 19 ancient melodies that time has polished.

[A Mandolin Christmas](#)

Deep in the throes of the hottest summer on record in Austin, TX, Karen Mal and Will Taylor decided to make a Christmas album. It was a 112-degree "Silent Night" in their un-airconditioned recording studio in August. Even the cat was sweating.

The couple had collaborated on many musical projects; his, hers, and their ensemble's, but a "Mandolin Christmas" is purely a duet in every sense of the word. It's a dance between two partners: the mandolin and the classical guitar. And that's it. Karen and Will are perhaps better-known as vocalist and violinist, respectively, but as the tracks blossomed, the two instruments just didn't seem to want any company. There's a simple elegance in the combination that makes for a classic record. "A Mandolin Christmas" is also a duet between traditional folk music and jazz. The music includes pristine old-style classical arrangements, and also subtle and playful jazz harmonizations, weaving around familiar melodies that sound like home. You can practically smell the sugar cookies coming out of the oven, see the kitchen windows steaming up.

Even the packaging is a duet. Karen staged the shots in their vegetable garden. That's a real Calabacita squash with the bow on it. (we ate it for Thanksgiving) Will took the photos and fit everything into the artwork templates. If you like Christmas music even a little, you're going to love this album. You're going to love it again when you dig it out next year, and again and again, every holiday season.

Karen Mal sings. From raw sensuality to shimmering bell-like clarity, her voice is both tender and powerful, and as effortless as a waterfall. There's a river that flows between Karen and her audience. It's about love. The possibility and the unbearable beauty of it. Elusive and abundant at the same time.

Based in Austin, TX, Karen has created a name for herself as a captivating singer, instrumentalist and songwriter. Ranging from charming to seductive, impressionistic to philosophical, her songs have brought her nationwide acclaim. She's won top awards from the Wildflower Arts and Music Festival in Texas, the Tucson Folk Festival and the Portland Songwriters Association and has also been a three time New Folk Finalist at Kerrville, emerging artist at Falcon Ridge and a finalist at the Sisters Folk Festival.

Karen has released three CDs on Waterbug records, starting with **Mercury's Wings** in 2002. Karen Mal is riding a musical high, raved Sing Out! Magazine about her debut. The title song is a beautiful tribute to her friend, mentor and collaborator, the late Fred Alley. **Dark Eyed Sailor** was next, a collection of traditional Celtic songs. The title cut won the Celtic Radio Music Award for best song in 2006. Her newest release, **The Space Between**, came out in late 2007 and has been getting extensive airplay, reaching #6 on the Folk DJ Chart in November.

When she's not singing her own songs she's in high demand as a mandolinist and bassist appearing with *Ronny Cox*, *Buddy Mondlock*, *Jonathan Byrd*, *Sam Baker*, *Ken Gaines* and many, many others at Kerrville, Woodyfest and stages across the country. Karen has worn so many hats for so long, that on stage, there's nothing she can't do. You don't just get hot licks; you get melody, counterpoint, and a sense of rhythm that eases the whole sound deeper into the groove. Just ask Celtic superstars *Cherish the Ladies* who invited Karen to tour with them in 2005.

She grew up in small-town Plainville, CT, which is exactly what it sounds like, rows of little houses and quiet people with cats and televisions. She found she was best off creating her own entertainment. "I always had music in my bones. I don't remember a time when I couldn't read music, or sing harmony," says Karen. Her mother wrote in the scrapbook she kept, "8 months old - Karen sings herself to sleep in her crib." It wasn't until she was ten years old that she found her grandpa's long-forgotten old Gibson guitar in the attic. Karen was off and running.

After high school, she earned a degree in Music and Theater from Long Island University and moved to New York City -- a hundred miles and a galaxy away from Plainville. She started hitting the auditions, winning parts in Shakespeare plays, children's theater and regional theater productions. Then came an audition that changed Karen's life. These guys were in jeans and flannel shirts instead of New York theater chic and the audition was as much about her musical creativity as it was about her acting chops. Karen was immediately offered a contract with the American Folklore Theater in Door County, Wisconsin, a company producing original plays and musicals that tell the American story through the eyes and experiences of the immigrants, pioneers, native peoples and just plain everyday folks of Wisconsin. With a double role as actor and musician, Karen began a love affair with folk music.

AFT was a perfect fit for Karen too, and that first season's contract extended to seven more. While there she developed her mandolin skills and was called on to play a raft of other instruments including, fiddle, clarinet, psaltery, bass, flute, bodhran and of course guitar. She also made her first creative forays into writing songs and became the resident composer/musical director for Door Shakespeare in Baileys Harbor, WI, a title she still carries. Most importantly, this new creative challenge gave her a sense of musical direction. The girl who could sing and play in just about any style realized that she could write, too.

In late 1999 she made the move to Austin, leaving theater behind to play music full-time. She quickly became a favorite among the pickers and writers of a city that's become the hub of the American roots music scene. And now the rest of the country has discovered her too.

Karen Mal has a storyteller's voice, sifting words like she is talking to you over coffee, effortlessly rising from dusky phrases to bell-pure highs. You believe every word and note and you could listen to her sing all night long.

--*Michael Devlin, Music Matters*

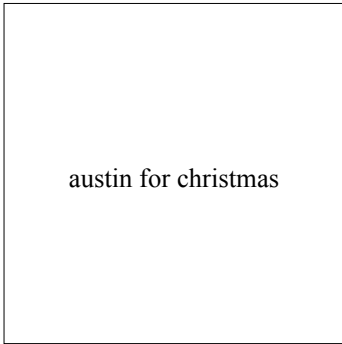
I'm Will Taylor. I arrived in Austin in 1973 and spent summers swimming at Barton Springs, played shirtless in the garden of the infamous Armadillo World Headquarters, lived two blocks from the Rome Inn where Stevie Ray Vaughan played the blues weekly.

I graduated from Austin High and studied viola performance at the UT School of Music in 1987 while playing jazz fusion in 6th street clubs on the weekend.

The music scene has drastically changed since I was a kid growing up at UT's married student housing next to Tom Miller dam.

My jazz string quartet, an early incarnation of Strings Attached, was invited to play at the keynote of the 1988 SXSW music festival.

I've lived briefly in other places, but I'm still convinced that Austin is one of the coolest places to make a life. Read more [here](#).



austin for christmas