

Timeless Songs of the Season

By Erin Vander Weele

Each year, we hear classic holiday songs spreading joy throughout the season. They are the traditional tunes to play at holiday gatherings or while decorating, baking sugar cookies and wrapping presents. It's fun listening to the songs we know and can sing along to as we get into the holiday spirit.

While these songs have been covered by various artists with multiple adaptations throughout the years, let's look back at the origin of a select few of the timeless holiday classics we continue to replay each season.

"Winter Wonderland"

By Guy Lombardo & His Royal Canadians (1934)
Written by Richard Smith and Felix Bernard

Inspiration for this song came to Richard Smith while observing the snow-covered view in Central Park in his hometown of Honesdale, Pennsylvania. The very first recording of this song was by Richard Himber and his orchestra. Guy Lombardo's version recorded that same year became a hit. The popular holiday song has been covered by more than 200 artists.

"White Christmas"

By Bing Crosby (1942)
Written by Irving Berlin

Describing memories of a traditional Christmas setting with beautiful snow, "White Christmas" was originally written for the movie *Holiday Inn* in 1942. Bing Crosby re-recorded the song in 1947, which is the version we hear most often today. The movie *White Christmas* was tied to the holiday favorite when released in 1954.

"Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas"

By Judy Garland (1943)
Written by Hugh Martin with lyrics by Ralph Blane

The song "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" resonated with many American soldiers fighting overseas during World War II. Judy Garland sang the song in *Meet Me in St.*

Louis and changed some of the lyrics for the scene to lift the melancholic mood of the music. We often hear upbeat versions of it today, including Frank Sinatra's interpretation from his album, *A Jolly Christmas*.

"The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to You)"

By Nat King Cole (1946)
Written by Mel Tormé and Bob Wells

Often known by its opening line, "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire," and also called "Merry Christmas to You," the song is a popular favorite this time of year. The story behind the lyrics is that Bob Wells started writing the first lines of the song to mentally cool off on a hot summer day. When Mel Tormé came over to his house and read the first lines, the songwriting partners finished writing it together in under an hour.

"Sleigh Ride"

By Leroy Anderson (1948)
Written by Leroy Anderson with lyrics by Mitchell Parish

Orchestral composer Leroy Anderson wrote the music to "Sleigh Ride" during a summer heatwave in Woodbury, Connecticut,

where he was staying at a cottage with his family. Mitchell Parish added lyrics in 1950. The orchestral music and upbeat tempo capture the feeling of a sleigh ride journey through the snow.

"It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas"

By Perry Como (1951)
Written by Meredith Willson

Celebrating the time of year when Christmas decorations are on display, this popular holiday song has a joyful, uplifting sound. Like so many holiday classics, this song has had several popular versions recorded over the years.

"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"

By Brenda Lee (1958)
Written by Johnny Marks

When she was only 13 years old, Brenda Lee recorded this song that came to be a Christmas classic after making the charts a few years later in 1960. Songwriter Johnny Marks previously also wrote the holiday standards, "A Holly Jolly Christmas" and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer."

"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"

By Andy Williams (1963)
Written by George Wyle and Edward Pola

Written for The Andy Williams Christmas Album and performed on his popular TV show, the song celebrates the season and gathering with family and friends. The song appeared in the seven other Christmas albums recorded by Williams, who earned the nickname "Mr. Christmas."

Source: www.songfacts.com

