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A history of carols

What would Christmas be without the sound of carols? Young and old take advantage of the season to lift their voices in songs both religious and secular. Here's a bit of history behind some favorite carols.

"Silent Night" is thought to have been written by Joseph Mohr in 1818. A priest at St. Nicholas church in Oberndorf, Austria, Mohr and his parishioners were facing a Christmas without music because the church organ was broken. But instead of facing a silent night, he wrote the words to the now famous song. Organist Franz Gruber set it to music on the guitar. It was completed and sung on Christmas Eve in 1818.

*Silent night, Holy night! All is calm, all is bright.
Round your virgin Mother and Child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.*

"Jingle Bells" is really more of a winter song than a Christmas song. James Pierpont is credited with writing the song.

*Dashing through the snow,
in a one-horse open sleigh,
O'er the field we go,
Laughing all the way;
Bells on Bobtail ring
Making spirits bright,
What fun it is to ride and sing
a sleighing song tonight*

*Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way.
Oh what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh!
Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way!*

Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh!

"Away in a Manger" has been traced to Martin Luther, but it has been confirmed that he wrote it. But it came from Luther's time and was the tune of a German folksong long considered a children's lullaby because of its lullaby theme.

*"Away in the manger, no crib, no bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down his head;
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep in the hay."*

"O Christmas Tree" was translated from the German "O Tannenbaum" and also comes from the times of Luther. It originated in the country that put a tradition of the Christmas tree during the Civil War, this tune was borrowed for "Maryland, My Maryland."

*O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
your branches green delight us O
Christmas Tree, O Christmas tree,
your branches green delight us
They're green when summer days are bright
They're green when winter days are white
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
your branches green delight us*

"We Three Kings" is an American original. Written in 1857 by John Henry Evans, the carol tells the story of the Three Wise Men and the gifts they brought to the Christ child after his birth.

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