Christmas Music Trivia

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. Which singer introduced ‘All I Want for Christmas Is You’ on her 1994 album Merry Christmas?
   - A. Mariah Carey
   - B. Whitney Houston
   - C. Celine Dion
   - D. Gloria Estefan

   Correct answer: A. Mariah Carey
   Mariah Carey released the song on Merry Christmas and wrote it with Walter Afanasieff.

2. For which film did Irving Berlin’s ‘White Christmas’ win the Academy Award for song?
   - A. Blue Skies
   - B. Going My Way
   - C. Holiday Inn
   - D. White Christmas

   Correct answer: C. Holiday Inn
   The Academy’s 1943 awards record names Irving Berlin as the winner for ‘White Christmas’ from Holiday Inn.

3. Who composed the music for the original 1892 ballet The Nutcracker?
   - A. Sergei Prokofiev
   - B. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
   - C. Igor Stravinsky
   - D. Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

   Correct answer: B. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
   The Royal Ballet credits Tchaikovsky with the score for the ballet first staged in St. Petersburg in 1892.

4. Which jazz pianist wrote and performed music for the 1965 TV special A Charlie Brown Christmas?
   - A. Herbie Hancock
   - B. Dave Brubeck
   - C. Oscar Peterson
   - D. Vince Guaraldi

   Correct answer: D. Vince Guaraldi
   Vince Guaraldi created the jazz score. Fantasy Records released his soundtrack album in the same month as the TV premiere.

5. Who sang ‘Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas’ in the 1944 film Meet Me in St. Louis?

A. Deanna Durbin
B. Judy Garland
C. Dinah Shore
D. Alice Faye

Correct answer: B. Judy Garland
Judy Garland performed the song in the film. The American Film Institute notes that her recording was sent to U.S. troops overseas around the film’s release.

6. What title would you look for on the early sheet music for James Pierpont’s song now called ‘Jingle Bells’?

A. The One Horse Open Sleigh
B. The Little Silver Bells
C. A Winter Ride Home
D. A Sleigh for Two

Correct answer: A. The One Horse Open Sleigh
The Library of Congress identifies The One Horse Open Sleigh as the title under which Pierpont’s song was first published.

7. How old was Brenda Lee when her single ‘Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree’ first came out?

A. 22
B. 16
C. 19
D. 13

Correct answer: D. 13
Lee was 13 when the single was released. Johnny Marks wrote the song.

8. Which composer is credited for ‘O Holy Night’ in the Library of Congress music collection that lists it as ‘Cantique de Noël’?

A. Camille Saint-Saëns
B. Charles Gounod
C. Adolphe Adam
D. Georges Bizet

Correct answer: C. Adolphe Adam
The Library of Congress catalog credits the music to Adolphe Adam and records the French and English titles together.

9. Which singer’s Rock & Roll Hall of Fame entry lists ‘Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)’ among her lead vocals?

A. Darlene Love
B. Ronnie Spector
C. La La Brooks
D. Mary Wilson

Correct answer: A. Darlene Love
The Hall of Fame identifies Darlene Love as the lead voice on this recording and several other hits from her early career.

10. In which city did Mykola Leontovych’s ‘Shchedryk,’ the work behind ‘Carol of the Bells,’ receive its North American premiere in 1922?

A. Philadelphia
B. Toronto
C. Boston
D. New York

Correct answer: D. New York
The Ukrainian Republic Capella performed ‘Shchedryk’ at Carnegie Hall in New York on October 5, 1922.

11. Which museum caption gives the month and city of the first performance of Handel’s Messiah?

A. April 1742 in London
B. December 1742 in Dublin
C. April 1742 in Dublin
D. December 1742 in London

Correct answer: C. April 1742 in Dublin
Trinity College Dublin’s exhibition dates the first performance to April 13, 1742, at a venue on Fishamble Street in Dublin.

12. Which note fits NASA’s December 18, 1965, entry for ‘I’ll Be Home for Christmas’ during Gemini VII?

A. Sent by the crew shortly before the maneuver to return to Earth.
B. Sent to the crew shortly before the maneuver to return to Earth.
C. Sent to the crew shortly before the spacecraft launched.
D. Sent by the crew shortly after the spacecraft landed.

Correct answer: B. Sent to the crew shortly before the maneuver to return to Earth.
NASA’s chronology records the song being transmitted to the crew just before retrofire, the engine firing that began the return from orbit.

13. Which recording of ‘The Christmas Song’ matches the Library of Congress description of Nat King Cole singing in stereo with Ralph Carmichael conducting?

A. The August 1946 version with added strings
B. The 1953 full-orchestra version
C. The June 1946 trio version
D. The 1961 full-orchestra version

Correct answer: D. The 1961 full-orchestra version
Carmichael conducted the 1961 stereo session. The Library of Congress essay credits Nelson Riddle with arranging the earlier 1953 full-orchestra version.

14. Which performance plan fits the Leipzig Bach Archive’s account of the first performances of Bach’s Christmas Oratorio in 1734–35?

A. Six parts performed across six Sundays and feast days in Leipzig.
B. Six parts performed together on one evening in Leipzig.
C. Six parts performed across six Sundays and feast days in Dresden.
D. Six parts performed together on one evening in Dresden.

Correct answer: A. Six parts performed across six Sundays and feast days in Leipzig.
The archive describes the parts being performed separately at Leipzig’s St. Nicholas and St. Thomas churches across the holiday period.

15. A fictional program says Mitchell Parish created the original music for ‘Sleigh Ride’ and Leroy Anderson added words in 1950. Which correction fits ASCAP’s account?

A. Parish wrote the words first, and Anderson set them to music in 1950.
B. Parish composed the instrumental piece, and Anderson added words in 1950.
C. Anderson composed the instrumental piece, and Parish added words in 1950.
D. Anderson wrote the words first, and Parish set them to music in 1950.

Correct answer: C. Anderson composed the instrumental piece, and Parish added words in 1950.
Leroy Anderson first composed ‘Sleigh Ride’ as an instrumental. Mitchell Parish supplied the lyrics in 1950.