



A time to remember fond friendships

Description

How *Auld Lang Syne* came to be the world-wide anthem for New Year celebrations

By Byron Toben

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My last article featured the song ***Counting My Blessings*** from Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* film. The song ***White Christmas*** also appeared in that movie as well as in two others of his. I am now informed that that song, as recorded by Bing Crosby in 1942, not only became the **best-selling singles record of all time** but still is in 2022, going on 2023, seventy years later! Records are meant to be broken – Babe Ruth's sixty single-season home runs in 1927 lasted 34 years – but it is unlikely anyone will ever eclipse the *White Christmas* record.

Berlin's Christmas-related movies led me to view once again one of the greatest Frank Capra movies, ***It's A Wonderful Life*** (1946). I had forgotten that its happy ending included the singing of ***Auld Lang Syne***, thus bridging the gap between the two holidays.

Auld Lang Syne is about remembering fond friendships and so, at this time, the hills are alive with the sound of musical renditions of the great poem of **Robert Burns**, Scotland's national poet, penned in 1788, but not published in print until shortly after he died in 1796. Only in 1799 did the words and music (based on an old Scottish tune) appear together, composer unknown. Sometime in the 1800s, it became a staple in the Hogmanay (Scottish new year celebration).

In 1929, **Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians** introduced it as it became the North American staple and since, world wide, I have listened to dozens of performers singing this song over the years, but to my mind, none better than **Sissel Kyrkjebø**, the Norwegian songbird.



Feature image: [Alexander Naglestad](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Byron Toben, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.



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