

THE ORIGINAL SOUND TRACK RECORDING OF THE CBS TELEVISION SPECIAL

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS VINCE GUARALDI TRIO



© 1950, 1952 PEANUTS Worldwide, LLC

- 1 **O TANNENBAUM** 5:09
- 2 **WHAT CHILD IS THIS** 2:24
- 3 **MY LITTLE DRUM** 3:12
- 4 **LINUS AND LUCY** 3:05
- 5 **CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE** (instrumental) 6:06
- 6 **CHRISTMAS TIME IS HERE** (vocal) 2:46
- 7 **SKATING** 2:25
- 8 **HARK, THE HERALD ANGELS SING** 1:54
- 9 **CHRISTMAS IS COMING** 3:25
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- 11 **THE CHRISTMAS SONG** 3:16
- *12 **GREENSLEEVES** 5:29
- *13 **GREAT PUMPKIN WALTZ** 2:29
- *14 **THANKSGIVING THEME** 2:00

* BONUS TRACKS (NOT ON ORIGINAL LP)



PEANUTS © 1950, 1952 PEANUTS Worldwide, LLC

fantasy®

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VINCE GUARALDI—piano (organ #8)

with

FRED MARSHALL, MONTY BUDWIG—bass

JERRY GRANELLI, COLIN BAILEY—drums

on #13:

EMANUEL KLEIN—trumpet

JOHN GRAY—guitar

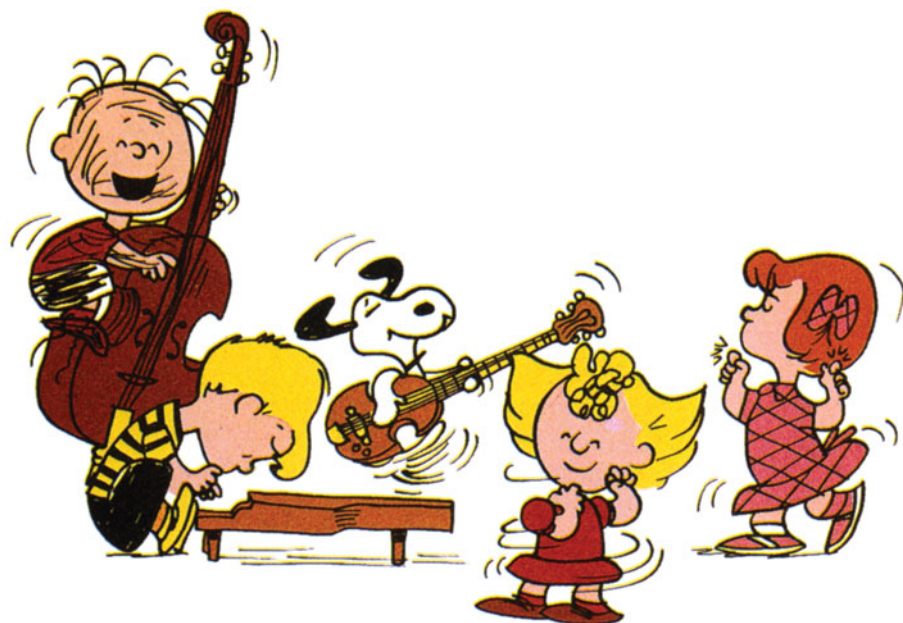
on #14:

CHUCK BENNETT—trombone

TOM HARRELL—trumpet

SEWARD McCAIN—bass

MIKE CLARK—drums



Reissue produced by **Nick Phillips**

Remastering—**Joe Tarantino** (Joe Tarantino Mastering, Berkeley, CA)

Booklet Notes by **Derrick Bang**



VINCE GUARALDI'S CHRISTMAS WISH

On May 23, 2012, with no ceremony beyond some press releases, the Library of Congress once again followed its annual practice of recognizing 25 vintage recordings for their “cultural, historical or aesthetic significance.” These recordings will be honored with the promise of permanent preservation, housed in the Library’s state-of-the-art Packard Campus for Audio Visual Conservation in Culpeper, Virginia.

The 2012 selections featured a diverse array of spoken-word and musical recordings that spanned nearly a century, from 1888 to 1984. They covered a wide variety of sounds and music, ranging from CBS Radio newsman Edward R. Murrow’s *I Can Hear It Now*, a curated collection of speech excerpts and news reports from 1933 to ’45; to the only known surviving recording of turn-of-the-20th-century musical stage star Lillian Russell; to the 1943 New York Philharmonic debut of Leonard Bernstein.

And Vince Guaraldi’s complete score for the 1965 *Peanuts* TV special, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.

Guaraldi’s fans have long known that his groundbreaking soundtrack would be immortal, but it’s always nice to get official recognition. And in this country, “official” doesn’t get better than the Library of Congress.

This is how the Library’s media release described Guaraldi’s album:

A Charlie Brown Christmas introduced jazz to millions of listeners. The television soundtrack album includes expanded themes from the animated “Peanuts” special of the same name, as well as jazz versions of both traditional and popular Christmas music, performed by the Vince Guaraldi Trio. Best remembered is the “Linus and Lucy” theme, originally composed by Guaraldi for an earlier “Peanuts” project, which remains beloved by fans of the popular television special, those devoted to the daily newspaper comic strip, and music lovers alike.

The importance of that first sentence cannot be overstated.

As an inflexible adolescent and teenager, I resisted embracing jazz, my father’s music of choice. This was the ’60s, man, and no self-respecting kid wanted to be on the wrong side of *that* generation gap. I was, nonetheless, enchanted by Guaraldi’s deceptively simple but oh-so-captivating *Peanuts* themes from the moment I joined half of America’s TV viewers on December 9, 1965, in watching the debut of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Subsequently discovering that Fantasy Records had wisely released an LP of this music—an album of TV cartoon music? what a concept!—was more than icing on the cake. That record gave me the ability to play Guaraldi’s music all year, without having to wait for the show to be re-broadcast on CBS-TV. (This was, we must recall, decades before videotapes, DVDs and everything that followed.)

My father, a wise man, carefully refrained from pointing out that I was, in fact, listening to—and enjoying—jazz.

Nay, not merely enjoying: being transported. Guaraldi’s music for that 30-minute TV special forever altered my musical tastes.

(Years later, when my father felt I was safely past the point of no return, he finally started using the “J word” during our discussions of Guaraldi’s work.)

To this day, my father credits Guaraldi with kick-starting my interest in jazz. He’s absolutely correct; more to the point, what was true for me, was true for hundreds of thousands—indeed, millions—of equally enchanted music fans across the country.

Director Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*—based on Philip Van Doren Stern’s short story, “The Greatest Gift,” and intended to be star James Stewart’s Hollywood resurrection after his WWII service—was deemed a flop during its 1946 release. The film’s initial theatrical run—quite long, as was the custom of the day—earned only \$3.3 million at the box office, far shy of its \$6.3 break-even point. The rights to Capra’s saga of spiritual redemption passed through the hands of various individuals during the subsequent decades, and then—due to a clerical error by then-owner National Telefilm Associates—the film’s copyright wasn’t properly renewed in 1974.



Suddenly, prints of *It's a Wonderful Life* popped up everywhere; TV stations across the country, unable to resist this inexpensive (practically free) means of filling two hours of programming time, began showing the film every holiday season.

Repeated exposure, every December since the mid-'70s, turned Capra's "flop" into an adored classic. *It's a Wonderful Life* became part of the American Christmas experience, and now routinely places toward the top of various American Film Institute "best-loved" lists.

CBS-TV achieved the same result with *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. By airing Charles M. Schulz's gently subversive holiday parable every year, the network helped American families anticipate and embrace the show with the warmth of a visit from a beloved relative. At the same time, those same viewers got "turned on" to jazz without even realizing it was happening.

This, absolutely, was Guaraldi's greatest gift.

His music from *A Charlie Brown Christmas* has become as essential to American holiday traditions as mistletoe, twinkling Christmas lights, and carol sing-alongs. Three generations of families decorate their trees—pausing as each ornament is unwrapped from its storage box, to reflect on the moment it was purchased—with Guaraldi's album playing in the background.

And we don't merely cherish Guaraldi's original compositions on that album: "Linus and Lucy," "Christmas Time Is Here," "Skating," and "Christmas Is Coming." He also permanently branded his arrangements of the established carols used within the show. To this day, I compare any cover of "O Christmas Tree" to Guaraldi's arrangement, which opens the original Fantasy LP and this re-mastered Concord CD.



A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

Network Television Special

A Lee Mendelson-Bill Melendez Production
Written by Charles Schulz
Music Composed and Conducted by Vince Guaraldi



CHARLES SCHULZ
Great House
Menlo Park, California



VINCE GUARALDI
Fantasy Records (1981)
San Francisco, California

Charles Schulz is the creator of the world's most famous comic strip "Peanuts", read by over one hundred million people in 750 newspapers in the United States and forty foreign countries. He is the only cartoonist to win twice the Reuben Award (the National Cartoonists Society's equivalent of an Oscar or Emmy) as National Cartoonist of the year in 1955 and 1965.

Vince Guaraldi, Grammy-award winning composer-conductor ("Cast Your Fate To The Wind") composed and performed the original score for "A Charlie Brown Christmas", as he did for another "special", "A Boy Named Charlie Brown", the latter a documentary on Charles Schulz to be seen on television in 1965. He also composed and conducted the score for the award-winning "Boy of Gold" television production.

Lee Mendelson, chief of production of Lee Mendelson Film Productions Inc., San Francisco, wrote and produced a Peabody Award winning documentary series in 1963, and produced and directed "A Man Named Mervyn", twice broadcast on network television in 1964. His "A Charlie Brown Christmas" will be followed by another Charlie Brown Baseball Special in 1966, plus two historical documentaries for the networks.

Bill Melendez, head of Bill Melendez Productions, Inc., Hollywood, has won international acclaim at the Cannes, Annecy, and Venice Film Festivals, with more than 150 major awards to his credit, and was the only director ever to win the New York Art Directors Club highest achievement award three out of five years. Starting with Walt Disney Studios in 1938, Bill has animated everything from feature films to commercials, including the "Peanuts" commercials.



LEE MENDELSON
San Francisco, California



BILL MELENDEZ
Los Angeles, California

Other Fantasy Albums of Interest

1957-1959 "CAST YOUR FATE TO THE WIND" and "CAST YOUR FATE TO THE WIND" - Vince Guaraldi & Bola Sete
1958-1959 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1959-1960 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1960-1961 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1961-1962 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1962-1963 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1963-1964 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1964-1965 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
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1971-1972 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1972-1973 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1973-1974 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
1974-1975 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
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2011-2012 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2012-2013 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2013-2014 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2014-2015 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2015-2016 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
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2018-2019 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2019-2020 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2020-2021 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2021-2022 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2022-2023 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2023-2024 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi
2024-2025 "THE BOY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN" - Vince Guaraldi

Invariably, all other versions are found wanting (just as I've never found a spaghetti recipe that can match the one passed to me by my mother).

"He added much more 'Vince' and much more Peanuts to his arrangement of 'O Christmas Tree,'" explains Toby Gleason, son of former *San Francisco Chronicle* jazz columnist Ralph Gleason, one of Guaraldi's early champions and best friends. "You know how Ray Charles...if you heard him do a song, it *became* a Ray Charles song? That version of 'O Christmas Tree' has *become* a Vince Guaraldi song. It evokes the season, Vince, Peanuts and family, and no other version evokes all those things."

"That's the sign of an actual original voice," agrees Jerry Granelli, who plays drums on many of these tracks. "Vince's arrangements of anything he touched became *his*."

For this new edition of the score for *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, reissue producer Nick Phillips and remastering impresario Joe Tarantino resurrected the original stereo analog master tapes, along with their beloved original stereo mixes. Longtime fans no doubt have purchased this album more than once, starting with the aforementioned 1965 LP; you'll want to compare this new re-mastering with the album's debut CD release, back in 1988. (*A Charlie Brown Christmas* was the first of Guaraldi's Fantasy albums that appeared on the then-new CD format; all the rest quickly followed.) Analog-to-digital conversion has gotten a lot better during the past quarter-century, as a side-by-side listening comparison reveals.

The results will prompt a smile ... although, actually, listening to Guaraldi's cheerful music *always* brightens one's day, so I guess we're talking about a broader smile. The ubiquitous background hum, so notorious due to the Spartan conditions

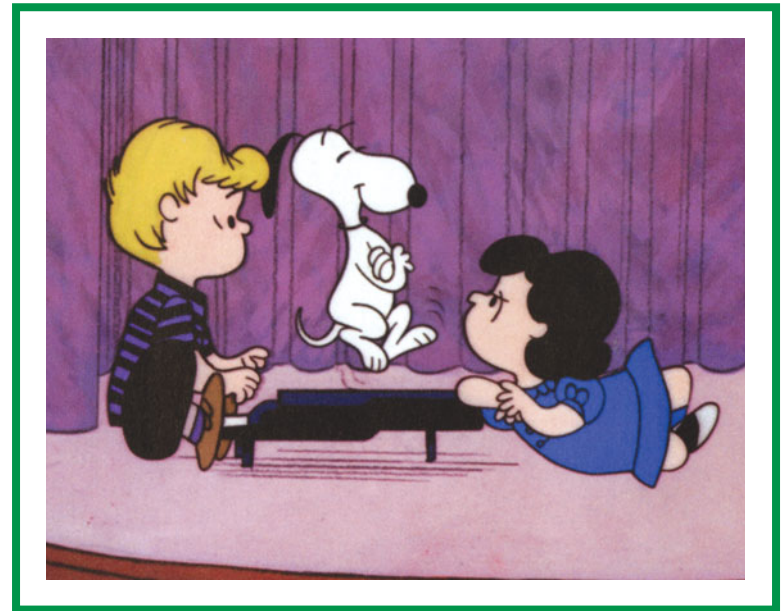
of Fantasy's recording studio, is less intrusive; this is particularly evident when the young members of San Rafael's St. Paul's Church Choir—standing in for all of Charlie Brown's friends—croon the melody line and then sing "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." The album's overall dynamics are more crisp, the individual elements and instruments more "alive," better conveying a sense that we're in the same room as the musicians.

The quiet drum brushes—which always evoke falling snow in my mind—are more distinct and less "fuzzy."

You'll notice the most vibrant difference, throughout, on the contributions by bassists Monty Budwig and Fred Marshall. Guaraldi's piano—at once more detailed and warmer than the somewhat brittle sounding original CD reissue—sits better in the mix. This draws greater attention to the equally superlative work by the sidemen; you'll hear marvelous bass riffs that have been all but buried until now. This is especially noticeable on "Skating," where the deft bass work now better complements Guaraldi's exhilarating keyboard runs.

Alternatively, on "Greensleeves"—the longer arrangement of "What Child Is This," added as a bonus track on the original 1988 CD release—the drums have been softened just a bit, and the piano brought forward. Guaraldi's improvisational noodling, during his solo on this take, bespeaks a musician truly at one with his instrument: performing with a warmth that perfectly reflects the seasonal tidings.

The enhancements aren't as conspicuous on this new CD's remaining two bonus tracks, with their nods to Halloween and Thanksgiving; both "The Great Pumpkin Waltz" and "Thanksgiving Theme" are sourced from poorer monaural masters.



Tarantino deserves credit for a herculean effort nonetheless; on the former, he minimizes the background hiss while granting better focus to the lyrical efforts by Emanuel Klein (trumpet) and John Gray (guitar). The "sweetening" is even better on "Thanksgiving Theme," with the drums once again softened, this time to enhance the expressive support from Chuck Bennett (trombone) and Tom Harrell (trumpet).

But this album's centerpiece track, today as it was back in 1965, is "Christmas Time Is Here," particularly the long, soulful instrumental version that clocks in at just over 6 minutes.

Ask jazz fans to cite their genre's most influential songs, and you'll get numerous answers: Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's "Take the 'A' Train," Illinois Jacquet's "How High the Moon," Paul Desmond and Dave Brubeck's "Take Five," Miles Davis's "All Blues," the Stan Getz/Astrud Gilberto version of "The Girl from Ipanema" or maybe even John Coltrane's cover of "My Favorite Things." All excellent choices. But these are answers given by jazz buffs preaching to their own choir. As noted by the Library of Congress, Guaraldi's score for *A Charlie Brown Christmas* affected the tastes of *mainstream* listeners—and continues to influence such tastes, nearly half a century later—to a degree that massively exceeds the reach of all those other tunes.

How do we know this?

Because nothing speaks truth louder than commerce.

As we move beyond the first decade of the 21st century, it truly can be said that Guaraldi got the eerily prophetic wish he expressed during an interview conducted with Ralph Gleason, all the way back in 1958: "I don't think I'm a great piano player,

but I would like to be able to have people like me, to play pretty tunes and to reach the audience."

Guaraldi achieved that wish: He reached an audience far larger than he ever could have imagined.

Despite its 1963 Grammy Award win and several popular covers during the next decade, Guaraldi's "Cast Your Fate to the Wind" never quite became a standard. But that honor unquestionably belongs to "Christmas Time Is Here," the gentle holiday anthem that debuted when sung—deliberately slightly off-key, as children would do—by the same young members of St. Paul's Church choir.

To the best of my knowledge, jazz guitarist Ron Eschete deserves credit for being the first to cover "Christmas Time Is Here" on his 1982 Yuletide album, *Christmas Impressions*. Pianist David Benoit followed, in '83, with a version on his album *Christmastime*.

Nothing much happened for the next few years.

Patti Austin and Debby Boone released vocal versions of the song, both in 1989. Mel Tormé was next, in 1992; he was followed by Rosemary Clooney, the rock band R.E.M. and the Stone Temple Pilots.

Then the dam broke.

Since the turn of this century, "Christmas Time Is Here" has been covered by Ellis Marsalis, Toni Braxton, Nancy Wilson, Dianne Reeves, Beegie Adair, Ricky Skaggs, Anita Baker, MercyMe, Sarah McLachlan, the Manhattan Transfer, Barry Manilow, Jars of Clay, Tony Bennett, Al Jarreau, Spyro Gyra, Harry Connick, Jr., the Radio City Rockettes, Sixpence None the Richer, Shelby Lynne, Christopher Cross, Mariah Carey, and Kidz Bop Kids ... along with dozens and dozens of others not mentioned only due to lack of space.

Call up the song on iTunes, and you'll find more than 1,700 entries.

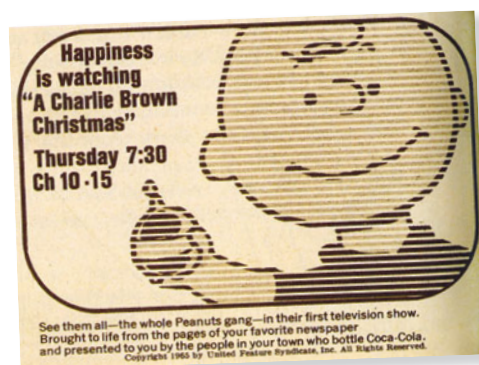
All this action, from a quiet little ballad that debuted as an interior track on what creator/writer Charles M. Schulz, director/producer Lee Mendelson, and animator Bill Melendez expected would be a one-off Christmas Peanuts special, nearly half a century ago. Funny how things work out.

I'd say Guaraldi got his heart's desire.

Derrick Bang

July 2012

— *Derrick Bang's book-length career study of Guaraldi, Vince Guaraldi at the Piano, was published by McFarland Press in March 2012*



TV Guide's "Closeup" feature announcing the debut of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* in December 1965.

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(traditional) Public Domain.
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(Beethoven) Public Domain.
- 11 **THE CHRISTMAS SONG** 3:16
(Mel Tormé—Robert Wells) Edwin H. Morris & Co./Sony/ATV Tunes-ASCAP
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Package Design—**Rachel Gutek**

Project Assistance—**Abbey Anna, Rikka Arnold, Bill Belmont, Jamie Barnes,**

Chris Clough, Pollyanna Kwok, Jeffrey Spector.

Special Thanks—**Glenn Mendelson, Bill Melendez Productions, Craig Schulz**
and the entire Schulz Estate, PEANUTS Worldwide LLC, and Creative Associates.

Original album digitally remastered with 24-bit technology from the original analog stereo master tapes.

Bonus tracks remastered from best available master sources.

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