

AULD LANG SYNE

Lyrics, Robert Burns, 1788
Tune: Traditional Scottish Aire

The words to this classic New Year's tune were penned in 1788 by the iconic Scottish poet and songwriter, Robert Burns. Born to a poor farming family in rural Alloway, Scotland in 1759, Burns started writing poetry at the age of 15, and published his first collection, *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, at the 24. This was such a success he became celebrated throughout England and Scotland as a great "peasant-poet". Most of Burns' poems were written in Scots, and documented traditional Scottish culture, expressions of farm life, as well as class and religious distinctions. He set over 300 of his poems to music, primarily using traditional Scottish folk melodies.

"Auld lang syne" literally translates as "old long since". More loosely translated, it means "time gone by" or "old time's sake". It invokes a sense of nostalgia that has been embraced throughout the English-speaking world. Since it has been translated into more than 40 languages, you can also hear it being sung across Europe, and even in such faraway places as Bangkok and Beijing. Every December 31, millions raise their voices in this song to say good bye to the passing year, and greet the new one.

The phrase "auld lang syne" was also used in similar Scottish poems that pre-dated Burns' effort, and Burns mentioned in a letter to his publisher that the first verse and chorus were "transcribed from the singing of an old man" he had once met. But it is widely believed that the subsequent verses are attributable to Burns himself.

The tune most commonly associated with the song today is not the one which Burns first paired it with. Most traditional Scots singers use the original melody when they sing it. The tune commonly paired with it today is another traditional Scottish folk song that was well known in Burns' time as well.

In music and friendship,

--Tull