

CHARLES M.

SCHULZ

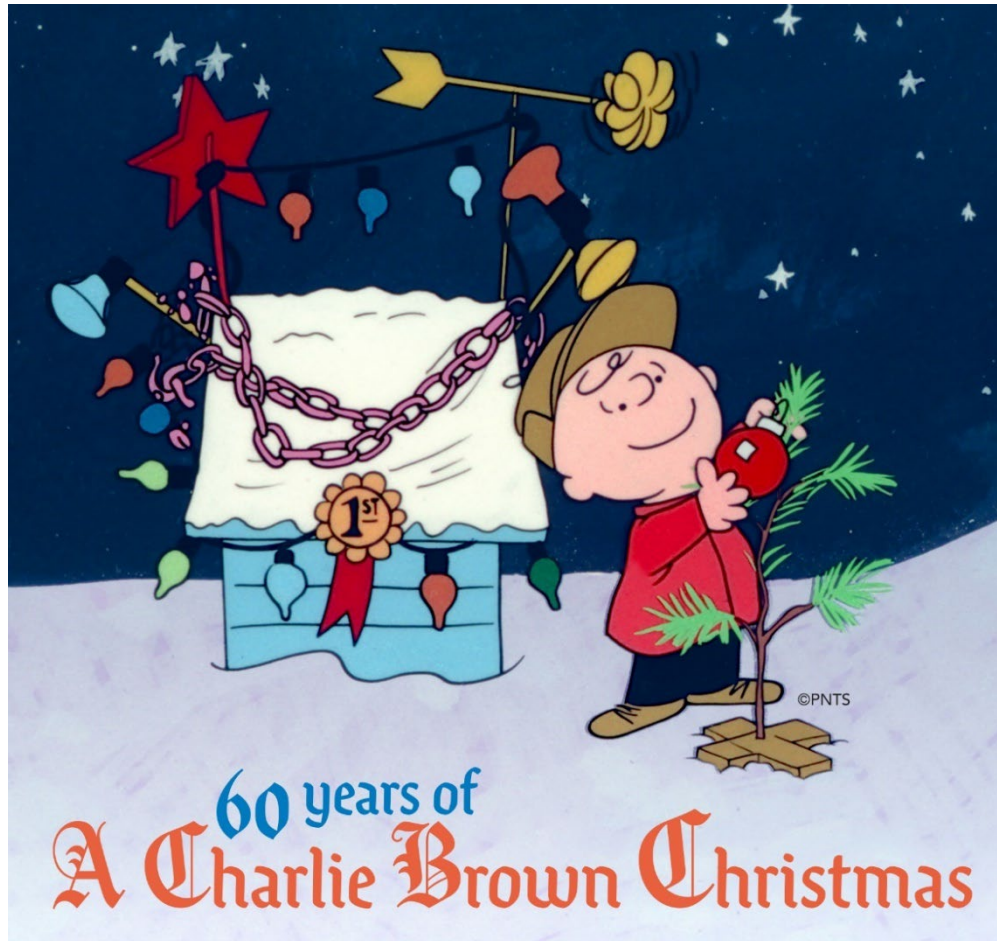
MUSEUM

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60 Years of “A Charlie Brown Christmas”

A new exhibition goes behind the scenes of the animated classic, celebrating its 60th anniversary in December.



SANTA ROSA, Calif.—The holidays arrive early this year at the Charles M. Schulz Museum with *60 Years of “A Charlie Brown Christmas,”* a new exhibition on view from July 17, 2025, to January 11, 2026. Celebrating the 60th anniversary of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, the exhibition draws from the Schulz Museum’s vast collection, including never-before-displayed items, to share the origins of the holiday classic, which was produced under remarkable odds to become one of the most enduring and celebrated holiday programs ever.

“This is the story about how the very first *Peanuts* animated special was created, and how it nearly didn’t happen!” Curator Benjamin L. Clark said.

A collaboration between *Peanuts* creator Charles M. Schulz, animator Bill Melendez, and producer Lee Mendelson, the 25-minute program was initially pitched by Coca-Cola’s advertising agency, which sought a television event to sponsor. Schulz, Melendez, and Mendelson were given less

than six months to develop, write, animate, and produce the special for CBS, debuting on December 9, 1965.

“That is a wildly accelerated timeline, by production standards then and now,” Clark said. “Then, Schulz insisted it have no laugh track, children voicing the characters instead of adults, and Linus quoting straight from the Bible. The soundtrack was jazz, and the pacing was slow. All of this simply was not done.”

At the time, animation was an area Schulz was reluctant to explore, but he trusted Melendez and his team to adapt Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and the rest of the *Peanuts* gang to the small screen in a way that felt authentic to his comic strip. Unfortunately, it was met with skepticism and nearly canceled. “After a preview screening, CBS executives told Mendelson it would flop, but they still planned to air it because it was too late to change the programming schedules,” Clark said.

Yet, what was deemed a flop turned out to be one of the most revered Christmas specials ever made. The program won an Emmy and a Peabody Award and has become embedded in pop culture and holiday traditions around the world. The soundtrack by Vince Guaraldi has sold over five million copies, making it the best-selling Christmas album of all time.

The exhibition features Schulz’s platinum record from the first million sales of the soundtrack in 1996. Other collection highlights include the original *Peanuts* comic strips used for storyline inspiration, original production cels, archival photos, the toy piano used for recording the “Jingle Bells” scene with Schroeder and Lucy, and shown for the first time—the original first three pages of the script, which was cut-and-pasted together with notes in the margins during the creative process.

A video station allows visitors to enjoy clips from the animated special, including its original opening and ending featuring the Coca-Cola logo, as well as an interview with David Willat, a museum volunteer who sang in the choir for Guaraldi’s soundtrack. *A Charlie Brown Christmas* will also be shown daily in the museum theater throughout the exhibition’s run.

The Schulz Museum will host an event featuring Jason Mendelson of Lee Mendelson Film Productions, original chorus and cast members, and a performance by the Maria Carrillo High School Jazz Choir on Saturday, December 20, at 1:00 pm. In addition, the museum celebrates another pivotal anniversary this fall—the 75th anniversary of *Peanuts*—with several exhibitions that will be on view alongside *60 Years of “A Charlie Brown Christmas”* (details below).

Images available on request.



The exhibition features a selection of original *Peanuts* comic strips that were adapted for *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, three of which are on view for the first time, including this one from December 5, 1963. Collection of the Charles M. Schulz Museum, Santa Rosa, CA. © Peanuts Worldwide LLC

BILL MELENDEZ PRODUCTIONS, INC.
7417 BEVERLY BLVD.
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90036

PROD. A-6 "A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS"

SCENE 1
 Charlie Brown: I THINK THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME, LINUS. CHRISTMAS IS COMING BUT I'M NOT HAPPY. I DON'T FEEL THE WAY I'M SUPPOSED TO FEEL. I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND CHRISTMAS, I GUESS. I LIKE GETTING PRESENTS AND SENDING CHRISTMAS CARDS AND DECORATING TREES AND ALL THAT, BUT I'M STILL NOT HAPPY. I ALWAYS END UP FEELING DEPRESSED.

Linus: CHARLIE BROWN, YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON I KNOW WHO CAN TAKE A WONDERFUL SEASON LIKE CHRISTMAS AND TURN IT INTO A PROBLEM!

LINUS S.C.1 { MAYBE LUCKY'S RIGHT. OF ALL THE CHARLIE * BROWNS IN THE WORLD YOU ARE THE CHARLIE * LUCKIEST.

SCENE 7
 Charlie Brown: HELLOOOO IN THERE. RATS: NOBODY SENT ME A CHRISTMAS CARD TODAY. I ALMOST WISH THERE WEREN'T A HOLIDAY SEASON.

SCENE 8
 Charlie Brown: I KNOW NOBODY LIKES ME. WHY DO WE HAVE TO HAVE AN HOLIDAY SEASON TO EMPHASIZE IT?

SCENE 9A
 Charlie Brown: THANK YOU FOR THE CHRISTMAS CARD YOU SENT ME, * VIOLET. (Sincerely)
 Violet: * I DIDN'T SEND YOU A CHRISTMAS CARD, CHARLIE * BROWN.
 Charlie Brown: DON'T YOU KNOW SHEESHAM, WHO YOU HATE IT?

SC. 9B.
 CHARLIE BROWN: PIG PEN, YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON I KNOW WHO CAN RARE AROUND OF DUST IN A SHAW STEAM. WHAT'S THE PAPER?
 PIG PEN: THAT'S MY BIT LIST?
 C.B.: WHAT'S YOUR BIT LIST?
 P.P.: THIS IS WHAT I FIGURE TO GET PENNANTS FROM MY MOM + DAD, AND MY 2 GRANDMAS, + 2 GRANDDADS + MY COUSINS + MAY ...
 C.B.: WHERE'S YOUR BIT LIST?
 P.P.: MY WHAT?
 C.B.: I KNOW IT!

Sally: (handing clip board & ball point to charlie)
 YOU WRITE IT, AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I WANT TO SAY. 449

Charlie Brown: OKEH, SHOOT.

Sally: 212 OF DEAR SANTA CLAUS, 215 HOW HAVE YOU BEEN? DID YOU HAVE A NICE SUMMER? HOW IS YOUR WIFE? I HAVE BEEN EXTRA GOOD THIS YEAR, SO I SHALL ENCLOSE AN EXTRA LONG LIST OF THINGS I WANT. 417 415

Charlie Brown: OH! BROTHER! 316

Sally: I'M NOT SURE WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR. SOMETIMES IT'S VERY HARD TO DECIDE. PLEASE NOTE THE SIZE AND COLOR OF THE ITEMS AND SEND LOTS OF THEM. IF IT SEEMS TOO COMPLICATED MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF.

Charlie Brown: TENS AND TWENTIES!!! AUGH!!

The original first three pages of the script for A Charlie Brown Christmas are on view for the first time. Shown here is page one (top) and a detail from page two (bottom). Collection of the Charles M. Schulz Museum, Santa Rosa, CA



TV Week from the *Chicago Tribune*, December 4-10, 1965, with an announcement of the December 9, 1965, air date of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* on the cover. Collection of the Charles M. Schulz Museum, Santa Rosa, CA



Left to right: Lee Mendelson, Charles Schulz, and Bill Melendez accept the Emmy for Outstanding Children's Program on May 22, 1966, for *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. The Emmy statuette is on permanent display in the Museum's Biographical Gallery. Collection of the Charles M. Schulz Museum, Santa Rosa, CA



The exhibition features a first-edition album (1965) for the original soundtrack of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Collection of the Charles M. Schulz Museum, Santa Rosa, CA

SUPPORTING EVENTS

Events subject to change. Visit schulzmuseum.org/calendar for current information.

Saturday, December 20, 1:00 pm

Celebrating 60 Years of *A Charlie Brown Christmas*

Celebrate the 60th anniversary of the classic animated special, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, with special guests including Jason Mendelson of Lee Mendelson Film Productions and original chorus and cast members. Also, enjoy a live performance of music from the special by the Maria Carrillo High School Jazz Choir. *Cost: Included in museum admission. Free for Members.* [More >>](#)

ALSO ON VIEW

Paperback Peanuts

Through September 10, 2025

[More>>](#)

Memorable Moments: Celebrating 75 Years of Peanuts

Through November 3, 2025

[More>>](#)

OPENING SOON:

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! 75 Years of Humor in Peanuts

September 20, 2025—March 11, 2026

[More>>](#)

ABOUT THE SCHULZ MUSEUM

Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center
2301 Hardies Lane, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
(707) 579-4452 | schulzmuseum.org

The Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center opened in 2002 to fulfill its mission of preserving, displaying, and interpreting the art of Charles M. Schulz, the creator of *Peanuts*, and building an understanding of cartoon art. Located 50 miles north of San Francisco in Sonoma County, California—where Schulz lived and worked for over 40 years—the Schulz Museum features the largest collection of original *Peanuts* comic strips in the world and presents changing exhibitions and programming for all ages. The museum also provides reference services and supports a robust traveling exhibition program. For more information, visit schulzmuseum.org.

HOURS & ADMISSION

Weekdays: 11:00 am–5:00 pm*

Weekends: 10:00 am–5:00 pm

*Closed Tuesdays

Museum Members, children 3 and under: Free

Adults: \$15.00

Seniors 62 and over (with ID): \$10.00

Youth 4-18 and college students (with ID): \$7.00

EBT Cardholders (with card; up to 4 people): \$4.00

Military: \$1.00 off admission

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