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Hey there and welcome to a brand new episode of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm excited to have you joining me today for musical discoveries. Today's episode is brought to you by my Nutcracker Camp for Kids, which is my completely free, 3-day online camp where we explore the music of Tchaikovsky's famous Nutcracker ballet. You can learn more about this camp and how to join it at busykidsdopiano.com/nutcrackercamp and I will provide that link in this episode's show notes as well.

This episode is scheduled to air at the beginning of December, and so I have a jingling, joyful and jolly topic for us to explore today – sleigh bells! Let's learn about the history of sleigh bells and how they're used in holiday music, shall we?

You know those delightful sounds that remind you of Santa's sleigh and winter wonderlands? Well, sleigh bells are behind those magical sounds. They've been a part of holiday music for centuries!

Sleigh bells are a type of handbell that was historically used on horse-drawn sleighs, particularly in the snowy landscapes of Europe and North America. As sleighs were not able to stop quickly, they needed a warning sound. Sleigh bells were that warning, and were used to alert pedestrians and other travelers to the approach of a sleigh, ensuring everyone stayed safe during snowy journeys.

Small bell ornaments– or sleigh bells – were used to adorn horses worldwide from at least 800 BCE. It was believed that these horse bells would protect owners against diseases, evil spirits and injuries. It was also a way for the affluent to flaunt their wealth and status. In countries such as Sumer, Babylonia, Assyria and Egypt, small bells were often suspended from not only horses but also mules and camels.

Sleigh bells have a distinctive bright, tinkling sound that brings to mind the joy of the holidays. They come in various sizes and materials, but are typically made from sheet metal bent into a spherical shape with a small ball bearing or short metal rod placed inside to create the jingle sound.

Now, how are sleigh bells used in holiday music? Well, they play a significant role in creating that magical atmosphere we associate with winter and Christmas. You can often hear sleigh bells in the background of classic holiday songs. Let's listen to a famous example.

That's right! "Jingle Bells" is a classic holiday tune that features the sound of sleigh bells prominently. The song was written by James Lord Pierpont in the 1850s and became one of the most recognizable and beloved holiday songs of all time.

Sleigh bells add that magical touch to the song, creating the sensation of riding in a horse-drawn sleigh on a snowy day. It's no wonder this song is so closely associated with the holiday season.

Another popular holiday tune featuring sleigh bells is "Sleigh Ride." This song, composed by Leroy Anderson, captures the joyful essence of a winter sleigh ride. Let's listen to a part of it.

Can you hear the sleigh bells? They make you feel like you're right there, dashing through the snow!

Sleigh bells are also used in many Christmas carols to create a festive ambiance. Songs like "Winter Wonderland" and "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" often incorporate the sound of sleigh bells to transport you to a winter wonderland.

Listen to how sleigh bells add that extra touch of magic to "Winter Wonderland."

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Sleigh bells also appear in holiday movies and TV shows, often signaling the arrival of Santa Claus. This magical use of sleigh bells helps to create the excitement and wonder that comes with the holiday season.

So, let's not forget that sleigh bells are not only instruments but also symbols of holiday cheer and the anticipation of wonderful surprises.

As we wrap up our exploration of sleigh bells and their role in holiday music, I encourage you to listen closely to the music and carols that you hear this month. Do you notice when sleigh bells are used to add a little extra holiday magic to the music? I've made a special playlist for you at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/111 that has holiday music featuring sleigh bells in it. It's a great playlist to have on in the background as you participate in fun holiday crafts, baking and other fun traditions over the next few weeks. Be sure to listen for those sleigh bells!

Thanks for joining me as we delved into the world of sleigh bells and their connection to holiday music. I hope you've enjoyed our festive musical journey, and I look forward to connecting with you again in 2 weeks when our next brand new episode of Busy Kids Love Music airs. Bye for now!