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Hey there Busy Kids! Welcome to another exciting episode of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm your host, Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and before we get started today I just wanted to give you a heads up that on January 1st, my online piano lesson membership programs – Busy Kids Do Piano and Busy Moms Do Piano – are opening up for a limited-time enrollment period. If you're thinking about piano lessons in the new year, it's the perfect time to join, and I'll pop the links about those two programs in this episode's show notes so that you can learn more and sign up for the waitlist.

Today I have a special festive treat for you as we delve into holiday musical traditions from around the world. December is such a magical time, filled with joy, lights, and of course, music! The holiday season is celebrated in various ways across the globe, with unique traditions and musical expressions that capture the spirit of the season. Today, we'll take a musical journey and discover some of these wonderful traditions.

Let's start our journey in Mexico, where the holiday season kicks off with Las Posadas. This tradition reenacts Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem. Pilgrims go from house to house singing traditional songs, and it all leads up to a festive party at a chosen house, with piñatas, music, and delicious food.

The song you're listening to now is the traditional Posada Song. It's sung responsively, so the travelers will sing the first verse, which begs for shelter, and then the occupants of the house will reply with the second stanza, turning the travelers away, until the final stanzas, where they are accepted and allowed inside and the celebration begins.

Now, let's travel to Japan, where the holiday season is marked by Oshogatsu, or New Year's.

At midnight on December 31, Buddhist temples all over Japan ring their bells a total of 108 times to symbolize the cleansing of the 108 worldly passions in Buddhist belief. A traditional Japanese instrument, the koto, is often played during the celebrations that mark the New Year's festivals. Listen to the soothing sounds of the koto from a New Year's Eve Celebration in Japan

The koto's melodic tones bring a sense of peace and tranquility to Japanese households during the holiday season.

Next, we're heading to South Africa, where they have a tradition known as "Carols by Candlelight." People gather outdoors, usually in parks or open spaces, to sing Christmas carols by the soft glow of candlelight. These events happen all over the country, usually from late November through December. One of the popular South African carols is "We Three Kings."

The joyous voices of families singing carols under the stars make this tradition incredibly special.

Our musical journey continues, and now we're making a stop in India to learn about Diwali. Diwali is a beautiful festival celebrated over 5 days by lots of people in India and other places around the world. It usually happens in November, and is all about celebrating the victory of good over bad and light over darkness. People light up their homes with beautiful lamps and colorful decorations. Music is also part of the fun! People play drums, sing happy songs, and perform traditional dances.

In Sweden, they celebrate Saint Lucia's Day on December 13th with a charming procession of young girls dressed in white gowns and wearing candlelit wreaths on their heads. A traditional song called "Sankta Lucia" is sung during this celebration.

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The song "Sankta Lucia" is all about a special girl named Lucia who brings light and happiness to the dark winter nights in Sweden. She wears a wreath with candles on her head and, with her friends, goes from house to house to spread joy. When they sing "Sankta Lucia," it's like a magical melody that brightens up the cold and dark December days. This song is a way for the people in Sweden to celebrate the coming of Christmas and to remind everyone that even in the darkest times, there is always a way to bring warmth and light to our hearts. The ethereal voices of the children in the procession singing this song create a magical atmosphere that warms the hearts of all who witness it.

As we wrap up our global tour of just a few of the many diverse holiday musical traditions from other countries, I want to encourage you to check out the playlist at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/112. That playlist contains video clips of all the songs you've heard on today's episodes, so you'll be able to not only hear the entirety of the musical clips from the episode, but you'll also be able to see the traditional instruments and dances that are part of the musical celebrations we learned about today. Again, you can find that at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/112.

Thank you for joining me on this festive adventure. I hope you've enjoyed learning about other countries' musical traditions and perhaps even thought of some ways you might wish to incorporate elements of their traditions into your own family's celebrations. Remember, music is a universal language that connects us all, no matter where we are in the world. Don't forget to subscribe to Busy Kids Love Music, and please leave a review if you enjoyed today's episode.

Until next time I wish you a joyous and melodious holiday season and look forward to connecting with you again in the new year, when our next brand new episode of Busy Kids Love Music airs. Bye for now!