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Welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, the podcast that brings the world of classical music to families. I'm your host, Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano. Before we get started with our first episode of 2024, just a quick reminder that Busy Kids Do Piano and Busy Moms Do Piano, which are my online piano lesson membership programs, are currently open for public enrollment through January 14th. If you're interested in piano lessons for you or your little ones, be sure to check out busykidsdopiano.com/membership or busymomsdopiano.com/membership — links which I'll place in the show notes as well.

Today in our brand new episode of Busy Kids Love Music, we're embarking on a musical journey through the life of a remarkable composer – Aaron Copland. This episode will be the first in a series about Copland where we'll be focusing on his life and musical contributions, and in the next few episodes, we'll dig deeper into some of his most renowned works.

Aaron Copland's childhood was a symphony of sounds that laid the foundation for his future as a groundbreaking composer. Born on November 14, 1900, in Brooklyn, New York, young Aaron was surrounded by the diverse and energetic rhythms of city life. His parents, who were Russian-Jewish immigrants, recognized the budding musical talent in their son and introduced him to the piano at an early age. His older sister was his first piano teacher, and he decided by the age of 15 that he wanted to be a composer.

In the urban landscape of Brooklyn, Copland's imagination soared beyond the skyscrapers as he found inspiration in the open fields, flowing rivers, and the vast sky. The contrasting elements of city hustle and natural beauty became the notes and harmonies that shaped his early musical compositions.

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Aaron Copland's musical journey was significantly influenced by his association with the renowned French composer and conductor, Nadia Boulanger. Aaron Copland's musical journey was significantly influenced by his association with the renowned French composer and conductor, Nadia Boulanger. Now you might recognize that name if you've been a listener of Busy Kids Love Music for awhile, because we learned about Nadia's famous sister, composer Lili Boulanger, in episode 92. Copland sought Nadia Boulanger's guidance during the early 1920s when he traveled to Paris to refine his compositional skills. Under Boulanger's tutelage, Copland honed his craft and absorbed the rich traditions of European music. Boulanger's teaching not only deepened Copland's understanding of classical techniques but also encouraged him to embrace his distinct American identity in his compositions. The two developed a lasting friendship. Nadia Boulanger's impact on Copland's musical language is immeasurable, as she played a pivotal role in shaping him into one of the most influential American composers of the 20th century.

One of the things that makes Aaron Copland's story even more exciting is that he wanted everyone to enjoy and understand classical music. He believed that music should be for all people, no matter where you come from or how old you are. The music he wrote in the 1930s and 1940s was a style often referred to as “populist”, which meant that everyone could understand and appreciate it – it wasn't overly complicated or difficult to understand, and reflected the experiences of everyday people. Copland called this his “vernacular” style.

As Aaron Copland grew older, his music became famous not just in the United States but around the world. He composed music for orchestras, ballets, and even movies! He traveled extensively to Europe, Africa and Mexico, where he became friends with Carlos Chavez, another composer that we've learned about in the Busy Kids Love Music podcast.

Around the 1960s, Copland focused more on conducting because he felt as though his creativity had suddenly stopped, comparing it to someone turning off a faucet. Before that time, he had been making a lot of music

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that many people liked, but during the 1960s, he changed his style. Instead of creating music that was easy for everyone to enjoy, he started making more complicated and abstract pieces, like the piece you're listening to now. This shift showed that Copland was trying out new things and exploring different ways of making music.

In the last years of Aaron Copland's life, he kept making a big impact on music. Even though he faced some health issues, Copland received a lot of awards for his contributions to American classical music. He stayed passionate about music and shared his knowledge with other musicians by teaching and mentoring. Copland was famous for his special American style of music, like the piece "Appalachian Spring" that you're hearing a portion of now. He passed away on December 2, 1990, but his music continues to inspire people all over the world. In the next episodes of Busy Kids Love Music, we'll dive into some of Aaron Copland's most famous works. We'll explore the melodies that made him a musical legend and discover the stories behind the notes. In the meantime, be sure to check out the curated playlist at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/113 that features some of Aaron Copland's works that you heard excerpts of today as well as many more. Thanks for joining me on this musical adventure to learn about Aaron Copland's life. Stay tuned for more episodes in our Aaron Copland series, and until then, keep listening and loving music!