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Hello, families, and welcome back to the Busy Kids Love Music podcast! I'm thrilled to continue our exploration of the incredible Sergei Prokofiev in our 3-part series. Our last episode, Episode 121, focused on his life and musical style, and I'll be sure to link to that episode in the show notes in case you missed it. Today, we're going to explore Prokofiev's timeless masterpiece, "Peter and the Wolf." In this episode, we'll dive deep into the captivating story behind this beloved composition, its origins, and the magical musical elements that bring it to life.

Let's begin with the story. "Peter and the Wolf" is a musical fairy tale for children, composed by Prokofiev in 1936. The story follows a young boy named Peter who lives with his grandfather in a Russian village. One day, Peter ventures into the forest, despite his grandfather's warnings, and encounters various animals: a bird, a duck, and a cat. However, the real adventure begins when Peter encounters a fearsome wolf.

Now, you might wonder why Prokofiev wrote this enchanting tale. Well, it was commissioned by the Central Children's Theatre in Moscow as a way to introduce children to the instruments of the orchestra. Each character in the story is represented by a different instrument or group of instruments, making it a perfect educational tool for young listeners.

"Peter and the Wolf" premiered on May 2, 1936, with Prokofiev himself conducting the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. The performance was a tremendous success, captivating both children and adults alike with its whimsical storytelling and rich musical tapestry.

One of the most remarkable aspects of "Peter and the Wolf" is its use of leitmotifs, which are short musical themes associated with specific characters or ideas. For example, Peter is represented by the strings, the bird by the flute, the duck by the oboe, the cat by the clarinet, and the wolf by the French horns. These recurring

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motifs help listeners identify and connect with each character throughout the story. Let's listen to a couple of these motifs. Here is the bird:

What do you think – do those flutes sound bird-like to you? Here is the theme for the cat, played by the clarinet.

Can you imagine a sly and mischievous cat, prowling through the grass as she hunts?

Another fascinating element of "Peter and the Wolf" is its innovative narration. The story is typically narrated by a single speaker, who guides the audience through Peter's adventures with vivid descriptions and expressive storytelling. This narration adds an extra layer of depth and engagement to the musical experience, allowing listeners to immerse themselves fully in the world of the story.

Since its 1936 premiere, the work has introduced many young listeners to classical music and been adapted for ballet and made into animated short films – including one by Walt Disney in 1946. Many of these short films are actually available on YouTube, and I would encourage you to check them out with your grown up and see if you can identify which instruments represent the characters in the story. I'll link to a few of these performances in my show notes.

As we wrap up today's episode, I also encourage you to check out my fun, free online camp based on Peter and the Wolf. In the camp, we explore rhythm, participate in guided listening and learn some ballet terminology. You can join that camp at busykidsdopiano.com/peter – a link which I'll also place in this episode's show notes.

Thanks for joining me to explore the magical world of Sergei Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" in today's episode. Join me next time as we delve into the final part of our Prokofiev series, where we'll explore his other works and legacy. That episode will air in two weeks on the Busy Kids

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Love Music podcast, so be sure to subscribe on whatever platform you listen to your podcasts. I look forward to connecting with you again then. Bye for now!

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