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Welcome back to the Busy Kids Love Music podcast, where we explore the fascinating world of music through stories, history, and fun facts. I'm your host, Carly Seifert, and I'm the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano. We've reached the final part of our 3-part series on composer Gustav Holst, and if you missed the first 2 parts, where we learned about Holst's life and his famous suite *The Planets*, be sure to check out the show notes because I'll place links to those episodes there. Today, we're diving into Gustav Holst's *First Suite in E-flat for Military Band*, a piece that's filled with excitement and unique musical colors. Let's uncover the secrets and stories behind this wonderful composition.

As we learned in our last episode, Gustav Holst was known for his grand orchestral works like *'The Planets.'* But he also composed several pieces for military band. A military band is a musical ensemble typically associated with a branch of the military, such as the army, navy, air force, or marines. These bands play an important role in military ceremonies, official events, and public performances. The *First Suite in E-flat* was composed in 1909, and it quickly became a hallmark of the wind band repertoire. What is a wind band you ask? Well it's a musical ensemble primarily composed of woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments. Unlike an orchestra, which includes string instruments, a wind band relies solely on wind instruments (such as flutes, clarinets, saxophones, and trumpets) and percussion instruments (like timpani, snare drums and cymbals).

Alright, now that we have all those definitions out of the way, if you recall from the first episode in our series on Holst, we learned that Holst was a formidable trombonist. While in college, he performed with a number of bands, but was unsatisfied with the types of music that was available to be performed in those ensembles. Holst also loved British military music traditions and sought to create a piece that showcased both the power and versatility of military band instrumentation.

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This suite is scored for your typical military band ensemble, which, as I said earlier, includes lots of brass and woodwinds instruments. Holst masterfully uses these instruments to create contrasting moods and textures throughout the suite. From the majestic opening to the lively dance-like movements, each section of the band gets a chance to shine.

At its premiere in 1920, where Holst conducted the piece himself, the suite was initially met with mixed reviews but eventually gained recognition for its innovative use of military band instrumentation. It is now one of the most frequently played pieces in concert band repertoire worldwide. It is performed in concerts, festivals, and military ceremonies, showcasing its enduring appeal and significance. Many music educators also use it to introduce young musicians to the rich history and expressive possibilities of wind band music.

As we conclude our journey through Gustav Holst's First Suite in E-flat for Military Band, I hope you've gained a deeper appreciation for this timeless masterpiece. Its blend of British musical heritage, inventive orchestration, and emotional depth continues to captivate audiences of all ages. In this episode's show notes at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/132](https://www.busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/132) I've linked a curated playlist on YouTube of some different performances of this popular piece, and I hope you'll take a chance to watch some of them until our next brand-new episode of Busy Kids Love Music airs in 2 weeks. Join me next time as we enjoy more musical adventures on the Busy Kids Love Music podcast. Bye for now!