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Hello, and welcome to another episode of Busy Kids Love Music, your podcast for music-loving families! I'm your host, Carly Seifert, creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and today, we're starting a new three-part series all about one of the most celebrated British composers of the 20th century—Benjamin Britten! In this episode, we'll explore his life, where he came from, his family background, how he trained in music, and what kind of music he wrote. So, let's dive in!

Benjamin Britten was born on November 22, 1913, in the seaside town of Suffolk, England. If you're a fan of musical history, you might recognize November 22 as a special day in music—it's St. Cecilia's Day, a celebration of the patron saint of music. So, it seems fitting that Britten, who had such a profound impact on the world of classical music, was born on this day!

Britten grew up in a middle-class family. His father, Robert Britten, was a dentist, and his mother, Edith, had a deep love for music. In fact, Edith believed her son was destined for greatness from a very young age. She encouraged his musical talent, enrolling him in piano lessons and fostering a love for classical music in their home.

Britten was something of a child prodigy, showing incredible skill in composition from a very young age. At just 14 years old, he met the composer Frank Bridge, who would become one of his most important mentors. Bridge taught Britten about the craft of composition and encouraged him to explore new musical ideas, particularly in a more modern style.

Britten's formal musical education continued at the Royal College of Music in London, where he studied composition under the guidance of John Ireland. While the Royal College of Music gave him a strong foundation, Britten often felt stifled by the more traditional methods taught there. He was always seeking new, innovative ways to express himself through music.

One thing that made Britten stand out as a composer was his ability to write music that spoke to everyone, regardless of age or background. His music was both complex and accessible, often drawing from English folk tunes and blending them with more modern, innovative sounds.

Britten is best known for his operas, such as Peter Grimes, which debuted in 1945 and is considered a cornerstone of 20th-century opera. The music you're listening to now is an excerpt from that opera. Britten also composed orchestral works, chamber music, and choral pieces.

Benjamin Britten lived during a time of significant global turbulence, which had a profound influence on both his life and music. Britten was born in 1913, just a year before the outbreak of World War I. Although he was too young to experience it directly, the aftermath of the war and the collective trauma it caused deeply affected British society. The war's impact, along with the societal shifts that followed, likely influenced his later views on pacifism and conflict. Pacifism is the belief that violence, especially war, is wrong, and that conflicts should be solved peacefully. People who are pacifists think that no one should use fighting to solve problems, and they work to promote peace instead of conflict.

Benjamin Britten was a pacifist, which means he believed that war and violence weren't the right ways to handle disagreements between countries or people. He thought it was better to solve problems through talking and understanding each other, without hurting anyone. This belief was important to him, especially during World War II, when many people were involved in fighting.

During World War II, Britten refused to fight because he believed so strongly in peace. Instead of being a soldier, he used his music to express his feelings about war. One of his most famous pieces, the piece you're listening to now, is called the War Requiem. It was written after the war to remember those who had died and to send a message about how terrible war can be. Through his music, Britten showed that he wanted the world to be a more peaceful place.

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Even though being a pacifist wasn't always easy for him, Britten stayed true to his belief that peace is better than war, and he shared that message with others through his art.

Britten's life and background deeply influenced his compositions. From his nurturing home environment and early musical education to his groundbreaking works, Britten carved out a unique place in the world of classical music. In our next episode, which airs in 2 weeks, we'll begin diving into some of his most beloved works as we continue our 3-part series on this famous composer. Until that episode airs, check out the curated playlist I've put together on YouTube for you at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/136](https://www.busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/136) featuring some of Benjamin Britten's most famous works – including many that you heard in today's podcast episode. Again, you can find that at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/136](https://www.busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/136).

If you enjoyed today's episode, I'd be so grateful if you'd leave a review for the Busy Kids Love Music podcast on whatever platform you use to listen to your podcasts. Make sure to join me next time as we continue our series on Benjamin Britten! Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast and I look forward to connecting with you again in two weeks when another brand new episode of Busy Kids Love Music airs. Bye for now!