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Hi friends, and welcome back to another 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 I'm thrilled to have you join me today as we dive into the second episode of our three-part series on composer Benjamin Britten. Today, we'll be talking about one of his most famous and fun pieces, The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra. But before we get into that, I want to tell you something cool about Benjamin Britten: he loved writing music for young performers! Britten felt it was important to write music that kids could perform and enjoy. He created pieces for children's voices, and he even composed operas where the performers were kids!

But one of his best-known works written with young listeners in mind is The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra. It's an exciting piece of music that teaches us all about the different instruments in an orchestra.

So, let's go back to when Britten wrote this piece. In 1946, Britten was asked to write something that could help kids understand what an orchestra is and how all the instruments sound together. To do this, he decided to use a theme by another famous British composer, Henry Purcell, who lived long before Britten. Britten took a melody from one of Purcell's works and created a musical journey by writing variations on that theme.

Now, you might be wondering, "What's a variation?" Well, a variation is when a composer takes a musical idea or theme and changes it slightly, each time making it a bit different. The melody might stay the same, but the instruments, speed, or rhythm could change. It's like taking a favorite toy and playing with it in different ways—sometimes fast, sometimes slow, sometimes soft, or maybe even with a twist!

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The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra begins with the whole orchestra playing Purcell's theme. Let's listen to the opening theme now. After the orchestra plays the theme together, each section of the orchestra takes turns playing variations on that theme, which helps us hear how each group of instruments sounds on its own. First, we'll hear the woodwind family of instruments: flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons. Listen for the smooth, flowing sound of the flute and the deeper richer tones of the bassoon. Woodwinds often sound light and playful.

Next come the brass instruments: trumpets, horns, trombones, and tubas. These instruments are louder and have a powerful, bold sound. Pay attention to how the trumpet sounds bright and brassy, while the tuba has a low, rumbling tone.

Then, we move on to the string family: violins, violas, cellos, and basses. You'll notice that strings can play both sweet and lively music. Violins play higher notes, and the basses are much lower, creating a beautiful contrast.

Finally, the percussion section comes in. Percussion instruments, like drums, cymbals, and tambourines, add rhythm and excitement to the music. Listen for how these instruments make the piece feel even more energetic!

At the end of the piece, the entire orchestra comes back together, and Britten adds an exciting fugue, where all the different instruments join in, layering their sounds on top of each other. A fugue is a type of music where one melody starts, and then other instruments or voices join in, one at a time, playing the same melody but starting at different times. It's like when you and your friends sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" as a round. Each person starts singing the same song, but at different points, creating a cool, layered sound. In a fugue, the melody gets passed around and played in different ways, but it all fits together to make the music sound exciting and full!

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Even though The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra was written almost 80 years ago, it's still used today to teach kids about orchestras! Many music teachers and conductors use this piece to show off how different instruments sound and how they work together to create beautiful music. It's such a fun way to learn, and it's a piece that kids (and adults!) still love listening to.

I hope you've enjoyed learning about Benjamin Britten's The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra. It's such a wonderful way to explore all the instruments that make up an orchestra. In our next episode, we'll continue our series on Britten with a look at one of his most famous works for the holiday season, A Ceremony of Carols. Since we'll be kicking off the month of December when this episode airs, it's the perfect time to dive into this beautiful, Christmastime piece, which features a choir of children's voices and a harp. Until then, head to [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/137](https://www.busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/137) where I've linked a performance of Benjamin Britten's The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra so you can listen to the piece in its entirety.

I look forward to connecting with you when our next episode airs in 2 weeks. Thanks for tuning in, and bye for now!