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Hello, and welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for kids and families that celebrates the composers, instruments, and stories of classical music. I'm Carly, the creator of the Busy Kids Do Piano program and I'm so glad you're here with me today for a very special episode.

Today is April 22nd, which means it's Earth Day! Earth Day is a time when people all around the world take extra care to celebrate and protect our beautiful planet. Maybe you've planted a tree, helped pick up trash in your neighborhood, or found ways to use less water or electricity.

But today on the podcast, we're going to celebrate Earth Day through one of my favorite things... music! Composers have been inspired by the natural world for centuries, and today, I'm sharing three classical pieces that celebrate our planet's beauty—from peaceful rivers to rolling hills to the mighty ocean.

Ready to take a musical journey through nature? Let's go!

The composer Ludwig van Beethoven loved spending time outdoors. He often went on long walks in the countryside, listening to the sounds of birds, breezes, and flowing water.

His Sixth Symphony, also called the "Pastoral Symphony," is all about the joy of being outside in nature. As you listen, you'll hear music that sounds like a peaceful day in the country—there are gentle streams, singing birds, and even a thunderstorm that rolls through before the sunshine returns.

Beethoven wanted listeners to feel the happiness he felt when surrounded by nature, and I think he did an amazing job turning those feelings into music.

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When you listen, close your eyes and picture yourself walking through a meadow on a warm spring day. Can you hear the birds calling to each other? Now we're heading to a river! Bedřich Smetana was a composer from the Czech Republic, and he wrote a piece called "The Moldau," which tells the story of a river's journey. The music begins quietly, like a small spring bubbling up from the ground. Then, as the river flows through forests and past castles, villages, and farms, the music grows and changes.

This piece is so much fun because you can imagine traveling right along with the river as it moves through the countryside. The water rushes and sparkles, and the melody flows like the current carrying you along. The piece is part of a larger work inspired by Smetana's fatherland. Each piece is a symphonic poem. This poem is named after the longest river in the Czech republic and is the most famous of his collection.

When you listen, picture yourself floating on the river. What do you see on the shore? What animals or people might be nearby?

Our last stop on our Earth Day adventure takes us into the deep blue sea with a piece called "Become Ocean" by John Luther Adams. This is a modern piece of music, and it sounds exactly like its name. The music is slow and calm and wide, just like the ocean itself. As you listen, it feels like you're floating on the waves, gently rocking as the water moves around you.

There are no words, no big melodies—just sounds that swirl together, rising and falling like the tides. It's the kind of music you can get totally lost in, imagining the water stretching on forever. The piece was commissioned by the Seattle Symphony Orchestra and premiered in Seattle in 2013. It won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Music and the 2015 Grammy for Best Classical Contemporary Composition. It is written for a large orchestra and requires many different instruments to perform it.

When you listen, take a few deep breaths and picture the colors of the ocean all around you. How does the music make you feel?

Now that we've listened to some composers who were inspired by the Earth, it's your turn!

This week, try creating your own Earth Symphony using the sounds you hear in nature. Here's how you can do it:

- Step outside and listen carefully. What do you hear? Birds chirping? Wind blowing? Water trickling? Leaves rustling?
- Try to imitate those sounds using your voice, your hands, or even household objects. Maybe you tap your fingers to sound like raindrops or hum like the wind.
- You can even make up a melody or rhythm inspired by your favorite part of nature.
- If you play an instrument, experiment with ways to make sounds that remind you of the outdoors.

You don't need anything fancy—just your ears, your imagination, and a little time outside.

And remember, part of celebrating Earth Day is taking care of our planet. So while you're out there listening to the sounds of nature, maybe you can find one small way to help take care of the Earth, too.

Thanks for joining me for this special Earth Day episode of Busy Kids Love Music. I've linked a playlist with recordings of all three pieces in their entirety that we talked about today in the show notes on my website, so you can keep the music of nature playing all week long. You'll find the link to that playlist at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/148. I'll be back in two weeks with another episode, but until then... keep listening to and learning about music, and don't forget to take care of our beautiful planet.