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Hello and welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, the podcast that helps you explore composers, instruments, and musical traditions from all around the world. I'm Carly, and you're joining us for our special summer series: Around the World with Busy Kids Love Music!

Each summer, we visit five different countries and learn all about their folk music traditions. Last week, we traveled to Ethiopia. And this week? We're heading to a country with powerful melodies, incredible vocal harmonies, and a deep love for singing—Ukraine.

Before we dive into the sounds of Ukraine, let's take a quick moment to review what folk music is.

Folk music is the traditional music of a country or culture. It's usually passed down from generation to generation, often by memory instead of being written down. Folk songs tell stories—about daily life, seasons, love, celebrations, and even struggles. They're often sung at festivals, weddings, or while working in the fields. Every country has its own folk music that helps us understand the people who live there and what they care about.

Ukraine is a large country in Eastern Europe with a rich and beautiful culture. Its folk music is famous for emotional melodies, unique rhythms, and beautiful choral singing. Music has always been important in Ukrainian life—especially as a way to celebrate community, nature, and history.

But did you know? Ukraine hasn't always been its own country. For hundreds of years, it was ruled by different empires—like the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union. During those times, Ukrainian people weren't always free to sing or celebrate their own traditions.

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In 1991, Ukraine finally became an independent country, and ever since then, people have been working hard to protect and celebrate their culture—including their folk music.

Let's take a listen to what makes Ukrainian folk music so special.

Ukrainian music often uses three-part vocal harmonies, especially in women's choirs. These harmonies give the music a rich, powerful sound that many people find very moving. The songs are often sung a cappella, which means without any instruments—just voices blending together in beautiful ways.

Now, let's meet a few traditional Ukrainian instruments! The bandura is one of Ukraine's most famous folk instruments – people actually call it the national instrument of Ukraine. It looks like a mix between a guitar and a harp—and it can have up to 60 strings! It's plucked with the fingers and creates a beautiful, twinkly sound. It can be used to perform complex sonatas, but historically, was used as an instrument for vocal accompaniment, the way you're hearing it now.

The trembita is one of the world's longest musical instruments—it can be up to 8 feet long! It's a wooden horn used in the Carpathian Mountains to communicate across long distances and was sometimes used to signal important village events, sort of like a telephone. And you really have to go to this episode's show notes and view the playlist I've linked so you can see this instrument being played and appreciate how long it is!

And then there's the tsymbaly, a type of hammered dulcimer. Musicians hit the strings with tiny mallets to create fast, energetic rhythms. It's often used in dances and festive celebrations. Folk ensembles always had a tsymbaly player in their lineup.

Ukrainian folk music changes from region to region. In the east, you might hear slower, more mournful songs. In the west, especially in the

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mountains, the music is more upbeat and full of dance rhythms. But no matter where you go in Ukraine, folk music is part of the country's heart and soul.

Even today, young people in Ukraine are learning these traditions from their parents and grandparents. Folk music groups perform at schools, festivals, and even on TV. In fact, some Ukrainian pop and classical musicians even include folk songs and instruments in their modern music!

Isn't it amazing how music can help a country keep its culture alive—even through difficult times?

Now that you've explored the sounds of Ukraine, it's time to add a brand-new stamp to your musical passport! Head to the show notes to download the Ukraine passport stamp and check out the link to my playlist of Ukrainian folk music so you can keep listening and learning. All of that can be found at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/152

Don't forget – in 2 weeks, we're off to a new country for more musical fun. I can't wait to take you there.

Until then, keep listening, keep learning, and keep making music! Bye for now!