

# transcript.

Hello, and welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, the podcast that helps you discover the music of composers, cultures, and traditions from all around the world. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so glad you're joining me today!

As the Christmas season begins, we'll be listening to the music of an English composer who loved carols so much that he collected, arranged, and even wrote music inspired by them. His name is Ralph Vaughan Williams, and the piece we're learning about today is called *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*.

Ralph Vaughan Williams was born in England in 1872 and grew up surrounded by music and poetry. He studied at some of the best music schools in England and Germany, but even though he learned the traditions of European classical music, he wanted his own music to sound English.

He loved collecting folk songs — simple, traditional tunes that people sang in small towns and villages. He believed these songs were an important part of England's identity. In the same way, he also loved Christmas carols — not just the famous ones you might sing in church or at school, but old carols that had been passed down for generations in tiny country parishes.

During his lifetime, Vaughan Williams became known for creating music that felt warm, familiar, and full of heart — just like the songs of the people he loved to collect. The title of this piece — *Fantasia on Christmas Carols* — gives us a clue about its style.

A fantasia — or a fantasy — is a type of composition that doesn't follow a strict structure. Instead, it feels more like a daydream or a musical journey — flowing freely from one idea to another.

So in this piece, Vaughan Williams takes several Christmas carols and weaves them together in a way that feels imaginative and spontaneous, as though he's exploring their melodies and finding new ways to connect them.

The piece is written for a baritone, chorus, and orchestra. A baritone is a solo male singer whose voice is in the middle range – lower than a tenor but higher than a bass. Famous baritone singers whose names and voices you might recognize include Elvis Presley and Josh Groban. The piece starts and ends with a beautiful cello solo, giving the music a serious feel.

Vaughan Williams based this piece on three traditional English carols:

1. The Truth Sent from Above
2. Come All You Worthy Gentlemen
3. On Christmas Night All Christians Sing (which many people know as The Sussex Carol)

Each carol appears in its own section of the piece, but Vaughan Williams also hides little fragments of other Christmas tunes inside the orchestra's music – almost like secret surprises for careful listeners! If you listen closely, you might hear bits of “The First Nowell” or “There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood.” These short sections appear for just a few moments before disappearing again.

Vaughan Williams truly loved Christmas carols – so much that he collected them from towns all across England.

During World War I, he served as a soldier and medic, and even in those difficult years, he found ways to bring music to others. He formed carol-singing groups wherever he went, believing that singing together could lift people's spirits and remind them of home and hope – even during war.

The Fantasia on Christmas Carols was first performed in 1912 at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford Cathedral – one of England's oldest and most famous musical festivals. The sound of the choir and orchestra echoing through the stone walls of the cathedral must have been breathtaking!

# transcript.

More than a century later, this piece is still performed during the holiday season by choirs and orchestras around the world. It reminds us that old carols can continue to inspire new music, and that songs of faith, hope, and peace never go out of style.

Thanks for joining me today as we explored Ralph Vaughan Williams and his Fantasia on Christmas Carols.

If you'd like to listen to this piece in full, check out the link in the show notes at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/164](http://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/164). I also have links to several other fun holiday music freebies – including my Online Nutcracker Camp for Kids and my Musical Advent Calendar – in those show notes, so be sure to check them out.

And don't miss our next episode – What Was That Sound: Holiday Edition? – where we'll play a fun musical mystery game with instruments of the season. Until next time, keep listening and keep learning, because Busy Kids Love Music!

# transcript.

there's also a worksheet in the show notes to keep the guessing game going with your family and friends.

Until next time, keep listening—and loving—music. I look forward to connecting with you again in 2 weeks for a brand new episode of Busy Kids Love Music. Bye for now!