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Hello and welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast that helps you discover the stories behind the world's greatest composers! I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so glad you're joining me for the first episode in our brand-new composer series.

Over the next three episodes, we'll be exploring the life and music of a composer whose works changed the sound of classical music forever: Igor Stravinsky.

Today we're starting with Stravinsky's life story—his childhood, his family, how he learned music, and how he developed the remarkable style that made him one of the most important composers of the 20th century.

Igor Stravinsky was born on June 17, 1882, in a suburb of St. Petersburg, Russia. Even though his music sounds very bold, modern, and sometimes surprising to our ears, he actually grew up in a very traditional musical home.

His father, Fyodor Stravinsky, was one of the most famous opera singers in Russia. He performed at the Mariinsky Theatre—the biggest opera house in St. Petersburg. Little Igor often sat backstage, watching rehearsals and soaking up the sights and sounds of opera life: the orchestra tuning, the singers warming up, and the beautiful sets and costumes.

Even though Igor was surrounded by music, his parents didn't want him to become a musician. They wanted him to study something practical, like law. So Stravinsky began studying law when he grew older... but music kept calling to him.

While studying law, Igor spent most of his free time dreaming about music, practicing piano, and studying music theory. The turning point came when he met the great Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, known for colorful, story-filled works like Scheherazade.

Rimsky-Korsakov recognized Stravinsky's talent and agreed to teach

him privately. This mentorship changed Igor's life. He fell completely in love with composing and eventually left law behind to pursue music full-time.

Stravinsky married a childhood friend, Catherine Nossenko. Together they had four children. Family life wasn't always easy. There were illnesses, financial challenges, and later in life, the difficulties brought by World War I and World War II. The Stravinsky family moved several times—first to Switzerland, then France, and eventually to the United States.

Despite all these changes, Stravinsky continued to compose. In fact, some of his most famous works were written during times when his family was living in small apartments or temporary homes. It was a reminder that creativity can grow even in challenging places.

Later in life, Stravinsky remarried after Catherine's death and settled in California, where he continued composing, conducting, and teaching until his own death in 1971.

Stravinsky didn't write music the same way composers like Mozart or Bach did. His style changed many times throughout his life, but here are some of the things that make his music stand out:

Stravinsky loved bold, surprising rhythms—music that feels like it has a heartbeat or a pulse that keeps you listening. Sometimes the rhythms feel unpredictable, almost like the music is jumping or stomping.

The Rite of Spring (which we'll explore more in a future episode!) is famous for its strong, pounding rhythms.

Just like a painter uses color, Stravinsky used instruments in creative ways to make new sounds. He paired instruments together in unusual combinations to create music that sounded fresh and exciting.

Stravinsky liked to surprise listeners. In many of his pieces, the music suddenly switches from loud to soft, fast to slow, smooth to sharp. These changes make his music feel alive and full of energy.

Stravinsky also continued to evolve in his style. He had several musical “periods,” each with its own sound.

- Russian period: folk-inspired, colorful, full of big orchestras
- Neoclassical period: music inspired by older composers like Bach or Mozart
- Serial period: complex patterns and modern techniques

Many composers stay in one style their whole lives, but Stravinsky kept reinventing himself—like an artist who paints in many different styles throughout life. In our next two episodes, we’ll explore two of Stravinsky’s most famous works and the stories behind them:

- Episode 2: The Firebird — his magical ballet filled with shimmering, fairy-tale music
- Episode 3: The Rite of Spring — the groundbreaking piece that caused a legendary uproar at its premiere

Each of these works shows a different side of Stravinsky—and I can’t wait to explore them with you.

Thanks for joining me for today’s episode of Busy Kids Love Music. If you enjoyed learning about Stravinsky’s life, be sure to check out the listening playlist linked in the show notes at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/167](https://www.busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/167). I’ll see you next time as we get swept away into the magical world of The Firebird!