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Hey there and welcome to episode 53 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm thrilled to have you join me today.

I'm so excited for the next 3-part composer series we're kicking off in today's episode. We are learning about a composer whose piano music I love to play and played for many piano competitions when I was a younger student -- French composer Claude Debussy.

Debussy, born in 1862, had a challenging childhood. He lived in a very poor suburb of Paris. His father, who was a traveling salesman, was arrested for taking part in a French uprising. While in prison, he became friends with a pianist whose mother was a piano teacher. When that pianist was released from prison, he made arrangements for 9-year-old Claude Debussy to take piano lessons.

At the age of 10, Debussy was one of just 8 pianists admitted to the Paris Conservatory to study piano and composition. A wealthy Russian millionairess became his patron, and he traveled with her to palatial homes throughout Europe during his long summer vacations at the Conservatory. During this time, he fell in love with a famous singer, who inspired many of his early works. This was a very emotional, stormy time in his life, which contributed to the beautiful sensitivity you hear in some of his early works, such as his most famous composition, Clair de lune.

In 1884 he won an important prize for a piano composition and was given a 3-year stay in the Villa Medici of Rome, Italy. This was supposed to allow him to pursue his creative work because he would be surrounded by beautiful and lovely things in a magnificent Renaissance palace. However, he only lasted 2 years in Rome before fleeing back to Paris.

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During this time, Debussy lived a life of extravagance and didn't always make good decisions. He was associated with a lot of scandalous women during this time, married his first wife Rosalie Texier, and then left her because he had fallen in love with Emma Bardac, an amateur singer. He and Emma eventually married, and had a daughter named Claude-Emma. At this point in his career, he was very famous. He's often considered to be the greatest French composer. He was surly and disagreeable without many friends, and he preferred cats to people. He hated performing, even though he was a master at it. His life was cut tragically short by cancer at the age of 55.

Debussy was a composer during the end of the Romantic period and beginning of the Modern period of music, but he was really one of the original impressionistic composers. The Impressionist style of music was one that had dreamlike harmonies, ethereal melodies, lots of different textures and created pictures and images in the minds of the listeners. Music from a lot of earlier periods was often very clear and precise sounding, and followed specific rules. Debussy learned all those rules, and then changed them up and invented new rules and new scales to build his music on. The result is music that sounds hazy and dreamy. Can you think of other words you might use to describe the sound of his music?

Over the next couple of episodes, we'll be learning and listening to some of Debussy's most famous pieces. They're beautiful and unusual, and I think you'll enjoy digging into them with me. To hear the music from today's episode in addition to other performances of some of his works, be sure to head to my show notes at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/53](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/53) where you'll find a link to a curated playlist that I've put together for you on YouTube. Again that's at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/53](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/53).

Thanks so much for joining me today to learn about the life of Claude Debussy, and I look forward to continuing our journey through Debussy's music in 2 weeks on the next episode of Busy Kids Love Music. Bye for now!