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Hey there and welcome to episode 54 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. This episode is brought to you by my Busy Kids Do Music History course, which is a comprehensive and fun online music history course for homeschoolers. It's filled with exciting video lessons, downloadable workbooks, guided listening activities and parent support materials. You can learn more about this course at [busykidsdopiano.com/musichistory](https://busykidsdopiano.com/musichistory), and I will place a link to it in the show notes as well.

Last week we started a new composer series by learning a little bit about the life and music of French composer Claude Debussy. In case you missed that episode, you can give it a listen at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/53](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/53). Today we're going to dig into Debussy's tender six movement suite that he wrote on the piano for his 3-year-old daughter, Claude-Emma, who was nicknamed Chouchou. The suite is called *The Children's Corner*.

The Children's Corner explores both the experience of being a child and also watching a child grow up. A suite is an ordered collection of pieces, and the first movement of this collection, which you're listening to now, is called "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum". "Gradus ad Parnassum" was the name of a piano textbook that was filled with exercises for pianists to practice. The piece is meant to depict a pianist practicing the important technique exercises, with the notes and patterns growing more and more complex and wild as the piece goes on.

The next piece of Debussy's Children's Corner suite is called Jimbo's Lullaby:

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Do you have a favorite stuffed animal, or did you have one maybe when you were smaller? Claude-Emma did. It was a stuffed elephant named Jimbo, and every night before Jimbo went to sleep, he needed a bedtime story. Do you hear the elephant's sleepy, big footsteps? As the piece goes on, it sounds as though Jimbo is getting sleepier and sleepier...

The next movement is also inspired by a toy of Claude Emma's. This time, a doll:

The doll that inspired this piece was an Asian porcelain doll and Debussy paid tribute to her by using the Chinese pentatonic scale throughout the piece. I think the piece sounds delicate -- the same way a porcelain doll would be!

Next up in the suite is a piece called "The Snow is Dancing". Can you picture a winter scene where it was snowing and you were trapped indoors? Remember - Debussy's music was often written to create pictures in the minds of its listeners.

The next movement, called "The Little Shepherd", creates a landscape he imagines Chouchou to visit in her daydreams, before the concluding movement, a ragtime dance named after a rag doll named Golliwogg.

Do you hear the choppy, ragged rhythms? The song is clearly inspired by African American ragtime and Jazz. Unfortunately, the Golliwogg doll, created by an American-born English cartoonist, has everything of the blackface minstrel tradition in its look, so while the music is delightful, the doll that inspired it is very problematic. The cakewalk was a dance or strut, and the dancer who performed the most elaborate steps, won a cake -- or, "took the cake."

When *The Children's Corner* was published in 1908, Debussy wrote a sweet dedication to his daughter: "To my dear little Chou-Chou, with her father's tender apologies for what is to follow."

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Debussy's friend, Andre Caplet arranged the entire suite for the orchestra in 1911, and there are many different arrangements of the piano suite for various instruments. In this week's curated playlist, which you can find at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/54](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/54), you'll find a collection of different arrangements on different instruments for each movement from the suite. I hope you enjoy listening to Debussy's depiction of these toys coming to life! Again, you'll find that link at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/54](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/54).

Thanks so much for joining me today to learn about Claude Debussy's suite, *The Children's Corner*. We'll finish up our series on Debussy in 2 weeks on the next episode of the Busy Kids Love Music podcast. Bye for now!