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Hey there and welcome to episode 58 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 joining me today. Today's episode is brought to you by my Busy Kids Play Christmas Music Course, which is my course that contains four holiday lesson tutorials from beginner through intermediate levels. You can learn more about the course at busykidsdopiano.com/christmas and I will link to that course in the show notes as well.

The Romantic period of music is a period of Western Classical music that lasted from around 1830 to 1900 where compositions became increasingly expressive and dramatic. We've talked about several different Romantic composers on the podcast - Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Chopin, and Clara Schumann, to name a few.

Today we're going to learn about the life of one of the last grand composers from this time period -- Gustav Mahler.

Mahler was born in 1860 to a Jewish family who lived in a Bohemian village in what is now part of the Czech Republic. He was the second of 14 children, but only 5 of his siblings survived infancy. At the age of four, his musical talent revealed itself. He was fascinated by the military and folk music he heard nearby, and was able to reproduce the songs he heard on both the accordion and piano in addition to composing his own original pieces. His parents arranged for piano lessons for him at the age of 6; by the age of 15, he was so musically proficient that he was accepted into the Vienna Conservatory where he studied history, philosophy and music.

He graduated from the conservatory, but lost an important competition -- for which Johannes Brahms was a judge -- and decided to pursue a more stable career as a conductor while doing a bit of composing on the side. He became a famous conductor and

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worked at various opera houses throughout Europe. But in the summer, he spent his time working on his own compositions. He would eventually go on to be a conductor in the United States, working for the Metropolitan Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra later in life.

In 1903, Mahler married a musician and composer 20 years younger than him named Alma Schindler. After their marriage, Mahler forbade her from composing her music, saying “The role of composer, the worker’s role, falls to me, yours is that of a loving companion and understanding partner.” Instead of composing, she made manuscript copies of her husband’s hand-written scores. They had two daughters, the first who died of diphtheria at the young age of four. Later that year, he was diagnosed with a fatal heart disease that would eventually take his life at the age of 50.

Mahler’s composing career is typically divided into three artistic phases, during which he wrote ten symphonies as well as vocal works, sometimes even combining the two. During his lifetime, his symphonies were criticized for having too many different styles and influences, though he is now given credit for ushering in some of the techniques that would eventually be used by many 20th century composers. Appreciation for his talent as a composer was neglected until about 50 years after his death, partly because during this time period there was a ban of the performances of his works in much of Europe under the rule of the Nazi party. After 1945, his music was re-discovered and he became one of the most frequently performed and recorded of all composers. Many musicians and conductors alike consider his symphonies to be among the greatest symphonies ever written.

If you head over to my show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/58, I’ve included a link to a curated playlist of some of Mahler’s works so that you can have a chance to further explore his musical style and deepen your understanding and appreciation for his music. Again you’ll find the link to that playlist at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/58.

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Thanks so much for joining me today to learn about Gustav Mahler. I look forward to connecting with you again in two weeks for the next episode of the Busy Kids Love Music podcast. Bye for now!

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