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Hey there and thanks for joining me for episode 59 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm Carly Seifert and I'm the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so happy to have you here with me. Today's episode is brought to you by my Busy Kids Do Nutcracker Camp, my free, 3-day online music camp for kids filled with guided listening activities and fun rhythm lessons to introduce your child to the exciting world of classical music through this beloved Tchaikovsky ballet. You can join this free camp by visiting busykidsdopiano.com/nutcrackercamp -- and I'll pop a link to the camp in this episode's show notes as well.

I love recording episodes of this podcast during the month of December, because there are just so many wonderful holiday works that are exciting to explore. In Decembers past, we've learned about famous Hanukkah tunes, a few Christmas Carols, the Nutcracker and Handel's Messiah. Today on the podcast, we're going to explore Johann Sebastian Bach's famous *Christmas Oratorio*.

Bach composed this six-part masterpiece in the year 1734 for two churches in Leipzig where he served as music director. In the liturgical calendar of Germany during this time, the Christmas season started on December 25th and ended on January 6th. Each of the six parts of this oratorio is a cantata for 1 of 6 feast days within the 12 days of the Christmas season. Now, a quick vocab review is in order here. An oratorio is a large scale musical work written for orchestra and voices, that's usually based on a religious text. Handel's *Messiah* is an example of an oratorio that we've discussed on the podcast.

The first piece of the oratorio is what you're hearing now, and it begins with the birth of Jesus on Christmas Day. What are some words you would use to describe the music from this section?

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The second and third parts of the oratorio focus on the arrival of the shepherds in the Christmas Story.

Listen carefully and you'll hear flutes, oboes, violins and violas among the instruments that play these parts of the oratorio.

The music that opens this second part is a traditional pastorella. A pastorella is a piece of music that makes the listener think of life in the country and usually follows a certain meter and has a not-too-fast but not-too slow speed or tempo.

Part IV of the Christmas Oratorio is a cantata written for performance for the New Year's Day feast.

The libretto - or the text -- that is sung in this cantata tells about the naming of Jesus according to the Gospel of Luke. Three soloists, a choir, and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of two horns, oboes, violins and viola are featured throughout this 7 movement portion of the *Christmas Oratorio*.

Both the 5th and 6th parts of the Christmas Oratorio focus on the Magi's visit, with the final part -- the 6th part -- written and performed for the Feast of Epiphany. The Feast of Epiphany in Western Christianity, was a chance to commemorate the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, and you'll sometimes also hear it called *Three Kings' Day* or *Little Christmas*.

The final chorale of this 6th part, which you're listening to now, has joyful trumpets and drums re-appearing for performance. The words that are sung translate in English to, "Now are you avenged of the host of your enemies." Do you think the music reflects the message of triumph in the words of the libretto?

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The Oratorio was first performed at Bach's churches -- the two most important churches in the region during his time -- in 1734, but the next performance didn't take place until 1857. If you were to listen to all six parts of his oratorio at once, you would be listening for nearly three hours. Most often, select portions of this work are presented rather than all at once. If you head over to my show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/59, I've put together a playlist on YouTube that has links to portions of Bach's Christmas Oratorio so that you can listen to this masterpiece and even see it performed on your screen. Again that playlist is at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/59. I'm also going to link in the show notes to a previous episode on the podcast that we did about the life of Johann Sebastian Bach in case you're interested in learning a little bit more about him.

Thank you so much for joining me today to explore this incredible musical work. I look forward to more musical discoveries with you when the next episode of Busy Kids Love Music airs in 2 weeks. Bye for now!