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Hi there Busy Kids and welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music-loving families. My name is Carly Seifert, I'm the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm thrilled to have you joining me as we make musical discoveries together.

One of the things that I love about doing this podcast is that as I research musical composers and instruments and styles, I get to learn so much right alongside of you. Sometimes I learn about composers who are brand new to me – and today's episode is about a brand-new-to-me composer and violinist named George Bridgetower.

George Bridgetower was an Afro-European virtuoso violinist. Do you remember what the word virtuoso means? It's a term we use to describe musicians who are very skilled. George was born in 1778 in Poland. His father was likely of West Indian descent, perhaps from Barbados, although he claimed on his son's birth certificate to be an African prince. George's family moved from Poland to London when he was young, and by the age of 10, he was performing as a violin soloist.

George gave violin concerts in major cities throughout Britain and France, and caught the attention of the future King George IV, who oversaw his musical education, ensuring that he would study under the leader of the Royal Opera with excellent teachers. He performed in the prince's orchestra in Brighton and London, and also gave a concert in the spring of 1789 at Paris with Thomas Jefferson and his family in the audience.

Bridgetower was given leave from the Prince's orchestra to visit his mother and brother, who was a cellist, in Germany. He later visited Vienna where he performed with a legendary composer whose name you might recognize – Ludwig van Beethoven.

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Beethoven was impressed by Bridgetower's talent. So impressed, in fact, that he dedicated his Violin Sonata No. 9 in A minor to Bridgetower, writing in the dedication, "Mixed-race sonata composed for the mixed-race Bridgetower, madman and mixed-race composer."

The piece was performed for a public concert in 1803 with Beethoven playing the pianoforte and Bridgetower on violin. Beethoven also presented Bridgetower with the gift of his tuning fork, something which Bridgetower would have used to tune his violin. The piece you're listening to now is the famous Beethoven Sonata which he originally dedicated to Bridgetower. However, not long after this performance, Bridgetower allegedly insulted a woman that Beethoven knew. Beethoven was outraged, and withdrew his dedication to Bridgetower, opting instead to name his sonata after a French violinist named Rodolphe Kreutzer. This scene is famously depicted in the movie *Immortal Beloved*, a biographical film about Beethoven from the '90s. Kreutzer never played the sonata, saying it had already been performed once and was too difficult.

Bridgetower continued to teach and perform throughout his life, was elected to the Royal Society of Musicians in 1807 and earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Cambridge University.

Little is known about the later years of his life, though he did marry and have a daughter who lived in Italy, where he often traveled. He died in poverty and his name was forgotten. Most of his compositional works were lost, but the ballad you're listening to now is one that we know of, as well as some exercises for the piano. I'll link to a playlist with performances of his work, as well as the famous Kreutzer – or Bridgetower – sonata in this episode's show notes at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/91](https://www.busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/91). I'll also place a link in there to a jazz opera that was written in 2007 called *Bridgetower - A Fable of 1807* which was written to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the first parliamentary bill to abolish slavery in the City of London. In that clip of this opera, you'll see the role of George Bridgetower played by

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Cleveland Watkiss. Again you'll find the link to this playlist at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/91](https://www.busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/91)

I hope you've enjoyed learning more about composer and violinist George Bridgetower in today's episode, and I look forward to connecting with you again in 2 weeks when our next brand new episode of Busy Kids Love Music airs.

When Robert Schumann suffered his first complete mental breakdown, Clara was pregnant with her seventh child, and Brahms came to help them in their time of need. He looked after their other children so that Clara could earn income to support their family while Robert was unable to. It was during this time that their feelings developed into something more than friendship. Brahms wrote in a letter to a friend about his falling in love with Clara, and Clara wrote in her diary that she loved his noble heart. It was a messy situation, of course.

While no one knows what passed between them after Robert's death, it is known that they took a trip to Switzerland together, accompanied by family, and then parted ways. They remained steadfast friends the rest of their lives, Brahms never marrying and Clara never remarrying after Robert's death.

Let's close this special Valentine's Day episode by learning about a final tempestuous love affair in classical music – that of French composer Hector Berlioz and Irish Shakespearean actress Harriett Smithson.

Hector Berlioz attended a production of Shakespeare's Hamlet in Paris in 1827, and fell madly in love with Harriet Smithson, who was playing the role of Ophelia. His obsession turned into an actual stalking situation...he wrote her letter after letter confessing to his infatuation, sent flowers and even rented an apartment near hers, but she refused to acknowledge him. Berlioz, unrequited in love, began writing her into his music. His first resulting collection was *9 Melodies*. Later, his first masterwork, called *Symphony Fantastique*, which you're listening to

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her return to Paris, but alas, Harriet did not show. Berlioz eventually wrote a sequel to the symphony, called Lelio, in 1832. A mutual friend invited Harriet Smithson to attend a performance of Lelio, which is where Smithson finally realized both works were about her. Smithson arranged for a visit from Berlioz and the pair eventually together in 1833...though both families vehemently objected. After several years of unhappiness, Harriet finally left Berlioz in 1848. Quite the love affair, wasn't it?

If you head over to this episode's show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/90, you'll find a link to a playlist I've created for you with songs that were inspired by the 3 real-life romance stories we learned about today – Bach and Anna Magdalena's happy marriage, the love triangle of Robert and Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms, and the tumultuous love/obsession of Hector Berlioz and Harriet Smithson. Again you'll find that playlist at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/90 along with a transcript for today's episode and a link to register for the parent-child piano workshop if that was something that you're interested in.

Thanks so much for joining me today, and I look forward to connecting with you again in 2 weeks for our next episode of the Busy Kids Love Music podcast. Bye for now!