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Hey there and welcome to episode 44 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I am so happy you're joining me today. In just 2 weeks, my Busy Kids Do Piano program -- which is an online piano lesson program for kids -- opens up for public enrollment. Head over to busykidsdopiano.com/waitlist and join the waitlist so that you'll get an e-mail when that enrollment period opens up and can join my Busy Kids Do Piano program. I'll also throw that link over in the show notes as well.

Today we're kicking off another composer series. We've done these series in the past on the podcast and learned about composers such as Tchaikovsky or Mozart or Bach. In this 3-episode series we're going to learn about the life and works of a famous composer from the Romantic Era of Music -- Johannes Brahms.

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg Germany in the year 1833. His father, Jakob Brahms, was a penniless horn and double bass player, and recognized that his son, Johannes, had a gift for piano. While his father was his first teacher, he went on to study with other reputable piano teachers and, at the age of 14, began to earn money by playing the piano at Hamburg inns and giving piano recitals. He also studied the cello and conducted choirs during his teenage years.

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In 1853, a turning point in Brahms' life occurred when he met the violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim, who recognized Brahms' talent as a composer. Joachim recommended Brahms to the composer Robert Schumann and the two became friends. Now you may recognize Robert Schumann's name because we talked about his wife, Clara, in Episode 42. Robert Schumann, early in Brahms' career, wrote an article in a magazine at the time that praised Brahms' compositional talents, and it created quite the stir. He said of Brahms that he was, "destined to give ideal expression to the times." Brahms was also a close friend of Clara's. When Robert Schumann was hospitalized for mental illness, he set aside his musical career and lived in an apartment above their home to assist her in managing their family. It is believed that he perhaps even fell in love with Clara, though they remained only friends.

Brahms never did marry, though it does seem he fell in love easily. In a letter he wrote, he said, "I couldn't bear to have in the house a woman who has the right to be kind to me, to comfort me when things go wrong."

Brahms also loved children, animals, nature and wasn't very good at expressing his feelings verbally -- so he did it through his music. As you listen to his music, does it help you to understand what Brahms might have been feeling? Does it bring up any feelings for you?

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In the 1860s and 1870s, Brahms worked in Vienna -- as a choir and orchestra director and conductor of the Society of Friends of Music. He was a perfectionist and was known to often destroy compositional works that he deemed unworthy. His fame spread beyond Germany and Austria and into countries such as Switzerland and Poland. People began to speak of him as one of the “three great Bs” -- meaning Bach, Beethoven and Brahms -- who many consider to be the most significant composers of all time. He composed in nearly every musical form except opera -- writing symphonies, loads of chamber music with a variety of instruments, concertos, piano sonatas, and so many more. In the next two episodes of Busy Kids Love Music, we’re going to learn more about some of his most important compositions, but you can head over to this episode’s show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/44 where I’ve linked a playlist on YouTube of some of Brahms’ works -- including the ones you’ve heard in the background of this episode. Again, you’ll find that at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/44.

Thanks so much for joining me today, and I hope you’ll join me again in 2 weeks as we continue to learn more about Johannes Brahms. Until next time, I wish you a wonderful and musical week. Bye for now!