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Hey there! Welcome to a brand new episode 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 delighted to have you here with me today.

Coronavirus. Are you tired of hearing about it? Well I promise this episode isn't about COVID 19 -- or the coronavirus. It's about how sometimes artists respond to suffering by creating art. When pandemics -- like the coronavirus -- have affected people in the past, some composers responded by creating beautiful music.

The piece you're listening to now is a cantata by famous German composer Johann Sebastian Bach. A cantata is a piece that is meant to be sung, and Bach wrote LOTS of them. At one point, he wrote a cantata every single week for eight years straight. The name of the cantata you hear now is called "There is Nothing Healthy in My Body". It was written in 1723, a year after the Great Plague of Marseille in France killed 100,000 people. The text of Bach's cantata talks about the world as a hospital and says "children laid low with sickness." How does the music sound to you? What are some words you would use to describe it? Some words I would use are somber, steady, melancholy.

In the middle of the piece is an aria, which is a part of the cantata that is sung by a soloist. The soloist sings, "My plague cannot be healed by any herb or ointment, other than the balm of Gilead." Bach composed much of his music for church, including this cantata, which was performed at church. In this verse, the vocalists ask Jesus for healing. If you listen carefully, you'll hear instruments that include trombones, oboes, recorders and violins accompanying the vocalists.

"Stella celi" is a hymn written to the Virgin Mary by an English composer named John Cooke. In this chant, Cooke is asking for the protection of Virgin Mary from the Black Plague, which wiped out much of the population in Europe. The lyrics -- or words -- of the text speak of the "ulcers of a terrible death" but also offer hope, saying "the star of heaven has rooted out the plague."

The 1918 flu pandemic was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic that infected around 500 million people world wide between the years 1918-1920. It was during this time that Russian composer Igor Stravinsky was struggling to make ends meet. Due to widespread effects of the pandemic, performances of Stravinsky's theatrical production that was set to go on tour had been brought to a halt in Switzerland, where Stravinsky was living at the time. Members of the production team for the show became infected with influenza -- including Stravinsky himself. So...Stravinsky got busy arranging something new.

In 1910 -- prior to the pandemic -- he had composed a famous ballet called "The Firebird". Stravinsky said that his original composition was, "wastefully large" and decided to arrange it as a smaller scale version called a suite. This allowed Stravinsky to earn some much needed cash during a difficult time. This shorter version of "The Firebird" is often performed by orchestras for concerts, and was used in a 1940's Disney film called *Fantasia*.

Another famous work to come out of the 1918 Flu Pandemic was a famous opera called *The Love of Three Oranges*. Composer Sergei Prokofiev from Russia had just come to New York for a 4-month stay due to revolution in Moscow. He hoped to make a name for himself in America. However, his plans for concerts in New York were brought to a screeching halt due to the influenza outbreak.

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His four month stay ended up becoming a two year stay in the United States, and it was during this time that he composed *The Love for Three Oranges*. The director of the opera commissioned -- or hired -- Prokofiev to compose this opera. It is an opera with a mix of fairy tale, humor and satire -- which means its purpose was to poke fun. In the story, a witch curses a prince with an obsessive love of three oranges. The piece is energetic, clever and fun with lots of surprises in the music. Knowing that the story is a bit of a silly, funny story -- do you think the music matches the story?

This episode's playlist -- which is a list of curated songs on YouTube that I've put together for you -- will feature some songs that have been created in the past during pandemics, like the ones you've heard in this episode. I'll also include links to performances that musicians have shared recently during the current coronavirus pandemic. I hope that these performances bring you hope and joy -- which is why many composers and musicians chose to write or share these works of art during challenging times. You'll find the link to the playlist as well as this episode's show notes and a transcript of this episode at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/27. Again that's all at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/27

Thanks so much for joining me today, and I look forward to connecting with you again in 2 weeks for more musical discoveries!