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Well hey there and welcome to episode 3 of Busy Kids Love Music, an educational podcast for music-loving kids. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and today we're talking all about the flute.

The flute is part of the woodwind group of instruments. Woodwind instruments used to all be made of wood, but today, they are made of wood, metal, plastic or a combination of these materials. You play a woodwind instrument by blowing air through a mouthpiece. To play a flute, you hold it sideways with both hands and blow air across a hole in the mouthpiece. Fingers open and close the keys, which changes the pitch.

A pitch is a sound that can be high or low. Some instruments, like drums, don't produce pitches -- they produce rhythms. But a flute produces pitches. The flute is the oldest instrument that can produce pitches.

A shorter version of the flute is called the piccolo. Piccolo means "small" in Italian. A piccolo is half the size of a flute, and can play the highest notes of all the woodwinds.

Some very old flutes have been found that were made of animal bones, but during the Renaissance period, the word flute came to describe instruments like a recorder or the traditional flute, which is held sideways. In 1847, a German instrument maker named Theobald Boehm debuted a new, very special kind of flute. This flute had a metal tube with keys attached. He created what we know as the modern-day flute.

An orchestra usually has 2 to 4 flutes. You'll sometimes hear the flute imitating the sound of chirping birds in a piece of music, like in this example from Camille Saint Saens' "Carnival of the Animals".

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In this example, listen closely for the flute and piccolo, which represent the “Firebird” in this suite by Stravinsky.

Next time you’re listening to orchestra music, listen for the flutes. Are they being used in a way that sounds high, fast and cheerful, or low, mysterious and sad?

Just because the episode is over doesn’t mean the learning has to stop. I’ve created a free 5 day music camp for kids that gives an overview of other instruments in the orchestra. You can join by visiting busykidsdopiano.com/musiccamp. For more information on today’s episode, including show notes as well as a list of the music you heard, visit busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/3

Bye for now!