

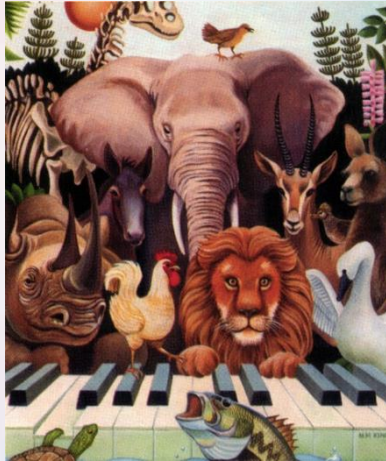
# Meridian Music of the Week!

## Issue No. 69 (based on original Newsletter No.14 – February 2020)

Each week ALL our children will be listening to a piece of music as part of our music lessons. We'll be talking about it in class and discussing what we like, what we don't like and what it makes us think about.

Parents/carers/family - why not join in and listen for yourself at home! All music is available **free** on YouTube as well as paid services such as iTunes and Spotify.

### This week's music...



## 'The Carnival of the Animals' by Camille Saint-Saëns (1886)

You can hear the whole thing [HERE](#)! (23 mins)

### A sweet suite!

In our 'Meridian Music of the Week' newsletters we've had music describing planets, seasons, moonlight, even battles – but now it's the turn of **animals**!

Like 'The Four Seasons' by Vivaldi and 'The Planets' by Holst, 'The Carnival of the Animals' is what is called a **suite** – that is,

it's a collection of different pieces of music, each one being about one of a group of connected things (seasons, planets, animals).

It was written by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns in 1886 and it was always meant to be **light-hearted**, unlike some of his other more serious music. In fact, at the time he wrote it, he was supposed to be writing a grand orchestral symphony - but he kept getting distracted by working on 'The Carnival of the Animals' instead because, as he said, it was **"Such fun!"**

But Saint-Saëns was worried that such a fun piece of music might damage his reputation as a serious composer. So, he didn't allow anyone to perform it in public while he was alive. In fact, the music wasn't formally printed and published until 1922 – a year after he died! But a first public performance of the suite that year became an instant success and it became Saint-Saëns most famous piece of music.



A drawing of Saint-Saëns as a boy

### The music...

The suite was written to be played by two pianos and a small orchestra. There are 14 sections of the music, each one representing different individual or groups of animals. The whole thing lasts about 25 minutes – and obviously I think you should listen to it **ALL**! However, if you're short of time, just try the following **five** little sections... (all the timings are taken from the YouTube version in the link at the top of this newsletter).

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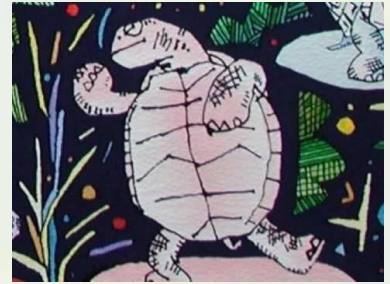


### 'Royal March of the Lion' (1:21 – 2:51 mins)

Listen out for the two pianos playing low, [chromatic scales](#) to mimic the deep-throated roaring of lions! There's also a cool bit just before the lions' march begins (1:19mins) where both piano players play a [glissando](#) (a slide upwards or downwards between notes) in opposite directions at the same time!

### 'Tortoises' (4:40 – 6:30 mins)

Nice and slow – just like tortoises. However, the musical 'joke' here is that, if you listen carefully, the strings are playing a really slow version of 'The Can-Can' – a lively and energetic dance from Offenbach's opera '[Orpheus in the Underworld](#)' (we featured it in Music of the Week newsletter No.54 back in June). Imagine tortoises wearing frilly skirts and high kicking to a very fast beat!



### 'Aquarium' (8:59 – 11:21 mins)

You might recognise this fishy one as it's been used a lot in movies and TV adverts (including Specsavers, Nissan and the Reid Furniture Winter Sale!). It influenced the prologue music to Disney's 'Beauty and the Beast' and was slightly 'borrowed (or half-stolen)' for [Hedwig's Theme](#) in 'Harry Potter'. My favourite fact is that the high notes in this section were written for a strange instrument called a [glass harmonica](#). It basically consisted of a set of differently sized glass bowls which revolved around a spindle. You played it by letting your fingers rub along the edge of the different bowls! You can see a demonstration of it [HERE](#). You can get a similar effect yourself by running a damp finger around the edge of a glass of water. Try it!

### 'Fossils' (16:09 – 17:32 mins)

Another one you might recognise... This piece was influenced by lots of things (including Saint-Saëns own spooky composition '[Danse Macabre](#)' which you can listen to [HERE](#)). My favourite thing about this one is, as well as the [xylophone](#) sounding like bones knocking together, you can hear the pianos play '[Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star](#)' in the middle of it!



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### 'The Swan' (17:38 – 20:39 mins)

The final animal in the suite of music – based on a slow and moving **cello** solo. This music inspired a famous short ballet called 'The Dying Swan' which was performed by the world-famous Russian ballet dancer Anna Pavlova over 4,000 times. You can see a very old clip of her dancing it [HERE](#). This is actually the only part of the whole suite that Saint-Saëns ever

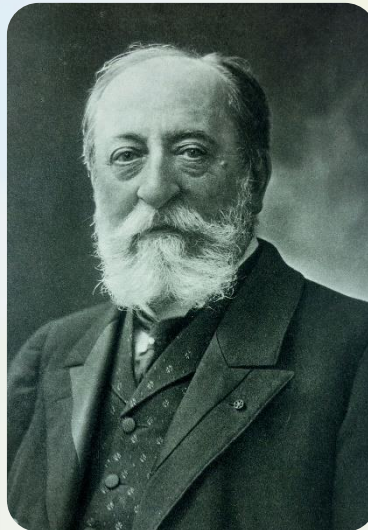
allowed to be performed while he was still alive. I guess he thought that this bit was 'serious' enough not spoil his image as a great composer!

I just think it's a shame Camille Saint-Saëns didn't get around to writing any music about a mole!

Listen & enjoy...

Mr. Mole

Music Teacher



Camille Saint-Saëns

1835 – 1921