

Charles Camille Saint-Saëns



Camille Saint-Saëns is a French musician who was born in the 9th of October, 1835 in Paris, France. He was raised by his mother and aunt since his father died when he was only two months old. Camille Saint-Saëns began learning how to play piano with his aunt when he was only three, where he can already read and write. Saint-Saëns had his first recital at the age of five when he accompanied a Beethoven violin sonata, although he did not make his formal debut by playing Mozart and Beethoven at Paris Salle Pleyel in 1846.

He got into the Paris Conservatory at the age of 13 and played organ for two churches in his late teens. He has also been the organist for Madeleine, the most prestigious church in Paris between the years 1857 to 1876.

The only school he had taught in was the L'Ecole which his students included Andre Messager and Gabriel Faure. In 1871, he went to England for the first time and played for Queen Victoria for promotion of the new French music. He married a 19 year old girl named Marie Truffot in 1875 and had two sons, but both died at very young age. Saint-Saëns separated with his wife three years later and never saw each other again. In 1886, Saint-Saëns composed the pieces *Le Carnaval des Animaux* (The Carnival of the Animals) and *Symphony No. 3*, dedicated to Franz Liszt who died that year, with his mother who died two years later. Saint-Saëns traveled around the world including places around Europe, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America. Saint-Saëns spent his late years composing more works and traveled more around the world before spending his last years in Algiers, Algeria. In recognition of his accomplishments, the government of France awarded him the *Légion d'honneur*. He died of pneumonia on 16 December 1921 at the Hôtel de l'Oasis in Algiers. His body was repatriated to Paris, honored by state funeral at La Madeleine, and interred at Cimetière du Montparnasse in Paris.

Five pieces written by Saint-Saëns

Le Rouet d'Omphale, op. 31 - Symphonic poem

Phaéton, op. 39 - Symphonic poem

Danse macabre, op. 40 - Symphonic poem

Symphony No. 3 in C minor ("Organ Symphony"), op. 78 – Symphony

The Carnivore of the Animals -

The Carnivore of the Animals is an animal fantasy that Saint-Saëns wrote as a musical joke. It is written in February 1886 and consists of 14 movements including Introduction and Royal March of the Lion, Hens and Cockerels, Wild Asses, Tortoises, The Elephant, Kangaroos, Aquarium, Persons with Long Ears, The Cuckoo in the depths of the Woods, Aviary, Pianists, Fossils, The Swan and Finale. Each movement has its own unique mood, timbre and the use of musical elements. For example, The March of the Lion starts very quietly, waking up and stretching before springing to their feet. The intro gradually gets louder and ends with a loud roar with the piano and strings. The music then moved onto a very rhythmic and proud piece, maintaining the loud dynamic with violins providing the melody and sometimes low piano scales as the lion's roar. The music then goes onto Hens and Cockerels with two pianos, strings without double basses and clarinets playing for the mood of chickens picking grains and Wild Asses with two pianos playing loudly and quickly picturing the image of wild animals running freely in the open prairie. The Wild Asses has huge contrasts between Tortoises since the Tortoises is such a slow movement. It is a slightly satirical movement using the famous tune "Can-Can" from Offenbach's operetta Orpheus in the Underworld. Fossils is also another musical joke using lots of famous tunes such as "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and his own work "Danse Macabre" to picture the bones clicking together and being dug up using the instruments xylophone, strings, piano and clarinets. Although most of the movements are written as a musical joke, there are still some serious pieces such as the Swan. The Swan is a G major piece played mainly by cello using lots of vibrato. The notes are usually very soft and slurred for the elegant and flowing tone. The idea of this piece is to let the audiences picture the image of swans swimming in a lake in their mind. After The Swan, the whole composing is finally being concluded with the final movement "Finale". Finale concludes everything since it is a combination of the last 13 movements, there are pictures of lions in the introduction, and sounds of bones clicking together and kangaroos hopping throughout the movement.