



BY CAMILLE
SAINT-SAENS
1886

CARNIVAL OF THE ANIMALS



THE STORY BEHIND THE MUSIC

After a disastrous tour of Germany in 1886, Saint-Saens went to relax in Austria. It was here that he composed Carnival of the Animals. He thought the music was just a bit of fun and originally composed the suite for his students. He gave private performances but was absolutely adamant that the music should not be published in his lifetime. He thought it would detract from audiences seeing him as a 'serious' composer. He did however publish a separate arrangement of The Swan from the suite as he rather liked this movement. Following his death in 1921, 'Carnival' was first performed to an audience and has since been one of Saint-Saens best-known works.

Suite	A set of compositions to be played in succession
Movement	A movement is a part of the whole piece of music that can be played separately
Musical dimensions	These are: PITCH (how high/low the sounds are) DURATION (how short/long the sounds are—the rhythm) TEMPO (the speed of the music) TIMBRE (the quality of the sounds—how they might be described) TEXTURE (how many sounds are playing at the same time—thick/thin) DYNAMICS (how loud/soft the music is)

THE MUSIC

- Carnival of the Animals is a musical suite of 14 movements
- Each of the 14 movements represents a different animal or animals. Animals include: donkeys, hens, kangaroos, a lion, an aquarium, a swan and tortoises
- Saint-Saens uses the musical dimensions to help the listener to understand which animal he is describing
- The music has been composed for two pianos and other instruments
- The Swan is a particular favourite and is written for cello and piano
- The Aquarium was originally written for an instrument called a glass harmonica which is a really unusual instrument that sounds quite like a glockenspiel

THE COMPOSER

- Saint-Saens was a French composer and pianist
- He was a child prodigy and gave his first performance at the age of 10
- He worked on an opera with Dukas (see Key Pieces 5)
- He performed once with Tchaikovsky (see Key Pieces 1)
- He thought that The Rite of Spring by Stravinsky was absolute madness (see Key Composer 6)

