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Hello and welcome to Busy Kids Love Music, the podcast that helps you discover the music of composers, cultures, and traditions from all around the world. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so glad you're joining me today! A quick reminder that this episode airs during public enrollment of my online piano lesson programs, so if you're interested in joining us, be sure to check links to join these programs in show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/156.

Today we're kicking off a brand-new 3-part composer series—and it's all about the brilliant French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. In today's episode, we'll learn all about his life—from his childhood as a musical prodigy to his adventures around the world and the beautiful music he created along the way.

But before we dive in— I have something exciting for you! Today's episode includes an Audio Treasure Hunt! I've hidden the answers to a special set of questions inside this podcast episode. So you'll need to listen carefully to catch them all! You can download your free Audio Treasure Hunt printable from the link in the show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/156.

Ready to begin? Let's meet Camille Saint-Saëns!

Camille Saint-Saëns (pronounced San-Sohnz) was born in Paris, France in 1835. He was just a tiny baby when his father died, so he was raised by his mother and great-aunt. It quickly became clear that Camille was no ordinary child—by the time he was 3 years old, he could already read and write. And by age 5, he was composing short pieces on the piano!

In fact, Camille was what we call a child prodigy—someone with extraordinary talent at a very young age. He gave his very first solo public concert at age 10 and amazed the audience by performing from memory and even offering to play any Beethoven sonata they requested!

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Saint-Saëns studied music at the Paris Conservatory, which is a super-special school just for music. As a young man, Saint-Saëns also began working as a teacher, and he helped younger composers. He became a fantastic organist and pianist, but what he loved most of all was writing music. Over his lifetime, he wrote ballets, operas, symphonies, concertos, and chamber music. One of his most famous pieces—The Carnival of the Animals—we'll explore in next week's episode!

When Saint-Saëns was in his late 30s, he got married and had two sons—but sadly, both boys died at a very young age, just a few weeks apart. Not long after, his marriage ended, and he never married again. For the rest of his life, he stayed focused on his music, his writing, and his travels. Saint-Saëns was more than just a composer. He was also a writer, a scientist, and a world traveler! He was fascinated by nature, astronomy, archaeology, and all kinds of things. He even wrote articles and books about them!

Saint-Saëns loved to travel and often took long trips to places like Algeria, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and especially Egypt, which inspired his music. In fact, one of his piano concertos – which you're listening to now – is nicknamed “The Egyptian” because he wrote it while visiting the country and included sounds from his trip – some sounds were actually meant to imitate the frogs croaking in the Nile River.

Even though Saint-Saëns lived in the 1800s, he didn't always follow the musical trends of his time. He liked to stick to clear, beautiful melodies and elegant structure. Some people thought his music was too old-fashioned, but others admired him for staying true to his own style.

He lived a long life and continued performing until just a few months before his death in **1921**, at the age of 86. Camille Saint-Saëns left behind a huge collection of music—and a legacy as one of France's greatest composers.

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Don't forget—your Audio Treasure Hunt questions are all hidden inside today's episode. Did you catch how old Saint-Saëns was at his first concert? Or what country inspired one of his concertos? Be sure to download the printable from the show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/156 and see how many questions you can answer! I also linked a playlist for you of some of Saint-Saëns' most famous works so that you can keep listening to some of the beautiful music from today's episode.

In the next episode, we'll explore one of Camille Saint-Saëns' most playful and imaginative works—The Carnival of the Animals—a musical zoo filled with leaping kangaroos, stomping elephants, and a very famous swan.

Thanks for listening to Busy Kids Love Music. Until next time, keep making music and keep listening closely... you never know what you might discover!