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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 for Episode 2 in our 3-part series about the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns!

And guess what? Today's episode includes another Audio Treasure Hunt! I've hidden the answers to six questions throughout the episode, so you'll want to listen closely. You can download your free Treasure Hunt printable from the show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/157.

Today, we're diving into one of Saint-Saëns' most beloved and imaginative works—Carnival of the Animals. It's a musical suite made up of 14 short movements, each one representing a different animal or group of animals. Saint-Saëns composed it just for fun in 1886, and he never meant for it to be taken too seriously. In fact, he only allowed one part of it—The Swan—to be performed publicly while he was alive!

He wrote Carnival of the Animals while on vacation, and you can hear just how playful and creative he was feeling as you listen. Let's explore some of the animals featured in this delightful musical zoo!

This movement begins with a bold roar from the piano and low strings. You can hear the lion pacing through his kingdom, majestic and powerful. Can you imagine a lion's mane swaying as he walks?

In this short, lively movement, the strings and pianos peck and cluck back and forth. Listen for the silly, short bursts that sound just like chickens squawking at one another!

In the next movements we hear from galloping donkeys and slow moving tortoises, but let's jump ahead and listen to the Elephant movement. Can you guess which instrument Saint-Saëns chose to represent an elephant? A low, rumble double bass! What are some words you would use to describe this movement?

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The Swan is a beautiful, graceful movement from the suite that features a solo cello, gliding smoothly like a swan on a quiet pond. It's the only piece Saint-Saëns allowed to be performed publicly during his lifetime—and it has become one of his most famous works.

There are many more animals in the suite, including birds, fish, fossils, and even pianists! Yes, Saint-Saëns poked fun at piano students in one movement, mimicking how they practice scales over and over again.

Even though Saint-Saëns originally wrote Carnival of the Animals as a private joke for his friends, he worried that people wouldn't take him seriously if they heard it. He was known for writing elegant, serious music, and he thought this funny animal suite might ruin his reputation. So he locked the rest of it away and only let The Swan be shared with the world.

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.

But here's the twist—after Saint-Saëns died in 1921, Carnival of the Animals was finally published in full, and audiences loved it! Children and adults were delighted by the clever melodies and animal impressions, and it quickly became one of his most performed and beloved works. Today, it's a favorite in concert halls, classrooms, and music camps all around the world. It's a perfect example of program music, which means it tells a story or paints a picture without using any words—just instruments!

Now don't forget—your Audio Treasure Hunt questions were hidden in the episode. Can you remember which animal was represented by the double bass? Or what instrument painted the picture of the swan? Be sure to download the printable from the show notes at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/157 and test your listening skills!

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And if you want to explore Carnival of the Animals even more, I've got something extra fun for you... Join my FREE 5-day online music camp inspired by Carnival of the Animals! Each day, you'll explore one of the animals through music, learn some piano basics, and complete creative activities that bring the music to life. It's the perfect way to keep learning—and playing—at home! You can find the link to join in the show notes.

Next week, we'll wrap up our Saint-Saëns series with a look at one of his most dramatic and spooky pieces: Danse Macabre. You won't want to miss it!

Thanks for listening to Busy Kids Love Music. Until next time, keep making music, keep listening closely... and keep your ears open for the next musical adventure!