

***The Carnival of the Animals: A Grand Zoologic Fantasy* by Camille Saint-Saëns**  
**New Narration by Nancy Bachrach**

if I played this, my hands would wheeze.

**(1) Introduction and Lion's March**

Our famous composer was down in the dumps.  
His concerts were panned, and he'd taken some lumps.  
He went out of town just to heal his wounds,  
and cheered himself up writing animal tunes.  
Enter The Lion King, feral and arch.  
This savage beast commanded a march.  
His Majesty threatened to pounce on a whim,  
but instead the piano . . . just swallowed him.  
"Funny, but frivolous," he said with dread.  
"Do not perform this until I am dead."  
He kept his Grand Fantasy off of the stage  
for thirty-four years, 'til he died of old age.  
In his Last Will, he proclaimed this decree:  
Publish The Carnival and let it be.  
So now let us welcome to Carnegie Hall,  
his posthumous work, most beloved of all.

**(2) Hens and Roosters**

Some think this melody came from Rameau,  
but with all the pecking, it's hard to know.  
It sounds like a henhouse where life's in disorder,  
but these chicks are ruled by a strict pecking order.  
And although the rooster crows like a jerk,  
we know it's the hen who does all the work.

**(3) Wild Animals**

Listen to the presto pace  
as these wild creatures race  
up and down the keys with ease  
as though scales are a breeze—

**(4) Tortoises**

Slow and steady wins the race,  
perseverance is a grace.  
How does the tortoise maintain his lead?  
Listen to the *Can Can* at his speed.

**(5) What's bigger than a piano**  
with a prominent derrière  
yet moves around the dance floor  
like a natural Fred Astaire?

**The Elephant!**

**(6) Kangaroos**

The lines of the score seem to jump, leap and drop  
as kangaroos pop up, rebound and plop.  
The music is French, the fables Aesop,  
It's turn-of-the-century beastie hip-hop.

**(7) Aquarium**

The piano lines flow in a contrary motion  
like opposite currents under the ocean.  
There is no fast lane, you won't get the bends,  
inside an aquarium, everything's Zen.

**(8) Characters with Long Ears**

Why did Saint-Saëns hide this music for years?  
Who are the characters who have long ears?  
Did the composer mean donkeys or asses—  
or perhaps people whose ears were morasses?

A clue in the score is its incessant braying,  
which mimics what some of his critics were saying.

**(9) The Cuckoo Deep in the Woods**

The pianist is setting a lyrical mood.  
The cuckoo's a heckler whose nature is rude.  
His tone-deaf staccato repeats like a bleep  
until our pianist can lull him to sleep.

**(10) Birds**

The piano weighs in at a half ton or more,  
but this movement calls for the big beast to soar.  
Tickle the ivories, hammer the strings,  
find the vibration that makes it grow wings.

**(11) Pianists**

Isn't it a great delight  
to hear a pianist's hands take flight?  
How'd they learn to play "Nocturne-y?"  
It starts by perfecting "Czerny."  
Fingering that's out of sight?  
That's called *fingerfertigkeit*.  
Since their day jobs last 'til night,  
all sonatas are Moonlight.  
How do they manage to do it all—  
without spinning off their axis?  
And how did they get to Carnegie Hall?  
"Practice, practice, practice!"

**(12) Fossils**

Saint-Saëns was revered and had many apostles,  
yet he spoofed himself in this gem about fossils.  
How many jokes does this movement harbor?  
Skeletons prance to his *Danse Macabre*,  
and Mozart's *Twinkle Twinkle* and Rossini's *Barber*.

Musical bones seem to groan, clank and clink—  
They're oldies-but-goodies, becoming extinct.

**(13)** When Saint-Saëns was still alive,  
he let this cello movement thrive.  
Beauty is its own reward,  
rippling through each broken chord.  
Franz Liszt heard it privately and he began to fawn  
over the whole Carnival, especially **The Swan**.

**(14) Finale**

Saint-Saëns was a child prodigy  
whose fame was at its apogee  
when fears about his legacy  
made him hide his Fantasy  
but that's what lifted his esprit  
to finish his Third Symphony.

Here's one moral of the story:  
There are many paths to glory.  
Tried-and-true? Exploratory?  
Time decides what's laudatory.

Fulfill your own Grand Fantasy  
whatever it turns out to be.  
Make sure it's more than reverie—  
To be is to do, and to do is to be!

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Pronunciation guide:

*Camille*: Kah-mee

*Saint-Saëns* = Sah -Soh

*Czerny* = Cher'ney

*Fingerfertigkeit* = Fin'ger-fair'-tish-kite'