

THE ELEPHANT, THE SWAN and FOSSILS – SAINT-SAENS

Context

Saint-Saens composed a work called *Carnival of the Animals* in which he illustrated many animals musically. *The Swan* is the only movement of *Carnival of the Animals* that Saint-Saens, the composer, allowed to be performed in public during his lifetime.

Teaching and Learning: The Elephant

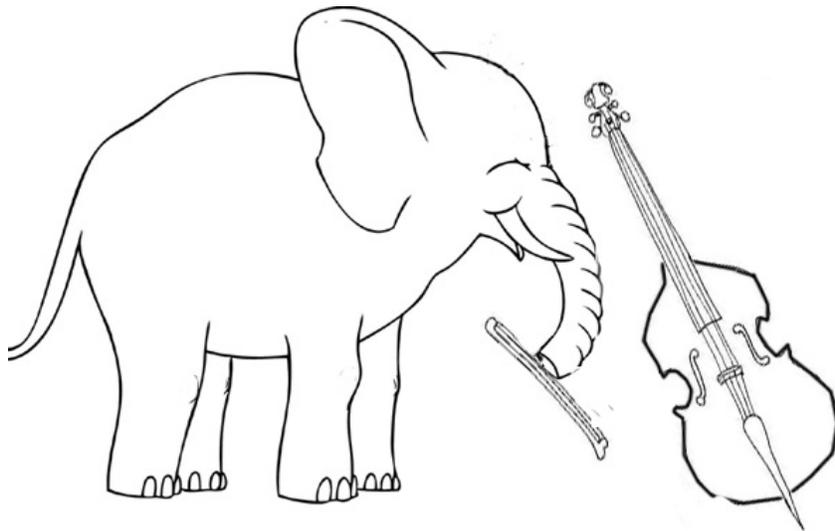
- *The Elephant* is a waltz in 3-time. The elephant itself is depicted by a double bass. This tune was borrowed from *The Ballet of the Sylphs* by Berlioz. Saint-Saens gives the instruction for it to be played 'pompously'. The piano accompaniment beats out the waltz time.
- Words connected with this music: waltz, dance, high and low, pompous, 1-2-3.

The Elephant

The image shows the musical score for 'The Elephant' from Saint-Saens' 'Carnival of the Animals'. It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the double bass, written in bass clef, 3/8 time, and B-flat major. It begins with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The melody is characterized by a steady, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with some accents and slurs. The bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment, written in treble and bass clefs, 3/8 time, and B-flat major. It features a consistent pattern of chords, primarily triads and dyads, played in a rhythmic sequence that emphasizes the waltz time. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'f' (forte) and 'p' (piano), and articulation marks like slurs and accents.

Activities for Children

- Children can waltz to the music with their partners, while counting 1-2-3.
- Compare a violin and a double bass. The bigger the instrument, the lower the register.
- Other waltzes, such as *The Cuckoo Waltz*, *The Blue Danube* and Nancy's *Oom-pah-pah* song from *Olive*, can be played to compare and reinforce waltz features.



Teaching and Learning: Fossils

- Fossils are the preserved traces of animals, plants and other organisms from long ago. The xylophone sounds like bones. Saint-Saens also used it in *Danse Macabre* to illustrate the skeletons dancing around.
- The tunes in the piece are very old so Saint-Saens refers to them as musical fossils. He instructs the performers to play in a 'ridiculous' way.
- Words connected with this music: light, brittle, happy, hoppy.

Activities for Children

- The children can draw their own fossils and colour them in with different colours. The fossils depicted here are ammonites. Children will talk about animals that have shells.
- How does a xylophone resemble a piano?
- Here is part of the xylophone tune that could be played by the teacher on a keyboard:

