

PROKOFIEV: Peter and the Wolf
BRITTEN: The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra
SAINT-SAËNS: Carnival of the Animals

Marian Lapšansky • Peter Toperczer, Piano
Czechoslovak Radio Symphony Orchestra
Ondrej Lenárd



Camille Saint-Saëns (1835 - 1921)

Carnaval des animaux / Carnival of the Animals

Sergey Prokofiev (1891 - 1953)

Peter and the Wolf, Op. 67

Benjamin Britten (1913 - 1976)

**The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, Op. 34
(Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell)**

The French composer Camille Saint-Saëns was prolific and lived a long time, although by the time of his death in 1921 music had changed beyond anything he could have conceived. He was a gifted pianist and, in common with many other well known French composers, found employment and distinction as organist at one of the principal churches in Paris. The popular Carnival of the Animals, described as A Zoological Fantasy, was written in 1886, originally for two pianos and a small chamber orchestra, to celebrate that year's carnival. The composer forbade further performances of this occasional music, except for The Swan, which enjoyed immediate and irresistible popularity.

The pianos open the work in a brief introduction that seems to suggest the roar of the lions, before the Royal March begins, with its suggestions of the exotic in its theme. Hens and Cocks are as true to nature as the composer can make them, followed by Wild Donkeys of unexpected rapidity of motion, in contrast to the lumbering Tortoises, who offer a can-can at the slowest possible speed, putting a foot wrong here and there. The Elephant is naturally represented by the double bass in an episode that includes a direct quotation of the highly inappropriate Ballet of the Sylphs by Berlioz. The pianos alone then imitate the capricious leaps of the Kangaroos, to be followed by an evocation of the Aquarium. People with Long Ears, critics, are portrayed by

piercing whistles and the braying of donkeys, while pianos and clarinet bring in the Cuckoo, followed by the rest of the aviary, with the help of the flute. Pianists, creatures not usually found in zoos, practise their scales, heavily accented, and are followed by Fossils, with tunes of undoubted antiquity and interesting activity for the xylophone. The Swan sings its dying song on the cello, reminding us now of the dance devised by Fokin for the great Anna Pavlova. The fantasy ends with a summary of much that has gone before.

The Russian composer Sergey Prokofiev wrote his *Peter and the Wolf* in 1936 to introduce to children the instruments of the orchestra. He had taken his two sons to see performances at the Moscow Children's Music Theatre and this had suggested to him the possibility of a composition of this kind. The boy Peter, represented by the strings, is playing in the meadow, forbidden territory. A bird, shown by the flute, sings in a tree: a duck, the oboe, swims in the pond, and a cat, the clarinet, comes onto the scene, sending the bird up to a higher branch. Peter's grandfather, the bassoon, warns the boy not to venture out, but meanwhile a wolf, the French horns, comes into the meadow, chases and swallows the duck whole, and lays siege to the cat and the bird, both now up the tree. Peter tells the bird to distract the wolf, while he catches it with a rope. Hunters then approach, their guns shown by the drums, and help to carry the wolf off to the zoo in a grand procession, with the duck still quacking inside the wolf and grandfather still complaining.

Ten years later, in 1946, the English composer Benjamin Britten was asked to write music for an educational film introducing the instruments of the orchestra. For the purpose he chose a theme by the great 17th century English composer Henry Purcell and wrote a set of variations, each of which shows the characteristics of a particular instrument or group of instruments. The alternative title of the work, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell*, is an exact description. The other title, *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, makes fun of the titles much favoured by writers of moral tales in

the 19th century, providing "young persons" with advice on how to regulate every aspect of their lives.

The theme, taken from music Purcell wrote for Aphra Behn's play *Abdelazar* or *The Moor's Revenge*, is played six times. At first the full orchestra plays the theme, followed by the woodwind (flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons). The theme is played a third time, this time by the brass (horns, trumpets, trombones and tuba), and then by the strings (violins, violas, cellos, double basses, and, as an extra, by the harp, an instrument not generally included in the string section of the orchestra). The percussion (drums, triangle, tambourine and cymbals) does what it can with the melody before the return of the full orchestra.

The first variation starts with the highest woodwind instrument, the piccolo, and two flutes, accompanied by the harp and violins. The oboes are given fuller accompaniment, leading to the clarinets demonstrating their agility, and to the deepest instruments of the woodwind section, the bassoons. The string section is allowed four variations, for violins, for violas, for cellos and for double basses. Four French horns introduce the brass section, with its second variation for trumpets and its third for trombones and bass tuba. The percussion instruments share the next variation. The kettle-drums (timpani) are joined by the bass drum and cymbals, tambourine and triangle, side drum and Chinese block, xylophone, castanets and gong, and, finally, the whip, simulated by hinged slats of wood brought smartly together.

The *Young Person's Guide* ends with a fugue, a traditional form of composition in which one part enters after another, using the same theme, so that the music grows gradually in size and intensity. The piccolo starts and the other instruments enter in order - flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons, lead to violins, violas, cellos, double basses and harp, and then French horns, trumpets, trombones and tuba, followed by the percussion. At the most exciting part of the fugue, the brass instruments play again the original theme, leading to a grand conclusion.

Carnival of the Animals

- 1 Introduction et marche royale du lion / Introduction and Royal March of the Lion (2:24)
- 2 Poules et Coqs / Hens and Cockerels (0:59)
- 3 Hémiones / Wild Asses (0:42)
- 4 Tortues / Tortoises (2:14)
- 5 L'Eléphant / The Elephant (1:33)
- 6 Kangourous / Kangaroos (0:57)
- 7 Aquarium / Aquarium (2:33)
- 8 Personnages à longues oreilles / People with Long Ears (0:51)
- 9 Le Coucou au fond des bois / The Cuckoo in the Depths of the Woods (1:50)
- 10 Volière / Aviary (1:16)
- 11 Pianistes / Pianists (1:52)
- 12 Fossiles / Fossils (1:18)
- 13 Le Cygne / The Swan (3:07)
- 14 Finale (2:10)

Peter and the Wolf, Op. 67

- 15** Peter in the meadow (0:43)
- 16** The Bird (1:13)
- 17** The Duck (1:54)
- 18** The Cat (1:45)
- 19** Grandfather (0:47)
- 20** Peter does not listen (0:21)
- 21** Grandfather takes Peter home (0:38)
- 22** The Wolf (1:00)
- 23** The Cat climbs the tree (0:25)
- 24** The Duck jumps out of the pond (0:18)
- 25** The Wolf swallows the Duck (0:40)
- 26** The Cat and the Bird in the Trees (0:47)
- 27** The Wolf prowls in wait (0:38)
- 28** Peter takes a rope and climbs the tree (0:47)
- 29** He tells the Bird to distract the Wolf (1:03)
- 30** Peter catches the Wolf with a lasso (0:21)
- 31** The Wolf tries to escape (1:28)
- 32** The Hunters approach with their guns (1:28)
- 33** Peter suggests they all take the Wolf to the zoo (0:37)
- 34** They all march together, Peter, then the Hunters with the Wolf (2:10)
- 35** And after them Grandfather, complaining, and the Cat (2:10)

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| 1 | - | 14 | SAINT-SAËNS: Carnival of the Animals | (23:33) |
| 15 | - | 35 | PROKOFIEV: Peter and the Wolf,
Op. 67 | (21:09) |
| | | | BRITTEN: The Young Person's Guide
to the Orchestra - Variations and Fugue
on a theme by Purcell, Op. 34 | |
| | | 36 | Theme | (2:03) |
| | | 37 | Variations (Strings) | (2:52) |
| | | 38 | Variations (Woodwind) | (4:41) |
| | | 39 | Variations (Brass) | (2:38) |
| | | 40 | Variations (Percussion) | (1:59) |
| | | 41 | Fugue | (3:01) |
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