

TUSCARAWAS PHILHARMONIC

State of the Art | October 2020

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Thank you for enabling us to provide the highest quality music and music education to the citizens of Tuscarawas County and beyond!



Just among friends...

On the evening of Shrove Tuesday, March 9 in 1886, Camille Saint-Saens gathered with a group of friends in the home of cellist Charles Lebouc for a dinner party. The chief entertainment for the evening was the first reading of a charming diversion Saint-Saens had just finished entitled *Carnival of the Animals*. It's a perfect musicians' party piece, calling for a small ensemble of 10 players and filled as it is with inside musical jokes, quotes of other music and the sly titles referring to various "animals". Most of it has to be played rather tongue-in-cheek (admittedly hard to do on a woodwind instrument...) as the humor is rather droll and some of the animals are, well...not animals. In fact, while one can hear sounds that picture lions, roosters, mules, etc., what might be missed is that Saint-Saens was also depicting the personalities and physical attributes (long ears, etc) of some of the individuals in that circle of friends. So, it's music that is about fun - fun with music, fun with playful depictions of animals, and fun with friends. And, thanks to American poet Ogden Nash, there is word play. In 1949 Nash wrote light verse to accompany each movement and his clever rhymes and broad humor add to the fun.

Lately I have been studying the score of the *Enigma Variations* of Edward Elgar - a work renowned for its musical sophistication and for the heartfelt

Education Corner



Tuscarawas Philharmonic is pleased to partner with Tuscarawas County music teachers to provide this season's performances as an online venue for classroom learning. For our October performance, students in grades K-12 have shared their talents by providing artwork as a visual accompaniment to the orchestra's online concert.

These video performances are designed for teachers to use whole, in part, or in conjunction with the orchestra's grant-funded "LinkUp" education program. We are proud to play this important role in music education for Tuscarawas County!

tribute it pays to important people in Elgar's life. Each variation is an imaginative transformation of the cryptic original melody by the composer, but also a kind of musical portrait of members of his close circle of friends and loved ones. "It's not much, but something may be made of it." said the composer of the theme when he first devised it and, with the grand conclusion of the work, one does feel that "something was made of it."

Elgar seems to have identified with the theme, and that something was made of him as well, with a little help from his friends, to whom he pays tribute.

And *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky also comes to mind in this regard. While Mussorgsky's brilliant score is the quintessential "picture" piece in music, to me it really makes sense as a testimony to his friendship with the deceased artist Victor Hartmann. The way the promenade theme is elevated to the grand conclusion seems to speak to something beyond clever imaging of architectural drawings to the glory and grandeur of friendship itself. In these times of separation, seclusion, sequestering, that music can remind us of the value of human contact comes as a great reminder of a still- prevailing social and psychological fact.

Eric



A Little History...

At the dawn of 1886, while working on his *Third "Organ" Symphony*, Camille Saint-Saëns found himself diverted by a composition conceived decades earlier during his short tenure as professor at L'École Niedermeyer de Paris. Originally intended as a piece for his students, Saint-Saëns was drawn to the idea of writing a light, whimsical, short suite that was not only humorous in subject matter, but also included snippets of other famous works from the period. In a letter dated February 9, 1886, the composer confessed to his publishers at Durand that he knew he should be working on his Third Symphony, but this composition was "such fun!" ("...mais c'est si amusant!") The resulting suite was to become one of Saint-Saëns's most well-known and beloved works, *Carnival of the Animals*.

Scored for a chamber ensemble of ten players, *Carnival of the Animals* takes listeners on a rousing zoological tour. The opening fanfare introduces the king of the jungle – the lion. From there, listeners meet a variety of finned, furred, shelled, and even fossilized creatures. Ingenious in structure, each movement not only captures the essence of the animal(s) represented through clever instrumentation and style, but incorporates fragments of other composers' melodies, including Offenbach's "Can-Can," Mendelssohn's "Scherzo from Midsummer Night's Dream," and even "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star!" This use of parody constitutes a musical joke within a joke and adds deeper complexity to what initially appears as a light, whimsical, and seemingly frivolous piece.



It's ironic that in light of the popularity and prominence *Carnival of the Animals* holds in chamber music literature, Saint-Saëns himself thought the piece too frivolous to be published within his lifetime, declaring it detracted from his larger works. In his will, the composer explicitly stated his wish to have the piece published posthumously except for one movement, "The Swan." Had Saint-Saëns known this "frivolous" suite would become ubiquitous – as soundtracks to movies and TV, commercial jingles, and used in educational venues as an introduction to classical music for countless children – would he still hold the same view? *That* the world will never know, but we are fortunate to have this musical gem as performed by Tuscarawas Philharmonic, albeit virtually, COVID-19 style.

As you enjoy our performance, how many musical references can you detect? To give you a hint, there are more than previously stated, but the above are the most obvious. Extra points awarded to those who can discern the others...



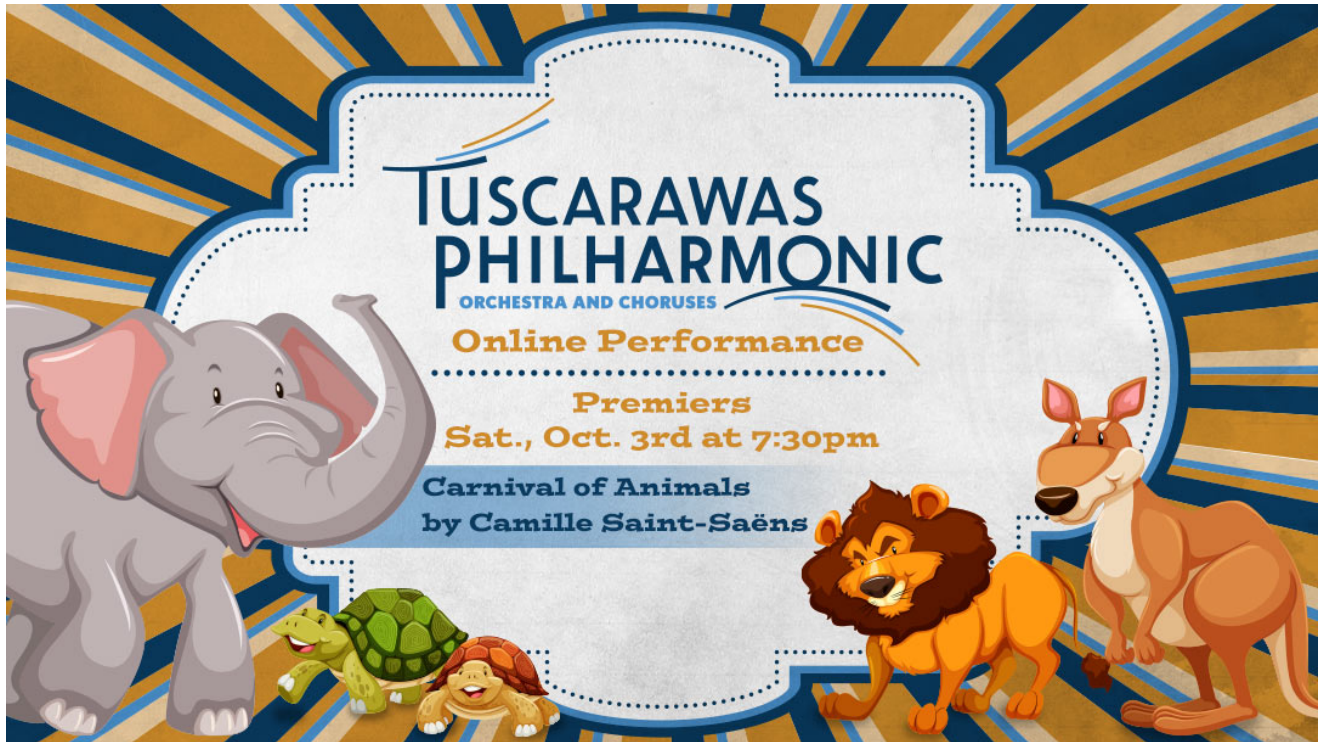
Some words about Ogden Nash...

What does a 20th century American poet have in common with a 19th century French composer? Well, when it comes to Saint-Saëns's timeless classic, *Carnival of the Animals*, many listeners find the suite incomplete minus the humorous accompanying verses by Ogden Nash. A master of rhyme, Nash penned over 500 pieces of light verse throughout the course of his extensive career. Nash's humorous animal poetry caught the attention of Columbia Masterworks and in 1949 he was commissioned to write the famous verses that now accompany *Carnival of the Animals* performances world-wide. For many listeners, Nash's verses are synonymous with Saint-Saëns's charming suite and recordings have featured narration from the following celebrities:

Noël Coward
Ted Danson
Audrey Hepburn
Charlton Heston
James Earl Jones
Arte Johnson
Walter Matthau
Dudley Moore
Deborah Raffin
Lynn Redgrave
Joan Rivers
William Shatner
Jaclyn Smith
Lily Tomlin
Betty White



While none of the celebrities listed above were available to share their talents for this Tuscarawas Philharmonic performance, the orchestra was able to enlist the services of one its own, Jayne Naragon. When not narrating or performing as a clarinetist, Jayne serves as the orchestra's Personnel Manager and Librarian. We look forward to having you join Maestro Eric Benjamin and Tuscarawas Philharmonic for a virtual trip to the zoo!



Tuscarawas Philharmonic P.O. Box 406 New Philadelphia, OH 44663

www.TuscarawasPhilharmonic.org