



Saint-Saëns in the Morning

A-Musing Animals





CLASSICAL



Saint-Saëns in the Morning

A-Musing Animals

SAINT-SAËNS The Muse and the Poet. for violin, cello and orchestra SAINT-SAËNS Carnival of the Animals with words by Bradley Trevor Greive

Toby Thatcher conductor · Richard Morecroft narrator Kirsty Hilton violin · Catherine Hewgill cello Laurence Matheson piano · Peter De Jager piano

Tea & Symphony Fri 22 Sep. 11am Sydney Opera House



Carnival of the (Australian) Animals

An SSO Family Concert **HINDSON** Dangerous Creatures SAINT-SAËNS Carnival of the Animals with words by Bradley Trevor Greive

Toby Thatcher conductor · Richard Morecroft narrator Laurence Matheson piano · Peter De Jager piano

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TEA & SYMPHONY

FRIDAY 22 SEPTEMBER, 11AM

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE CONCERT HALL



Chief Conductor and Artistic Director



SAINT-SAËNS IN THE MORNING

Toby Thatcher conductor
Kirsty Hilton violin
Catherine Hewgill cello
Laurence Matheson piano
Peter de Jager piano
Richard Morecroft narrator

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921)

La Muse et le poète, Op.132 (The Muse and the Poet)

Kirsty Hilton, violin Catherine Hewgill, cello

Carnival of the (Australian) Animals with words by Bradley Trevor Greive

See page 8 for a list of today's menagerie

Laurence Matheson, piano Peter de Jager, piano Richard Morecroft, narrator Estimated durations: 17 minutes, 30 minutes
The concert will conclude at approximately 11.55am.

COVER IMAGE: Painting of a lyrebird (1813) by convict artist T. Richard Browne (1771–1824) (Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW / Bridgeman Images)



ABOUT THE MUSIC

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) La Muse et le poète, Op.132 (The Muse and the Poet)

Kirsty Hilton *violin*Catherine Hewgill *cello*

The title of this piece reminds literate French speakers of a famous poem by Alfred de Musset, *La Nuit d'octobre*, written in 1837 and expressing the poet's recovery from the heartache of his relationship with George Sand (later to be the lover of Chopin). The poem is couched as a dialogue between the poet and his muse, in which she helps him to re-live and come to terms with his emotional distress, pointing him to his reconciliation with life and love, in the arms of a new, young mistress. At the climax, the poet addresses his faithless lover:

Shame on you who first taught me what betrayal is, and made me lose my mind to horror and anger!

Shame on you, dark-eyed woman whose fatal loves buried in darkness my spring-time and my finest days!

Don't, however, expect Saint-Saëns' music to convey these highly Romantic feelings. The title, one scholar feels he has established beyond doubt, was added after the music was composed, at the request of the publisher, Durand, who thought it would make the music more saleable. Durand, at least, thought he could find in the music, as many writers have, that 'the violin, as Muse, offers soothing answers to the complaints, sometimes melancholy, sometimes agitated, of the cello as poet'.

The prosaic truth seems to be that Saint-Saëns set out to write a concertante piece with violin and cello as soloists. Eugène Ysaÿe and Joseph Hollman played the premiere in London on



 Illustration by Eugène Lami for Alfred de Musset's poem La Nuit d'Octobre, published in 1883 7 June 1910, in an all–Saint-Saëns program with the composer at the piano, marking the 25th anniversary of the cellist Hollman's first public appearance in England. The same artists gave the Paris premiere later that year in the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre. The original version of this duo for violin and cello was with piano, but when he composed the music at Luxor in Egypt in 1909, Saint-Saëns was already planning a version with orchestra, which he thought would be much better. The accompaniment is certainly orchestral, though very closely based on the piano version. A critic wrote of the Paris première:

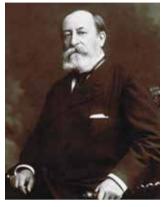
What amazes me about this duet which is accompanied by a symphony is that it is full of conviction and feeling...A work of tenderness, which seems to me to be actually a bit painful, or at least sombre...the listener is caught up in the vibrant unity of an inner drama.

Performances of *La Muse et le poète* are rare: this is the first time the SSO has programmed it and its first performance by any of the ABC orchestras was as recently as 2002 (by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra). Its occasional appearances in concert are due to the limited repertoire of concertante works with violin and cello. Sometimes it can function as a companion piece for the Brahms Double Concerto (as when Pinchas Zukerman and Amanda Forsyth performed it with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in 2009); or, as in this morning's concert, it offers an opportunity to feature soloists from the orchestra.

In Saint-Saëns' case, the stimulus for his last work featuring the cello as soloist seems to have come from his collaboration with Hollman (1852–1926), who trained in Brussels under Servais, and who gave the first performances of Saint-Saëns' Cello Concerto No.2 in 1903, and of his second Cello Sonata in 1905. The complexities of Hollman's own cello music show that he was a virtuoso, and there is virtuosity for the soloists in *La Muse et le poète*. Yet it remains a dialogue of the two instruments rather than a contest, and the vocal character of some of the writing justifies the title, with a bardic harp heralding the soloists' first entry.

The treatment of the material – short melodic ideas in a variety of moods – is rhapsodic within a broadly lyrical context, harking back to Romanticism's invention of the free-form symphonic poem, which Saint-Saëns learnt from Liszt. Solo parts and orchestra are closely interwoven, and restatements of thematic ideas hint at a cyclical structure. The many tempos can be surveyed as an arch from slow to fast and back to slow, then a fast coda. The modestly sized orchestra is deployed with Saint-Saëns' typical transparency, abetting the suggestion of a cool neoclassicist handling Romantic forms and material, the paradox of so much of Saint-Saëns' music.

DAVID GARRETT © 2002



Saint-Saëns in 1900

The orchestra for *La Muse* et *le poète* calls for pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets and bassoons; two horns, two trumpets and three trombones (no tuba); harp and strings.

This is the first performance of the work by the SSO.

Carnival of the (Australian) Animals

Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals – Grand Zoological Fantasy with words by Bradley Trevor Greive

- Introduction A Toast to Camille Saint-Saëns' Ghost Royal March of the Marsupial Lion – His Terrifying Majesty Introduction and Royal March of the Lion
- 2. Nature's Most Gifted Artist The Superb Lyrebird

 Hens and Roosters
- 3. Swift Animals The Emu's Crazy Legs Wild Asses (Speedy Animals)
- 4. Slow Animals The Koala and the Blobfish Tortoises
- 5. The Happy Heavyweight The Dugong

 The Elephant
- Hopping Animals All you Need to Know About the 67 Species of Macropods Kangaroos
- 7. God's Aquarium The Coral Reef Aquarium
- Omniaudient (All-Hearing) Animals with Long Ears –
 The Greater Bilby
 Personages with Long Ears
- 9. The Boobook in the Depth of Night Nature's After-Party

 The Cuckoo in the Depths of the Forest
- 10. Keep Australia Beautiful, Or Else! The Australian Tiger Beetle

 Aviary
- Looking for Trouble The Mulga Snake Pianists
- 12. Little Whiskers, Big Hearts The Passionate Antechinus

 Fossils
- 13. The View from Heaven Soaring with the Wedge-Tailed Eagle The Swan
- 14. Finale A Land of Countless Wonders

 Grand Finale

Laurence Matheson and Peter de Jager *piano duo* Richard Morecroft *narrator*

Camille Saint-Saëns struck those who knew him as childlike in a way, in spite of his great and unquestioned mastery of his art. No wonder he wrote one of the most enduring musical entertainments for children of all ages!

Brought up by his doting mother and a great aunt, Saint-Saëns mastered everything he tackled with disconcerting ease. When he gave his first public concert, at the age of ten, he played a Mozart piano concerto, and offered to play any one of the 32 Beethoven



sonatas from memory as an encore! His interests outside music included astronomy, botany, and literature.

One of the great pianists of his time, Saint-Saëns participated in movements championing what was worthwhile and serious in contemporary music, and became, long before his death, a national institution in France.

In spite of all these signs of outward success, Saint-Saëns' personal life was not very happy. He married late, the marriage broke down, and his two young sons died tragically. Saint-Saëns' feelings for children, thwarted in his own fatherhood, found a substitute in his relationships with his pupils. He was a teacher at the École Niedermeyer, founded to train church organists and choirmasters.

About 1861 Saint-Saëns promised his students a 'grand zoological fantasy', which he finally got around to writing 25 years later. It was intended as a surprise offering to the famous cellist Lebouc, for whom *The Swan* was written.

The Swan was the only part of the Carnival of the Animals Saint-Saëns allowed to be published or even performed during his lifetime. His fear that this musical jest would harm his reputation as a serious composer has been amply justified since his death. Nevertheless, it is a very good member of a rare species – the musical joke – and it reflects Saint-Saëns' scientific interests.

The *Carnival* can be appreciated as witty characterisation in music of various animals. That is the level on which it is usually taken, and which has inspired the recitations by poets and humourists with which it is often accompanied. The sound combinations Saint-Saëns evokes are deliciously apt, and remind us of Gounod's comment: 'Monsieur Saint-Saëns possesses one of the most astonishing musical organisations I know of...He is master of his craft as no one else is...He plays, and plays with, the orchestra as he does the piano. One can say no more.'

But Carnival of the Animals is also a private joke, conceived by a musician for musicians. No doubt it contains many references which would have been clear to its first audience, but not to us. In keeping with the private occasion, the Carnival of the Animals was scored for a large chamber music ensemble, with one string instrument to each part, and two solo pianos. It is equally effective with orchestral strings.

The Musical Menagerie

Rumblings and a regal fanfare make an obvious enough **Introduction** and **Royal March of the Lions**, and **Hens and Roosters** pays homage to a long French tradition of illustrative music.

What are the **Wild Asses** (Hémiones)? Are they 'Speedy Animals' (Saint-Saëns' subtitle) – or perhaps pianists who insist on playing music in strict time and with unvaried loudness?

The can-can – the risqué, high-stepping dance from Offenbach's

BRADI FY TREVOR GREIVE

Author, artist, naturalist, actor, adventure sportsman and media personality, Bradley Trevor Greive AM was born in Hobart in 1970. He began his career in the Australian Army but in 1993 'gave up regimented life of the military elite to undertake a series of underpaid but creatively enlightening positions, including stints in advertising, modelling and table waiting'.

Since then he has written more than 20 books, of which the best-known is *The Blue Day Book* (2000), an uplifting collection of amusing animal photos and inspirational texts. In 2000 he also joined the ranks of the Taronga Foundation, supporting and sponsoring wildlife.

His creative projects - too numerous and varied to list here have included cartooning, a collaboration with wildlife photographer Mitsuaki Iwago (Priceless - The Vanishing Beauty of a Fragile Planet), voicing the Albatross in Finding Nemo, travelling to Antarctica, programs with presenter Christopher Lawrence on ABC Radio, producing An Intimate Evening With John Cleese (starring Cleese and featuring Richard Morecroft), living in Alaska while researching a book on brown bears and Tlingit culture, and taking on the role of Executive Creative Consultant to Disney Global Creative.

In 2016 he wrote an Australianthemed set of verses for *Carnival* of the Animals, premiered by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. He lives on a remote farm on the east coast of Tasmania.

btgstudios.com

Orpheus in the Underworld - is almost unrecognisable when slowed down to Tortoise pace. Recognisable but absurd is the exquisite gossamer of Berlioz's Dance of the Sylphs transferred to the elephantine double bass! The Elephant also features a fleeting quotation from the Fairy Scherzo in Mendelssohn's Midsummer Night's Dream.

What mental picture can Saint-Saëns have had of Australia? His **Kangaroos** belong in a landscaped park rather than the bush. The bell-like celesta, which features in the Aquarium, was a brand new instrument in 1886.

Were the Personages with Long Ears music critics, perhaps? And what do the inane interruptions of the Cuckoo tell us about these beautiful calm processions of harmonies? That they were stolen from another composer?

Anyone who has lived in a musical household will recognise the animals depicted in Pianists, but Saint-Saëns may have been thinking of the Niedermeyer School, whose pupils practised simultaneously on 18 pianos in the same room! Under the heading Fossils Saint-Saëns has had the good grace to put himself first, parodying the xylophone tune from his own Danse macabre. Then three French folk songs (including the one we know as 'Twinkle, twinkle little star') come up for burlesque, and a phrase from Rossini's Barber of Seville.

The ballerina Anna Pavlova provided the name for one of Australia's favourite desserts - she whose most lasting fame came from dancing The Dying Swan to Saint-Saëns' ineffable cello tune. In the vaudeville Finale, the long-eared personages seem to have almost the last word, as all the animals try to join in.

ABRIDGED FROM A NOTE BY DAVID GARRETT © 2013

In addition to the two featured pianos, Carnival of the Animals calls for flute (doubling piccolo), clarinet. percussion, celesta and strings.

The SSO first performed Carnival in a 1943 Young People's concert conducted by Bernard Heinze with pianists Vaila Pender and Marion Tennet. Our most recent performance was in 2013 with conductor Benjamin Northey, pianists Caroline Almonte and Bernadette Harvey, and Dame Edna Everage presenting a narration by Barry Humphries.

sydney symphony orchestra

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THE ARTISTS



Toby Thatcher conductor SSO Assistant Conductor, supported by Rachel & Geoffrey O'Conor and Symphony Services International

Toby Thatcher was born in Melbourne and raised in Sydney, where he studied at the Conservatorium of Music and participated in the Symphony Australia Young Conductor Development Program. He subsequently completed a Master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he studied oboe as well as participating in international conducting masterclasses. In his final year of studies he performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra and London Sinfonietta and was offered a trial with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for the position of Principal Cor Anglais.

After graduating, he was a finalist and prize winner at the 2015 Georg Solti International Conducting Competition. That same year he won a Neeme Järvi Prize at the Menuhin Festival and was appointed Assistant Conductor to the SSO. In 2016 he received Sydney University's Outstanding Achievements of Young Alumni Award and the Brian Stacev Award for Australian Conductors, and he was recently invited by the Salzburg Festival to apply for their prestigious Young Conductors Award. He is founder and director of the London-based Ensemble Eroica and conductor of contemporary music group Ensemble x.y. This year for the SSO, Toby Thatcher has conducted concerts in the Playlist, Family. and Mozart in the City series, as well as on tour in Central West NSW.



Richard Morecroft narrator

Richard Morecroft is one of Australia's most familiar television faces, particularly as the ABC's nightly news presenter for 20 years, the host of many wildlife documentaries and, most recently, the SBS quiz *Letters and Numbers*. He is particularly remembered for reading the TV news with a baby flying fox wrapped up inside his shirt. The book and film *Raising Archie* told the story of his fostering the little bat until its eventual release into the wild.

Richard Morecroft's enthusiasm for the natural world has been a lifelong commitment and he has been a Trustee of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Patron of the Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES) and is a Governor of the Taronga Zoo Foundation.

Together with his partner Alison Mackay, he has authored books on wildlife for children and adults. Richard Morecroft appears by arrangement with Saxton Speakers Bureau.





Kirsty Hilton violin Principal second violin

Kirsty Hilton was born in Sydney in 1976. She began studying violin with the Suzuki method before beginning lessons with Alice Waten at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music at age seven. She attended the Sydney Conservatorium of Music High School and then completed her undergraduate studies with Alice Waten at the Australian Institute of Music. During this time she worked with the Australian Chamber Orchestra and was concertmaster of the Australian Youth Orchestra. In 1998 she was a postgraduate student of David Takeno at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, From 1999 to 2001 she was a member of the Karajan Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, where she performed under such conductors as Claudio Abbado, Simon Rattle, Mariss Jansons, Seiji Ozawa, Bernard Haitink and Lorin Maazel. She then had a contract with the Berlin Philharmonic for a year before taking up the position of Assistant Principal Second Violin in the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Munich, conducted by Mariss Jansons. She still performs regularly with these orchestras, as well as the Camerata Salzburg, and in 2011 became a member of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. In Australia she has also performed as a regular guest concertmaster with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra. Kirsty Hilton took up the position of Assistant Concertmaster with the SSO in 2007 and was appointed Principal Second Violin in 2009.



Catherine Hewgill celloPRINCIPAL CELLO, THE HON. JUSTICE AJ & MRS FRAN MEAGHER CHAIR

Catherine Hewgill studied cello in Perth then at the Royal College of Music in London, University of Southern California, Santa Barbara Music Academy and the Aspen Summer Music Festival. In 1984 she won the Hammer-Rostropovich Scholarship and was invited by Rostropovich to perform in a recital at the Second American Cello Congress. A period of private study with Rostropovich followed. She then toured Europe with I Solisti Veneti, and studied with William Pleeth in London. Returning to Australia, she joined the Australian Chamber Orchestra. In 1989 she joined the SSO, and was appointed Principal Cello the following year. She has performed as a soloist with most of the Australian orchestras and her SSO concerto appearances have included: Beethoven's Triple (conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy), Haydn D major (Charles Dutoit), Elgar, Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations, the Boccherini/Grützmacher Concerto in B flat. Dutilleux's Tout un monde lointain, the Brahms Double with Michael Dauth, and as a soloist in concerts with Nigel Kennedy. Chamber music highlights include Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time with Reinbert de Leeuw. In 2003 she toured Japan with the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa and Michael Dauth (Brahms Double), and in 2011 she played principal in the inaugural concerts of the Australian World Orchestra. She has recently completed a recording of Russian music for cello and piano with Vladimir Ashkenazy, Catherine Hewgill plays a 1729 Carlo Tononi cello.



Laurence Matheson piano

Melbourne pianist Laurence Matheson studied with Tim Young at the Australian National Academy of Music, having previously been involved in the Young ANAM program (2005-08). He participated twice in the final of the ANAM Chamber Music Competition and won the ANAM Directors' Prize. He has also performed at the Melbourne Recital Centre and in broadcasts on ABC Classic FM and 3MBS FM. As a concerto soloist he has appeared with Orchestra Victoria, the ANAM Orchestra, Preston Symphony and South Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He has also played in the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria and the Opera Australia Orchestra (with Opera Australia and as soloist with the Australian Ballet). Chamber projects include collaborations with Paavali Jumppanen, Michael Houstoun, the Aurora Ensemble, Peter Hill, Anthony Marwood, Kathy Stott and Lisa Moore; and Wilma Smith, Sophie Rowell and Tim Young are among his regular chamber music partners. In 2016 he was an ANAM Fellow, appearing in concerts throughout Melbourne and outside Victoria, and in a solo recital at the Melbourne Recital Centre. This year he appears with the Melbourne Youth Orchestra. Wilma and Friends, and performs in the 4MBS and Melbourne festivals and the Sydney Opera House Utzon Room series. He is also an accomplished harpsichordist, has directed the ANAM Orchestra and was commissioned to write for Victorian Opera's 2012 production of Cinderella.



Peter de Jager piano

Peter de Jager is a Melbourne-based pianist, harpsichordist and composer. His diverse repertoire encompasses all periods of western classical music as well as musical theatre and cabaret. He is on the faculty of the Australian National Academy of Music as an Associate Artist, and works regularly as a collaborative pianist, particularly with Trio Bresciani. Performance highlights include the solo piano part in Messiaen's Turangalîla-Symphonie (Melbourne Youth Orchestra, 2011), all five major keyboard works of Jannis Xenakis (2016 Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music), and participating in the Lucerne Festival Academy under the direction of Pierre Boulez. He won the inaugural Australian International Chopin Competition in 2011, and in 2016 he was awarded second prize in the Australian National Piano Award. In 2013 he recorded an album of French oboe sonatas with Ben Opie, and a solo album is forthcoming. In 2014 he was awarded the Freedman Fellowship and he used the \$15,000 prize to commission the 98-minute Piano Sonata by Chris Dench. He has performed this in Australia and Europe for which he received the accolade of Performance of the Year in the 2017 Art Music Awards, As a composer, Peter de Jager has received commissions and performances from Astra, the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, Speak Percussion, Syzygy and Arcadia Winds, and he co-wrote Reception: The Musical with Bethany Simons. He is currently producing his first album of chamber music, Crystals.

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



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Founded in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra has evolved into one of the world's finest orchestras as Sydney has become one of the world's great cities. Resident at the iconic Sydney Opera House, the SSO also performs in venues throughout Sydney and regional New South Wales, and international tours to Europe, Asia and the USA have earned the orchestra worldwide recognition for artistic excellence.

Well on its way to becoming the premier orchestra of the Asia Pacific region, the SSO has toured China on four occasions, and in 2014 won the arts category in the Australian Government's inaugural Australia-China Achievement Awards, recognising ground-breaking work in nurturing the cultural and artistic relationship between the two nations.

The orchestra's first chief conductor was Sir Eugene Goossens, appointed in 1947; he was followed by Nicolai Malko, Dean Dixon, Moshe Atzmon, Willem van Otterloo, Louis Frémaux, Sir Charles Mackerras, Zdeněk Mácal, Stuart Challender, Edo de Waart and Gianluigi Gelmetti. Vladimir Ashkenazy was Principal Conductor from 2009 to 2013. The orchestra's history also boasts collaborations with legendary figures such as George Szell, Sir Thomas Beecham, Otto Klemperer and Igor Stravinsky.

The SSO's award-winning Learning and Engagement program is central to its commitment to the future of live symphonic music, developing audiences and engaging the participation of young people. The orchestra promotes the work of Australian composers through performances, recordings and commissions. Recent premieres have included major works by Ross Edwards, Lee Bracegirdle, Gordon Kerry, Mary Finsterer, Nigel Westlake, Paul Stanhope and Georges Lentz, and recordings of music by Brett Dean have been released on both the BIS and SSO Live labels.

Other releases on the SSO Live label, established in 2006, include performances conducted by Alexander Lazarev, Sir Charles Mackerras and David Robertson, as well as the complete Mahler symphonies conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

This is David Robertson's fourth year as Chief Conductor and Artistic Director.

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