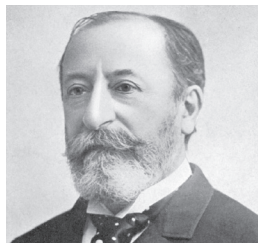


Approximate performance time: 7 minutes



CHARLES-CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

Born October 9, 1835, Paris, France

Died December 16, 1921, Algiers, Algeria

Le Carnaval des animaux (Carnival of the Animals) (1886)

The ensemble begins in hushed anticipation: trembling and murmuring. Suddenly, the pianists tumble up and down the keyboards, calling us to attention. The show is about to begin!

Camille Saint-Saëns was a curious soul, fond of a laugh, of parlor games, of creating light-hearted musical satires. He was also obsessed with animals: their intelligence, their individuality, their fearlessness.

Aged 51, Saint-Saëns was nursing the wounds of a disastrous concert tour. He escaped to a tiny Austrian village, where ideas for a suite of animal portraits tickled him. “It’s too much fun!” he wrote.

Carnival of the Animals was first heard during Paris’s carnival season, before Lent. Amid parades and parties were private house concerts, where Saint-Saëns’ joyful animal-portraits were given open-armed welcomes.

Saint-Saëns crams his score to the brim with musical in-jokes. Tortoises dream of a tortoise-paced “Can-can,” and an elephant attempts light-footed dances. A skeleton rattles along to nursery rhymes, and the pianists—those rare animals—struggle through scales.

Carnival also displays a unique musical imagination. The aquarium’s water seems to tremble and gleam, the donkeys hee-haw with experimental flourishes. And the swan stretches its long neck in music of infinite grace.

First performance: March 3, 1886, by cellist Charles Lebouc

First SLSO performance: February 9, 1923, Frederick Fischer conducting

Most recent SLSO performance: March 25, 2019, Gemma New conducting

Scoring: 2 solo pianos, flute (doubling piccolo), clarinet, percussion, strings

Approximate performance time: 21 minutes

Tim Munro is the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra’s Creative Partner. A writer, broadcaster, and Grammy-winning flutist, he lives in Chicago with his wife, son, and badly-behaved orange cat.



St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra

stéphane denève : music director

20
21

141st season

Stéphane Denève, conductor

Alessio Bax, piano

Lucille Chung, piano

Thursday, April 1, 2021 at 7:30pm

Friday, April 2, 2021 at 11:00am

Saturday, April 3, 2021 at 11:00am

AARON COPLAND

(1900–1990)

Appalachian Spring Suite

(for 13 instruments) (1944, arr. 1972)

Very slowly

Fast/Allegro

Moderate/Moderato

Quite Fast

Still faster/Subito Allegro

Very slowly (as at first)

Calm and flowing/Doppio movimento

Moderato—Coda

ARTHUR HONEGGER

(1892–1955)

Pastorale d’été (Summer pastoral) (1920)

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

(1835–1921)

Le Carnaval des animaux

(*Carnival of the Animals*) (1886)

Introduction and Royal March of the Lion

Hens and Roosters

Wild Donkeys—Swift Animals

Tortoises

The Elephant

Kangaroos

Aquarium

Characters with Long Ears

Cuckoo in the Depths of the Woods

Aviary

Pianists

Fossils

The Swan

Finale

Alessio Bax, piano

Lucille Chung, piano

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2020/2021 Classical Series is presented by the **Steward Family Foundation**.

This concert is presented by the **Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation**.

Program notes sponsored by **Washington University Physicians**.

Program Notes

By Tim Munro

Stéphane on this program

From an interview with Stéphane Denève. Stéphane's responses have been edited for length and clarity, and questions have been removed.

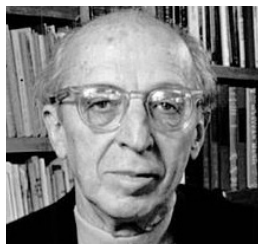
This concert is music of rebirth. There is sunrise, nature, the hope of Spring. French and American cultures unite, giving us two dawns: *Appalachian Spring* and *Pastorale d'été*.

Arthur Honegger's *Pastorale d'été* is tender, charming, and impressionistic. On the first page of the score, there is a quote from an Arthur Rimbaud poem: "J'ai embrassé l'aube d'été" ("I embraced [or kissed] the summer dawn"). If you close your eyes, Honegger's sun delicately warms you.

Like *Pastorale d'été*, Camille Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the animals* is a celebration of nature. It was a party piece, written to celebrate Mardi Gras. It's full of musical references and quotes: the wooden ribs of the xylophone as fossils, a slowed-down can-can for the tortoise, dueling pianos. It's fantastic music!

Reading about *Appalachian Spring*, I found an article by Mark Swed in the *Los Angeles Times*. Swed writes that its roots "lie in the awareness of the Appalachian Trail as the slave route to freedom. Graham and Copland also had been affected by...the Memorial Day Massacre of 1937, when the Chicago police shot and killed ten unarmed protesters."

In our own time, Swed writes, "a parable of a struggle that leads, with humility and a grace, to a new spring takes on new necessity."



AARON COPLAND

Born November 14, 1900, Brooklyn, New York

Died December 2, 1990, Sleepy Hollow, New York

Appalachian Spring Suite (for 13 instruments) (1944)

Dawn breaks on a farmhouse. One by one, instruments gather, offering messages of hope.

In 1942, Aaron Copland was asked for a new ballet score by the dancer and choreographer Martha Graham. Copland had watched Graham blaze a trail through 1920s New York. He'd seen her uncompromising physical language and understood its focus on the heaviness and intensity of the human body.

Graham set *Appalachian Spring* in a Pennsylvania farmhouse, in the shadow of the Civil War. A couple is soon to be married. The wife-to-be is ambivalent, feeling joy and concern. There is tension as the couple clashes with a hellfire preacher.

Copland's music reflects the varied influences of Graham's story. Swing music, hymns, and folk-tinged melodies mingle, while the melody "Simple Gifts" reflects Copland's interest in the Shakers, an insulated Christian sect focused on community, work, and simplicity.

He later made a suite from the ballet. Included is the hope of the morning, dances of celebration, ecstasy of religious experience. Gone is the darkness of the ballet's second half: numbers like "Fear in the Night," "Day of Wrath," and "Moment of Crisis."

The work's title came from a Hart Crane poem, "The Dance." The poem is baffling, but the "Appalachian spring" seems to refer to a water source as well as the annual season. When Copland asked if the poem had anything to do with the ballet, Graham answered, "No, I just liked the title and I took it."

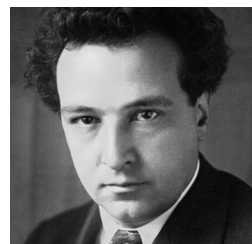
First performance: Original version, October 30, 1944, at the Library of Congress. This version: August 14, 1970, in Los Angeles, the composer conducting.

First SLSO performance: This version, July 3, 1975, Amerigo Marino conducting. Full orchestra version, October 30, 1952, Vladimir Golschmann conducting.

Most recent SLSO performance: This version, March 13, 2013, on tour at the University of California–Davis, David Robertson conducting.

Scoring: Flute, clarinet, bassoon, piano, 4 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos, double bass

Approximate performance time: 23 minutes



ARTHUR HONEGGER

Born March 10, 1892, Le Havre, France

Died November 27, 1955, Paris, France

Pastorale d'été (Summer pastoral) (1920)

It is still dark when cellos and basses set out for a walk in the mountains. Melodies catch our ear, birds circle above, an alphorn sounds in the distance.

For much of his life, Arthur Honegger lived in Paris's artistic district, Montmartre. He felt comfortable in the city's rush and tumble. But to compose, he needed solitude.

One summer in his late twenties, Honegger escaped to the quiet of a village in the Swiss Alps. His career was about to take off, but he didn't know that yet. Honegger loved the jolt of a new idea, and we might imagine him on a dawn walk in the mountains, ideas flooding his mind.

Above the opening of *Pastorale d'été* is the first line of Arthur Rimbaud's poem, "Dawn." The first lines of the poem read:

I have kissed the summer dawn. In front of the palaces, nothing moved. The water lay dead. Battalions of shadows guarded the forest road. I walked, waking the warm and sharp breaths, while stones watched, and wings rose soundlessly.

Rimbaud's words—hallucinatory, dreamlike—are captured in the insistent pulsing, the hazy textures of Honegger's music.

First performance: February 17, 1921, in Paris, Vladimir Golschmann conducting

First SLSO performance: November 11, 1922, Rudolph Ganz conducting

Most recent SLSO performance: June 3, 1979, David Stahl conducting

Scoring: Flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, strings