**Carnival of the Animals**

**Text & Cue Sheet**

*Sound cues Highlighted*

*When the house is ready, play track 1 Carnival - Intro. Players enter. Reader will read BOTH Introduction and Lions before the next cue.*

Introduction

Before the thrill

When Saint-Saëns’ quill

Notated this noted notation,

That quill had a bill

Whose trills filled hills

From nation to nation to nation.

Can we return that quill

To the bird who trilled

And flew and feasted and foraged?

Who saw from great heights

The world and its sites

Then fell among the foliage?

Can these strings grow wings?

Can this flute song sing

As sounded the Amazon basin?

Can these reeds reseed

Till the trees and weeds

Reclaim their conquered kingdom?

Can these ivory tusks,

The keys we now thrust,

Regain their hornèd complexion?

And grow like plants

Into the elephants

From whose hollowed husks we plucked them?

Sit in silence broken.

I think I see the first one…

Behold: Saint-Saëns’ succession

Of impressive beast impressions!

Lions

The Lion holds you inher gaze: Ablaze? Amazed? Unfazed?

She’ll sit and stare,

And freeze you there,

While seconds pass like days.

Will she bound and bite,

Or flee or fight,

Or slaver the smell of your marrow?

Or is she well-fed?

With the pet of the head

She’ll vanish until tomorrow.

The curl of her tongue,

The round of her lung,

She fills her voice with thunder,

Then hurls forth a roar

That quakes to the core

And leaves you there in wonder.

*[Play 2 Carnival – Lions]*

Chickens

The whip chick flicken,

The pick wick licken,

The click clock yellow-socked titch-topped tippen.

Think you can the think

Those wordy thinkers thinked

The day they thought to think up ‘chicken’?

The flock blocked blickens?

The slotch slipped slickens?

The pitch-pocked sally-socked feather-frocked flickens?

Think you all the thinks

Those wordy thinkers thinked;

No thought will synch the think like ‘chicken.’

*[Play 3 Carnival – Hens]*

Turtles

Thirty purple turtles

Hurtle in the myrtle:

The purple turtle myrtle-hurtle

You’ve heard of years ago…

One ambly turtle rambled,

And off the course he brambled.

Two turtles crept pell-mell,

And off the dell they fell.

Three turtles spied a fly,

And one whole day passed by.

Four turtles lost and blundered,

‘Which way?’ they lay and pondered.

The other turtles sauntered,

And around the course they wandered.

But one brave turtle gurgled,

“I’ll hurtle through this myrtle!”

She didn’t stop to weigh

Or dawdle, sit, or stay.

Yes, one purple turtle

Went hurdle after hurdle

Through blades of grass punctually;

She’ll get there eventually.

*[Play 4 Carnival – Tortoises]*

Elephants

It was four men of far back when

To learning much inclined,

Who went to see the Elephant,

Though all of them were blind.

The First approached the Elephant side,

At once began to bawl:

“Bless me!”—says he—“this Elephant

Is very like a wall!”

The Second grasped the Elephant trunk

And dropped it with a shake:

“I grant,” he rants, “the Elephant

Is very like a snake!”

The Third reached out about the knee,

“This Elephant is as a tree!”

The Fourth its tail began to grope,

“This Elephant is as a rope!”

And so these men of far back when

Disputed loud and long,

Though each was partly in the right,

And all were in the wrong!

*[Play 5 Carnival – Elephant]*

Aquariums

Like unruly jewels that glisten and glide and glimmer between the fingers,

Like a million glints with a billion tints of a trillion shattered mirrors,

Like rainbows dashed and splashed and flashed by rolling rainy rivers,

The aquarium’s hypnotic gaze

Lingers in the mind for days

With light that seems to fall and rise

From fishes’ unblinking eyes.

*[Play 6 Carnival – Aquariums]*

Aviary I

Mid-air the hawk is plucked,

ill-blessed, distressed, perhaps ill-lucked;

It tumbles through the trees

and then gets eaten by the fleas.

The fattened flea ain’t quick

and soon is eaten by the tick.

The sticky tick is swallowed

by the swallow that had followed.

The swallow lands in the squawk

of the stalking, gawking hawk…

This circle may seem a shock

to the flea, the tick, the swallow, and hawk,

But on this they do not wallow;

each gives to the next so the next can follow.

*[Play 7 Carnival – Aviary]*

Fossils

At the Musée Anthropologic,

The fossils morphologic

Into things more biologic,

And all night long they frolic.

At the Musée Anthropologic,

Awakened workaholics

See frightening figures frolic

To ghostly philharmonics.

Their scientific logic

Is what makes them posit:

Is this dream diabolic,

Or something more symbolic?

They share with histrionics

The sight of these night frolics:

The flowing gin and tonic,

The chatting philosophic,

The swirling dance hypnotic,

The gossiping sardonic—

The parties mythologic

At the Musée Anthropologic.

*[Play 8 Carnival – Fossils]*

Swan

The neck unfurls,

The wings uncurl,

The swan swirls up in flight;

The plumes assume

A soft loomed groom

Amidst undawning light.

She then ascends,

The shadow bends,

The light casts out then inward.

Does she recede?

I do concede,

Perhaps I’m moving backwards.

We gaze our fill,

We stand quite still,

She fades and soon forsakes us;

We make no fuss,

For such is dusk:

And now the night awaits us.

*[Play 9 Carnival – Swan]*

Final

These beasts hold us in their thrall,

While we hold them not at all;

Just their bones or teeth, and wonder,

Forgive they us our plunder?

The strings that now these fingers pluck

Cannot return them to the gut.

Those necks that swivelled, turned, and bent

Now can only strain and fret.

The violin and cello oak

Recall their sturdy woodland folk:

The willow and the chestnut sallow,

Because their cousins are now hollow.

We can’t restore them to that day;

It is their spirits we now play.

A sacrifice we do not squander,

And play we here all in their honour.

*[Play 10 Carnival – Finale]*