

CBSO PROMS 1973

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

FAMILY PROM

Wednesday 4 July 1973 at 7.30 p.m.,

Town Hall Birmingham



Programme 10p



Photo: Constantine

Louis Frémaux

An Orchestra Abroad, an exhibition of about eighty magnificent colour photographs by Dennis Constantine, FIIP, taken during the CBSO's tour of Eastern Europe in May 1972, is on view in the basement refreshment area throughout the Proms.



Leader: John Bradbury

Conductor: **LOUIS FRÉMAUX**

Soloists: **FRANK WIBAUT and
CLIFFORD BENSON**

Family Prom I

Carnival of Animals

Overture, The Thieving Magpie Rossini

Zoological Fantasy:

The Carnival of Animals Saint-Saëns

INTERVAL

Refreshments are available in the Basement Hall 6.45-10.30 p.m.
Licensed Bar

Light refreshments are available in the Lower Gallery during the interval

Circus Polka for a Young Elephant .. Stravinsky

The Flight of the Bumble-Bee .. Rimsky-Korsakov

Firebird Suite (1919) Stravinsky

This concert is designed to end at approx. 9 p.m.

Patrons are asked not to enter or leave the auditorium while the Orchestra is playing. It would be appreciated if patrons would refrain as far as possible from coughing during the performance

CBSO records and publications are available at the CBSO information desk in the right-hand box office during the interval and after the concert, where CBSO Society membership subscriptions may also be paid

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra receives financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain, the City of Birmingham and the Midlands Authorities Orchestral Association



FRANK WIBAUT was born in London in 1945. He began his musical studies with his mother at the age of seven, and when he was eleven he gained a Junior Scholarship to the Royal College of Music, where he studied with Barbara Kerslake and John Barstow. During 1961-62 he won the Angela Bull Memorial Prize (the highest award for any instrument in the Junior Department at the Royal College), also the second prize in the National Piano Competition and a Senior Scholarship to the Senior Department of the Royal College of Music, to study with Cyril Smith.

In 1963 Frank Wibaut won the Chopin Competition and in 1964 the Chappell Gold Medal. Other awards included the Croydon Concerto Trials at Fairfield Halls and the Hastings Concerto Class (carrying an introduction to the LPO), and in 1968 he won the BBC Piano Competition.

Frank Wibaut has appeared on radio and television and has given concerts in this country with the RLPO, the RPO, and has appeared at Cheltenham Festival and in recital at the Wigmore Hall as well as giving concerts abroad. He lives in Birmingham and is on the staff of the Birmingham School of Music.

CLIFFORD BENSON was born in 1946 and studied at the Royal College of Music with Lamar Crowson and Cyril Smith. Whilst there he won the Chopin Sonata Prize and was awarded the Tagore Gold Medal. In 1969 with the violinist Levon Chilingirian he won the BBC Beethoven Duo Competition and two years later the Munich International Duo Competition. He made his London debut as a soloist in 1970, performing Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto at the Royal Festival Hall.

As a chamber musician he has an extensive repertoire performing duos with many other well known artists such as William Bennett and Thea King, and also as a member of the Nash Ensemble. In addition to recitals and concerto performances in this country, Clifford Benson has toured many parts of Europe and the Middle East. He is a regular broadcaster on BBC radio and has also appeared on television both here and in Germany and Switzerland.



PROGRAMME NOTES

Overture, *The Thieving Magpie*

Giacomo Rossini (1792-1868)

Rossini was an Italian composer, famous as a writer of operas. An opera is a play, generally lasting some three hours or more, where everyone sings instead of speaking to each other. Between the years 1810-1829 Rossini wrote thirty-eight operas, which is two each year, and that is really amazing if you think of all the notes that he would have had to write, for, do not forget, that as well as the tunes for the singers he had to write for the orchestra as well. Many of these operas are never heard nowadays, mainly because some of the stories were too silly, and nowadays we like to have a good plot as well as good music. The audience in Rossini's day just wanted good tunes and they certainly got them.

We do, however, hear the overtures to many of his operas played in the concert hall, and the music tonight is very popular with audiences all over the world.

As you know, magpies are attracted to bright glittering objects and will take them back to their nests. They have been known to steal pieces of glass, marbles, even rings and necklaces. In this opera, *Ninette*, a servant girl, is accused of stealing a silver spoon, but later on it is discovered that it was a magpie all the time. You need to know that her father deserts from the army to come home to prove his daughter's innocence.

At the beginning of the music two side-drums play a roll, the second one echoing the first, and then together they lead in a stirring military march, which represents the army. To us today this is exciting but not extraordinary, but in 1817 the side-drum was hardly ever used in orchestras, only in army bands. One angry young man went so far as to arm himself with a sharp knife to deal with Signor Rossini for offending the ears of opera-goers! Luckily he was dissuaded from doing anything drastic. After the march there comes a cheeky tune, which could represent the bird, but actually it is the tune of a duet in Act III. This is just the sort of tune the Italians loved, and the composer makes it grow louder and louder, and at its loudest the brass join in with downward scales which make it very exciting indeed. There is a silence and then a second tune begins on the oboe with flute and strings having a laugh (perhaps this is the magpie?). This too gets louder and louder, and then both tunes are played again leading up to a thunderous ending on the full orchestra.

Harry Jones ©

ANTONY HOPKINS



Antony Hopkins, eminent musician and broadcaster, writes: "Playing a musical instrument is one of the most complex acts that mankind can perform, involving superb co-ordination of nerves, muscles, mind and human spirit. But like machines, the body can begin to wear out, become less efficient; illness can cause a deterioration of any one of the faculties involved. For the musician this can be a tragedy. If you have enjoyed music as one of the worthwhile things in life, spare a thought (and a little money) for the musicians who have, through no fault of their own, fallen on hard times."

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Sir Thomas Armstrong, Chairman,
Dept. A.H., Musicians' Benevolent Fund,
16 Ogle Street, London, W1P 7LG.

Zoological Fantasy: The Carnival of Animals

Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)

Introduction and Royal March of the Lion
Hens and Cocks
Wild Asses
Tortoises
The Elephant
Kangaroos
Aquarium
Persons with Long Ears
Cuckoos in the heart of the wood
The Aviary
Pianists
Fossils
The Swan
Finale

There is something ironic about the fact that while much of the prodigious output of Saint-Saëns, including some works by which the composer set great store, gathers dust on the shelves, *The Carnival of Animals*, today one of the most popular works to have come from his pen, was withdrawn by him after a few performances because, he thought, it would impede his reputation as a serious musician.

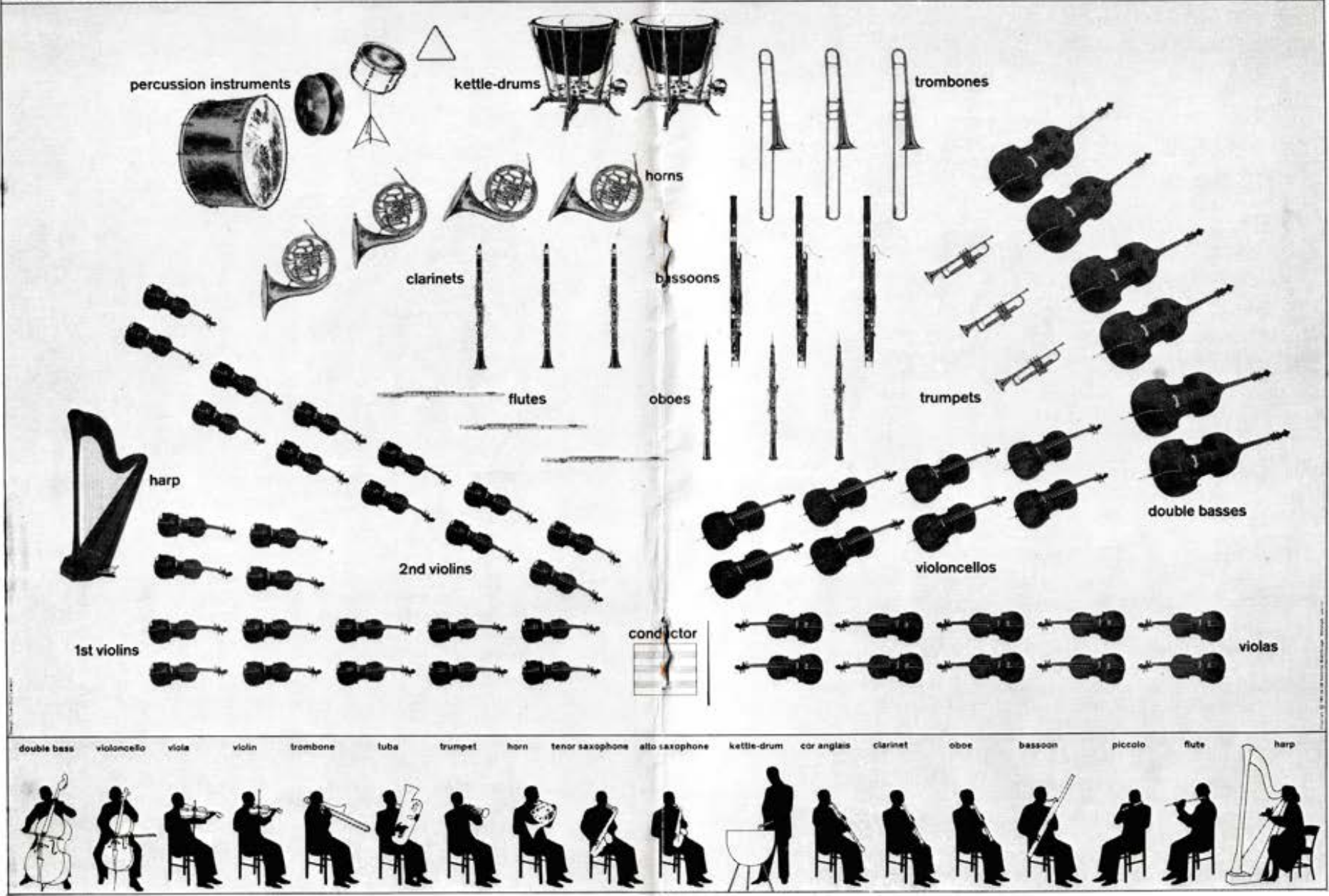
Only *The Swan* was published in his lifetime, and that movement was something special. It is, of course, a very beautiful tune, but there was more to it than that. Lebouc, for whom the complete suite was written, was a famous cellist and friend of the composer, and it was natural that Saint-Saëns should give him what could be described as the star number in the suite. Lebouc was delighted and introduced the work at his concerts in Paris, and after Saint-Saëns had withdrawn the suite, played the single movement so often in recitals that it became almost exclusively identified with him.

It also became personal to someone much more famous. For Pavlova, Fokine arranged a dance *scena* called *The Dying Swan*, using Saint-Saëns's brief movement. Her admirers probably remembered her for this more than anything else, and she is said to have referred to it on her deathbed.

Saint-Saëns composed the suite while on holiday in Austria in 1886, and Lebouc's first performance in Paris took place later that year, as a work for two pianos and small orchestra. It has now become popular in its arrangement for larger orchestral forces. Light-hearted and witty though it is, there is much to admire in it, particularly Saint-Saëns's skilful instrumentation, and his instinctive good taste in keeping humour free of malice.

Saint-Saëns loved animals, and he deals with them affectionately here. It is this affectionate observation, together with the brilliant feeling for parody, which raises *The Carnival of Animals*

The orchestra



This chart shows the basic lay-out of the Symphony Orchestra, though many conductors prefer to have the cellos on the outside of the platform, and the violas on the inside.

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to a height rarely achieved by humour in music, ensuring that the jokes are fresh every time we hear them.

One cannot help feeling that the lions that roar in the pianos and lower strings are a reasonably friendly lot; probably they have already been fed. The *Hens and Cocks* scratch and peck in realistic agitation; the *Asses* seem to chase each other in a perpetual but good-tempered dither.

Among the charms of the suite is the composer's unlikely sources of quotation. For example, we hear the *Tortoises* shambling along to a slow version of the can-can from Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, then the *Elephants* waltz to Berlioz's *Dance of the Sylphs*, a Disneyish vision in advance of its time. The *Kangaroos* hop with nervous uncertainty over the keyboard, the picture of the *Aquarium* takes us into a different world of shimmering submarine light and drifting shapes.

Persons with Long Ears is a picture skilfully created by the violin; the impression of the still wood from within which the cuckoo sings is a little masterpiece of simplicity. *The Aviary* has exotic overtones; these fluttering creatures so deftly created by the flute surely have gorgeous tropical plumage. Nobody who has ever lived next door to a flat inhabited by a child destined by fond parents to be (they think) another Liszt will fail to warm to the good-natured protest behind Saint-Saëns's picture.

In *Fossils* Saint-Saëns disarms those who might object to the inclusion under this heading of *Baa Baa Black Sheep* and *Una voce poco fa* by quoting from his own *Danse Macabre*. Then, the lovely picture of the swan gliding across the water, and all that remains is the finale in which one imagines that the animals make their exit — two by two, perhaps?

Kenneth Loveland ©

Circus Polka for a Young Elephant Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Stravinsky is perhaps the most important composer of this century. Born a Russian who later lived in Switzerland, then America, he was a pupil of the famous Rimsky-Korsakov. He astonished the world with his brilliant music for Diaghilev's ballets, such as *Firebird* and *Petrouchka*. Later on his music became more difficult to understand, but always contained exciting sounds and stomping rhythms; which leads one straight to this piece. Composers can seem to be, like giants, not real at all, but remote people leading a special life writing music, and cut-off from everyday life. This notion should be swept away by the story of how this piece was written: George Balanchine devised the steps for ballet dancers and one day in 1942 he was asked to work some out, not for ballerinas, but for dancing elephants in Barnum and Bailey's circus in New York! He could also choose the music. The story goes that he rang Stravinsky and the telephone conversation went like this:



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Stravinsky: What kind of music?

Balanchine: A polka.

Stravinsky: For whom?

Balanchine: Elephants.

Stravinsky: How old?

Balanchine: Young.

Stravinsky: If they are very young I'll do it.

They were, so Stravinsky agreed.

There is no need to describe the music, except to add a post-script. The polka was performed 425 times in the circus. The elephants were not very happy with it (they prefer dreamy waltzes) and on each occasion the ringmaster half expected a stampede. It is a romping piece, and if you listen very carefully you will hear Schubert's *Marche Militaire*.

Harry Jones ©

The Flight of the Bumble-Bee

Nikolas Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

Nikolas Rimsky-Korsakov was born in the Russian province of Novgorod in 1844 and died at St. Petersburg in 1908. As a youth he entered a Naval College and might well have remained a sailor all his life but for a chance meeting when he was 17 with Balakirev, then one of the most influential figures in Russian music, which led to his taking up composition and subsequently becoming the most important Russian composer of his day. He wrote some fourteen operas, orchestral works and smaller-scale compositions. His principal contribution to music was in the field of the skilled use of the orchestra to produce exotic colour-effects, and he was especially attracted by the allure of the East.

The Flight of the Bumble-Bee is a short and extremely well-known extract from Rimsky's opera *The Story of Tsar Saltan*, which is based on a fairy-story by the famous Russian writer Pushkin. The hero of the opera, Prince Gvidon, rescues a swan (a magic one, of course, and really a Princess in disguise!) and the swan in turn gets him out of a jam by turning him into a Bumble-Bee. Make what you like of the plot, but you won't have any difficulty in recognising the buzzing of the bee!

Beresford King-Smith ©

Firebird Suite (1919)

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Stravinsky, as you know, was Russian and first became famous as a writer of brilliant music for a series of ballets put on in Paris in the early years of this century by Diaghilev and his famous Russian Ballet Company. The *Firebird* was first performed in the Opera House, Paris on 25 June 1910. You may be surprised to know that the composer of this piece, which is

Conductors: LOUIS FRÉMAUX, Principal Conductor and Musical Director
MAURICE HANDFORD
HAROLD GRAY, Associate Conductor

Leaders: FELIX KOK, JOHN BRADBURY

Deputy Leader: BARRIE MOORE

1st Violins

Stanley Smith
Philip Head
Richard Howarth
Paul Wood
Enid Beaumont
*Cyril Read
Andrew Szirtes
Gisela Hess
John Sutton
Paul Smith
Sheila Clarke
Stuart Ford
Diana Levitas

2nd Violins

Jeremy Ballard
David Wood
Henry Birch
Michael Buckley
Thelma Maden
Richard Featherstone
Judith Gandy
David Hiscox
James Hunter
David Parsons
Paul White
Anne Ashcroft
Anne Clark
Louise Dayman

Violas

John Brearley
Robert Leighton
Gwyn Williams
Peter Cole
Carol Millward
Diana Drewer
Margaret Artus
William Danks
Ann Steynor
Jean Cartmell
Richard Pugh
Jennifer Whitelaw

Cellos

John Franca
Dietrich Bethge
Jean Gubbins
Sonya Grey
Cecily Hake
Colin Humphreys
Ben Rivers
Alison Harper
Edward Boshier
Elspeth Cox

Double Basses

George Greer
Christopher Staunton
*Kenneth Burston
Leslie Chapman
Jifi Zicha
Alan Stevenson
Robert Mitchell

Flutes

Lynda Coffin
Colin Lilley

Piccolo

Russell Parry

Oboes

Richard Weigall
Antony Miller

Cor Anglais

Peter Walden

Clarinets

Colin Parr
Martyn Davies

Bass Clarinet

Frank Allen

Bassoons

Andrew Barnell
John Schroder

Double Bassoon

Toddy Harman

Horns

David Lee
Allan Mead
Kenneth Cordingley
Paul Dudding
Adrian McLeish

Trumpets

Alan Whitehead
Trevor Jones

Cornet

Roy Curran

Trombones

David Evans
Brian Altham

Bass Trombone

John Powell

Tuba

Arthur Doyle

Timpani

James Strebing

Percussion

Nicholas Cole
Anne Oakley
John Jeffery
Margaret Cotton

Harp

Robert Johnston

Piano/Celesta

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