SAINT-SAËNS WAS A SUZUKI TEACHER
OR HOW TO STAGE YOUR OWN CARNIVAL (OF THE ANIMALS)

Presented by Renée Robbins at the 2014 Suzuki Conference, May, 2014

It's carnival time in the animal kingdom
They come from the distant ends of the earth to mingle and gambol and jostle each other
And show what they know about mirth.
Now we cannot see all of them, much as we'd like to
And therefore at random we'll just have to choose some.
We've got a fine bunch of musicians on hand
Plus a pair of pianists – you win some, you lose some!
So make yourselves comfortable, ladies and gents!
The procession of beasts is about to commence.

-Peter Schickele

Preparing for your very own Carnival:

Plan on at least a year's lead- time to:

1. Select an orchestra
   - Suzuki strings
   - Local high school orchestra
   - Local amateur or professional orchestra
   - Pick-up group, ranging from chamber to full orchestra size of local supporters
2. Enlist the cooperation of a conductor
3. Find instrumental soloists: flute, clarinet, xylophone
4. Choose an auditorium
5. Arrange for two grand pianos on site
6. Obtain the music
   - Buy on-line
   - Borrow from local orchestra library
   - Copy through Petrucci Library
7. Arrange for rehearsal space: two pianos and enough room for orchestra rehearsals

The piece itself:

Fourteen numbers, including as few as two and as many as twenty-six pianists (including two harmonium parts)

There are also solos on cello, bass, flute, clarinet and xylophone.

Introduction and Royal March of the Lion

Two pianos, beyond the Suzuki books level: must be able to play alternate hands running chromatic octaves; glissandi

Full string orchestra: violins I and II, viola, cello, bass

Hens and Chickens

Two pianos, book 3 level: alternating parts, require counting, at Beginning trill playing

Clarinet solo

Violins I and II, viola

Wild Jack-Asses (Fast Animals)

Two pianos, beyond the Suzuki book level; fast coordinated technic; two pianos play in parallel

No orchestra parts

Tortoises

One piano, book 4 level; large chord slow triplets; octave chords can be rearranged to eliminate big stretches

Full string orchestra plays in duples, all in unison; can be played By Suzuki book 4 level violins without other strings

The Elephant

One piano, book 4 level; large chords can be rearranged to eliminate big stretches; arpeggios

Bass solo, Suzuki book 3

Kangaroos

Two pianos, book 5 level, alternating parts

No orchestra

Acquarium

Two pianos, book 5 and 6 and level; arpeggiated chords, *una corda* pedal

Harmonium (can be played on digital keyboard), Suzuki piano book 3 level
Flute solo
Violins I and II, viola, cello

Mules

No piano
Violins I and II

The Cuckoo in the Forest

Two pianos, book 4 level
Clarinet solo, easy technically, must be able to count
No orchestra

Birds

Two pianos, book 4 level; long trills, counting difficulties
Flute solo, advanced flute player
Full string orchestra

Pianists

Two pianos, book 5 level; a little clowning and improvisation is helpful
Full string orchestra

Fossils

Two pianos, book 6 level; fast octaves; references to Twinkle and Clair de Lune
Clarinet and xylophone solos
Full string orchestra

The Swan

Two pianos, books 4 and 5 level; piano I plays traditional cello accompaniment; piano II plays slow rolled chords
Cello solo, Suzuki book 6
No orchestra

Finale

Two pianos, beyond the Suzuki books; composite of most of the animals

Harmonium, Suzuki piano book 3 (can be played on keyboard)
Flute or piccolo, clarinet, xylophone solos

There are two sets of words illustrating the Carnival: the traditional set is by Ogden Nash; Peter Schickele also has words. This is a perfect role for a high school student or parent with public speaking abilities.

Renée Robbins is a Suzuki piano teacher trainer in Ann Arbor, MI. She has coordinated four productions of the Carnival of the Animals. She loves to provide ensemble opportunities for her students and to coordinate with other musicians in town.
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