

Lesson: 00

## THE SWAN (LE CYGNE)

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Lesson Date: 4<sup>th</sup> February 1997

Title: Swan (from Suite Carnival of the Animals)

Composer: [Camille Saint-Saëns](#) (1886).

### Lesson Note:

The suite 'Carnival of the Animals' is one of the most popular works by the composer; however, he did not allow this suite to be published in his lifetime in order to keep his image as serious composer. The exception was this movement 'The Swan (Le Cygne)', which he published as a cello and piano piece.

I think it was a spontaneous decision to learn this piece in the lesson on that day, so that is why there are quite few unsure notes played. Tommy often put on his own recordings, and we listened together in lessons. I hope you will feel that you are in the same room with us listening to the piece with him. This lesson began with The Swan but we end up listening to 'Suite dans le style Français' by James Moody.

### Transcription:

**TR: Have you played 'The Swan'? Shima: Yes. TR: That's a very naughty thing to play... Shima: Yes, very naughty... TR: Have you got (the music) ...? Shima: hmm... TR: ... Probably you know it from memory anyway... Shima: Shall I start? I'll start from here...**

Shima plays from Bar 2 (5 notes).

**TR: (override with his own playing) ... I don't wanna hear blow and draw.**

Shima starts from Bar 2 (5 notes).

**TR: ... Hey... again... that...**

Tommy starts playing together up to Bar 5. Shima unsure with some of the notes from memory. Tommy decides to explain what I need to learn by putting his CD recording of the piece played with the harpist [Skaila Kanga](#). The introduction of the piece starts:

**TR: Perfect to do it with Skaila.** (Melody part begins. At bar 3) **TR: ... very difficult piece to play. Shima: Yes...** (Continue listening. At bar 14) **TR: No accents.**

(Continue listening in silence. Towards the end of harp's descending phrases,) **TR: Look how beautifully she plays that.** (At the end,) **TR: Beautiful with the harp, isn't it,**

when you play like that. I think I've got a copy here... **Shima: ...must be somewhere...?** (Press a pause button on CD system. Tommy notices) **TR: I didn't know there was a pause button before...** (TR and Shima both laugh. Conversation continues while looking for the music).

**TR: You know, one of the things which I meant to tell you is, you must strive... to play. Blow and Draw, no difference. It's... very hard. But you get... how can you play 'The Swan' with ... (heavy breathing action). **Shima: mmm...** **TR: It's putting the note... when you get the note you get ... (demonstrate) ... what you have to get is the same level each time (demonstrates) ... it's no good going ... (demonstrates) ... you see?****

Shima plays from bar 2. At the seventh note;

**TR: You are on the right road.** (Shima continues two more notes,) **TR: No, blow that (C on Bar 3). Put it in blow, you'll never hold it.**

Shima plays again. At Bar 5 at the diminuendo on the note B,

**TR: That's good.** Shima continues, TR joins when the highlight occurs in the music. At the end,

**TR: ... you're on your way to the ... But..... I tell you. ...It takes a lot of concentration to play that ...**

**TR: You know, you have to feel that run to the end of your toes ... It's concentration, and it's the heavy concentration you do, it makes it sound...(pause)... it's 'something', you know, this is, this means something. Because I've always said you can play two or three notes... wonderful. And play two... or fifty notes all rotten and nobody's gonna listen. (pause) **Apart from that...****

**TR: The way to play... you know that book of mine, ... that green book. **Shima Yes...****

**TR: You should play ... (looking for the book) ... some of the exercises... in there... slowly...**

**TR: ... and listen..., you..., you are quite good at listening to yourself... that's terribly important..., terribly...**

TR bangs on the CD player to open the CD drawer.

**TR: Now I play a bit in here where you blow and draw ... Oh, she plays it ... so gorgeous ...**

Conversation continues about composers etc. while looking the recording of 'Suite dans le style Français' by James Moody, for harmonica and harp.

Music begins. During the introduction;

**TR: You know, this is one of the best things Jimmy Moody ever wrote.** (Continues listening) **...And you can see how bad this would be if you can hear all the blows and draws... Now, I play solo here... you can't tell if I'm blowing or drawing...**

The music of Tommy and Skaila fills the room. We were no longer thinking about technical side of harmonica playing, but instead, continued to listen to the whole suite in silence.

**TR: She is so clear, isn't she? Shima: Uh hmm.** (Continue listening) **TR: Octave starting ...** (After the end of harmonica octave ascending phrase) **All the endings are difficult of these 3 and 4... Shima: Uh hmm...** (Continue listening to the end of the movement) **Shima: I love this... last part chord. TR: Yeah...**

We continued to listen the whole suite. He shared some memories about how he and Skaila made music together, admiring the way she performed and James Moody's musical ideas.

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C. Saint-Saëns

**Adagio**

*p*  
Expression

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