Animals on Parade: Collecting sounds for *l’histoire naturelle* of modern music

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A

*l’Âne*

‘Hee-haw!’ (Please say that out loud as you read it.) Given the bestial nature of this collection, I thought it would be acceptable to begin by making an ass of myself. Instead of following the precepts of Aristotle, in this essay I ruminate on the festival animals of French modern music, processing through a parade of alphabetical topics that begin with the medieval Festival of the Ass and roam into the twentieth-century music of ‘Les Six’ and their milieu, where the ass returns in the contexts of the festival, the fair and the circus. I start, then, with *l’âne* – the ass.

Sources in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries describe the Festival of the Ass as occurring every year during the Middle Ages in the south of France, ostensibly in order to celebrate the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt. Descriptions of the festival’s procedure vary, but many describe a pretty girl riding a donkey to or from church while the local priest said ‘Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw’ instead of ‘Go in peace’. Participants at the festival were said to bray loudly in church before singing the ‘Prose de l’âne’, a carol sometimes named ‘Orientis partibus’ for its first line. The melody is still familiar today as the Christmas carol ‘The friendly beasts’. Here is a loose translation of the text of the medieval carol’s opening Latin verse:
Orientis partibus,
Adventavit asinus,
Pulcher et fortissimus,
Sarcinis aptissimus.
Hez, sire Anes, Hez!

Here comes the ass,
From eastern parts.
He’s handsome and so strongly built
That heavy loads are just his tilt.
Gee-up, sir ass, Gee-up!

In 1938, composer Arthur Honegger used the carol in his oratorio Jeanne d’Arc au bûcher, set to words by Paul Claudel. In Honegger’s version, the court reporter at Joan’s trial is a literal ass, entering the courtroom with loud hee-hawing and laughter. He is one of a procession of animals involved in the trial, including a sheep, tiger, fox, lion and snake. Each animal is introduced briefly to the audience with a short musical parody, creating a kind of musical procession in which stylistic caricatures set each animal apart. For example, the pig, who plays the role of judge (a pun on Pierre Cauchon, who led the trial of Joan of Arc), enters the courtroom accompanied by a loud music-hall number, singing ‘I’m a pig! Me, meeeeee, I’m a pig!’ while the chorus chants ‘Porcus! Porcus! Porcus! Porcus!’

When Honegger’s ass enters the courtroom, he receives a particularly elaborate tribute to animal musicality. His hee-hawing melody unfolds as part of a three-part fugue sung by the chorus, set to a vaudeville-inspired remake of the French version of the carol ‘Hail sir donkey …’, while the original Latin tune (the source of the fugue melody) is sung in the bass as a cantus firmus. The end of each line in the French fugue shifts from melody to mimicry, with the chorus singing ‘hee-haw’ in imitation of a donkey’s loud bray amid a laughing ‘ha ha ha ha ha’.

For those not in the know, this passage is recognisable to the educated European ear as a musical parody in its own right. Honegger’s listeners would have heard in the braying ‘hee-haw!’ echoes of Bach and Schütz, of the fugues and flights of fancy that were a trademark of German counterpoint at the end of the seventeenth century. Every student at the Paris Conservatoire – where Honegger spent seven years – knew this antiquated German sound-world through required composition exams, dutiful piano exercises, annual courses in counterpoint, and
endless other examples of copying, practising and imitating Bach’s example. Deemed a high point in classical music’s origins, this was a style that teachers at the Conservatoire believed originated not in Germany, of course, but in France, in the form of medieval songs like the ‘Prose de l’âne’. Honegger would have learned to love this music at school, and perhaps, loved to hate it.

This parade of animals from Jeanne d’Arc has always fascinated me. I love how funny it is, and I love the animals. At face value, the ass’s passage seems to be a sharp rebuke to a host of things a listener might imagine were distasteful to Honegger: self-important scholars, vaudeville, German counterpoint and rote conservatory exercises. One can imagine (and I hope someone will write) a historical study of the implicit criticisms of this work. These are criticisms that matter in the work’s reception history, for although Honegger completed the oratorio in 1938, it was one of the most popular works to be publicly performed in France during World War II. Played repeatedly in Vichy France under the aegis of an anti-English national identity, surely this asinine German chorale was a salve to listeners forced to hear a steady stream of Bach, Beethoven and Wagner during the war.

But though the passage makes fun of these other Others, it also offers a charming, memorable and strange exoticism. The complexity of the interwoven parts is striking, and so is the ‘hee-HAW!’ that concludes every line of verse with a descending octave. What else, besides satire, is going on in this odd little collection of ass, sheep, tiger, lion and pig? How is the project of collecting beasts, feasts and festivals part of the ongoing court of modernity? How do these things fit into Honegger’s world? And what does his ass, and the animals with whom it circulated, tell us about the ways we may still hear animals and other Others?

B

Le Bestiaire

I leave the ass behind to pursue the bestiary of modern music, a short summary of some of the animals that Honegger’s contemporaries wrote into music. Honegger was a member of the musical circle dubbed ‘Les Six’ by music critic Henri Collet in 1920. Nominally consisting of the composers Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Georges Auric, Germaine Tailleferre, Louis Durey and Francis Poulenc, the group’s social membership was more expansive, including composers, artists and
writers such as Erik Satie, Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau. During the interwar period, they met at each other’s homes and at local bars in Montparnasse and Montmartre. There was an artistry of queer masculinity, cultured simplicity and stylistic mixing. Rejecting the perceived sentimentality of concert music from the turn of the century, they turned to the poets and artists of their own time, notably Jean Cocteau, Paul Claudel and Guillaume Apollinaire.

Members of Les Six rendered quite a few animals in music. Two years after Honegger’s courtroom of animals in *Jeanne d’Arc*, Francis Poulenc created a setting for voice and piano of Jean de Brunhoff’s *L’histoire de Babar, le petit éléphant*. Germaine Tailleferre, the group’s only woman, created the music for a 1952 radio broadcast of Erich Kästner’s story *The Animals’ Conference*, in which nonhuman animals take over the world in order to stop war. Less explicit animals paraded through songs like Poulenc’s ‘The Hedgehog’ and the titles of works like Milhaud’s *Le Bœuf sur le toit* and Poulenc’s ‘Les Biches’. And, of course, in 1919, both Francis Poulenc and Louis Durey independently created their own versions of Apollinaire’s *Le Bestiaire* as short song cycles – Poulenc’s version with only 6 of Apollinaire’s animals, and Durey’s with 26.

Although these works were written by different composers over a 30-year period, they share some of the structural elements of a festival procession that shaped Honegger’s *Jeanne d’Arc*. Almost all of the works I’ve mentioned adopt an episodic structure that isolates short musical sections or movements and distinguishes those episodes with an idiomatic rhythm or style. In so doing, these episodic works invite the listener to attend to and compare differences of musical style that can be loosely connected to notions of bodily or cultural difference. This processional form was not specific to musical collections of animals, but reflected a more far-reaching interest in acts of musical collection, comparison and pastiche. Early in the century, French composers turned to simple episodic forms drawn from French baroque precedents, such as François Couperin’s keyboard works, in their search for alternatives to the long and complex works of Wagner and Brahms. Debussy’s 24 *Préludes*, the fleeting postcards of *Estampes*, and Ravel’s *Ma Mère l’Oye*, paraded little works for piano in small collections. Les Six and others built upon this precedent, sometimes framing their works in opposition to the celebrations of musical formality they associated with their elders, but retaining the previous generation’s love of episodic collections.

Both Poulenc and Durey’s settings of *Le Bestiaire* are cases of these little parades, providing processions of songs that last at most just over a
minute and rely on the linear, thin accompaniments of the neoclassical aesthetic (piano for Durey, and Poulenc with a version for flute, clarinet and strings). Both composers use idiomatic shifts in musical style and rhythm to craft a sense of an episodic parade of musical styles and rhythms from song to song. Durey’s Tortoise (the shell of Orpheus’s lyre), for example, opens with a rolled chord in the piano that emulates the strummed strings of the lyre, while the Horse gallops along in an odd five-beat rhythm.

Let me briefly compare their settings of one of these animals in *Le Bestiaire*, the goat. Both Durey and Poulenc have made their goats rather flippant and urbane creatures, traipsing through the collections with exotic chords and languid tempi. Durey’s Tibetan Goat dances lightly to a triple meter reminiscent of a baroque sarabande, favouring a held note on the downbeat and a little eighth note at the end of the measure. Poulenc’s does not dance but prances to alternating eighth notes that process in the exotic and ancient dorian mode. Both Goats initially keep to a restricted and sober melody, one that does not reflect my own limited encounters with goats (illustrations 27 and 28). Their attitude seems to match the text, however, which compares the hairs of the Golden Fleece to the golden hair of a lover: ‘Les poils de cette chèvre et même / Ceux d’or pour qui prit tant de peine/ Jason, ne valent rien au prix/ Des

![Illustration 27](image.png)

**Illustration 27**  Music example 1: measures 1–10 of ‘La Chèvre du Thibet’ from Louis Durey, *Le Bestiaire*, 6
cheveux dont je suis épris’. Listeners can almost enjoy their glimpse of these goats (and the other animals of the bestiaries), hearing the faintly commercialised glimmer of the lovely golden hair without troubling themselves about the poor goat, who was skinned long before the song began. The unfortunate condition of the goat’s subjectivity is pleasantly exchanged for the urbanity of the flâneur – at least, until one encounters the title. As other authors in this book have pointed out, Le Bestiaire is compelling in part because its animals are so casually turned into goods: the tortoise into a lyre, the elephant into ivory, the grasshopper into a delicious treat.

These bestiaries of usable animals, however, were set amid good musical company. Maurice Ravel’s Histoires naturelles, a song cycle for voice and orchestra, was completed in 1906 and bears an episodic structure and linear harmony that resonates with Durey’s and Poulenc’s later settings of Apollinaire. Another and more specific backdrop for these collections of animals would have been the posthumous premiere in 1922 of Camille Saint-Saëns’ Carnival of the Animals. Originally composed in 1886, Saint-Saëns’s Carnival followed a similar episodic logic, with a series of animals processing in a parade of styles. The tortoise, for example, is not a musical representation of a lyre, but instead is a mockery of Jacques Offenbach’s ‘Infernal Galop’, whose melody is played at an absurdly slow speed. Towards the end of Saint-Saëns’ collection, the animals are extended to include a section called ‘pianists’, which mocks the dutiful exercises of a bad piano student and, like Honegger’s ass, invites the listener to evaluate human difference in the act of evaluating a musical trope.
Supposing at least some of these musical animals to be more than mere allegory, where might Parisian artists and composers have found an actual tortoise or Tibetan goat? In Paris, there were four possibilities: the natural history museum, the zoological gardens, the menageries of street fairs and the circus. The latter two – the fair and the circus – are well-known sites in the landscape of modernism. While scholars often attribute carnivalesque aspects of modernism to visits to the fair or the circus, there is surprisingly little literature that details exactly what those visits entailed, and nothing, as far as I know, that locates modern music’s processions of animals in relation to literal experiences of animals in these places.

With that thought in mind, I’m going to take a moment to imagine that trip to the circus, and the animals and music that one encountered there. In 1923, composer Darius Milhaud moved to a new apartment on boulevard de Clichy in Montmartre. In several sources, Milhaud describes weekly meetings at his apartment with members of Les Six and its social circle:

We had developed the habit of dining together every Saturday. In addition to the six musicians (Auric, Durey, Honegger, Poulenc, Germaine Taillferre and me), writers such as Jean Cocteau, Raymond Radiguet, Paul Morand, Lucien Daudet, painters such as PICASSO, Guy-Pierre FAUCONNET, Roger de FRESNAY, Raoul DUFY, Jean HUGO, the singer KOUBITZKY, the pianist Juliette MEROVICH [sic] came to my place before dinner. Paul MORAND made the cocktails. We played the works we had composed in the week. POULENC sang his Cocardes, AURIC had just written his foxtrot: Adieu New York. AURIC and I played the four-hand version of Le Bœuf sur le toit. After dinner, which took place in a little restaurant in Montmartre, we went as a group to see the fair or the Médrano circus. The aesthetic of the music-hall was in full vogue and we loved the sketches of the famous Médrano clowns, the three FRATELLINI.5

The group would meet for drinks at Milhaud’s apartment, go to dinner at a small restaurant on rue Blanche, and then walk up and down boulevard de Clichy, all told a short walk that was usually under a mile start to
finish. At the west end of the street, right at the turn to rue Blanche, was the Moulin Rouge cabaret. At the east end, less than half a mile away, was the Cirque Médrano with its orchestra, acrobats, equestrians and lion-tamers. Between the two were cabarets, theatres, cafés and hotels.

For several weeks each year, boulevard de Clichy was also home to the booths, rides and theatres of the Fête foraine de Montmartre, one of Paris’s annual carnivals. When the fair was running, walking up and down this street offered a real-world bestiary of sound. In between the fair’s rides and shooting galleries, sideshow booths called ‘parades’ fronted temporary theatres set up on the side of the street, populated by barkers who tried to persuade visitors to pay the entrance fee required to see the acrobats, animals, boxing or other entertainment behind the booth. While the walls of the fair’s temporary booths and buildings might restrict a visitor’s view, they did little to restrict the flow of sound. As far as the ears were concerned, the enclosed parade bands, rides, animals, games and other attractions were a chaotic mixture. Listeners heard gunshots, shouting, barrel organs, small orchestras, brass bands and the cries of captive performing animals. During Milhaud’s house-warming party in 1923, which doubled as a birthday celebration for Jean Cocteau, the sounds coming through the open windows of his apartment included ‘the music from the organ-grinders, the sounds of shooting, and the growls of caged wild animals’. The same year, one of the reviews in Le Gaulois described much the same soundscape: ‘From the illuminations, to the music, to the cries of joy, the songs, the sirens, the sounds of the trumpets, the howls of wild beasts, the sparkling sideshows, and the pressing and jostling of the sizeable crowd: it’s the fair of Montmartre.’

The street music of these settings was a riotous mixture in its own right. Organ grinders carried small barrel organs with changeable cylinders that played popular tunes from the opera for a fee. Brass bands and light dance orchestras performed middle-class dances like waltzes and marches in popular theatres, cafés and public squares. And American jazz bands had recently become popular in cabarets and bars. During the Fête foraine, these sounds would have competed with the sounds of handheld organs and sideshow musicians in the street.

At the end of the block, the Cirque Médrano provided its own soundscape. This was a circus that Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Seurat, and later Picasso and Cocteau eagerly watched and mingled with. One of the many reasons artists loved the Médrano was its band, which was directed by Jean Laporte and was considered one of the best circus orchestras in Europe. The Médrano’s band would have had some
percussion, wind and brass instruments as a bare-bones minimum; some of the Dufy brothers’ paintings of the Médrano suggest jazz ensembles, including one image by Jean Dufy of what appear to be performers in blackface. The Médrano’s band played older popular dances from the turn of the century, following in the tradition of brass bands that had once been employed by European zoos and pleasure gardens. Those outdated dance tunes performed by a brass band are the sound we hear today as ‘circus music’: the polka, march, quadrille and galop. One of the most well-known examples is the ‘Entrance of the gladiators’, which was recorded by Jean Laporte and the Cirque Médrano’s orchestra in 1957. The piece is a typical brass-band march of the nineteenth century, with a strong walking rhythm of one-TWO, one-TWO. The recording by the Cirque Médrano orchestra has a remarkable xylophone solo, one that suggests a possible source of inspiration for the new uses of percussion instruments by French composers like Edgard Varèse.

How would a listener of Honegger’s day come to associate this riotous soundscape of animals, gunshots and bands with a parade of species difference? I can’t even begin to really examine this question in detail, but I’d like to point out that the circus and the fair presented a disorganised assortment of classes and classifications that included differences of musical style as well as differences of social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and species biology. Such musical mixings had long garnered animal names, as with the Victorian organ-grinders compared to monkeys in Britain’s popular press. It seems significant that music scholars sometimes used the word ‘species’ (and in French espèce) to describe both animal species and categories of musical style or musical instruments. Members of Les Six would have known this use of the word. In a period that often treated difference as a far-ranging category of bio-cultural comparison, the sounds of the circus and the fair created a setting that fostered questions about hierarchy, power and relationships across boundaries that are still important to Western listeners today.

D

Dompteurs

In 1929, writing at the end of the Parisian circus’s heyday, the Cirque d’Hiver’s lion-tamer, or dompteur, Henry Thétard asked, ‘Who was the first man who wanted to live in harmony with lions and tigers?’ ('Quel fut
le premier homme qui voulut vivre en harmonie avec les tigres et les lions?) Thétard answered his own question by drawing on Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* to cite the main character, Mowgli, as the historical origin of lion-tamers. Without any apparent irony, Thétard claimed that it was Mowgli who first taught the master-words that control bears and monkeys to subsequent animal trainers. The slippage between fiction and fact in Thétard’s narrative could be read as invoking what art historian Albert Boime has called the circus performer’s ‘double transgression of the real’.

Boime was not really thinking of animal trainers, but of the artists for whom the circus offered a response to the social norms of the day. Boime argued that for the avant-garde, the imaginary world populated by characters like Mowgli was more real than realism. According to Boime, the fantasies of the circus and the fair helped modernists reject a painterly realism that validated the vision of normalcy advocated by France’s Republican political majority. Boime turned to the circus because he was trying to find a new way to understand the symbolists, and not because he was interested in lions or lion-tamers. Yet it seems to me that the layered transgressions of reality depended, all along, upon the startling presence of the lions and tigers who jumped through flaming hoops. And in that space of the unreal, I wonder whether it was the irrepressible cries from the animal cages that enabled the aesthetic of pleasure, discomfort and control that allowed the avant-garde to redefine reality.

When Thétard’s history of animal-tamers was published, his reviewer, André Legrand-Chabrier, described his story about Mowgli as a ‘symbolical and allegorical and truthful portrait’ of the animal trainer (‘un portrait symbolique et allégorique et véridique’). Legrand-Chabrier pointed out that the contrast between Thétard’s allegorical narrative and his technical expertise featured two different truths, the second and technical truth displayed in descriptions of raising tigers in extremely confining cages so they would feel unsafe in the open. Thétard’s tigers were one among many of the species of the circus or the fair menagerie, which included domesticated dogs, chickens, pigs and horses, as well as lions, tigers, monkeys, camels and elephants. Like the human members of the circus, nonhuman animals were performers as well, albeit animals whose control and choice were more limited than most. Like most of the circus’s human performers, animals were born with the circus or raised by their trainer from a young age. At the Cirque Médrano, which was a permanent structure, the animals were stabled on the ground floor, while some of the human performers had lodgings directly above them. The relationship between these animals and their trainers, like
the story of Mowgli, was a hybrid of real and performed violence, intimacy and affection.

Images represented this juncture of partnership and inequality as central to the work of animal trainers. Almost all mid-century images of French circus animals show trainers holding the whips that served as objects of protection, discipline and coded signalling. For example, artist Gustave Soury made a series of circus posters depicting the spectacle of an animal trainer holding out a whip to keep lions or tigers at bay while the big cats bared their teeth and batted at the whip. Other posters from the period used similar imagery, occasionally even showing animals wounding their trainers. But these were also affective relationships. One of Soury's study photographs offers a different image, with both more dominance and more affection, in which one of three leopards appears to be enjoying an ear rub from its trainer (illustration 29). Finally, consider Charles Levy's poster of one of the Cirque Fernando's horses (named 'Barbare' for his presumed ferocity) in costume as Pegasus, from a performance of the late eighteen hundreds (illustration 30). In this image, the Pegasus is posed like a wild animal in liberty, but its costumed wings are visibly strapped on, while the portrait of the circus’s director,
Illustration 30  Poster by Charles Levy of the horse Barbare performing at the Cirque Fernando circa 1885, with inset portrait of Louis Fernando. © Bibliothèque nationale de France. Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des arts du spectacle, AFF-17886
Louis Fernando, which is encircled by a horseshoe, is a reminder that this image of liberty is controlled by Fernando. Barbare’s plight is surprisingly echoed in ‘Le Cheval’ (‘The Horse’) in Apollinaire’s *Le Bestiaire*, in which the poet forcibly tames and rides Pegasus.

This double transgression of the real extended to the contested artistry and status of the human performers. Cocteau wrote in 1919 that the circus, and by extension its performers, was not art but inspiration, comparing them to nature, animals and machinery. In his study of George Seurat, Albert Boime traces the marginalised status of Parisian circus performers to the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, when the *banquistes*, or circus performers, were subject to restrictive government legislation. This regulation was framed in part through the legislation of sound, which targeted the cacophony of animal cries, brass bands and gunfire that issued from the circus and fair sideshows. In 1887, a petition from residents of boulevard de Clichy garnered over 380 signatures protesting at the noise from the fair. According to Karin Bijsterveld, such anti-noise legislation can be connected to the regulation of social class through residential zoning and similar laws. Thus when clowns and circus animals were admired and valorised by the likes of Cocteau, Satie, Picasso, Seurat and Degas, artists and composers both contested and relied upon a social order that divided the trained horse from the horse’s trainer, and the painter or musician from the clown.

Despite this, it’s still meaningful to me that artists took joy in the circus’s temporary disruption of society’s categories. In addition to the layered performance of power and intimacy in animal performance, the Médrano itself transgressed and enforced divisions between performers and audience. The circus’s bar was also the break room for performers, and, during intermission, patrons would mingle with human performers and even smell the animal performers, since the stable was located directly below the bar.

The same year that Thétard published his history of animal trainers, 1929, a music professor at the Schola Cantorum in Paris completed two symphonic works for his *Le Livre de la Jungle* that, like Thétard’s history, used Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* as inspiration. In the first of the two pieces, ‘La loi de la jungle’ (‘The law of the jungle’), the instruments of the orchestra represent the jungle animals reciting their laws in a modernised version of medieval French chant. With all the instruments moving together to create a single melody, the primitive, the animal and the exotic are framed around and through the same tradition of medieval chant that underlies Honegger’s understanding of the ‘Prose de l’âne’.
In the second piece, ‘Les bandar-log’ (‘The bandar-log’), the orchestra runs amok as orchestral monkeys attempt to deploy a riot of dissonant counterpoint that sounds suspiciously like atonal German modernism. With these sounds of animal intention, I return from the relationship between biological species to the relationship between musical species, and to the processions of musical difference favoured by Les Six.

Éléphant

My bestiary concludes with a final animal act that, like the ass, travelled from North Africa into European culture: Babar, the elephant from Jean de Brunhoff’s children’s book of 1930. Babar was recomposed as a musical elephant in 1940 by Francis Poulenc; Babar’s life is told in a series of charming musical episodes that navigate interspecies tropes of power, intimacy and violence through a procession of musical styles. Early in the story, Babar witnesses the murder of his mother by a colonial hunter in Africa; he soon travels to Europe, where he joins a rich old lady and, later, his elephant cousins.

The soundscape of Poulenc’s L’histoire de Babar le petit éléphant is reminiscent of the carnival that wafted through Milhaud’s windows before the war. Each scene in the story is set to its own short musical episode. The gunshots and animal sounds of the narrative are framed by a parade of musical styles: a Chopin nocturne as Babar walks in the jungle, a march as he drives his car, and a waltz-musette, Paris’s street version of the Viennese waltz, as he eats tiny cakes in a tea shop with his cousins.

Like the other works I’ve described, Babar relies on the listener’s ability to recognise and associate musical difference with differences of race, class, nationality, gender, sexuality and biological species. A similar procession of stylistic diversity defined works like Koechlin’s Jungle Book, Poulenc and Durey’s settings of Le Bestiaire, Honegger’s Jeanne d’Arc and Saint-Saëns’ Carnival of the Animals. Their animal works, like so many other works, highlight the parallel between musical and biological species that was already implicated in the shared use of ‘species’ to described biological and musical difference. German counterpoint, baroque dances, brass military marches, street tunes: musical difference gave composers a language that associated sound with a broader notion of difference that included categories like nationality, species, race, class or gender. That
association intersected with the growing discourse in the 1920s and ’30s about national identity that used differences of race, nation and gender as a way to compare and evaluate the worth of individual citizens.

By returning to World War II as the broader setting of Poulenc’s *Babar* and Honegger’s *Jeanne d’Arc*, I also return to the interwoven histories of power and animal identity that shaped modern notions of difference. Some of the works I’ve discussed in this short essay, like Koehlin’s parody of German modernism in ‘Les bandar-log’, seem to have encouraged listeners to do that work of evaluation and comparison; for me, however, the most carnivalesque of these works are the ones that don’t. The two settings of *Le Bestiaire*, whose texts are filled with the consumption and destruction of animals, parade musical styles serenely by in a procession of aural diversity that seems devoid of distortion or judgement. Poulenc’s *Babar* is equally resistant to the comparative interpretations that made it possible, wafting through waltzes and nocturnes as if they shouldn’t be compared or judged, but enjoyed.

As I continue to explore the slippage between musical and biological species, I would argue that for the French modernists, navigating biological differences of species was always and already a matter of navigating differences of class, race, nation, gender, sexuality and, by extension, genre. The notion of species in musical writing of the period was usually a reference to natural history, and implied a confirmation of the natural order. But it seems to me that works in which musical species arrived in a procession of episodes contested that order from within. France’s musical animals were composed almost exclusively by men of education and social standing. Yet many of these works open up a possibility of hearing musical difference as a festival rather than an act of comparative evaluation. And, like Apollinaire’s *Le Bestiaire*, they keep within earshot the acts of violence and hierarchy that define relations with those who are different. Even though that festival of music was still contained within the categories or norms of its time, it provides a playful possibility for rethinking the parade of difference in the post-war, post-modern and post-human world in which we live today.

FIN
Notes

1 Duncan 1911, 40. See also Lacroix 1878 and Kidson 1907.
2 Textbooks of the early twentieth century by authors such as Jules Combarieu and Vincent D’Indy framed chant traditions from France as the foundation of later German contrapuntal traditions. An excellent resource on the turn towards Gregorian chant as a story of French cultural origins is Bergeron 1998.
3 See Fulcher 2005 and Sprout 2013.
4 Wartime concert repertoire is described in detail in Chimènes 2001.
5 Cocteau, who claimed to be the leader of the group, wrote in 1919 ‘The creative artist must always be partly man and partly woman, and the woman part is almost always unbearable’ (Cocteau 1921, 12).
6 Darius Milhaud, unpublished draft as quoted in Kelly 2013, 185.
7 Arnaud 2016, 291.
8 See, for example, ‘Le Wattman’ 1921, 4; Legrand-Chabrier 1922; and Guide des Plaisirs à Paris 1927.
9 Schmidt 2001.
10 Cocteau 1923.
12 Cocteau 1921; for other descriptions of music in public spaces of fair, menagerie and circus, see also Scott 2008, as well as Craft 2010 and Ito 2014.
13 Wall 2013, 227.
14 See, for example, Scott 2008 and Cowgill 2013.
15 The recording is reproduced in French and American Circus - Zirkus (Musiques de cirque), various artists (Caravage B003EX8LF6), 2010, CD.
16 Picker 2003, 69.
17 As in, for example, de Lens 1924 or de Lima 1930.
18 As quoted in Legrand-Chabrier 1929, 27.
19 Legrand-Chabrier 1929, 27.
20 Circopedia 2019.
21 Poster by Charles Levy of trainer Fernando and horse Barbare (Levy c.1885).
22 Cocteau 1921, 23.

Bibliography


**Selected Musical Works Representing Animals**

1917  Georges Auric, *Scènes de Cirque*
1919  Francis Poulenc, *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée*
1919  Louis Durey, *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d’Orphée*
1925  Germaine Tailleferre, *Berceuse du petit éléphant*
1937  Darius Milhaud, *L’Oiseau* (orchestral)
1938  Arthur Honegger, *Jeanne d’Arc au bûcher*
1940  Francis Poulenc, *L’histoire de Babar, le petit éléphant*
1952  Germaine Tailleferre, *Conférence des animaux*