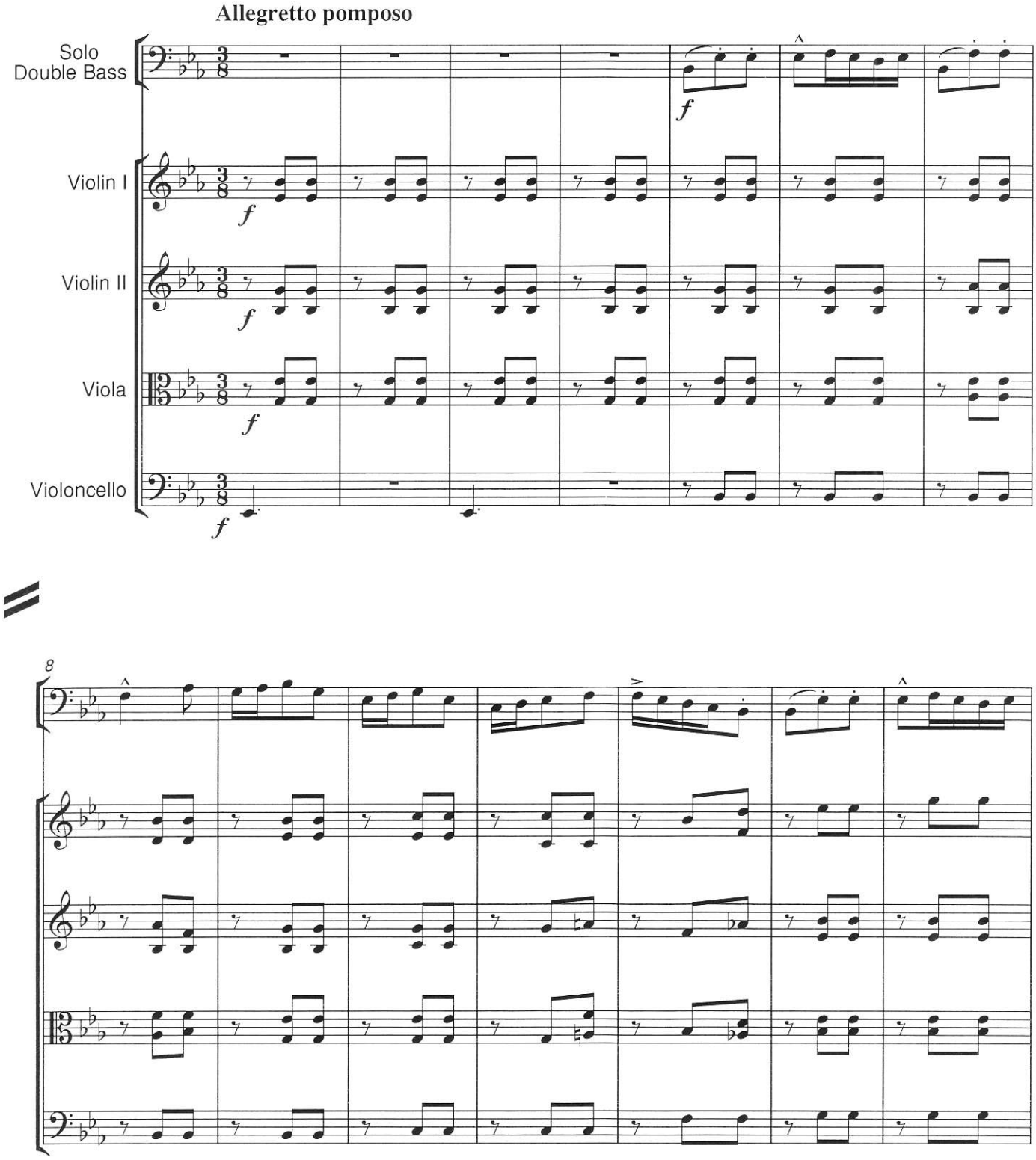
The Elephant

for Double Bass & String Quartet

Camille Saint-Saëns
(arr. David Heyes)



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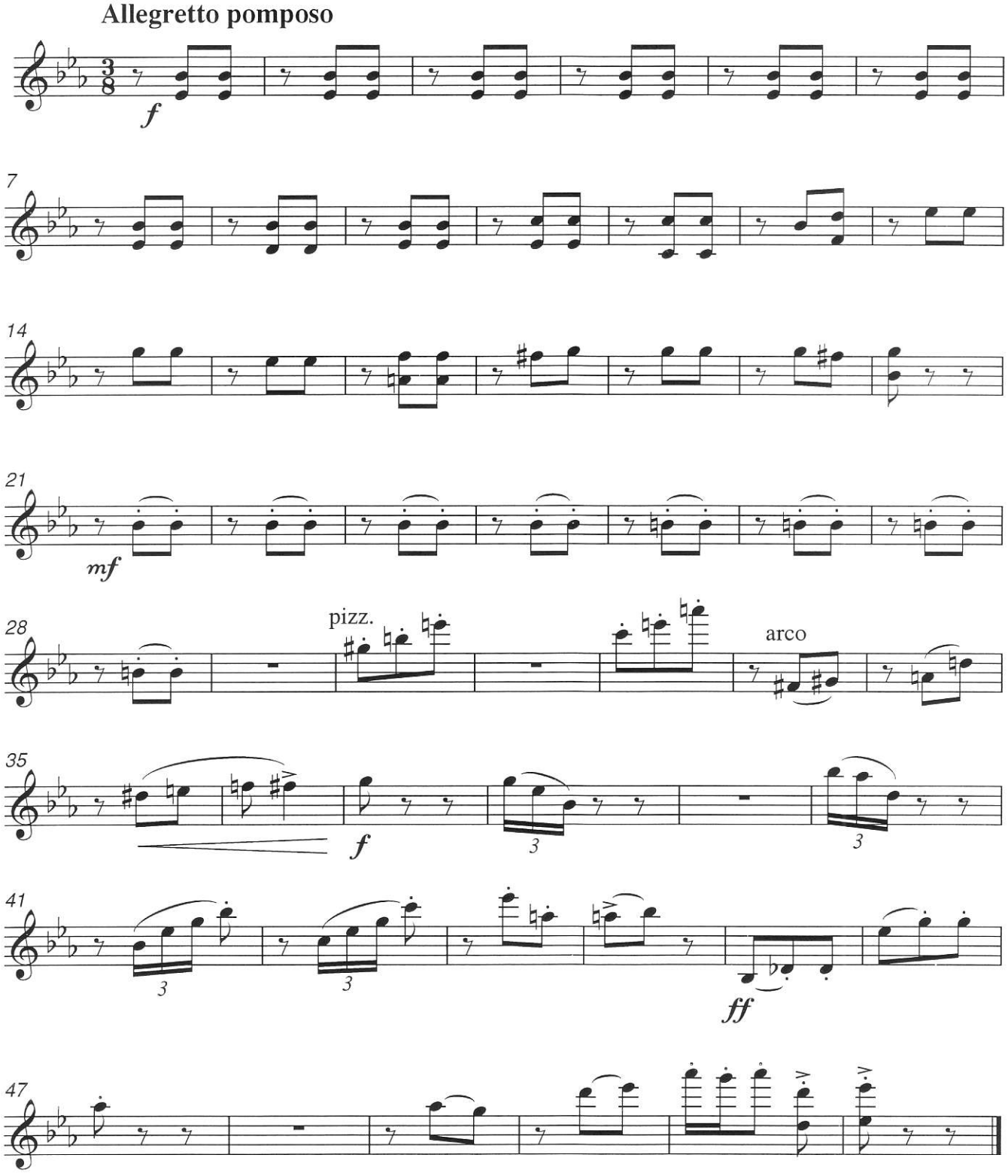

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Camille Saint-Saëns

Charles Camille Saint-Saëns was born in Paris in 1835 and died in Algiers in 1921, aged eighty-six. He was a prolific composer, writing in almost every genre, a virtuoso pianist and organist, and was one of the leading and most respected French composers of his generation.
Saint-Saëns studied at the Paris Conservatoire from 1848, where Halévy was his teacher for composition, and won the admiration of Gounod, Rossini, Berlioz and especially Liszt, who called him the world's greatest organist. He held the position of organist at the Madeleine Church (1857-1875) in Paris for almost twenty years, taught at the Ecole Niedermeyer (1861-1865), and toured throughout Europe as both piano and organ soloist, including concerts in Britain, France, Russia, Germany and Austria.
Saint-Saëns had a great facility for composition, which continued throughout a long and successful career, and much of his music has entered all branches of the concert repertoire. His command of orchestration is supreme and his works have a clarity, elegance of melodic line, and a strong sense of form.

Important works include:
Samson & Delilah (1877), *Requiem* (1878), *3 Symphonies* (1855/1878/1886), *Danse Macabre* (1874), *Le Rouet d'Omphale* (1871), *The Carnival of the Animals* (1886), *3 Violin Concertos*, *5 Piano Concertos*, *2 Cello Concertos* and much orchestral, chamber and vocal music.

The Elephant (L'Éléphant) is the fifth movement of *The Carnival of the Animals* and the double bass is accompanied by piano 2. Saint-Saëns parodied 'Danse des Sylphes' from *The Damnation of Faust* by Berlioz (bars 21-28) and a hint of the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (bars 29-32) - both melodies being as far away from the elephant as you can possibly get.
The original manuscript, held in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, shows that bars 21-28 were originally intended to be played one octave lower than the accepted version today (see bass part), making the inclusion of Berlioz's 'Danse des Sylphes' even more humorous when played in the lowest register. The confusion was begun by the first publication in 1922, transcribed by Lucien Garban and published by Durand et Cie, at the composer's wishes. Garban wrote bars 21-28 as the composer intended but then added that the double bass should play these eight bars one octave higher than written, as this edition was *'pour Violoncelle ou Contrebasse et Piano.'*

David Heyes (2002)

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