

# The Sorcerer's Apprentice Story

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

By

Paul Dukas

(1865-1935)

Paul Dukas was a French composer. He studied piano, harmony, and composition at the famous Paris Conservatory and later became a teacher of orchestration. One of his most well-known orchestra pieces is *L'Apprenti sorcier*, or as we call it today, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. This well-loved composition, written in 1897, was chosen by Walt Disney to be included in his animated anthology of music, *Fantasia*.

*The Sorcerer's Apprentice* is considered to be "program music" which is music in which the composer uses musical themes to describe a particular event, a narrative idea, or develop a character. Mr. Dukas based his symphonic work on a poem written by Goethe, a German poet.

A young boy from the village was apprenticed to a sorcerer. The young boy wanted to learn how to create magic, but all that he was allowed to do were chores: carrying water, picking up, and cleaning around the sorcerer's castle. He felt like a servant.

One day, as the sorcerer was getting ready to leave the castle, orders were given for the boy to carry water from the well and use it to scrub the floor in the *Great Hall*. As soon as the sorcerer left, the boy put on the sorcerer's special hat and sat down to look through the big book that contained the sorcerer's magic spells. He wanted to be like the sorcerer and do magic more than anything else. As he looked through the big book of spells, he found a spell that would bring inanimate objects to life. He got an idea! Instead of sweeping and mopping the castle floor, he would use magic and make the broom do it. Ha! He could sit back and relax and the broom could be HIS servant!

The boy practiced the magic words. Then he said them over the broom. At first nothing happened. Then, the broom suddenly moved. The broom sprouted arms. The boy quickly showed the broom how to pick up a bucket. The broom followed the young apprentice to the well where the boy demonstrated how to fill the bucket with water. The broom was to fill the large tub in the *Great Hall* with water so that it could be used to wash the floor.

The broom carried the bucket to the well, filled it with water, and carried it back to the tub in the castle. The tub was filled with water. The broom continued to carry more water from the well. Soon the tub was overflowing. The boy ordered the broom to stop but the broom continued on. Then remembering that he had used a magic spell on the broom, the boy frantically tried to find the special words that would make it stop. But the broom kept on going. Grabbing an ax, the boy chopped the broom into small pieces. Very pleased with

himself for finding a solution to this problem, the boy sat back in the sorcerer's chair and soon fell asleep.

The small pieces of the broom began to move. As the brooms grew, arms sprouted and these new brooms began to carry buckets to the well to be filled. Soon there was an entire army of brooms with buckets in hand, marching to the well, filling buckets with water, marching back to the castle, and filling the now overflowing tub with even more water. The water cascaded from the tub into the room. Waves of water washed up the walls of the Great Hall and the apprentice was cast afloat in his chair. As he tumbled into the water, the boy woke up and could not believe his eyes! More brooms than he could ever imagine were hard at work carrying water from the well and splashing it into the room that was now filled with water. The apprentice was powerless to stop them.

Just then, the sorcerer returned. He lifted his arms and in a loud voice spoke the necessary words to return all to its original order. He was angry at the boy. The apprentice knelt and begged for forgiveness, but the sorcerer pointed to the door indicating that the boy could not be trusted, that he must leave, and that he would not be given the opportunity to learn magic. Sadly, the boy turned to go. As the boy left, the sorcerer changed his mind and gave his young apprentice a spank instead.