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Saturday, **April 4th, 2015**, 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Paul Dukas, 150th Anniversary

Paul Dukas (1865–1935). [*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*](#) (1897)

Dukas. [*Symphony in C*](#) (1896)



Paul Dukas, age 30

There's one Paul Dukas work that overshadows everything else he wrote, and that's a shame because there's much more to him, the 150th anniversary of whose birth is in 2015, than that.

There's more to *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* than the Disney animated movie *Fantasia*, too, but one of the surprising things about the cartoon is how close its story is to the original poem. For it is a poem by Goethe, and except for the protagonist being an animated mouse, the movie follows Goethe quite well. The idea of appropriating power and using it without full knowledge, which leads to unintended consequences, is behind both the poem and the music. The apprentice speaks an incantation to make a broom fetch water, but it won't stop. Chopping it in half merely creates two brooms, which literally deepens the

problem, threatening catastrophe. Only when the apprentice realizes, helplessly, that he cannot control spirits he called, does the master return, and end the danger.

The story even predates the poem, which by the time of Dukas was already a century old. Goethe recalls the satirist Lucian, whose story *Philopseudes* or "Lover of lies," from about AD 150, takes aim at lying politicians, whose deceit brings about their own downfall.

Paul Dukas was well versed in the written word in addition to his career writing music. He was a music critic, and as with Karl Goldmark from last month's show, he struck a balance between artistic factions. Goldmark appreciated both Wagner and Brahms, and Dukas admired the tradition of Beethoven alongside the French progressivism of Debussy. Later, when he was a professor, he taught Maurice Duruflé, Joaquín Rodrigo, and the avant-garde Olivier Messiaen.

He also produced a work unusual for a French composer of the time: a symphony. We are fortunate to have it, because Dukas destroyed many of his works, making the ones still in existence even more dear. French composers were known for piano and chamber music and songs and operas, which Dukas created quite successfully, but apart from the 1888 César Franck Symphony in D there is not much French pure symphonic music from that period.

The Paul Dukas Symphony in C, however, is a wonderful addition to the repertoire, modern in spirit while traditional in structure. Like the Franck, it is in three, rather than what had become the standard four movements. It is filled with themes of beauty (three in the first movement, two in the second, and a cyclical Rondo for the third) and color. He was 30 when he wrote it. Dukas started a second symphony, but that, along with more operas, orchestral works, and other pieces, never saw the light of day.

So it's good that we can enjoy the Symphony in C, one of the fine works of Paul Dukas that *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, in all its popularity, all but washed away.