



ROYAL
COLLEGE
OF MUSIC
London

Exploring Leitmotifs

RCM Sparks is the Royal College of Music's learning and participation programme.
To find out more and get involved visit www.rcm.ac.uk/sparks



This activity pack explores leitmotifs in two magical film scores - Harry Potter and Sorcerer's Apprentice.

Harry Potter Suites

Fun Facts:

- The 8 Harry Potter films have 4 different composers!
- All the famous tunes were written by John Williams and then adapted by the other composers
- These themes are called ***leitmotifs**

*A ***leitmotif** is a theme that represents something, a person, place, thing. As the story within the music unfolds, the leitmotifs adapt

Paul Dukas, The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Fun Facts:

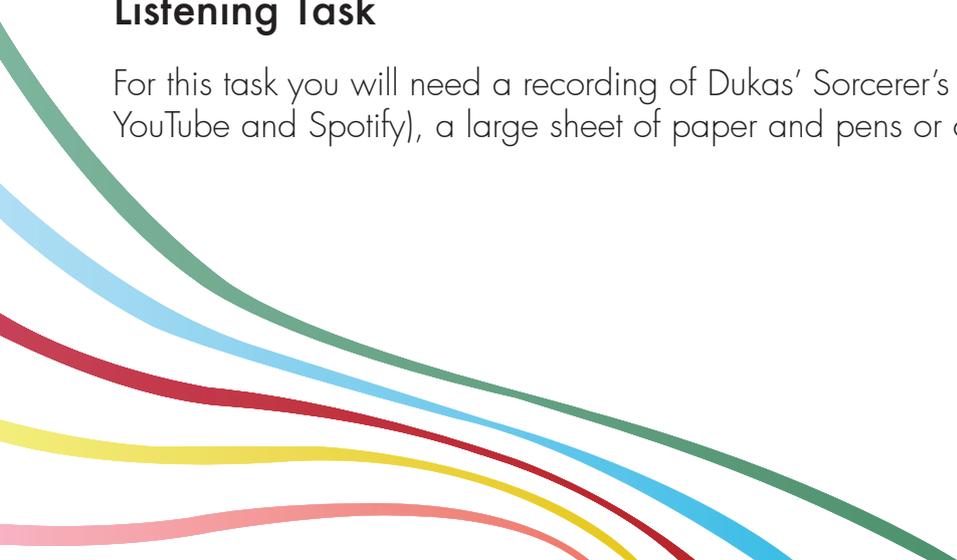
- Paul Dukas was a very shy and serious man who wrote very little music. He worried that his ideas weren't good enough for the public
- The Sorcerer's Apprentice started life as a story by a very famous writer called Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- It became very famous when it was used in Walt Disney's Fantasia.
- It also uses ***leitmotifs**

The story

A very famous and scary wizard (not Harry Potter!) leaves his assistant alone with the task of mopping the workroom. Bored by the task the apprentice casts a spell that makes the broom come to life to do the work for him. Things quickly get very, very chaotic.....!

Listening Task

For this task you will need a recording of Dukas' Sorcerer's Apprentice (there are many on YouTube and Spotify), a large sheet of paper and pens or coloured pencils



Dukas's piece uses this very famous tune:

1. Broomstick



Place your paper landscape in front of you (long side bottom and top) and divide it into eight sections by folding it lengthways and then into four. Number your boxes like this:

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8

Listen to Dukas's Sorcerer's Apprentice and try to spot the broomstick theme every time you hear it. Try to draw what's going on in the story like a cartoon, filling in the boxes 1 – 8 as you go. Use the broomstick theme to help you - if the theme is loud and dancing, the broom is too!

Be careful you don't draw too much of the story too early on, the eight boxes could divide up like this:

Leitmotif 1: Introduction (just hints of the broomstick tune)

Leitmotifs 2, 3 & 4: Broomstick theme getting bigger each time

Leitmotif 5: Axe!

Leitmotif 6: Broomstick babies!

Leitmotif 7: Many broomsticks causing chaos

Leitmotif 8: Wizard arrives, everything stops

Taking it further -

Dukas's piece is actually made up of four simple *leitmotifs. Here are the other three:

2. Magic (this theme also represents water)



Slow, shimmering, swooping, heard first in the piece

3. The Apprentice



Jerky and dance-like

4. The spell (also represents the Wizard when he returns)



Loud, short-long rhythm

You can hear these motifs back-to-back during the very beginning of Dukas's music

Listen out for them as you draw. Can you add them onto your cartoon too?

The Harry Potter composers also use ***leitmotifs**. So you could re-do this task using any of the music from the films.