Dukas was a very important French composer, musician and teacher. He started composing when he was 14, and then went to the Paris Conservatoire (music college) when he was 16. By the age of 18, Dukas was writing symphonic poems (orchestral pieces exploring a story, image or written poem) and became greatly inspired by the work of the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). He enjoyed his work as a composition teacher, and worked at the Paris Conservatoire throughout his life. In 1928, he eventually became the Professor of Composition there, teaching many composers who would achieve their own future successes (Messiaen, Duruflé, Lefevre).

Dukas enjoyed writing operas, programmatic music (intended to evoke a particular idea) and orchestral works. He preferred to spend a lot of time writing a piece which meant he only composed a relatively small amount of music during his lifetime. Dukas was very critical of the music he composed and ended up destroying quite a lot of his own work. His symphonic poem The Sorcerer's Apprentice (1897) became popular soon after it was first performed, and is now Dukas’ most famous work.

What inspired Dukas’ The Sorcerer’s Apprentice?

Dukas was inspired by Goethe’s poem The Sorcerer’s Apprentice (http://germanstories.vcu.edu/goethe/zauber_e4.html) and used the story of the curious apprentice to create a mysterious and magical piece. In 1940 Dukas’ music featured as part of the soundtrack to Walt Disney’s Fantasia (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWyxGadPD5s).
LISTEN

First listening – with/without sharing the name of the piece or composer. Teacher/Musicat to choose whether to play whole piece or a specific section/s.

First impressions:

- What comes to mind immediately?
- What do you notice about the music eg tempo, dynamics, pitch; what about the rhythm?
- What about the instruments? Can you identify any of them?
- How does the music change or develop?
- What do you imagine when you are listening to it?
- Does the music make you feel a particular way? (it doesn’t matter if not).
- Do you have a favourite/least favourite part?

EXPLORE

- This piece uses the whole orchestra to tell the story and is a good opportunity for children to start recognising instruments and motifs:
  - A simple activity could involve listening to a small extract of the piece, giving actions to the different motifs (a motif is a repeated pattern or musical idea) and asking the children to do the actions when they hear it in the music.
  - Ask the children to listen to the piece and draw the type of characters/place the music makes them think of.
  - Discuss what they have come up with, if there are any similarities in their class, and why the music made them think a particular way.

- Children could create diagrams and drawings to represent the motifs, using different colours and shapes. Think about why Dukas would have chosen to write what he did, what the motifs make us think of, and where else we hear these sorts of ideas (films/TV shows/theatre). You could illustrate the magic motif with:
  - high wavy lines to represent the strings, or circles going upwards to represent the flute melody. These instruments and high notes make us think of magic; in a pantomime you hear this type of music when The Fairy Godmother appears.

DO

- Once the children know the story of The Sorcerer’s Apprentice they could listen to sections of the piece and create short mime sequences to tell the story of what is happening at a particular point, e.g. when the apprentice gets bored and decides to enchant the broom or when the spell starts to go wrong.
• Compose their own musical motifs using voices, percussion and any other instruments to tell their own story, or a story based on a poem of their choosing.

• Write their own narrative for the story.

• Combine the story and musical motifs, with children narrating the musical motifs they have created.

DID YOU KNOW??

• Dukas was friends with many French composers and musicians – writing piano music for Saint Saëns and Debussy.
• The Sorcerer’s Apprentice became so famous across the world that it annoyed Dukas.
• Dukas believed that the music people wrote should show how they are feeling and would tell his students, “Always remember that music should be written from the heart and not the head”
• The Sorcerer’s Apprentice was also made into a ballet and performed in 1916 so even more people could hear the piece
• Disney made the Fantasia film because they wanted Mickey Mouse to become more popular, everyone liked Donald Duck too much!