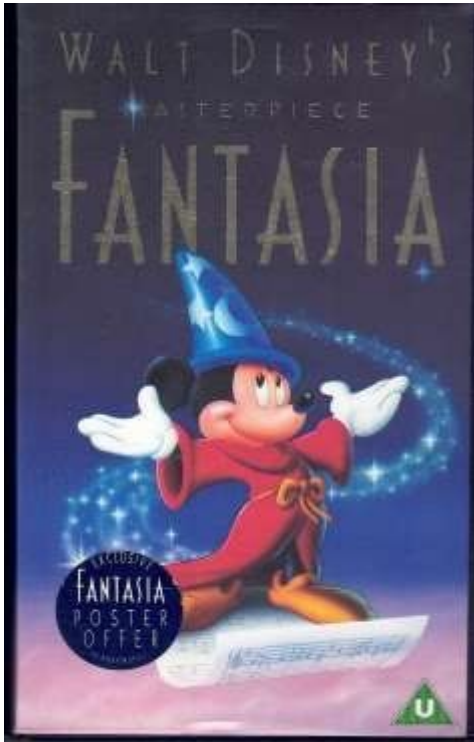


VHS F-M1

The Paragon Multimedia DVD, VHS Collection

Title: **Fantasia**



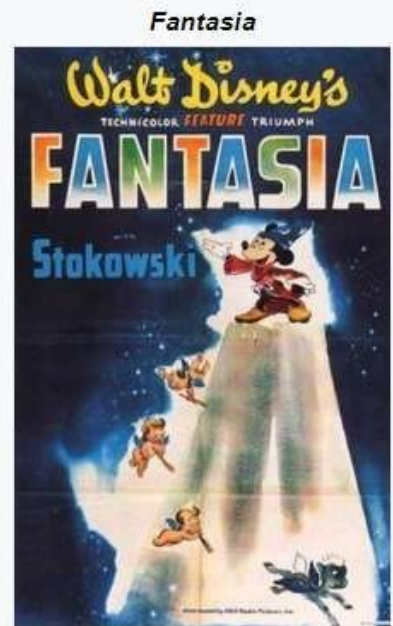
Library Image

ISBN: 5017182113225

Information

Release **Title:** Fantasia - The Movie
1940s (United Kingdom)

From:
AKA:
Release date: 1940s
Origin: United States
Genres: Orchestral Music and Animation
VHS Nos. - 1
Certification: U
Duration: 2h 6m
Region Code:
Region: 2
Product Code:
MPN:
EAN:
UPC:
Languages: English
Filming locations:
Sound mix: Stereo Digitally Mastered, Dolby Surround Sound
Colour: PAL Technicolor
Aspect Ratio:1.39:1



Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Samuel Armstrong James Algar Bill Roberts Paul Satterfield Ben Sharpsteen David D. Hand Hamilton Luske Jim Handley Ford Beebe T. Hee Norman Ferguson Wilfred Jackson
Story by	Joe Grant Dick Huemer
Produced by	Walt Disney Ben Sharpsteen
Starring	Leopold Stokowski Deems Taylor
Narrated by	Deems Taylor
Cinematography	James Wong Howe
Music by	See program
Production company	Walt Disney Productions
Distributed by	RKO Radio Pictures
Release date	November 13, 1940
Running time	126 minutes ^[1]
Country	United States
Language	English
Budget	\$2.28 million ^{[2][3]}
Box office	\$76.4–\$83.3 million (United States and Canada) ^{[4][5]}

Storyline

Fantasia opens with live action scenes of members of an orchestra gathering against a blue background and tuning their instruments in half-light, half-shadow. Master of ceremonies Deems Taylor enters the stage (also in half-light, half-shadow) and introduces the program.

Toccata and Fugue in D Minor by Johann Sebastian Bach. Live-action shots of the orchestra illuminated in blue and gold, backed by superimposed shadows, fade into abstract patterns. Animated lines, shapes and cloud formations reflect the sound and rhythms of the music.

The Nutcracker Suite by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Selections from the 1892 ballet suite underscore scenes depicting the changing of the seasons from summer to autumn to winter. A variety of dances are presented with fairies, fish, flowers, mushrooms, and leaves, including "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy", "Chinese Dance", "Arabian Dance", "Russian Dance", "Dance of the Flutes" and "Waltz of the Flowers".

The Sorcerer's Apprentice by Paul Dukas. Based on Goethe's 1797 poem "Der Zauberlehrling". Mickey Mouse, the young apprentice of the sorcerer Yen Sid, attempts some of his master's magic tricks but does not know how to control them.

Rite of Spring by Igor Stravinsky. A visual history of the Earth's beginnings is depicted to selected sections of the ballet score. The sequence progresses from the planet's formation to the first living creatures, followed by the reign and extinction of the dinosaurs.

Intermission/Meet the Soundtrack: The orchestra musicians depart and the Fantasia title card is revealed. After the intermission there is a brief jam session of jazz music led by a clarinetist as the orchestra members return. Then a humorously stylized demonstration of how sound is rendered on film is shown. An animated sound track "character", initially a straight white line, changes into different shapes and colour based on the sounds played.

The Pastoral Symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven. A mythical Greco-Roman world of colourful centaurs and "centaurettes", cupids, fauns and other figures from classical mythology is portrayed to Beethoven's music. A gathering for a festival to honour Bacchus, the god of wine, is interrupted by Zeus, who creates a storm and directs Vulcan to forge lightning bolts for him to throw at the attendees.

Dance of the Hours by Amilcare Ponchielli. A comic ballet in four sections: Madame Upanova and her ostriches (Morning); Hyacinth Hippo and her servants (Afternoon); Elephanchine and her bubble-blowing elephant troupe (Evening); and Ben Ali Gator and his troop of alligators (Night). The finale finds all of the characters dancing together until their palace collapses.

Night on Bald Mountain by Modest Mussorgsky and Ave Maria by Franz Schubert. At midnight the devil Chernabog awakes and summons evil spirits and restless souls from their graves to Bald Mountain. The spirits dance and fly through the air until driven back by the sound of an Angelus bell as night fades into dawn. A chorus is heard singing Ave Maria as a line of robed monks is depicted walking with lighted torches through a forest and into the ruins of a cathedral.

Development

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Leopold Stokowski conducted the film's score.

In 1936, Walt Disney felt that the Disney studio's star character Mickey Mouse needed a boost in popularity. He decided to feature the mouse in The Sorcerer's Apprentice, a deluxe cartoon short based on the 1797 poem written by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and set to the 1897 orchestral piece by Paul Dukas inspired by the original tale. The concept of matching animation to classical music was used as early as 1928 in Disney's cartoon series, the Silly Symphonies, but he wanted to go beyond the usual slapstick, and produce shorts where "sheer fantasy unfolds ... action controlled by a musical pattern has great charm in the realm of unreality." Upon receiving the rights to use the music by the end of July 1937, Disney considered using a well-known conductor to record the music for added prestige. He happened to meet Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra since 1912, at Chasen's restaurant in Hollywood, and talked about his plans for the short. Stokowski recalled that he did "like the music"; was happy to collaborate on the project, and offered to conduct the piece at no cost.

Following their meeting, Disney's New York representative ran into Stokowski on a train headed for the East Coast. In writing to Disney, he reported that Stokowski was "really serious in his offer to do the music for nothing. He had some very interesting ideas on instrumental colouring, which would be perfect for an animation medium". In his excited response dated October 26, 1937, Disney wrote that he felt "all steamed up over the idea of Stokowski working with us ... The union of Stokowski and his music, together with the best of our medium, would be the means of a success and

should lead to a new style of motion picture presentation." He had already begun working on a story outline, and wished to use "the finest men ... from colour ... down to animators" on the short. The Sorcerer's Apprentice was to be promoted as a "special" and rented to theatres as a unique film, outside of the Mickey Mouse cartoon series.

An agreement signed by Disney and Stokowski on December 16, 1937, allowed the conductor to "select and employ a complete symphony orchestra" for the recording. Stokowski was paid \$5,000 for his work. Disney hired a stage at the Culver Studios in California for the session. It began at midnight on January 9, 1938, and lasted for three hours using eighty-five Hollywood musicians.

Expansion to feature film

As production costs of The Sorcerer's Apprentice climbed to \$125,000, it became clearer to Disney and his brother Roy, who managed the studio's finances, that the short could never earn such a sum back on its own. Roy wanted his brother to keep any additional costs on the film to a minimum. He said, "because of its very experimental and unprecedented nature ... we have no idea what can be expected from such a production." Ben Sharpsteen, a production supervisor on *Fantasia*, noted that its budget was three to four times greater than the usual *Silly Symphony*, but Disney "saw this trouble in the form of an opportunity. This was the birth of a new concept, a group of separate numbers—regardless of their running time—put together in a single presentation. It turned out to be a concert—something novel and of high quality."

Ideas to produce a complete feature film were pursued in February 1938, when inquiries were made to extend Stokowski's contract. In August, Disney asked Stokowski's representative to have him return to the studios to select material for the new film, which was initially titled *The Concert Feature*. Disney agreed to pay Stokowski \$80,000 plus royalties for his services. The pair further thought of presenting the film with an on-screen host to introduce each number in the program. Both had heard composer and music critic Deems Taylor provide intermission commentary during radio broadcasts of the New York Philharmonic, and agreed he would be most suitable for the role. Disney did contact Taylor about the project, but by then work on *Pinocchio*, *Bambi*, and development on his new Burbank studio kept him too busy to work on the new feature. In a change of plans, Taylor was asked during a call on September 3, 1938, leave to come to the studios as soon as possible. He left New York City for Los Angeles by train two days later for a month's visit.

Story meetings and program selection

Deems Taylor was the film's Master of Ceremonies, who introduced each segment in live-action interstitial scenes. Taylor arrived at the studio one day after a series of meetings began to select the musical pieces for *The Concert Feature*. Disney made story writers Joe Grant and Dick Huemer gather a preliminary selection of music and along with Stokowski, Taylor, and the heads of various departments, discussed their ideas. Each meeting was recorded verbatim by stenographers with participants being given a copy of the entire conversation for review. As selections were considered, a recording of the piece was located and played back at the next gathering. Disney did not contribute much to early discussions; he admitted that his knowledge of music was instinctive and untrained. In one meeting, he inquired about a piece "on which we might build something of a prehistoric theme ... with animals". The group was considering *The Firebird* by Igor Stravinsky, but Taylor noted that his "*Le Sacre du printemps* would be something on that order", to which Disney replied upon hearing a recording, "This is marvelous! It would be perfect for prehistoric animals. There would be something terrific in dinosaurs, flying lizards, and prehistoric monsters. There could be beauty in the settings."

Numerous choices were discarded as talks continued, including *Moto Perpetuo* by Niccolò Paganini with "shots of dynamos, cogs, pistons" and "whirling wheels" to show the production of a collar button. Other deleted material included *Prelude in G minor* and *Troika* by Sergei Rachmaninoff, and a rendition of "*The Song of the Flea*" by Mussorgsky, which was to be sung by Lawrence Tibbett. On September 29, 1938, around sixty of Disney's artists gathered for a two-and-a-half-hour piano concert while he provided a running commentary about the new musical feature. A rough version of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* was also shown that, according to one attendee, had the crowd applauding and cheering "until their hands were red". The final pieces were chosen the following morning, which included *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*, *Cydalise et le Chèvre-pied* by Gabriel Pierné, *The Nutcracker Suite*, *Night on Bald Mountain*, *Ave Maria*, *Dance of the Hours*, *Clair de Lune* by Claude Debussy, *The Rite of Spring* and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Disney had already begun working out the details for the segments, and showed greater enthusiasm and eagerness as opposed to his anxiety while starting on *Pinocchio*.

Clair de Lune was soon removed from the *Fantasia* program, but Disney and his writers' encountered problems of setting a concrete story to *Cydalise*. Its opening march, "*The Entry of the Little Fauns*", attracted Disney to the piece

which at first provided suitable depictions of fauns he wanted. On January 5, 1939, following a search for a stronger piece to fit the mythological theme, the piece was replaced with sections of Beethoven's sixth symphony. Stokowski disagreed with the switch, believing that Disney's "idea of mythology ... is not quite what this symphony is about". He was also concerned about the reception from classical music enthusiasts who would criticize Disney for venturing too far from the composer's intent. Taylor on the other hand welcomed the change, describing it as "a stunning one", and saw "no possible objection to it".

The new feature continued to be known as The Concert Feature or Musical Feature as late as November 1938. Hal Horne, a publicist for Disney's film distributor RKO Radio Pictures, wished for a different title, and gave the suggestion Film harmonic Concert. Stuart Buchanan then held a contest at the studio for a title that produced almost 1,800 suggestions including Bach to Stravinsky and Bach and Highbrowski by Stokowski. Still, the favourite among the film's supervisors was Fantasia, an early working title that had even grown on Horne, "It isn't the word alone but the meaning we read into it." From the beginning of its development, Disney expressed the greater importance of music in Fantasia compared to his past work: "In our ordinary stuff, our music is always under action, but on this ... we're supposed to be picturing this music—not the music fitting our story." Disney had hoped that the film would bring classical music to people who, like himself, had previously "walked out on this kind of stuff".

Segments

Over 1,000 artists and technicians were used in the making of Fantasia, which features more than 500 animated characters. Segments were colour-keyed scene by scene so the colour in a single shot would harmonize between preceding and following ones. Before a segment's narrative pattern was complete, an overall colour scheme was designed to the general mood of the music, and patterned to correspond with the development of the subject matter. The studio's character model department would also sculpt three-dimensional clay models so the animators could view their subject from all angles. The live action scenes were filmed using the three-strip Technicolor process, while the animated segments were shot in successive yellow, cyan and magenta-exposed frames. The different pieces of film were then spliced together to form a complete print. A multiplane camera that could handle seven levels, three more than the old multiplane camera, was built.

Toccata and Fugue in D Minor

Disney had been interested in producing abstract animation since he saw A Colour Box by Len Lye from 1935. He explained the work done in the Toccata and Fugue was "no sudden idea ... they were something we had nursed along several years but we never had a chance to try". Preliminary designs included those from effects animator Cy Young, who produced drawings influenced by the patterns on the edge of a piece of sound film. In late 1938, Disney hired Oskar Fischinger, a German artist who had produced numerous abstract animated films, including some with classical music, to work with Young. Upon review of three Leica reels produced by the two, Disney rejected all three. According to Huemer all Fischinger "did was little triangles and designs ... it didn't come off at all. Too dinky, Walt said." Fischinger, like Disney, was used to having full control over his work and not used to working in a group. Feeling his designs were too abstract for a mass audience, Fischinger left the studio in apparent despair, before the segment was completed, in October 1939. Disney had plans to make the Toccata and Fugue an experimental three-dimensional film, with audiences being given cardboard stereoscopic frames with their souvenir programs, but this idea was abandoned.

The Nutcracker Suite

In The Nutcracker Suite, animator Art Babbitt is said to have credited The Three Stooges as a guide for animating the dancing mushrooms in the Chinese Dance routine. He drew with a music score pinned to his desk to work out the choreography so he could relate the action to the melody and the counterpoint, "those nasty little notes underneath ... so something has to be related to that". The studio filmed professional dancers Joyce Coles and Marjorie Belcher wearing ballet skirts that resembled shapes of blossoms that were to sit above water for Dance of the Flutes. An Arabian dancer was also brought in to study the movements for the goldfish in Arab Dance. Jules Engel also worked on the choreography and colour-keying for this sequence. To avoid hard ink outlines, new techniques like transparent paint was used on the cels. The snowflakes used in the snowflake fairies' sequence was difficult to draw by hand, so a man named Leonard Pickley, from the Special Effects Department, came up with the idea of using stop-motion animation. Diagrams of real snowflakes were traced by the Ink and Paint Department, who used a material a little heavier than regular cels, and painted them in translucent white. They were then cut out and placed on revolving spools attached to small steel rails. The mechanics was hidden under black velvet as the snowflakes were moved one frame at the time. The hand-drawn animation was added later.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice

Disney acting out a scene in *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* for Taylor and Stokowski.

Animation on *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* began on January 21, 1938, when James Algar, the director of the segment, assigned animator Preston Blair to work on the scene when Mickey Mouse wakes from his dream.[43] Each of the seven hundred members of staff at the time received a synopsis of Goethe's 1797 poem *Der Zauberlehrling*, and were encouraged to complete a twenty-question form that requested their ideas on what action might take place.[53] Layout artist Tom Codrick created what Dick Huemer described as "brilliantly colored thumbnails" from preliminary storyboard sketches using gouache paints, which featured bolder use of colour and lighting than any previous Disney short. Mickey was redesigned by animator Fred Moore who added pupils to his eyes for the first time to achieve greater ranges of expression. Most of the segment was shot in live action, including a scene where a UCLA athlete was asked to run and jump across one of the studio's sound stages with barrels in the way, which was used for reference when Mickey traverses through water.

Rite of Spring

An early concept for *Rite of Spring* was to extend the story to the age of mammals and the first humans and the discovery of fire and man's triumph. John Hubley, the segment's art director, explained that it was later curtailed by Disney to avoid controversy from creationists, who promised to make trouble should he connect evolution with humans. To gain a better understanding of the history of the planet the studio received guidance from Roy Chapman Andrews, the director of the American Museum of Natural History, English biologist Julian Huxley, paleontologist Barnum Brown, and astronomer Edwin Hubble. Animators studied comets and nebulae at the Mount Wilson Observatory, and observed a herd of iguanas and a baby alligator that were brought into the studio. The viewpoint was kept low throughout the segment to heighten the immensity of the dinosaurs.

The Pastoral Symphony

According to Ward Kimball, the animators were "extremely specific on touchy issues". In the making of *The Pastoral Symphony* Greek mythological segment, the female centaurs were originally drawn bare-breasted, but the Hays office enforcing the Motion Picture Production Code insisted that they discreetly hung garlands around the necks. The male centaurs were also toned down to appear less intimidating to the audience. Originally, the segment included a pair of black centaurs who tended to the others, but these were cut from the film in later releases for sensitivity reasons (see § Controversies).

Dance of the Hours

Dance of the Hours was directed by Norman Ferguson and Thornton Hee and was completed by eleven animators. Most of the story was outlined in a meeting in October 1938, including the creation of the main alligator character, Ben Ali Gator. Its story, direction, layout, and animation underwent several rewrites, yet Disney wanted to present animals perform a legitimate caricature ballet sequence with comedic "slips". The design of the elephants and alligators were based on those by German illustrator Heinrich Kley, while the hippos and ostriches were based on those by cartoonist T. S. Sullivan. To gain a better idea on the animals' movements, the crew visited Griffith Park Zoo in Los Angeles. Animator John Hench was assigned to work on the segment, but resisted as he knew little about ballet. Disney then gave Hench season tickets to the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo with backstage access so he could learn more about it.

The studio filmed several people in live action to help with the animation of the characters. The lead ostrich, Madmoiselle Upanova, is based on Irina Baronova. Hyacinth Hippo, the prima ballerina, was inspired by dancers Marge Champion and Tatiana Riabouchinska and actress Hattie Noel who weighed over 200 pounds (91 kg), the animators studying the "least quiver of her flesh, noticing those parts of her anatomy that were subjected to the greatest stress and strain". Riabouchinska's husband David Lichine was used for Ben Ali Gator's movements.

Night on Bald Mountain and Ave Maria

Night on Bald Mountain was directed by Wilfred Jackson. Its story closely follows the descriptions that Mussorgsky had written on his original score of the tone poem. Chernabog was animated by Vladimir "Bill" Tytla, his design inspired from a pencil sketch by Swiss artist Albert Hurter of a demon sitting atop a mountain unfolding its wings. Despite Hurter never producing animation for Disney, the studio temporarily hired him to produce pencil sketches for the animators to gain inspiration from. Chernabog and parts of the segment were developed further by Danish-born illustrator Kay Nielsen. Tytla conducted research on all the characters he had animated and being Ukrainian, was familiar with the folklore that the story detailed. Actor Béla Lugosi, best known for his role in *Dracula* (1931), was brought in to provide reference poses for Chernabog, but Tytla disliked the results. He then got Jackson to pose shirtless which gave him the images he needed. At one point in its development, the idea of using black cats to represent evil was considered, but Disney rejected it as he thought cats had always been used.

The film's program reads that Ave Maria provides "an emotional relief to audiences tense from the shock" of Night on Bald Mountain. Disney did not want much animated movement, but wanted the segment to bring the background artwork to the forefront. An early story outline had the segment end with a Madonna presented on the screen with the clouds, but Disney decided against this as he did not want to suggest overly religious imagery. There were ideas of releasing scents throughout the theatre during Fantasia, including the smell of incense during Ave Maria.

The lyrics to Ave Maria were sung by Julietta Novis. On the sleeve notes of the LP version of the sound track, Disney acknowledged the original words, as written by Sir Walter Scott, but said that it had been decided to use words specially written for Fantasia by the distinguished American author Rachel Field.

Video

Fantasia has received four home video releases. The first, featuring the 1990 restored theatrical version, was released on VHS, Betamax and Laserdisc on November 1, 1991, as part of the Walt Disney Classics line. The original soundtrack returned when Fantasound was also recreated in Dolby Stereo for the film's 1990 theatrical release. The result, named "Fantasound 90," was used as a basis of the audio for these releases. The release was limited to just 50 days, prompting 9.25 million advance orders for cassettes and a record 200,000 for discs, doubling the figure of the previous record. The "Deluxe Edition" package included the film, a "making of" feature, a commemorative lithograph, a 16-page booklet, a two-disc soundtrack of the Stokowski score, and a certificate of authenticity signed by Roy E. Disney, the nephew of Walt. In 1992, Fantasia became the biggest-selling sell-through cassette of all time in the US with 14.2 million copies being purchased. The record was surpassed later that year by Beauty and the Beast. By October 1994, 21.7 million copies of the video had been sold worldwide. The video portion of this was also released outside of the U.S. as a DVD in 2000, again under the "Walt Disney Classics" banner (but with 5.1 surround sound featured in the 2000 US DVD release).

In November 2000, Fantasia was released on video for the second time, this time along with Fantasia 2000, on DVD with 5.1 surround sound. The films were issued both separately and in a three-disc set called The Fantasia Anthology. A variety of bonus features were included in the bonus disc, The Fantasia Legacy. This edition attempted to follow as closely as possible the runtime and format of the original roadshow version, and included additional restored live action footage of Taylor and the orchestra, including the bookends to the film's intermission. Since the 2000 release, Taylor's voice was re-recorded throughout by Corey Burton because most of the audio tracks to Taylor's restored scenes had deteriorated to the point that they could no longer be used.

Both films were reissued again by Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment in November 2010 separately, as a two-disc DVD/Blu-ray set and a combined DVD and Blu-ray four-disc set (named the "Fantasia 2 Movie Collection") that featured 1080p high-definition video and 7.1 surround sound. The 2010 version of Fantasia featured a new restoration by Reliance MediaWorks and a new sound restoration, but was editorially identical to the 2000 version. This also marked the first time in Europe, where it was originally denied a release due to the war, that the roadshow version was released. Fantasia was withdrawn from release and returned to the "Disney Vault" moratorium on April 30, 2011.

In 2021, both films, along with the 2018 compilation Celebrating Mickey, a collection of 13 Mickey Mouse shorts, were reissued on DVD, Blu-ray, and digitally as part of the U.S. Disney Movie Club Exclusive the Best of Mickey Collection. They were also released for the first time on multiple U.S. purchased streaming platforms, including Movies Anywhere and its retailers.

(Courtesy Wikipedia 2023)

Parents Guide

Certification U

