

Preface

The times when children had to memorize ballads like *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) in school are – unfortunately? – long gone. Yet the wisdom of these poems will continue to exist as long as humans exist themselves. The story of the sorcerer's apprentice, first who unleashes the spirits of nature and then fails to tame them ("I have forgotten what the magic word may be"), is a symbol of a fundamental dilemma of human nature: Every discovery that aims to utilize nature – be it fire or nuclear fission – is a threat at the same time.

I remember that, as a child, I got goose bumps when I heard the story of the sorcerer's apprentice, even before I really understood its essence. Later, when I first encountered Paul Dukas' genius Scherzo for orchestra, I was entirely captivated: There is no better way to musically depict how the initially harmless game of the apprentice turns into a massive threat. Dukas must also have had a tremendous feel for the rhythm of the German language. The bassoon theme that illustrates "The sorcerer, my old master, left ..." captures all emotions of the beginning of the ballad, thus inspiring me to imagine a pointed nose or the broomstick's angry face. Thus, a long time ago, I transcribed the story for puppet theatre.

Later, when I arranged an increasing number of works for cello ensemble, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* crossed my mind again. First, I thought of an arrangement for eight cellos, but it became quite clear to me that the true terror of the story only transpires upon reducing the vast orchestral score to one single cello part. This idea itself mirrors the apprentice's foolishness that results in his seemingly unresolvable situation.

As Dukas composed his piece along the story of the poem, it seems only logical to add the text to this score. Our edition shows only one of many options how to place the text, and naturally this could work with English or French (or other) translations as well – we do not see any limits to the player's creativity.

The realization of the instrumental part, however, might push a cellist's boundaries, thus sharing fate with the sorcerer's apprentice. Do not give up – I managed too! Yet I have to admit that I was fortunate enough to have the wonderful soprano Angelika Kirchschrager by my side when this version of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* was premiered at the Konzerthaus in Vienna on 25 November 2015.

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