*FANTASIA* (1940)

*Fantasia* is an animated American film produced by Walt Disney. The film consists of eight animated segments, of which ‘The Sorcerer’s Apprentice’ is the most famous one. Apart from the ‘The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,’ all segments of the film are set to the music of well-known Western classical composers, performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra and conducted by Leopold Stokowski. Live action introductions by composer and music critic Deems Taylor link each segment. *Fantasia* was the first film to utilize stereophonic sound, referred to by Disney as ‘Fantasound’. In bringing together high art (classical music) with popular culture (animation), *Fantasia* demonstrates the modernist tendency to disregard cultural hierarchy and traditional distinctions between genres – an act that stirred controversy when the film was first released. The film employs an eclectic approach, splicing together pieces of music from longer symphonies and depicting heterogeneous subject matter, from characters based on Greek mythology to a literalistic portrayal of the extinction of the dinosaurs. The style of the animation, characterized by intricate multilayered images produced by multiplane cameras, draws from diverse modernist sources. The influence of surrealism, art-deco, modernist abstraction, combined with the more traditional influences of Romantic nineteenth-century painting and academic art, are all evident in its visual imagery. Both critically praised and widely popular, *Fantasia* was named number 5 in the American Film Institute’s top ten best animated films, and number 58 in their list of the 100 best American films.

References and Further Reading:

Allan, R. (1999) *Walt Disney and Europe: European Influences on the Animated Feature*

*Films of Walt Disney*, London: John Libbey & Company.

Culhane, J. (1983) *Walt Disney’s Fantasia*, New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Leslie, E. (2002) *Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant-Garde*,

London; New York: Verso.

Paratextual Material:

- Numerous stills from the film, including this one from the Sorcerer’s Apprentice, can be found at the Internet Movie Database: <http://www.imdb.com/media/rm766750720/tt0032455?ref_=ttmd_md_nxt>