



MICKEY, the sorcerer's apprentice

# WALT DISNEY HAS

## The New CINESYMPHONY Stars Mickey Mouse And Stokowski

WALT DISNEY, the greatest innovator in twentieth century entertainment, has made history once again. His new film, "Fantasia," is described in this article, which is based on facts secured from *Time*, the American magazine, and published in *The Listener* by arrangement with the editors of *Time*.

In his technicoloured cartoons, from the infantile "Mickey Mouse" to the adult "Snow White" and "Pinocchio," Disney has already combined old methods to make a new world of entertainment. He joined the fairytale to the screen.

In "Fantasia" it seems that he has created an ever braver and brighter new world. He has combined the film and the fairytale, the cartoon, and great music. The result is what *Time* calls the "cinesymphony." It has just been previewed in America. There is as yet no word about the possibility of its coming to New Zealand. Even Disney's distributors (RKO) do not know whether it will appear here or go with the wind like one other famous picture.

A primeval world "Rite of Spring" illustrates Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring." This has the same effect on highbrow audiences as swing on jitterbugs. It has made them shout and pound each other in their ecstasy. The men working on it had to be quarantined from their fellows in the Disney lot because Beethoven's dulcet Sixth Symphony just would not mix with the hectic Stravinsky. Everything from brontosaurus to the archaeopteryx peopled the planet drawn for Stravinsky's cosmic hullabaloo.

By startling his audience with such stuff as this, Disney gets over his initial difficulty: that neither himself nor any of his artists is a Gustave Doré to do justice to the giant strides of the composers whose shadows they have worked with.

"Fantasia" as a whole leaves its audiences gasping, because Disney has been bold, and his audiences will be frightened as often as they are delighted. He has even risked being flippant. For Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony" he created centaurs and centaurettes, with Pegasus, Mrs. Pegasus, and several little Pegasi gambolling around. Bacchus and his crew are well drenched when the storm comes up.

"Fantasia" fills a long succession of very large orders, from the Pierian-well-water of Johann Sebastian Bach to the violet-bordered stream of Schubert's "Ave Maria." Many of the orders are so beautifully filled that they have left critics no longer callous but whispering incredulously among themselves.

"FANTASIA" comes from a bigger conception than anything Disney has used previously. It is a symphony concert on the screen, starring Mickey Mouse, Leopold Stokowski, Bach, Beethoven, Stravinsky, Dukas, Tchaikovsky, Moussorgsky, Schubert; the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, and a revolutionary technique of sound recording.

The cine cartoon is already an old form of entertainment, but it still appeals to the popular mind, and all the great audience it carries with it will be diverted, willy-nilly, to the symphony as an entertainment form when the impact of Disney's cinesymphony is felt. "Fantasia" is a new treatment of great music, a new use for the film cartoon, and a completely new dimension in entertainment.

For several years Disney has had the idea. Even before "Snow White" he vaguely thought about doing a serious opera in the same method. In 1929 he

turned Saint-Saens's "Danse Macabre" into a silly symphony. In 1938 he was making Paul Dukas's "Sorcerer's Apprentice" into a Mickey Mouse short when Stokowski, visiting Hollywood, asked to be allowed to conduct the music.

### Too Good for a Short

When the recordings were done, and most of the animation completed by Disney's army of artists, the film began to look too good for a short and too expensive for anything but a feature. And Stokowski had been calling up so many fresh ideas that Disney began to be really interested. They decided between them to build up a whole programme of cinesymphonies.

"Fantasia" was begun there and then in Disney's big new studio.

They chose highbrow music. The small orchestra with which they had worked was replaced with Stokowski's own magnificent Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, which made all the recordings in the acoustically perfect Academy of Music, in Philadelphia.

Technicians dispensed with even the best of ordinary sound equipment and developed new methods. Each section of the big orchestra was caught on to a separate sound track, and the whole blended into a master track on which every faint breath of the least of all the instruments could be caught as accurately as the conductor demanded. Working with Bill Garrity, expert sound engineer, Stokowski cut 430,000 feet of sound track into a near-perfect 11,953 feet.

When the recordings were played back engineers were astonished to find that the sound followed characters across the screen, chased ideas up to the ceiling of the studio, rolled around the walls, whispered into the ears of the wondering listeners.

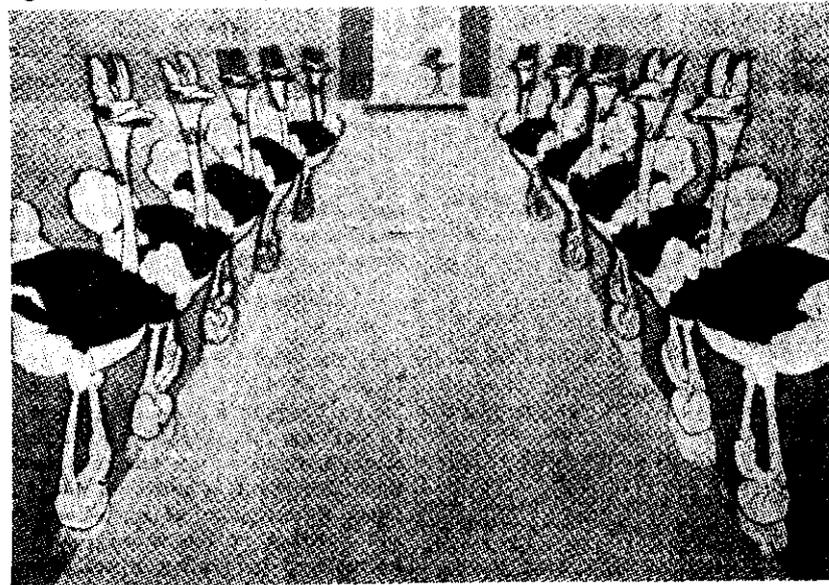
### Music Everywhere

At the preview the music came not simply from the screen but from everywhere in the Manhattan theatre. It seemed as if the hearer were in the very midst of the music. It frothed over the proscenium arch, boiled into the rear

of the theatre, waltzed up and down the aisles.

The new sound equipment was the pride of its creators, who claimed that it would revolutionise cinema production like nothing since technicolour.

Meanwhile, the artists were busy. While the Disney lot sounded with classical music, while engineers who had never heard of Beethoven began whistling concertos in the bath, the idea men



OSTRICHES MAKE THE BALLET for Ponchielli's "Dance of the Hours," and Ben Ali Gator is premier danseur

were picturing the music for the screen.

The film opens with the sounds of a big orchestra tuning. It appears on the screen huge, hazy. A musical commentator introduces Stokowski, and the show is on.

And what a show!

With Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" the ballet on the screen turns into flowers, fairies, fish, falling leaves, mushrooms. Mickey Mouse appears in the title role of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice."

### Eerie Fantasy

The eerie fantasy of Moussorgsky's "Night on a Bare Mountain" was covered from outside the Disney studio by the fairy-tale illustrator, Kay Neilson, who designed graveyards complete with ghosts, and a Walpurgis nightmare calculated to turn white the hair of little children. Neilson's jagged scenery, developed in a new high level of animation technique, made this quite the best act in the whole "Fantasia."



FOR STRAVINSKY'S hectic "Rite of Spring," Disney artists created a primeval planet fit for the music's cosmic reverberations