Berklee College of Music

CULMINATING EXPERIENCE

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Music in

Scoring for Film, Television, and Video Games

Supervisor: Alfons Conde

by Seung Taek Lee

Valencia Campus, Spain

June 2021

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Before the Preparation of My Project

Although I could not go to London for the recording session due to the special circumstances in the world, I wanted to make this opportunity the most memorable moment in my life. Due to the current situation, there have been many changes in the media industry. Among them, the game industry had a big change. People could not go outside, so people started looking for something to do at home. Game allows people to spend time with others with the game as they are playing the same game together as if they were physically meeting each other. In fact, game company stocks have flocked and the proportion of people playing games has increased exponentially as well as the number of developers. Looking at this phenomenon, I wondered what would be the best way to take advantage of this big opportunity to start my future and choose the game that I like the most in this era.

A full orchestra was given to me on this project. Therefore, I chose the game that could best utilize this orchestra. So the game of my choice is The Elder Scroll 5: Skyrim. The game was chosen as the most autonomous game, with the background of the Middle Ages and fantasy combined. I thought that the main storyline of fighting against huge beings would be best suited with a full orchestra.

After deciding on the game, I went out to find someone who could make a video. I then contacted a YouTuber called Zion. He was once a big fan of the game Skyrim, and produced a lot of videos made from the game.

Preparation

After talking with Zion about my project, he suggested that I create the details of the storyline and video together. While I was suggesting a few ideas about the storyline of the video, he thought that it would be better for us to create it together in the first place. I took his offer because production and composition shared something in common, so I could sympathize with the process of video production. When composing music, simple musical ideas do not make you a composer. Good music essentially needs to have a clear logical flow, and the expression of an idea can be built only when the composer has various knowledge and skills. I was worried at first when Zion suggested me to participate in video production, but thinking of this common trait of video and music production, I accepted his offer.

THE CHANGES OF THE PROJECT

First change

We set the goal of showing various parts of the game in a three-minute cutscene. Skyrim's main storyline is to fight the strongest and most disturbing villain against the Dragons. We decided to present the battle process at this end. In the beginning of the video,

we decided to briefly introduce the world view and mainly show the battle. Skyrim's way of fighting varies considerably, so I thought it would be very interesting to show all of the fighting tactics. There are many different ways of fighting in this game such as using words, archery, magic, and snaking. Based on the battle against Alduin, the strongest main villain in the Skyrim game, I decided it would be best to use the full orchestra.

Second Change

We decided that the first idea would be too complex. The recommended length of video and music for this project is about three minutes. But as I did the first try, I felt that three minutes was far from enough to express everything. We also concluded that it would not be appropriate to give diversity to the overall flow because video and music would only lead to combat from beginning to end. So I suggested that we express the process of players

preparing to play the main storyline of the game, and he decided to make a video with that opinion in mind.

Skyrim is a game with MMORPG characteristics. Basically, it has the characteristics of an adventure, and the player can prepare for the adventure in diverse ways. The player can create various equipment for the adventure, create a motion, talk to non-player characters in the game, and greatly change the flow of information or stories. In particular, Skyrim exceptionally emphasizes the degree of freedom compared to other MMORPG games, so we decided to re-start the project with this feature.

For example, we decided to recreate the project based on various hammer scenes to emphasize large pulses in music or to show the flow of music and videos of various instruments exchanging melodies.

Third change as the final version

We looked at the game from a broader perspective and decided that it would be better to represent the game and Dovahkiin. We decided to restart everything for the last time.

We wanted to show Skyrim's view of the world and the existence of the main character in the game. Furthermore, I thought that a brief overview of the game's main storyline and overall flow would make it very suitable to show a variety of themes, and also give the details of a solid identity. This was chosen as the final idea, and the project was adopted as the final version.

COMPOSITION

I expressed various backgrounds and individuals musically. The title of the video and the song is The Journey of Dovahkiin, which implies many characters' identities. My ultimate goal was to create elements that even a single note will have a clear meaning and representation. If a music piece is written based on abstract feelings, the intention of the music may become unclear.

The song has three themes, each theme having different perspectives. I will call each theme A, B, and C in order to make it easier to explain. Theme A indicates how people living in Skyrim's world see and think about Dovahkiin. Theme B represents the world and the view of the world itself. Theme C shows Dovahkiin's point of view.

Theme A, B, and C

Theme A is based on the original song of the game. In Skyrim, there are bards as non-player characters (npc). These bards sing at inns or on the roads, and some of them are called The Dragonborn Comes. Dovahkiin's name in human language means Dragonborn. This means that Dragonborn is mortal with the dragon's soul and is the only one who can stand up to the dragons. The melody was adapted to the tempo and phrases to make theme A. It also used traditional woodwind to make people feel as if they were singing. It reappears as the major version of the song's ending section.

In addition, unlike musical reasons, this section briefly shows the world before Dovahkiin's appearance in the video, so it focuses on giving a minimal effect to not focus heavily on the

music. Thus, the melody of Dovahkiin's representative melody, The Dragonborn Comes, and Ambient Texture, used only two notes except 3rd to give environmental sounds.

All series of The Elder Scrolls have a medieval and fantasy background. Furthermore, this worldview is a world in which many gods exist and various races live. As a result, there are many extremely large issues or situations, and sometimes even a race disappears. As a result, people in the game need the existence of heroes and praise them over centuries. To highlight these features, I focused on making various colors of orchestration. In addition, I chose horns as the instrument to play the main melody, to imply that Dovahkiin exists as a hero. The world's diversity is expressed with lines rather than a combination of musical instruments. Not only the melody but also the bass line changes constantly in the music. The melody of theme B recombines the notes of theme A. I used this to emphasize the connection between the world and the people who live in it. The first verse of theme A has B D E F# G A notes in E key. The first line going up 4th from B to E was turned into a line that goes down 5th in theme B. The lines behind it are similar. In theme A, the notes are generally legato, while theme B emphasizes activity with a variety of articulations. In addition, another difference between the two themes is the presence or absence of a small number in one phase. In theme A, all phrases consistently have cadence, making them feel stable and breathing relatively

short. Theme B shows cadence when a strong pulse comes out. Thus, it shows that the breathing continues until this cadence after the melody line begins, and has a breathing length that is completely opposite to theme A. The biggest difference is that theme A has a definite strong pulse, while theme B shows a strong pulse only at the eighth node.

I will explain how I made the melody line of theme B. The reason for the leap going down 5th in the melody line is to imply the drastic changes. It also used a variety of articulations to show not only suddenness but also tens of thousands of large and small changes.

After the melody that represents Dovahkiin on theme C, a part of theme B that represents the whole world of Skyrim appears in a different form. Dovahkiin is, after all, shwon as an existence living in the world and inescapable creature from there. It means this part is a device that implies that the existence of Dovahkiin is a part of the world. At the same time, theme C is played in the form of Dovahkiin's melody and theme B representing the world where Dovahkiin solves the world's confusion.

To explain about theme C, Dovahkiin is a type of person who occasionally appears in the world every few centuries. It has a heroic aspect of the times and as a main character. Skyrim, however, is a game that emphasizes tremendous freedom that fully respects the choice of players playing the game. This means that Dovahkiin can become a hero, or a main character, or can also live a life opposite of a hero. Therefore, it was necessary to find musical instruments that could express various personalities, such as bright and dark, and in the middle. I chose that instrument as horns. Horns has a strong sound of color as a brass instrument and is best suited for its wide range of instrumental techniques compared to other instruments. Similarly, a neutral melody line that can be a good or not being of the worldview was conceived. Thus, I envisioned another theme with a range of 6th derived from the B theme representing a worldview.

At the same time, a line that goes up and down in sequence on theme B was utilized. No matter how special Dovahkiin is and how he shakes the world, he eventually derives theme C from theme B, which represents the world view, as a living being within this worldview. But the rhythm is completely different. I did not just give a difference, but I wanted to show that I was strong regardless of good or bad.

I thought that a simple and repetitive rhythm was suitable for representing Dovahkiin. The clearer and more intense the characteristics, the more suitable the characteristics of legends, and the most suitable the sound characteristics of brasses. That has also been highlighted significantly from an Orchestration perspective.
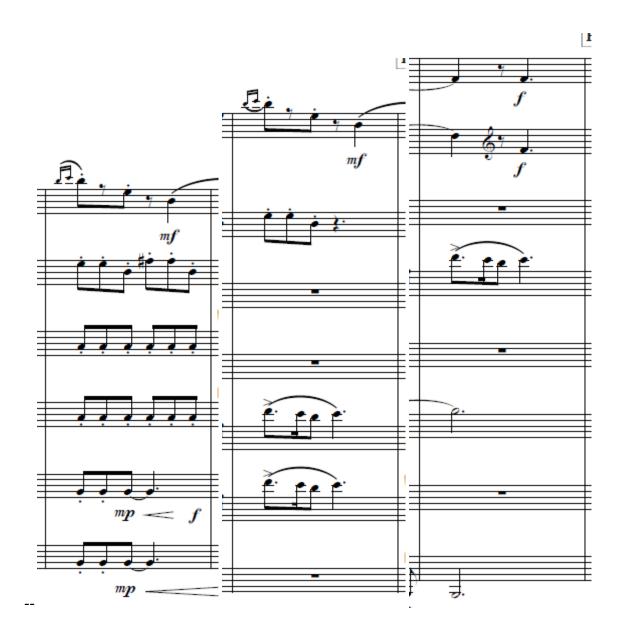
Almost every instrument is played as tutti, as shown in the score. This is particularly in

contrast to theme B. In theme B, a variety of instruments, including main melody lines and

sub melody lines, were used to represent the harmony of many things, including the existence

of a world, but in theme C, which represents Dobahkiin, almost all instruments represent one line. This is also why theme B did not show a strong pulse. The theme of this music is, after all, Dovahkiin. I thought about how theme B, which represents a worldview, could get more attention than B, with many things that can stand out musically, such as melodies, and even harmonious orchestration. In order to highlight the characteristic that theme C focused on a strong pulse to represent simple yet clear sounds, it was thought that the freedom in the previous theme was weak or not shown. Combining these features, the C theme was created.

After theme C -

After theme C, this bridge to the ending shows a variety of situations and things. Also 16 beats that were started from theme B continues playing it to the ending as well.
This is to continue the tension until the climax of my piece, choir, is started. It also used various parts of B's theme to show many threats to the world. It also did not provide any stability through continuous key changes. That is why the song's basic key, major or minor's dominant chord, does not appear until the Ending section.
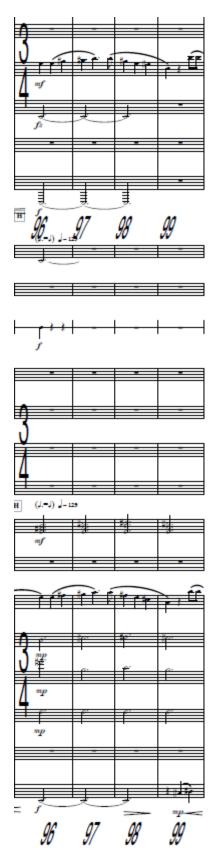
In the climax where Choiir appears, it is the climax of the world's threat and Dovahkiin's confrontation. It shows that the lines coming from theme B are contrasted with melody lines and Dovahkiin's theme with bass lines, highlighting that they are adversarial., I used choir to describe the scene of fighting with Dovahkiin. Especially in the game, when Dovahkiin fights with the biggest disaster in the world, not only everyone in the world, but even the previous heroes who had already passed away pray for his victory. I tried to express that atmosphere.

Ending (measure 96)

In the ending section, the major key appears for the first time. It is a major version of the theme A, Dovahkiin, the hero who brought peace at the same time as peace came to the world. Female choir used to make the sound feel as if people were praising the hero, but not as aggressive as before. The melody line also uses only woodwinds and strings that give a bright feeling, making the feeling of praising Dovahkiin stronger. And overall orchestration

also used a wide range of notes to exaggerate joy but at the same time not to give a heavy

feeling.

It was also noted that the ending was gradually decreased, representing the peace of the world at the same time as Dovahkiin's happy ending. Dovahkiin has a finite life because he is only one person after all, and at the same time, the hero remains a legend and is slowly forgotten.

CONCLUSION

To me, the process of doing this project is very valuable. SFTV's major is learning to handle music for all media. Plus, the characteristic of these music is collaboration. Furthermore, the ultimate goal of the project was to plan and execute everything, starting with finding people in particular in other fields. I had experience working before I entered school, but it was the first time I took charge of everything like this and this inspired me to plan my future.

In particular, it is my first experience to find, learn, and build on music other than music by myself in many fields besides making music suitable for the video. In fact, at first, I was not in a position where I could simply concentrate on music, so I was more worried than curious. Especially, when I worked on the storyline together, I was not confident because it seemed it will not work. However, while talking to the video maker, I started by asking him a light question, and I wanted to emphasize that when I wrote the music, I was able to write the music in much more logical and detailed ways than when I wrote other music before.

I would like to thank the schools, professors, and parents again for providing such learning even in this situation that could be recorded in history in this world.