

VIDEO GAME MUSIC ANALYSIS
- For Educational Use Only -

Dancing Calcobrena

from

Final Fantasy IV

Composed by Nobuo Uematsu
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A ♩ = 160

Flute

Guitar

Organ

Bass

Am F7 Am Fmaj7

i ♭VI i ♭VI

(1) - The track is in 3/4, the pulse a standard waltz rhythm. A waltz is stereotypically formal and pleasant. Here, it's set to a battle with a cadre of creepy, animated mannequins. It's a "dance to the death", if you will. This is one of several ways in which Uematsu utilizes genre dissonance to paint a musical picture of the enemy at hand (the creepy mannequins).

(2) - The harmonic accompaniment (the oom - PAH - PAH of the waltz) is voiced by the *last* thing one might expect: a sinister sounding church organ. This adds more to the genre dissonance.

(3) - Acoustic guitars tend to be associated with more laid-back styles of music (*tend* to), so this lilting counter-melody creates *even more* genre dissonance when juxtaposed with the loud and imposing church organ.

(4) - The melody itself is voiced by a spritely, playful flute that almost "mocks" the player with chromatic lines. This is *not* the powerful sound of strings and brass that the player has thus far come to expect from the game's intense battle music. Instead, the player/listener is thrown off balance which ultimately serves to make this battle scene that much more unsettling, intriguing, and memorable.

Fl. 9 **B** 3

Guit. Eb (7th of F7) is re-spelled to D# here for reading convenience. chordal 7th chordal b9th

Org. 1

Con. Sn. 2

Bass 3

Am F7 Am F7b9 3

i bVI i bVI

(1) - The introduction of the snare drums adds a bit of militaristic spice to the genre dissonance pot, making the music feel cold and controlled...much like the possessed dolls the player is fighting.

(2) - Chromatic runs can be comedic or sinister. In this case, it's both, primarily due to the ambiguous mood the genre dissonance has created.

(3) - The track is quite short, and so relies on a basic vamp between the tonic (Am) and the bVI (F) as a harmonic framework. However, to add a sinister flavor to the track's mood, Uematsu continually emphasizes the #4/b5 of the A minor scale (D#/Eb) in the melody, which - when heard against the F major chord in the harmony - creates the sound of an F7 chord. In the case of mm. 15, further dissonance is created via a passing tone of Gb, the b9 of F7.

This is a favorite progression of Uematsu's, the bVI⁷ to i. (It could be thought of as using a German sixth in a dominant function rather than its usual subdominant function). The "sinister" mood the progression creates is due to the chromatic voice leading and unconventional movement in the bass. I've whipped up a short example of this past the end of the track in this score: took a look/listen if you're interested!

Musical score for measures 17-24. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of five staves: Flute (Fl.), Guitar (Guit.), Organ (Org.), Congas/Snare (Con. Sn.), and Bass. Measure 17 is marked with a '17' above the Flute staff. The Flute part features a melodic line with various accidentals (flats and sharps) and rests. The Guitar part has a sparse accompaniment with some accidentals. The Organ part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords. The Congas/Snare part has a rhythmic pattern with accents and rests. The Bass part has a simple line of notes. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Same

The B section repeats exactly.

25 **1** **2** **3** 5

Pno.

F7 Am F7 Am F7 \flat 9 Am

(1) - Basic $bVI^7 - i$ progression. Notice the highly chromatic movement inherent in the cadence.

The movement is the $b5$ and bVI of the scale "crushing" into the 5th of the tonic chord, which gives the progression its unsettling, somewhat restless quality.

(2) - Same progression with the root notes from the track added in. The leap upwards of a major third (as opposed a 4th or 5th) adds to the restless quality.

(3) - Now, adding the $b9$ as an appoggiatura (similar to how Uematsu voices it) creates *even more* chromaticism leading to the 5th of the tonic chord.