

VIDEO GAME MUSIC ANALYSIS
- **For Educational Use Only** -

Kefka's Tower

from
Final Fantasy VI

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Intro ♩ = 125

The musical score is written for three parts: Pad, Noise, and E. Bass, all in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 125. The Pad part consists of four measures, each containing a single half note with a long sustain line. The notes are C4, G3, F#4, and C4. The Noise part consists of four measures, each containing a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The E. Bass part consists of four measures, each containing a single half note with a long sustain line. The notes are C3, G2, F#3, and C3. The score is written on a grand staff with three staves.

Pad

Noise

E. Bass

Synth heavy texture contrasts with the mainly orchestral timbre of the OST, making this level special (it is the final dungeon). The chaotic, rising tension from the open harmony and syncopated rhythm characterize madness of Kefka without leaning too far into cliché.

5

Pad

Noise

El. B.

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Pad', uses a treble clef and contains a whole note with a slur across three measures. The middle staff, labeled 'Noise', uses a bass clef and contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests, also spanning three measures. The bottom staff, labeled 'El. B.', uses a bass clef and contains a whole note with a slur across three measures. A small '5' is positioned above the first measure of the 'Pad' staff, and a small '8' is positioned below the first measure of the 'El. B.' staff.

8

Tpts.

Sn.

Timp.

Pad

Noise

El. B.

This musical score is for a percussion and electronic ensemble. It consists of six staves, each with a specific instrument label to its left. The staves are: Tpts. (Trumpets), Sn. (Snare), Timp. (Timpani), Pad (Pads), Noise, and El. B. (Electronic Bass). The score is divided into three measures by vertical bar lines. The Tpts. staff begins with a measure number '8' above the first staff line. The Tpts. staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The Sn. staff has a snare drum symbol. The Timp. staff has a bass clef. The Pad staff has a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The Noise staff has a bass clef. The El. B. staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The Tpts. staff has a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The Sn. staff has a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The Timp. staff has a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The Pad staff has a long note in the first measure and a long note in the second measure. The Noise staff has a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The El. B. staff has a simple rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Bridge

11

This 4 measure bridge is *very* similar to the four measure bridge right before the end of the track (repeat line). This makes for a very well-crafted, seamless loop since a) the player has already heard this material and b) the last four measures could *start* the track. The listener remains unaware of where the start and stop begins, and the loop is all the better for it. This is a specific consideration to VGM, one that separates good from great.

The musical score is arranged in seven staves. The top staff is for Tpts. (Trumpets), followed by Tbns. (Trombones), Sn. (Snare), Timp. (Timpani), Vlins. I (Violins I), Vlins. II (Violins II), and El. B. (Electric Bass). The score is in 4/4 time and consists of 4 measures. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The first measure is marked with a 'G' and the second with an 'Am'. The third measure is marked with a 'G' and the fourth with an 'Am'. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, glissandos, and dynamic markings.

G

Am

bVII

Uematsu writes some amazing bass lines. It's a fantastic choice born of limitation - not enough voices for cello + DB. Instead, he injects the track with a punchy groove that gives it attitude (and memorability)

A

P4ths in brass create a powerful, intimidating sound.

15

Tpts.
 Tbns.
 Cym.
 Sn.
 Timp.
 Vlins. I
 Vlins. II
 El. B.

Descending contrapuntal figure has mocking feel, like the strings are laughing at the player.

B \flat Am G \sharp Am E 7 Am

\flat II i VII i V 7 i

B \flat Am G \sharp Am E 7 Am

\flat II i VII i V 7 i

Replacing usual leading tone diminished with full major triad creates punchy, sinister chromaticism.

19

Tpts.

 Tbns.

 Cym.

 Sn.

 Timp.

 Vlms. I

 Vlms. II

 El. B.

Track sounds more intense due to *less* noise. Judicious rests and call-reponse work infinitely better than loud noise, tutti all the time.

E Am

E7

Am

C

B

Am

E7

Am

V i

V⁷

i

bVI

II

i

V⁷

i

23

B

Tpts.
 Tpbs.
 Sn.
 Timp.
 Vlms. I
 Vlms. II
 El. B.

Am

G#°7

Am

G#°7

i

vii°7

i

vii°

27

Tpts. 

 Tbns. 

 Sn. 

 Timp. 

 Vlms. I 

 Vlms. II 

 El. B. 

Another of Uematsu's favorite phrases

Am E $B\flat maj^7$ $E7^{\sharp 5}$ Am
 i V $\flat II^7$ $V^{7\sharp 5}$ i

Bit of Neapolitan style cadence
going on here.

31 **C**

Tpts.

Tbns.

Sn.

Timp.

Vlins. I

Vlins. II

El. B.

F Lydian:

F⁶

F⁶/D

F

Em

I

vii

Shift to parallel Lydian, a common technique
 Uematsu uses to introduce contrast into his tracks.
 Creates a "sliver of hope" feel when juxtaposed with the rest of the track,
 which is fitting since this is the pre-amble to final battle.

Sn.

Timp.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

El. B.

F

B°

Dm

i

#iv°

vi

3

3

8

8

37

Tpts.

Tbns.

Sn.

Timp.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

El. B.

augmented passing chord facilitates this voice leading

suspension

F **C+** **C** **B°7** **C** **E7** **Am** **E7**

I **C+ acts as a passing chord** V **Key of A:** **bVI** **V7** **i** **V7**

Key of C: I **vii°7** I

Economical use of pivot chords to modulate back to relative minor and return to tonic key *well before the loop* <-- IMPORTANT!

Bridge 2

i

Subtonic harmony is re-iterated before loop point, making it harder for listener to tell where the repeat actually is.