



GENESIS FROG



COMMENTARY BOOKLET

Welcome, cherished listener, to What Pumpkin Presents: Genesis Frog: The Commentary Booklet: The Complete Experience by Alex Rosetti; Illustrated by Marina and Rikuru.

I, Alex Rosetti, intend to make this a pleasurable experience for those of you looking for additional insight on the long-winded and self-absorbed music of this album. I assure you the commentary will encapsulate those qualities as well, perhaps even more so!

SO, WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

Genesis Frog is an album about the eponymous amphibian's journey from paradox slime to universe. Specifically, it is about the frog Jade Harley attempts to breed and grow so that He may reach His pond in Skaia and fulfill His role as the next universe created by SBURB. Some themes of the album also address the Genesis Frog that Earth already inhabits, while still other themes could be applied to any Genesis Frog in paradox space. In more general terms, it is an album about Sburb's mythology, which is both and remarkable and hilariously ridiculous in its ability to tailor fit itself into each unique session it is in.

When I first envisioned Genesis Frog, I did not imagine the album's focus would be on a single entity from Homestuck. In fact, my first idea was to create a sort of "Homestuck Bestiary" soundtrack, giving themes to all the creatures and citizens of Sburb. The seeds of the album's current form were planted when I decided I wanted to make a "Frogs" theme at the beginning and transform it into "Bilious Slick's Theme" by the end of the album, thus symbolizing the overarching purpose of Sburb. I gradually fell more in love with the concept while more information on the Genesis Frog was covered in the story such as frog breeding, the Prospitians' and Consorts' worship of the deity, and Derse's detestation of it.

I began to realize how important the Genesis Frog was to Homestuck's big picture: the goal of Sburb is creation, and the main conflict in the story is preventing destruction. The most intensely cinematic End of Act as of this writing involved the assassination of two of these frogs as the result of a beautifully intricate plot and pushing the story towards its climax. One of my favorite aspects of Homestuck is its world-building (in some cases world-destroying), and I thought it would be fun to compose an album about an entity that quite literally contains its worlds.

ALRIGHT ALREADY, I GET IT, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MUSIC?

From the very beginning I decided I wanted *Genesis Frog* to have its own unified sound, even back when it was "Homestuck Bestiary". To accomplish this, I treated the album as a sort of orchestral suite, and it could certainly be referred to as such. Of course, getting a real orchestra to record this music is well beyond my means as an amateur composer, but I think the samples used in the album are high-fidelity and well-sequenced enough to be enjoyable.

There is a lot of continuity between tracks on the album, which lends itself well to the idea that it is an orchestral suite. *Genesis Frog* is really a singular work rather than a collection of somewhat related songs—I paid very special attention to the order of tracks and when certain recurring themes appear. The album has three main recurring musical motifs: the "Pondsquatter" theme (the main theme of the album and most frequently used), the "Divine" theme (which first shows up in *Our Glorious Speaker*), and the "Folklore" theme (which first shows up in *Prospitian Folklore*). There are also a handful of musical devices and ostinati that find their way into various nooks and crannies that help contribute a sense of unity and are certainly fun to spot if you pay attention. I like to think all these snippets of musical material are treated the same way that repeated dialogue, situations and every other kind of callback are in Homestuck. If you recognize them you will enjoy the experience that much more, though the callbacks in the album are not that difficult to spot in my opinion, so it shouldn't take as much effort as noticing *Colonel Sassacre's Daunting Text of Magical Frivolity and Practical Japery* was heavy enough to kill a cat, and then finally doing so several thousand pages later.

While the album does deviate somewhat from the orchestral sound in a few small instances, the instrumental ensemble remains relatively constant through each track, with the exception of percussion instruments that come and go and a short appearance by an electric guitar and bass, as well some much more eccentric instruments than those.



PRELUDE

TRACK ART BY MARINA

This is an album about growth, so I wanted it to start very quiet and exposed. The piece opens with a quartal chord in the harp, and after the atmosphere is established a solo clarinet introduces the main theme of the album. A portion of the orchestra comes in after that and there's a small swell before tapering off into a cello solo. The ensemble is pretty scarce in this one due to its subdued nature. There's not a lot going on in this track overall, but it does its job both as the prelude to Pondsquatter and the album as a whole.



PONDSQUATTER

TRACK ART BY MARINA

If *Genesis Frog* were a game, this would play at the title screen. It is a full realization of the album's main theme, this time with the entire orchestra in tow and plenty of thematic development. I sort of have a love-hate relationship with this track. For one thing, it is the first piece I composed for the album and its melodic material served as its main groundwork, so it's really important in that respect. But at the same time I had the least experience while initially composing it as compared the album's other tracks, so I had to spend a lot of extra time fine-tuning it and developing it more (the original was barely under two minutes long). Still, considering the amount of work I had to put into it, it was one of the more rewarding tracks to work on.

The combination of *Prelude* and *Pondsquatter* to open the album with is something I thought about a lot, and in many ways they are one piece split into two parts. Consider this Movement II. *Pondsquatter* flows right out of *Prelude* and gradually adds to the orchestration. After a brief celesta interlude, the theme gets going in full. This piece has a sense of emerging, particularly out of the empty space of *Prelude*. There are plenty of woodwind trills and harp runs; I wanted them to feel like they were bursting out of the texture, and the openness of the quartal harmonies was eventually replaced by more triadic chords. Quartal chords retain some significance through the album, however, though they are certainly not prominent. I aimed to make the climax of this piece very satisfying, with the gong practically screaming "we've arrived!" but I was afraid of having too much of a sense of finality so I didn't give the piece a proper ending. Instead it goes straight into the next track without only a hint at a cadence.



OUR GLORIOUS SPEAKER

TRACK ART BY RIKURU

Much like Pondsquatter, the concept for this piece was conceived very early on in the album's life before it became Genesis Frog. It was supposed to be a theme for the Prospitians, and it still mostly is, but now the piece focuses more on their devotion to the Speaker than the citizens themselves. The chess-people of Prospit are referenced a few times in Homestuck as worshipping the Genesis Frog, and it is through perusing their lore in various updates (mostly Seer: Descend) that I got inspiration for several tracks on the album, including this one. The music was representing devotion, so I wanted it to have the warmest, most tranquil tone it could. There are two chorale-like sections, the first being the passage the strings play in the beginning, and then later in the brass when the rest of the orchestra drops out for a while. The style of this piece was inspired by Taku Iwasaki's scores, which often feature very beautiful and lush string textures. I actually don't think I captured that very well, and in fact strayed from that idea as the piece went on. But the core of the inspiration remains and I think one can tell if they are familiar with his style. Of note is the last third of the piece which is a self-indulgent, overly-romanticized arrangement of Erik Scheele's *Sarabande*. It's such a beautiful piece and I knew from the day I started working on this that I wanted to include it, no matter how schmaltzy I made it sound. Give me a break, it was fun, okay?



PROSPITIAN FOLKLORE

TRACK ART BY RIKURU

"THOUGH WE ADORE HIM WE SHALL NEVER ENJOY HIS BEAUTEOUS CROAK. WE SPILL OUR BLOOD ON ACRES OF BLACK AND WHITE SO THEY MAY CROSS THE YELLOW YARD. AT LAST IN SKAIA'S REFLECTION THROUGH BROKEN GLASS HE MAY FIND THE POND IN WHICH HE'S MEANT TO SQUAT." - BOOK IN PROSPIT LIBRARY (FROM SEER: DESCEND)

This piece is a musical retelling of the above passage. If you read it while listening to the music, the tone should match for the most part (as long as you are reading very, very slowly). This track's melody appears several more times throughout the album, and represents the "folk tale" and more legendary aspects of the Genesis Frog as seen through His followers. Because of this I tried to make it sound like a genuine folk tune, and ended up with something vaguely resembling a tune out of Eastern Europe. It's a melancholic sort of melody, which suits the grim tone of the text it is based on. It is passed through several instruments: first a solo oboe, then the violins, a soprano recorder, and a trumpet.

After the main section is over, the piece shifts into a short woodwind chorale, and then into what I can only call a cadenza made up of tense suspended figures in the strings with an out-of-meter pulse underneath. I kind of wrote this last section accidentally, since it somehow started flowing out of the chorale and I just went with it. It seemed to have an air of urgency and importance to me, so I kept it in to represent "Skaia's reflection through broken glass", which is such a fascinating image. Broken glass has been a recurring motif in Homestuck and seems to hold important consequences every time it occurs, and the text implies it will be significant in the Genesis Frog's final destination. So the atmosphere of this final section felt significant and fitting to me.



CONSORTS' INTERMEZZO TRACK ART BY MARINA

After the introductory tracks are over, the album shifts gears and an intermission of sorts is instigated by the Consorts, who love the Genesis Frog very much and worship Him the same as the Prospitians do. I decided it would both be fun and shake things up if I composed a theme for each group of Consorts we meet on the kids' four planets during their Sburb session. Represented are the Crocodiles of LOHAC, the Turtles of LOLAR, the Salamanders of LOWAS, and the Iguanas of LOFAF. Some are more characterized than others, but I made do and crafted a unique theme for each of them.

The character of the music during this section is a bit different than the rest of the album due to the inherent silliness of the creatures it is representing. The Consorts are all also, for lack of a better word, dumb. The music reflects that too. This intermezzo transitions from the serious tone of the first section of the album into the absurd romp that is about to follow. The idea of including two intermezzos in this album came from the Actraiser Symphonic Suite, a collection of orchestrations from the SNES game Actraiser that used this classical "in between" sort of music as a way to reiterate a recurring theme. I use these little movements in a slightly different manner, but the spirit is the same. Musically, this is a simple interlude that states all the Consort themes that are to come in a solo viola accompanied by pizzicato strings.



BUY NAK SELL DOOF

TRACK ART BY MARINA

Where do I even start? This is one of my favorite tracks that I've made, and by that I mean to say I'm really amused I was able to come up with this in the first place. It originally wasn't part of this album at all—it was supposed to be a short jingle for the LOHAC Stock Exchange! But it was too much fun to let go of and soon it morphed into a full-fledged character theme for everyone's beloved, excitable consorts. The general idea behind the music was this: Jit may have made a silly arrangement of Atomyk Ebonpyre, but what could I do to put it in an even more ridiculous context? And so it was that it became the manic violin and xylophone old-timey television music-inspired (this was my only frame-of reference for what I thought stock exchange music should sound like) tune that it is now. And wouldn't you know it, this type of music turned out to fit the personality of the Crocodiles like a crocodile-fitted glove.

In terms of pacing, I thought it was crucial to place this as the first Consort track. The first four tracks of the album all range from relatively slow to moderately less slow, so I really needed something to break out. This is the most energetic and fast-paced of the four Consort themes, so for my money it was the best choice to introduce this section of the album and keep interest instead of having too many low-energy tracks in a row. However, this isn't to say I was able to resist the temptation to put a slow middle section into this piece, which provides a little break from all the pandemonium. But more importantly, it set the stage for an incredibly silly idea I had to record a bunch of people nakkng like maniacs to sound like the Crocodiles, and then have that gradually crescendo into the last section of the piece.

In what is of some note, I tried to feature each of the Kids' instruments in their respective Consort theme. Dave's usual turntable affair was impossible for me to consider for this style of music, though I'm sure some incredibly talented person could have pulled it off. Instead, the piece uses xylophone heavily, since I was operating under the logic that both turntables and xylophones sort of fall under the percussion category? I will admit it's a bit of a stretch.

I would like to thank the following contributors for lending their beautiful, sonorous voices to this piece of music:

nyanface, Hayden Lombard, Tawawa, Rachel Macwhirter, Thom Rosell, Marcy Nabors,
Kyle Chung, Ben Sharrin, Max Wright, Katie Cadwell



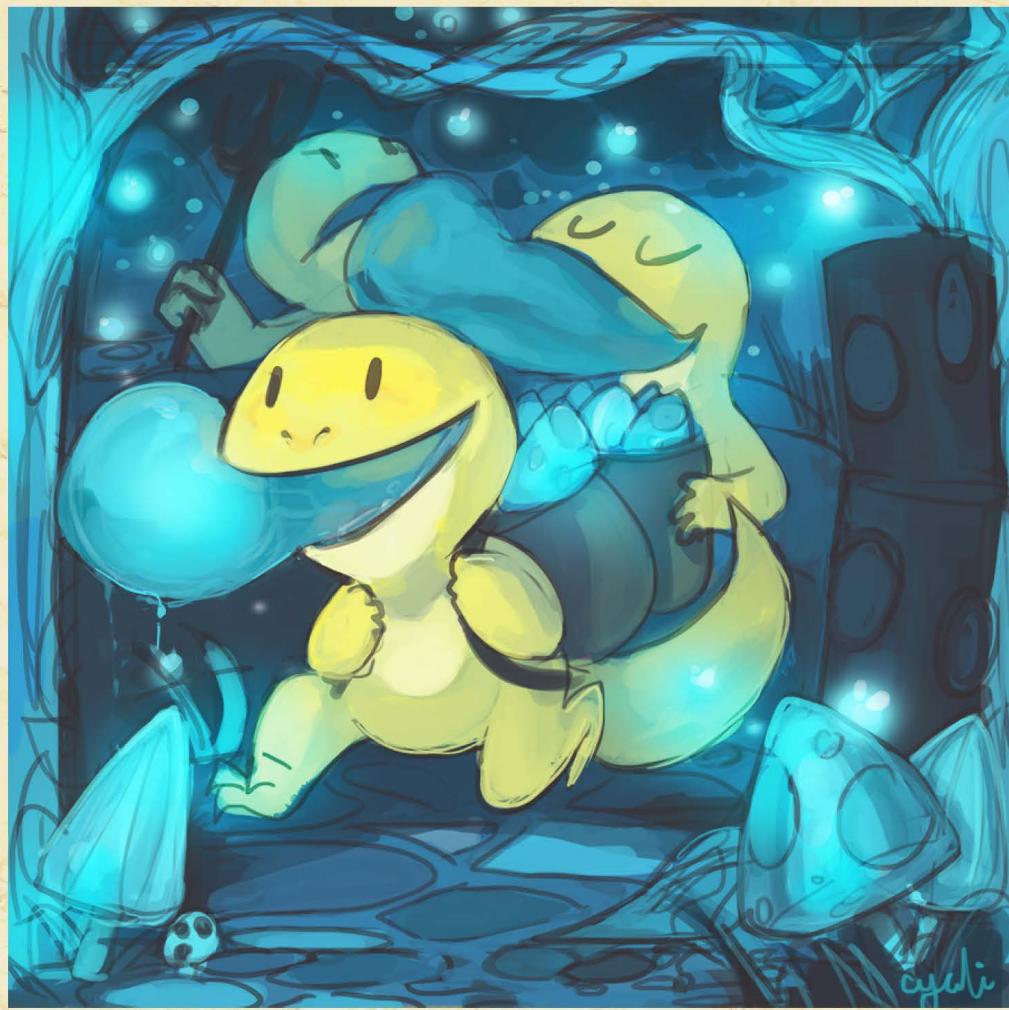
PINK SHELLS

TRACK ART BY RIKURU

This was a difficult one to compose. The Turtles in Homestuck haven't been given much characterization other than the ones quaking in fear of Rose, and even then that characteristic is basically the extent of it. I wondered if it was even worth writing a theme for them, since their importance to the story is minimal; what kind of music would I compose for them, anyway? But in the end I decided if I was going to do a set of Consort pieces I was going to do it right and that meant composing the whole package. There was going to be a cycle of fun, lighthearted pieces on this album regardless of characterization or story relevance.

Unfortunately, by the time I decided this I had absolutely no musical ideas. I knew I wanted to give the piece a sort of awkward, wooden sound, so I had a pretty good idea of what timbres I needed (wood blocks, marimba, bassoons, etc.). Then I decided to just outright make it as quirky as possible and added a contrabassoon, even giving it the melody at one point, because hey, I might as well have fun with a track where I'm making up 90% of a character interpretation. Violin was included to fit the theme of the Consorts' music matching their kids' instruments. I eventually settled on a tired-sounding little melody, and while it is appropriate it's the not my favorite one I've ever written. You can probably tell too, since it never seems to go anywhere, and when it finally sounds like it is it drops out and a different variation starts playing.

The middle section is a very loosely based on the Pondsquatter theme, and the high register marimba interjection makes it obvious in case you didn't pick up on it in the first five notes. This eventually leads back into the main melody of the piece, and a couple sequences later it ends. I wonder how much it shows that I was really short on ideas for this piece. Any time it was playing up the comedy in timing or shifting feel, it felt more like I had no idea what to do and desperately stuck something in so the piece could move on. Maybe I'm being hard on it; I still think it is enjoyable to listen to. But from a compositional standpoint, it is probably the weakest on the album.



ENTRANCE OF THE SALAMANDERS

TRACK ART BY MARINA

This piece picks up where Buy NAK Sell DOOF left off, meaning it goes right back into a silly, dimwitted march. This time however, we are joined by John's signature instrument, the electric organ! I also put some piano in there I guess, but baby, it is all about that organ. Maybe it gives it a bit too much of a "baseball flavor" but that's okay, the Salamanders are sporting folks. Right off the "bat", you will notice the opening ostinato bears a strong resemblance to Danny Elfman tomfoolery, which is entirely coincidental; not that I have any problems with Danny Elfman tomfoolery, in fact I enjoy it very much.

Like the Crocodiles, the Salamanders have gotten plenty of characterization in Homestuck, so it was pretty easy to write their theme. They actually have a lot in common with the Crocodiles (mostly that they are enthusiastically unintelligent), which is why I decided to give them the same kind of style. There is a primary theme and a secondary theme, and they are both developed throughout the course of the piece. I realize this is an incredibly simple and non-specific description, but it is a very straightforward piece in that regard, and I don't know what else to say about it. The first theme is a bouncy little tune, and the second theme is more legato and chromatic, and they fit together in various ways when they interact with each other.

I sort of envisioned this composition as a dual piano/organ concerto in terms of how I treated the instruments. Both are featured over the orchestra, and play off it with plenty of silly textures and orchestrations. Stylistically, the oom-pah marching characteristics combined with the instrumentation may call to mind images of a circus, which is in fact how the piece got its name. It's kind of a veiled reference, but if you know what the title is referring to then it's easy to figure out why it resembles circus music. And of course in the spirit of things, for one last antic I finished it off with a slide whistle; an instrument I thought represented the salamanders' bubbles pretty well.



THIP OF THE TONGUE

TRACK ART BY RIKURU

If you asked me what title on this album I am most proud of coming up with, it would be this one. Ever since the Iguanas were introduced I was terrified someone was going to use this pun before I had a chance to put it out in an official capacity. I wanted to be the thip king, and despite being nervous about it for almost two years no one usurped my throne. Even as of this writing, searching for that exact phrase on the internet will yield no results. Obviously if you are reading this, that is no longer true. But I digress.

As for the piece itself, I decided to separate it into two very distinct sections. The first depicts the Iguanas' life in the Land of Frost and Frogs before Jade stokes the Forge (which, incidentally, is the name of a later track which takes this concept even further); the second part depicts their life after the frost has melted away. Due to this structure, the first third of the piece is subdued and establishes a calm atmosphere with the strings and woodwinds, with not a single brass instrument to be found. The opening motive that continues to be used throughout the piece is an almost exact repetition of the Salamanders' main motive. All the Consort tracks are connected, but these two take it to the next level by building this piece's base off the main material of the last.

The second part is where things get interesting. It is the only section of the album where I drop the orchestra shtick completely and use an ensemble of recorders, crumhorns, pipes, and an unconventional rhythm section featuring a dulcimer. I thought about what kind of music the Iguanas would make if given the opportunity. I figured they would have a lot of primitive instruments at hand and would produce simple, joyous music. This whole section is unabashedly a tribute to Kumi Tanioka's work in Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles. It's a sort of re-imagining of this world of ancient instruments that she created, and it was one of my earliest influences. There are also seeds of Yasunori Mitsuda in here; it is such a fun piece that I don't mind citing very strong influences here if people want to hear similar music to this.



FROGS' INTERMEZZO

TRACK ART BY MARINA

After a lovely intermission from the Consorts, our story continues. The sequence of tracks was very carefully chosen for this album, and it is especially true here. Every track from here on out details the journey undertaken to create the Genesis Frog, as well as its ultimate fate. From the ectobiological breeding (Breeding Duties), to the unfreezing of the Land of Frost and Frogs (Stoke the Forge), to the hunt for frogs (Great LOFAF Expedition of 2009), to the mysteries and certain doom hiding in the frog temple (The Temple's Withered Bloom), and finally to the destruction of the universe (Bilious), a story is told through music. As a conclusion, we bear witness to the fate the Genesis Frog is meant to fulfill: finding His pond in Skaia (Speaker), and signifying the creation of a new universe (The Vast Croak).

This intermezzo changes the tone from the lighthearted Consort music to something more full of wonder to suit the story to come. It is a simple swell based on the Pondsquatter theme, and once it settles down, the texture becomes very sparse so as to lead into Breeding Duties.



BREEDING DUTIES

TRACK ART BY MARINA

GA: But Regardless I Think Our Roles Are Approximately The Same Since We Are Both Stokers Of The Forge

GA: As Well As Holders Of Breeding Duties

GA: However I Should Clarify That My Earlier Counsel Was Mostly Academic

GA: It Takes Weeks To Do All Of It Properly

GA: You Wont Have Time

GG: breeding duties?????

This entire piece was inspired by Kanaya's awkward phrasing. It's a great line, and Jade's dumbfounded reaction is even better.

Naturally I wanted this to be an awkward-sounding piece, so in the beginning there is plenty of pizzicato strings, strange pauses and the like. Of course, more thought went into the mood than that; Jade has a small association with witches, even if it is only in title and costume. The idea that she is the Witch of Space and is dabbling in ectobiology with frogs put a lot of images in my mind, the most obvious connection being a witch's cauldron. How would this type of music sound, exactly? Eventually I settled on the sort of faux-baroque feel mixed in with plenty of silliness, since this is a piece about Jade and frogs, after all. The orchestration is full of fast-decaying timbres like the aforementioned pizzicato and liberal use of harpsichord. I also included celesta since it adds a sort of whimsy to the piece, and it has the added bonus of calling back to the beginning of the album.

The main motive is a very baroque sort of device, and I used it that way a little, though I mostly put it in ridiculous contexts. The opening is very stately and lively; what a way to open the last third of the album! But after the first phrase it immediately drops out into a very spacious world, and it is during this section that I explore a variety of colors while playing with the motivic material. Then I prove how short my attention span is because the music goes a lot of places fast after that. First it takes a sweet tone with a celesta melody, and then feels majestic with a lyrical cello line and a call in the horns. If you were to think about this piece programmatically, then that might be the moment when Jade finally successfully breeds the frog with the right genes. In which case the rest of the piece is about hundreds of frogs hopping around or something, which is an explanation I like, but will not officially state since I wasn't actually thinking much about a story when composing this.

But still, I did have a lot of scenes brewing in my head with this one, so I think it is totally appropriate to imagine a story going along with it. Anyway, the majestic section cuts off for a few seconds, then a booming section based on the opening stumbles in and leaves as fast as it entered. From that point on the material from Pondsquatter comes in and is given the same feel as the rest of this piece, and if there was any one word I had to describe this last section with it would be, "shenanigans". Incidentally, I consider this and Great LOFAF Expedition of 2009 to be the heart of the album. There will be more on that later in the commentary.



STOKE THE FORGE

TRACK ART BY MARINA

Why did I compose this piece? Well, mainly because I wanted something bombastic to use an anvil as percussion in. But I also wrote it because of its importance in the role of each Space player's planet and their frog breeding duties. Not only that, but it acts as a transition from the darker Breeding Duties to the lighter, more energetic Great LOFAD Expedition of 2009. More specifically, it extends the idea behind Thip of the Tongue to three tracks instead of one; it is a progression from the planet's frosty beginnings to a sudden and beautiful spring, and this piece heralds that moment. In any case, I ended up with a pretty fun piece that may not be the most impressive on the album, but it definitely serves a purpose and keeps the flow intact.

The piece opens with a brass fanfare based off the Folklore theme interspersed with anvil and bass drum hits. The decision to feature the anvil came from Dave's denizen, Hephaestus, who is referred to as "Lord of the Forge" with little explanation other than he desired access to Jade's Forge to repair the Caledfwlch. In fact, the entire piece has the feeling of hammering, since harsh gestures in the brass and strings are common in combination with liberal usage of timpani and bass drum. The entire piece is in Dorian, which is a mode I can rarely resist composing in, and it lends a big sense of adventure to it. Formally there is not a lot going on, other than a melody being repeated several times with different orchestration and transposition. An interesting moment occurs when the entire ensemble drops out and a Flute solo comes in playing a lighter, more humorous version of the tune before heading towards the climax. All in all, it is a pretty standard theme with a solid tune despite the fact that nothing extraordinary happens for its duration. But hey, we wouldn't want overkill would we? I was saving that for the next track.



GREAT LOFAF EXPEDITION OF 2009

TRACK ART BY MARINA

Ah, Frog-hunting music. I had the idea for this track brewing long before Homestuck Volume 8 was in the works, so you can imagine my horror when not one, but two tracks with this subject were on it. I have to give props to Jit and Bowman, those are a couple of great pieces and they both explore the idea in unique ways. I lamented however, worrying my track would be extraneous. How many times could we repeat the same, specific idea, after all? So I had to think outside the box a little bit. I would try to capture the entire experience of not just the hunt, but exploring LOFAF after the Forge had been stoked. This piece is programmatic in the same sense Breeding Duties is—it is meant to be a collection of musical ideas depicting any number of scenes the listener might imagine. Which isn't to say the music isn't thematically grounded; it is essentially based on one theme in addition to the Pondsquatter theme, which also has a large presence.

Earlier in the commentary for Breeding Duties, I referred to that and this track as being the heart of this album. It may sound hokey, but when I think of Genesis Frog I think of these two tracks. I think they exemplify the kind of music I've had in my head for two years and wanted to compose most. When I first thought of them, I knew Genesis Frog as an album would work, this was the kind of music I had always wanted to listen to but no one had quite made yet. This isn't to say it's anything new or innovative; merely that it is a specific sound I love that I wanted to hear. I think the album experience is purest during these two tracks, as ridiculous or pretentious as that may sound, but I don't know how else to say it. Great LOFAF Expedition of 2009 is made up of so many of my favorite things to do in orchestral music, so for better or worse you can use this as a roadmap for my compositional output and ridicule me as I become more and more of a slave to my own style.

It opens with a solo horn call to signify the beginning of the hunt. Normally these sorts of calls are based around perfect fifths, but I totally broke the rules like the rebel I am and used it as a way to introduce the main theme. After that, the piece is split into three sections, the first being a march featuring a piccolo playing a variation on the Pondsquatter theme. The orchestration gradually fills in, and an ostinato is introduced in the xylophone and santoor (a string instrument native to India) that is used throughout the piece. After the march, we dive into the undergrowth, represented by the next section.

The music makes a shift into 7/8, though no true pulse is really established. As a result, many different lines of counterpoint come in at disjointed intervals, lending to the image of a lot of different frogs hopping around in the depths of the forest. The pace picks up again when the music shifts back to simple meter and the march rhythm is brought back. There is more counterpoint here with the main motive of the piece; it is overlayed with itself in several different rhythmic transpositions over the march ostinato. Then, after a brief interlude, the piece shifts back into 7/8 with more of a pulse, and the Pondsquatter theme is repeated in full followed by a coda based on this piece's motive. This is one of the few pieces on the album that ends on an unambiguous tonic chord, which I thought was very refreshing at this point. Especially in light of this piece, which I promised would be overkill thanks to all the ridiculous directions it manages to go in for its duration of five minutes.



THE TEMPLE'S WILTED BLOOM

TRACK ART BY RIKURU

This is an interesting one, since it has probably undergone the most change in terms of concept and musical ideas before I finally composed it in earnest. It started out as a general Frog Temple theme, and all along I had the idea to explore sweeping chords in the strings and choir, which I did end up doing, albeit in a very different fashion than I expected. I tossed around the idea of including material from Jit's Ruins, then I thought about adapting an old wind ensemble piece of mine. Conceptually I switched from the idea of the Frog Temple to the hieroglyphics inside, tentatively naming it "Temple Walls", then "Glyphs".

What ended up happening was that I ended up composing this and the next track as one whole, and then split them into two, so in a lot of ways the two of them combined could be considered a single piece. In fact, I would venture to say the last four tracks on the album could be considered four connected movements among the greater whole, since I added more continuity between them than any previous tracks on the album. Because of the connection to the last track, which is heavily about Jack Noir, I decided to have this music represent the Lotus Time Capsule he went through during Cascade. The lotus being in the frog temple was very convenient for me since I got to keep that idea without straying too much from the theme of the album. So this track ended up being the calm before the storm as it were, representing the menace hiding inside the temple for centuries before coming out to wreak havoc.

The piece opens with a major chord in the strings, as if to continue the train of thought left behind by the previous track's end. However, the chord quickly changes into something more dissonant, and the tone shifts from light to dark. The choir answers the strings, and the piece progresses in this manner with the two sections being featured the most. A gamelan ensemble plays in the background, very out of tune with the rest of the ensemble, lending to the sense of foreboding. There is a musical device in here that represents Jack, a descending line that implies a tritone. It comes in quietly and at irregular intervals, indicative of the murderous asshole lying in wait among the confines of the temple. As the music progresses, this motive comes in more and more until it is an ostinato under the chordal strings and choir. Eventually the piece crescendos and leads into the next track, where Jack is finally the star of the show.



BILIUS

TRACK ART BY RIKURU

Poor Bilious Slick. Every iteration of Him we've seen in Homestuck has been brutally murdered in one way or another. As if that wasn't enough, He is primarily known by the spiteful nickname Dersites have given Him. In composing this album, I would have missed a big opportunity if I didn't take material from those in Derse that oppose creation, most specifically Jack Noir. The title of course came from the name Bilious Slick, but it also has the benefit of adding grotesque imagery to a piece of music about Jack slaughtering a giant universe frog. It is a continuation of The Temple's Withered Bloom, and it picks up where it left off with Jack exiting the Lotus Capsule, escaping the session and eventually going on to destroy the universe he emerged from.

The piece opens right away in 10/8, and an electric guitar, bass, and drum set are added to the ensemble. I decided that among the pastoral and bouncy, lighthearted pieces in this album, there was no single track that felt like a hook to me. I wanted to attempt to compose something that just plain kicks ass, some climactic piece that could act as a reward for listening through the relatively calm album. Naturally I came to the decision to include guitar and drums and let more rock influence come through.

The theme is based on the Folklore theme, which I thought was appropriate and somewhat ironic, since what represented creation before was now being used to represent destruction. The guitar takes over the melody as the meter goes through several changes, and after several consecutive contrasting sections that play with different motives, the guitar once again begins the next section by establishing a triplet ostinato.

At this point I figured, what the hell, I'll quote Black. It actually fits quite well with the "Jack" device from The Temple's Withered Bloom that I bring back here, thanks to the fact that they both emphasise on the tritone. My own Jack motive begins to take over from Radiation's, and eventually the strings are playing it in canon as it gets more and more chaotic, until everything drops out and the lower piano register begins an ostinato based on it. The orchestra builds again into more chaotic textures, the tension drops briefly, and then the theme is recapped as the climax. All in all it is probably the most exciting piece on the album, and for my first foray into more action-like music, I think it does its job well.



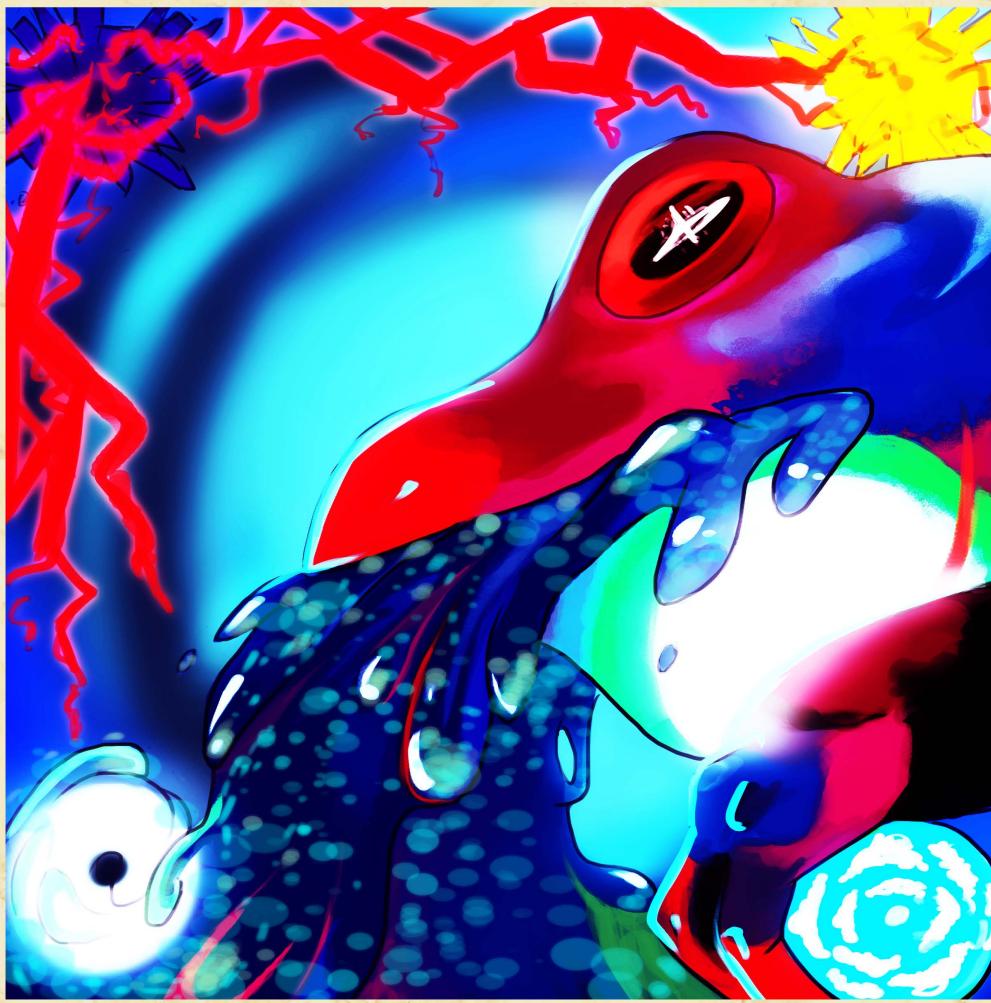
SPEAKER

(SKAIA'S REFLECTION)

TRACK ART BY MARINA AND RIKURU

Out of destruction comes nothingness, and the only sounds are sparse and atmospheric. The nothingness persists for a bit, a result of the universe's destruction in the previous track. If I were feeling really dark I could just end the album there, but I wanted there to be a sense of conclusion and returning to what once was. What better way than to have the music rise from the ashes and the solo clarinet come back to play a new version of the Pondsquatter theme? The idea behind the countless Genesis Frogs is that they propagate one another, each frog producing the next, and behind this lies the idea of infinity and repeated processes. So I wanted the album to do a Möbius Double Reacharound as it were, and end as it began. So the pairing of Speaker and The Vast Croak echoes the earlier pairing of Prelude and Pondsquatter.

This piece even has the same structure and general idea as Prelude before going into a full statement of the modified theme. As a result it is difficult to talk about its composition, since it is virtually the same as Prelude only with varying material. The clarinet emerges out of the atmosphere just as before, and a texture-based section builds this time not into a false climax, but into a fuller orchestration of what the clarinet was doing earlier. It ends simply and quietly in the woodwinds, allowing the next and final track to proceed with its exciting start.



THE VAST CROAK

TRACK ART BY RIKURU

After six notes from the drumset, the grand finale begins. I still don't have a clear idea what prompted this sort of conclusion to the album. For the longest time I intended to end it the way Speaker did, and that track indeed had a finality of its own. But I wanted something exciting at the end, and I felt like there was still momentum left over from Bilious that I could do something with. So despite only having a vague idea of what the Vast Croak probably was at the time of this composing it, I ran with my assumptions and based the album's last hurrah around that idea. What little information existed implied the Genesis Frog will Croak once He has matured, and I can only assume it signifies the birth of the new universe in some way. I hope my interpretation does not end up conflicting with canon, and even if it does with any luck the music will still match the tone of it and my thoughts will remain hidden in this commentary.

Kanaya described the Vast Croak as the most amazing thing she had ever seen. I doubt anything I compose could possibly match the scope of such a cosmic event, but I at least attempted to capture the excitement of such a thing happening. When one thinks of the Vast Croak being put to music I'm sure bombastic orchestrations come to mind, like bass drum hits and gongs swelling, the brass going wild. Maybe that would have been the right direction to go in. Of all the tracks on this album this one probably puzzles me the most, since I'm not sure exactly why I decided to go in the direction I did musically. I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of people think it isn't appropriate for its namesake, and maybe someone else could compose something more suitable at some point. All I can say is that I wanted to capture the excitement of the moment and create something that felt like joy spilling forth. I wanted the music to have a big sense of happiness and accomplishment, a feeling of "yeah, we did it!" Even if it did not capture the feeling of the Vast Croak in as literal a sense as it could have, the music has the kind of feeling I imagine players would have upon reaching this final, monumental goal. That is my defense, and I am sticking by it.

The sense of excitement is what prompted me to bring the drumset back. I thought the piece needed a percussive drive like Bilious had, so I employed the same method. And hell, if I'm going to bring drumset into an orchestral setting then I might as well do it a second time. The Dorian version of the Pondsquatter theme played by the horns and trombones is reminiscent of its use in Prospitian Folklore. In fact, the second phrase appears exactly as it did in that piece and after repeating it goes straight into the Folklore theme. At this point in the music I thought it was appropriate to quote some of the themes from earlier in the album as a sort of "B" section. I mixed together all the Consort themes once the Folklore theme ended and snuck in a little bit of Breeding Duties. I liked the idea of bringing all these themes back, since presumably all of them would have a role once again in the new universe being created.

The A section then returns in a transposed form before the piece ends in a very big fashion. When all appears to be said and done and the very last of the reverberation is dying off, the harp comes in. It is followed by clarinet, piano, celesta, and finally the violins playing harmonics; this is the instrumentation the album opened with. This small ensemble plays a subdued arrangement of Pondsquatter, and the album ends as it began in the vastness of paradox space. If you start the album over again, you will find that it flows seamlessly from the ending to beginning. Somewhere in this revelation lies my ultimate artistic intent with Genesis Frog, which probably involves something about infinity's endless repetition, or life always finding a way forward, or something along those lines depending on how pretentious you want to think of me as.

BONUS TRACKS

PONDSQUATTER (LIVE CHAMBER VERSION)

During my Junior year of college, I had the opportunity to have one of my pieces read by the acclaimed Talea Ensemble, a chamber group that was visiting my college and doing a performance there. They graciously offered to read through student works and provide commentary for us. I took advantage of this in an odd way and arranged Pondsquatter for Pierrot Ensemble, an instrumentation that consists of piano, violin, cello, flute, clarinet, and in some cases percussion. This recording was made during a runthrough they did of it, and what you should keep in mind is that this was all sightread. Obviously the performance is not perfect, and I'm slightly afraid of sharing this in case I embarrass the ensemble with it, but I can guarantee that had they prepared it beforehand, it would have been perfect. However, even without prior preparation, the performance is astounding and I thank them dearly.

In case you are reading this online and are unable to buy the album to obtain this bonus track, you can find it on both my website and my music blog, the URLs of which are provided at the end of this commentary.

FROGSONG

This was originally going to be in the album, but I excluded it because it didn't fit enough with the orchestral feel and I didn't really know where to go with it after the first minute. It's still a very fun piece though, and I thought it was worth including as a little bonus. I may have employed heavy use of certain frog-related sound effects...it's a bit of a weakness...

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS, THANK YOU'S, AND CROAKS OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Wow, did I really make it through the entire commentary without typing the word "ribbit"? Those of you who know me and my love for animal-based onomatopoeia are probably as shocked as I am. Perhaps more shocking is that I composed an entire album and only included two tracks with ribbits and croaks in them. And one of them is a bonus track, it's a new personal record of some kind! Of course you shouldn't expect me not to put animal noises in any album I ever compose, so don't even go there. Alright, enough of that. I would like thank everyone who took the time to listen to Genesis Frog. The fact that I have an audience at all is something to be thankful for, and even if you didn't enjoy it I appreciate you giving it a chance. Thank you to everyone anticipating the album for all their patience and support in the time before its release. Unfortunately I wasn't ready to release it before the Homestuck Kickstarter happened, so it had to be delayed quite a bit. However, I believe the album is all the better for the extra time I had to work on it. Thanks to everyone on the MSPA Forums who voiced their excitement in the Homestuck music thread, or otherwise interacted with me or gave me advice of any kind. Thanks to all my Tumblr and Twitter followers for actually caring enough about what I have to say to follow me. I hope everyone who knows me or pays attention to what I do musically enjoyed this album, as well as people who were not familiar with me until now. I appreciate every single listener I have, and without you guys the only person listening to my music would be my mom and close friends, and somehow that doesn't have the same sense of accomplishment to it.

I have two very big thanks reserved for my two artists and collaborators, Marina and Rikuru. In a lot of ways this was a joint project, and their art is just as important to the album as the music. From the beginning I decided I wanted the album to be as unified visually as it is aurally, so I tried contacting two artists who were friends with each other and were capable of drawing in a unified style together. As it turned out I could not have made a better decision. Both Marina and Rikuru have knocked every piece of track art out of the park the instant I saw them. Their artistic vision matched mine perfectly, and I truly feel that each piece of art they made was a faithful visual interpretation of my music in terms of color, tone, style and pretty much anything you could think of.

The three of us tossed around ideas a lot; I looked at sketches, I explained what each piece of music was about, the feelings the music conveyed were discussed. Amazingly the two of them were able to produce all the art necessary for the album and we didn't end up needing any outside help. One of this album's greatest strengths is definitely its unity, and working closely Marina and Rikuru ended up with a product I think we can all be proud of. Thanks so much for all your hard work, both of you. The album is that much better thanks to your artistic visions, and I hope you had just as much fun as I did working on it.

You can find the work of the artists here:

Marina - sylladexter.tumblr.com

Rikuru - quipster-rikuru.tumblr.com

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS, THANK YOU'S, AND CROAKS OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would also like to thank Toby "Radiation" Fox for being a constant friend and getting this album up and running. He's always been a source of inspiration for me whether he knows it or not, and every time he's given his input on my music it has helped me. Kudos to him taking care of so much business on behalf of the Homestuck music team and finding talented musicians in the community to help showcase their music in addition to the "official" (pffffahahaha) team's.

Of course I would like to make an obligatory thank you to Andrew Hussie for creating Homestuck, the entirety of which inspired this album (even the bits of it that don't have frogs). Without his story I wouldn't have had the opportunity to grow and interact with similar-minded musicians the way I have. And without his permission, I certainly wouldn't have this album to show for myself.

Genesis Frog has undergone quite the journey over the last couple of years, even if the larger portion of it took place inside my head as vague bubbles of inspiration. I was finally able to compose the music I had always wanted to compose and contribute my own voice and interpretation of Homestuck to its discography. This is an immense privilege and one I will always carry in my mind as one of the most important opportunities I ever had in my life. It's an excellent time to be making music, and I will take everything I have learned in making this album with me as I continue to compose in the future. Thank you once again for listening, and make that a double thank you if you read through this extremely long-winded commentary.

I am Alex Rosetti and I am a composer who loves video game music, whether it is listening to it, studying it, or making it. If you're interested in my music or any other projects I'm up to, feel free to check me out at any of the following:

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