

= Masashi Hamauzu =

Masashi Hamauzu (山手 真志 , Hamauzu Masashi , born September 20 , 1971) is a Japanese composer , arranger , pianist and lyricist . Hamauzu , who was employed at Square Enix from 1996 to 2010 , was best known during that time for his work on the Final Fantasy and SaGa video game series . Born into a musical family in Germany , Hamauzu was raised in Japan . He became interested in music while in kindergarten , and took piano lessons from his parents .

Hamauzu was hired by Square as a trainee , and his debut as a solo composer came the following year when he scored Chocobo no Fushigina Dungeon . He has collaborated with his friend and fellow composer Junya Nakano on several games , and has worked closely with synthesizer programmer Ryo Yamazaki on most titles since SaGa Frontier 2 .

After Nobuo Uematsu left Square Enix in 2004 , Hamauzu took over as the leading composer of the company 's music team . He was the sole composer for Final Fantasy XIII . He has also become a renowned piano arranger , and has arranged a number of albums , including Yasunori Mitsuda 's Sailing to the World piano score in 2006 . His music incorporates various styles , although he mostly uses classical and ambient music in his pieces . In 2010 , Hamauzu left Square Enix to start his own studio , MONOMUSIK .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Born in Munich , Germany , Hamauzu 's mother was a piano teacher and his father , Akimori Hamauzu , an opera singer . He developed an interest in music while in kindergarten . Growing up in Germany , Hamauzu received piano and singing lessons from his parents and created his first original compositions during high school . After his brother , Hiroshi , was born , the family moved to Osaka . He enrolled in the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music , where he joined a student ensemble as a pianist . Hamauzu met his wife , Matsue Hamauzu (née Fukushi) , at the university , and they have two children . Matsue worked alongside Hamauzu on the soundtrack to Final Fantasy VII as a soprano and Sigma Harmonics as a scat singer ; she was also a soprano for the score to Final Fantasy VIII & a lead vocalist in Final Fantasy XIII . After graduating from the university , he thought about becoming a classical musician , but he eventually found out that he wanted to work with game music instead .

= = = Career = = =

A fan of the Final Fantasy games , Hamauzu decided to apply for a job at Square . Nobuo Uematsu was impressed with his résumé , and employed Hamauzu as a trainee in 1996 . His debut came with the 1996 title Front Mission : Gun Hazard , with Uematsu , Yasunori Mitsuda , and Junya Nakano . Later the same year , he created four tracks for another multi @-@ composer game , Tobal No. 1 . Working with Nakano on these games , Hamauzu admired his musical style , and they became friends ; they have later collaborated on several titles . Hamauzu 's first solo project came in 1997 with Chocobo no Fushigina Dungeon . Shortly after the title 's release , Hamauzu and Yasuo Sako created Chocobo no Fushigina Dungeon Coi Vanni Gialli , an arranged album containing orchestral tracks from the game 's music . Both the soundtrack and Coi Vanni Gialli were praised . For Final Fantasy VII , Hamauzu was the synthesizer programmer for the rendition of Joseph Haydn 's " The Creation " , and provided bass vocals in the eight @-@ person chorus for " One @-@ Winged Angel " .

In 1999 , Hamauzu was assigned with scoring SaGa Frontier 2 , replacing the SaGa series ' long @-@ time composer Kenji Ito . He spent some time conforming to the music Ito had established for the series , but eventually realized that he wanted to use his own unique style . The project introduced him to synthesizer programmer Ryo Yamazaki , whom he has worked with on most of his

subsequent soundtracks . Hamauzu also released Piano Pieces " SF2 " ~ Rhapsody on a Theme of SaGa Frontier 2 , an arranged album featuring piano pieces of the game 's music . In 2001 , Hamauzu and Nakano were chosen to assist Uematsu in the production of the score for the critically acclaimed Final Fantasy X , based on their ability to create music that was different from Uematsu 's style . Hamauzu also contributed the Piano Collections arranged album of the game , which he described as his most challenging work , and the track named " feel " , an arrangement of " Hymn of the Fayth " , from the EP feel / Go dream : Yuna & Tidus .

In 2002 , Hamauzu composed the music for Unlimited Saga , a game that would be received negatively by critics due to a variety of gameplay issues . He became the leading composer of Square Enix 's music team in October 2004 , following Uematsu 's departure from the company . In 2005 , Hamauzu , Nakano , and the duo Wavelink Zeal (Takayuki and Yuki Iwai) scored Musashi : Samurai Legend , the sequel to the 1998 title Brave Fencer Musashi . Hamauzu composed the highly anticipated but critically unsuccessful Final Fantasy VII follow @-@ up , Dirge of Cerberus : Final Fantasy VII , in 2006 . Later the same year , he arranged the Sailing to the World Piano Score at the request of Mitsuda ; the album was well received by pianists and confirmed Hamauzu 's position as the leading piano arranger of game music .

Hamauzu released a solo album , Vielen Dank , in 2007 after recording it in Munich , Germany . The album includes eleven piano pieces that he composed for personal pleasure after the creation of Piano Pieces " SF2 " ~ Rhapsody on a Theme of SaGa Frontier 2 as well as 14 arrangements of his game compositions . Two tracks from the album were performed at the 2007 Symphonic Game Music Concert in Leipzig . In 2008 , he composed the soundtrack to Sigma Harmonics , with synthesizer programming by Mitsuto Suzuki rather than Yamazaki . At the 2006 E3 event , a Square Enix press conference revealed that Hamauzu would be returning to the Final Fantasy series , scoring Final Fantasy XIII . He left Square Enix on January 19 , 2010 . He went on to form his own studio , Monomusik , which he describes as a personal studio that does not include any other composers . He has since gone on to score Final Fantasy XIII @-@ 2 and Lightning Returns : Final Fantasy XIII , while also rearranging his old compositions for the high definition version of Final Fantasy X.

= = Musical style and influences = =

Hamauzu composes music in a wide variety of styles , often using multiple styles throughout the various pieces of a soundtrack . He mostly creates classical and ambient music , and uses the piano predominantly as an instrument . He frequently uses dissonance to provide an atmospheric effect . In Unlimited Saga , for example , the style of his compositions mix classical marches , tango music , electronic ambiance , instrumental solos , bossa nova , and jazz .

He cites animation composers Hiroshi Miyagawa and Ryuichi Sakamoto of Yellow Magic Orchestra , impressionist composers Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy , and his father as major musical influences . During his adolescence , he enjoyed listening to the works of Miyagawa and Sakamoto . While attending university , he developed an appreciation for classical music , especially the compositions of Ravel and Debussy .

= = Works = =