

= Nobuo Uematsu =

Nobuo Uematsu ( 1959 , Uematsu Nobuo , born March 21 , 1959 ) is a Japanese video game composer , best known for scoring the majority of titles in the Final Fantasy series . He is considered to be one of the most famous and respected composers in the video game community . Sometimes referred to as the " Beethoven of video games music " , he appeared five times in the top 20 of the annual Classic FM Hall of Fame .

Uematsu , a self taught musician , began playing the piano at the age of twelve , with English songwriter Elton John as his biggest influence . Uematsu joined Square in 1986 , where he met Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi . They have worked together on many video game titles , most notably the games in the Final Fantasy series . After 18 years with Square , he left in 2004 to found his own company called Smile Please , and the music label Dog Ear Records . He has since composed music as a freelancer for many other video games , including ones developed by Square Enix and Sakaguchi 's development studio Mistwalker .

Many soundtracks and arranged albums of Uematsu 's game scores have been released . Pieces from his video game works have been performed in various Final Fantasy concerts , where he has worked with Grammy Award winning conductor Arnie Roth on several of these performances . From 2002 to 2010 , he was in a hard rock band with Square Enix colleagues Kenichiro Fukui and Tsuyoshi Sekito called The Black Mages , in which he played electronic organ and other keyboards . The band played arranged rock versions of Uematsu 's Final Fantasy compositions . He has since performed with Earthbound Papas , which he formed in 2011 as the successor to The Black Mages .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life = = =

Uematsu was born in Kashiwa , Kashiwa Prefecture , Japan . A self taught musician , he began to play the piano when he was between the ages of eleven and twelve years old , and he did not take any formal piano lessons . He has an older sister who also played the piano . After graduating from Kanagawa University with a degree in English , Uematsu played the keyboard in several amateur bands and composed music for television commercials . When Uematsu was working at a music rental shop in Tokyo , a Square employee asked if he would be interested in creating music for some of the titles they were working on . Although he agreed , Uematsu at the time considered it a side job , and he did not think it would become a full time career . He said it was a way to make some money on the side , while also keeping his part time job at the music rental shop .

= = = Career with Square = = =

Uematsu joined Square in 1985 , and composed the soundtrack to Cruise Chaser Blassty in 1986 , his first . While working at Square , he met Hironobu Sakaguchi , who asked him if he wanted to create music for some of his games , which Uematsu agreed to . For the next year , he created music for a number of games which did not achieve widespread success , including titles like Genesis and Alpha . In 1987 , Uematsu and Sakaguchi collaborated on what was originally to be Sakaguchi 's last contribution for Square , Final Fantasy , a game that turned out to be a huge success .

Final Fantasy 's popularity sparked Uematsu 's career in video game music , and he would go on to compose music for over 30 titles , most prominently the subsequent games in the Final Fantasy series . He scored the first installment in the SaGa series , The Final Fantasy Legend , in 1989 . For the second game in the series , Final Fantasy Legend II he was assisted by Kenji Ito . In late 1994 , Uematsu signed on to finish the soundtrack for the critically acclaimed title Chrono Trigger after the game 's composer , Yasunori Mitsuda , contracted peptic ulcers . In 1996 , he co composed

the soundtrack to Front Mission : Gun Hazard , and created the entire score for DynamiTracer . He also created music for three of the games in the Hanjuku Hero series .

Outside video games , he has composed the main theme for the 2000 animated film Ah ! My Goddess : The Movie and co @-@ composed the anime Final Fantasy : Unlimited ( 2001 ) with Final Fantasy orchestrator Shir? Hamaguchi . He also inspired the Ten Plants concept albums , and released a solo album in 1994 , entitled Phantasmagoria . Feeling gradually more dissatisfied and uninspired , Uematsu requested the assistance of composers Masashi Hamauzu and Junya Nakano for the score to Final Fantasy X in 2001 . This marked the first time that Uematsu did not compose an entire main @-@ series Final Fantasy soundtrack . For Final Fantasy XI from 2002 , he was joined by Naoshi Mizuta , who composed the majority of the soundtrack , and Kumi Tanioka ; Uematsu was responsible for only eleven tracks . In 2003 , he assisted Hitoshi Sakimoto in scoring Final Fantasy Tactics Advance by providing the main theme .

In 2002 , fellow Square colleagues Kenichiro Fukui and Tsuyoshi Sekito asked Uematsu to join them in forming a rock band that focused on reinterpreting and expanding on Uematsu 's compositions . He declined their offer at first because he was too busy with work ; however , after agreeing to perform with Fukui and Sekito in a live performance as a keyboardist , he decided to join them in making a band . Another employee at Square , Mr. Matsushita , chose the name The Black Mages for their band . In 2003 , Keiji Kawamori , Arata Hanyuda , and Michio Okamiya also joined the band . The Black Mages released three studio albums , and appeared at several concerts to promote their albums .

= = = Current freelancer career = = =

Uematsu left Square Enix in 2004 and formed his own company called Smile Please ; he also created the music production company Dog Ear Records in 2006 . The reason for Uematsu 's departure was that the company moved their office from Meguro to Shinjuku , Tokyo , and he was not comfortable with the new location . Also , he cites the fact that he had reached an age where he should gradually take his life into his own hands . He does , however , continue to compose music as a freelancer for Square Enix . In 2005 , Uematsu and several members of The Black Mages created the score for the CGI film Final Fantasy VII Advent Children . Uematsu composed only the main theme for Final Fantasy XII ( 2006 ) ; he was originally offered the job of creating the full score , but Sakimoto was eventually assigned as the main composer instead . Uematsu was also initially going to create the theme song for Final Fantasy XIII ( 2010 ) . However , after being assigned the task of creating the entire score of Final Fantasy XIV , Uematsu decided to hand the job over to the main Final Fantasy XIII composer , Hamauzu .

Uematsu also works closely with Sakaguchi 's development studio Mistwalker , and has composed for Blue Dragon ( 2006 ) , Lost Odyssey ( 2007 ) , Away : Shuffle Dungeon ( 2008 ) ; The Last Story ( 2011 ) ; and Terra Battle ( 2014 ) . He also wrote music for the cancelled game Cry On .

Uematsu created the main theme for the multi @-@ composer game Super Smash Bros. Brawl in 2008 . He then composed the music for the 2009 anime Guin Saga ; this marked the first time he provided a full score for an animated series . Uematsu recently contributed music and storyline to an e @-@ book titled called " Blik @-@ 0 1946 " . He is currently working on soundtracks for multiple games , including Project Phoenix .

Uematsu appeared five times in the top 20 of the annual Classic FM Hall of Fame . In 2012 , " Aerith 's Theme " , written by Uematsu for Final Fantasy VII , was voted into the number 16 position in the annual Classic FM ( UK ) " Hall of Fame " top 300 chart . It was the first time that a piece of music written for a video game had appeared in the chart . In 2013 , music from the Final Fantasy series received even greater support and was voted into the third position on the Classic FM Hall of Fame . Uematsu and his Final Fantasy music subsequently appeared at number seven in 2014 , number nine in 2015 , and number 17 in 2016 .

= = = Personal life = = =

Uematsu currently resides in Tokyo , Japan with his wife , Reiko , whom he met during college , and their beagle , Pao . They have a summer cabin in Yamanakako , Yamanashi . In his spare time , he enjoys watching professional wrestling , drinking beer and bicycling . Uematsu has said he originally wanted to become a professional wrestler , mentioning it was a career dream when he was younger .

= = Concerts = =

Uematsu 's video game compositions have been performed in numerous concerts , and various Final Fantasy concerts have also been held . Outside Japan , Uematsu 's Final Fantasy music was performed live for the first time at the first event of the 2003 Symphonic Game Music Concert in Leipzig , Germany . Other events of the Symphonic Game Music Concerts featuring Final Fantasy music were held in 2004 , 2006 , and 2007 . The concert in 2004 featured a world premiere of Those Who Fight from Final Fantasy VII . Japanese pianist Seiji Honda was invited to perform the arrangement together with the orchestra . Another world premiere was " Dancing Mad " from Final Fantasy VI , performed by orchestra , choir , and pipe organ . The event in 2007 included " Distant Worlds " from Final Fantasy XI , performed by Japanese opera soprano Izumi Masuda .

A series of successful concert performances were held in Japan , including a Final Fantasy concert series titled Tour de Japon . The first stateside concert , Dear Friends - Music from Final Fantasy , took place on May 10 , 2004 , at the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles , California , and was performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestra and the Los Angeles Master Chorale . It was conducted by Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra director Miguel Harth @-@ Bedoya . Due to a positive reception , a concert series for North America followed . On May 16 , 2005 , a follow @-@ up concert called More Friends : Music from Final Fantasy was performed in Los Angeles at the Gibson Amphitheatre ; the concert was conducted by Grammy Award @-@ winning Arnie Roth .

Uematsu also made a guest appearance at A Night in Fantasia 2004 performed by the Eminence Symphony Orchestra 's debut concert in October 2004 which coincided with his last day as a staff at Square Enix .

Uematsu 's Final Fantasy music was presented in the concert Voices - Music from Final Fantasy , which took place on February 18 , 2006 at the Pacifico Yokohama convention center . Star guests included Emiko Shiratori , Rikki , Izumi Masuda , and Angela Aki . The concert focused on the songs from the Final Fantasy series and was conducted by Arnie Roth . Uematsu and several of his fellow composers were in attendance at the world premiere of Play ! A Video Game Symphony in Chicago , Illinois on May 27 , 2006 ; he composed the opening fanfare for the concert . He also attended the European debut in Stockholm , Sweden on June 14 , 2006 , the performance in Toronto , Canada on September 30 , 2006 , and in Florence , Italy , on October 10 , 2007 . The world tour Distant Worlds : Music from Final Fantasy was held in Stockholm , and was performed by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and conducted by Arnie Roth on December 4 , 2007 . The second concert of the tour was held at the Rosemont Theatre near Chicago on March 1 , 2008 . The tour has continued , with a recent concert in Houston , Texas on July 24 , 2010 . Music from Final Fantasy made up one fourth of the music in the Symphonic Fantasies concerts in Cologne in September 2009 which were produced by the creators of the Symphonic Game Music Concert series and conducted by Arnie Roth .

In February 2010 , it was announced that Uematsu would appear at Anime Boston , one of the largest anime conventions on the East Coast . Uematsu did not only show up at Anime Boston , he made a surprise appearance and played with the Video Game Orchestra for the track One Winged Angel . On top of this , he made a short visit to the prestigious Berklee College of Music for a brief Q & A session at the request of VGO founder and Berklee alumni Shota Nakama . In January 2012 , Uematsu performed with his band Earthbound Papas at MAGFest X in National Harbor , MD . On November 24 , 2012 , Uematsu performed in a Final Fantasy Distant Worlds concert with Arnie Roth conducting the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra , Adelaide Philharmonia Chorus and soloists at the Adelaide Entertainment Centre . On June 14 and 15 , 2013 , Uematsu performed in a Final Fantasy Distant Worlds concert with Arnie Roth conducting the Vienna Volksoper Orchestra and Vienna

Chamber Chorus at Konzerthaus , Vienna .

On August 18 , 2013 , while headlining the Fantasy Rock Festival in Kawasaki , Japan with the Earthbound Papas , he revealed to the audience that he had originally intended to name their second album " Dancing Mad " after the Final Fantasy VI track which also appears on the album . However , referring to Square Enix indirectly , he told the audience that " a certain company ' S ' " had phoned and informed him that he " could not use the name " . Consequently , instead of backing down he decided to name the album " Dancing Dad " , as a nod to the band 's name . He also told the audience that he wanted to make an album of wholly original songs , but lamented that " it 's just that if there are no game songs on it , it probably wouldn 't sell ! " .

= = Musical style and influences = =

The style of Uematsu 's compositions is diverse , ranging from stately classical symphonic pieces and heavy metal to new @-@ age and hyper @-@ percussive techno @-@ electronica . For example , in Lost Odyssey , the score ranges from classical orchestral arrangements to contemporary jazz and techno tracks . Uematsu has stated that he is a big fan of Celtic and Irish music , and some of his work contains elements from these musical styles . Uematsu 's Final Fantasy scores vary from upbeat , to dark and angry , to melancholic in nature . For instance , the music of Final Fantasy VIII is dark and gloomy , while the soundtrack to Final Fantasy IX is more carefree and upbeat . His Final Fantasy music has been described as being able to convey the true emotion of a scene ; an example is " Aerith 's Theme " from Final Fantasy VII . In an interview with the Nichi Bei Times , Uematsu said " I don 't really self @-@ consciously compose music for Japan or for the world , but I do think there is something in my more melancholy pieces that has a distinctly Japanese quality . " He has been named one of the " Innovators " in Time Magazine 's " Time 100 : The Next Wave ? Music " feature . He has also been called the " John Williams of the video game world " and been credited for " increasing the appreciation and awareness " of video game music .

Many of Uematsu 's musical influences come from the United Kingdom and the United States . He cites Elton John as his biggest musical influence , and he has stated that he wanted to be like him . Other major inspirations include The Beatles , Emerson , Lake & Palmer , Simon & Garfunkel , and progressive rock bands . In the classical genre , he cites Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky as a great influence . Uematsu has said that 1970s bands , such as Pink Floyd and King Crimson , had an impact on his Final Fantasy compositions . The intro to the piece " One @-@ Winged Angel " from Final Fantasy VII was inspired by the Jimi Hendrix song " Purple Haze " ; the lyrics were taken from the medieval poetry on which Carl Orff based his cantata Carmina Burana , specifically the songs " Estuans Interius " , " O Fortuna " , " Veni , Veni , Venias " and " Ave Formosissima " . In turn , Nobuo Uematsu has had a major influence on video game music and beyond the video games industry as well . For example , " Liberi Fatali " from Final Fantasy VIII was played during the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens during the women 's synchronized swimming event . From the same game , " Eyes on Me " , featuring Chinese pop singer Faye Wong , sold a record 400 @,@ 000 copies and was the first song from a video game to win an award at the Japan Gold Disc Awards , where it won " Song of the Year ( International ) " in 2000 . In a 2010 interview , Uematsu revealed , " Rather than getting inspiration from listening to other music , I get inspiration while I 'm walking my dog . "

= = Works = =