

= Castlevania : Harmony of Dissonance =

Castlevania : Harmony of Dissonance , known in Japan as Castlevania : Byakuya no Concerto (?????????? ?????? , Kyassuruvania Byakuya no Koncheruto , officially translated Castlevania : Concerto of Midnight Sun) , is a platform @-@ adventure video game developed and published by Konami for the Game Boy Advance . Belonging to Konami 's Castlevania video game series , it is the second installment of the series on the Game Boy Advance . It was released in Japan in June 2002 , in North America in September 2002 , and in Europe in October 2002 . It was the first Castlevania game to be called " Castlevania " in Japan instead of " Akumaj? Dracula " .

Harmony of Dissonance occurs in the fictional universe of the Castlevania series ; the premise of the series centers on the eternal conflict between the vampire hunters of the Belmont clan and the immortal vampire Dracula . Set fifty years after Simon Belmont vanquished Dracula 's curse , Harmony of Dissonance focuses on his grandson Juste Belmont and his quest to rescue a kidnapped childhood friend .

Koji Igarashi produced Harmony of Dissonance with the intent of " creat [ing] a game that was similar to Castlevania : Symphony of the Night " , the critically acclaimed PlayStation game that he had worked on . Harmony of Dissonance sold 126 @,@ 000 units in the United States and did not become a " huge hit in Japan " . Critics praised it as an entertaining game with improved graphics as compared to its predecessor Castlevania : Circle of the Moon , but criticized its soundtrack . In January 2006 , Harmony of Dissonance was re @-@ released in North America and later Europe , along with Castlevania : Aria of Sorrow , as part of the Castlevania Double Pack .

= = Gameplay = =

Harmony of Dissonance makes use of a 2D side @-@ scrolling style of gameplay , similar to many of the previous Castlevania video games . The objective of the game is to lead the player @-@ character , Juste Belmont , through the monster @-@ filled castle as he searches for his kidnapped friend . The castle consists of two " layers " : Castle A and B. Structurally , each castle has mostly the same room layout , but monster types , items , and other aspects vary between the two versions . Later , the player can use special warp rooms that can teleport Juste to other castle rooms and between castles . The two castles share a connection ; for example , the destruction of a wall in one castle can cause a change in the other . The game further divides the castle into various , named areas : the Shrine of the Apostates , for example . Relics and keys found within the castle allow Juste to reach previously inaccessible areas . Harmony of Dissonance makes use of the forward dash move , which causes Juste to move forward with a short burst of speed . Unique to Harmony of Dissonance is the ability to collect furniture and collectables to furnish a bare room that Juste finds in the castle . This , under certain circumstances , does affect the ending .

Juste primarily attacks at close quarters using the series ' traditional whip weapon , the Vampire Killer . It can be brandished to deflect projectile attacks , reminiscent of Simon Belmont 's usage of the weapon in Super Castlevania IV . A variety of ranged sub @-@ weapons ? holy water , a dagger , a holy book , a cross , a gem , an axe , and a thunder gauntlet ? are available , one of which can be carried at any given time and combined with one of the five spell books ? Fire Book , Ice Book , Bolt Book , Wind Book , and the Summoning Tome ? hidden throughout the castle to create a magical attack . Casting a spell renders the player character invincible for a moment .

Harmony of Dissonance also makes use of elements found in role @-@ playing games . Defeating minor enemies and bosses will procure experience points for Juste , who will level up when statistical requirements are met . Leveling up will increase his statistics : hit points , the amount of damage the character can receive before dying ; magic points , which affects how often he can cast a magical attack ; strength , the power of the physical attack ; defense , the reduction of damage taken from an enemy ; intelligence , the strength of the magical attack ; and luck , which determines the rate of items dropped by enemies . Certain relics will also affect his statistics : the Fang of Vlad increases his defense points , for example . Equipment in the form of weapon modifications , armor and accessories can also be found scattered about the castle and will contribute to his statistics .

Occasionally , an enemy will drop an item after being killed . Items can also be bought with in @-@ game money from a merchant who appears in various places throughout the castle .

Additional modes can be unlocked in the game . For Boss Rush Mode , the player is required to complete the game once and can then fight the bosses from the game in order with the number of bosses depending on the level of difficulty selected . Maxim Mode requires the player to finish the game with the best ending and allows the player to take control of Maxim . Unlike Juste , Maxim cannot equip items and can only use his boomerang as a weapon . Finishing with the best ending also unlocks an option to listen to the music of the game .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting and characters = = =

Harmony of Dissonance takes place in 1748 , fifty years after Simon Belmont ended Dracula 's curse . As result of his battle against Dracula was that the villagers changed their opinion of him and the Belmont family . Producer Koji Igarashi explained : " Simon was regarded as a life @-@ saver , and people started to look upon him as a hero ; little by little , the people started to gather around them . A village , therefore , was formed around Belmonts . Juste Belmont grew up in this environment with his childhood friends Maxim Kischine and Lydie Erlanger . "

The protagonist and primary player character is Juste Belmont , the grandson of Simon Belmont and descendant of Sypha Belnades , who at the age of sixteen , gained the Vampire Killer whip . Together with his amnesiac and injured best friend Maxim Kischine , he sets off to rescue his kidnapped childhood friend , Lydie Erlanger . While exploring the castle , he encounters a merchant who stumbled upon the castle and Death , Dracula 's servant .

= = = Story = = =

Juste meets Maxim at a castle where Lydie is being held captive ; after a brief talk , he leaves Maxim outside and begins to explore the castle . Within the castle , Juste encounters Death , who confirms that the castle is Dracula 's . He then meets up with a dazed Maxim , whose memory is slowly returning to him and they split up to cover more of the castle ground . While trekking through the castle , Juste notices that the castle sometimes has different atmospheres . He also meets Maxim several more times , but is baffled by how his friend seems to change personalities periodically . Regardless , in one of their meetings , Maxim reveals that he went on a journey to find and destroy the remains of Dracula , something Simon Belmont had previously done , but when he collected all six , his memory went blank .

Juste encounters Death again , who explains that the castle has been split in two " layers " to accommodate the two spirits living in Maxim 's body : his original spirit and an evil one created from Dracula 's remains and his suppressed jealousy of Juste . Maxim later confirms this and admits to being Lydie 's kidnapper . Juste meets his friend again in the other layer of the castle where he reveals that he lost his memory to protect Lydie . He then gives Juste his bracelet to help him locate her in the castle . However , when Juste finds her , Death kidnaps her to use her blood as a means to unite the two castles by destroying Maxim 's spirit . Juste defeats Death , and proceeds to search for Maxim . Along the way , he accumulates Dracula 's remains , which are scattered throughout the castle . In the center of the castle , he finds Maxim with an unconscious Lydie .

Three endings exist . In the first , Maxim , possessed , has already bitten Lydie . With Maxim 's defeat , Juste escapes the collapsing castle alone and curses his inability to save either friend . In the second , Maxim struggles against the possession and urges Juste to kill him . In his final moments , he thanks Juste for killing him and reveals that he had wished to save him from his fate as a Belmont . Outside the castle , Lydie awakens , unharmed , and tells Juste not to blame himself for Maxim 's death . The third ending begins the same as the first , except that , during the fight , Maxim notices that Juste wore his bracelet and resists the possession . Dracula flees into a

weakened form using the gathered remains and fights Juste , planning to use his blood to return himself to full power . Vanquishing him , Juste escapes the castle together with Maxim and Lydie , whose bite marks disappear by the time she regains consciousness . Outside the castle , the three resolve to return home .

= = Development = =

Produced by Koji Igarashi and developed by Konami Computer Entertainment Tokyo , Castlevania : Harmony of Dissonance is the second installment of Konami 's Castlevania video game series for the Game Boy Advance (GBA) . Its predecessor Castlevania : Circle of the Moon had been developed by a different studio , Konami Computer Entertainment Kobe . Igarashi began the game 's development with the intention of making an installment of the series for GBA that shared similarities with Symphony of the Night (1997) . Ayami Kojima , who had previously worked on the character designs for Symphony of the Night , designed the characters of Harmony of Dissonance .

Harmony of Dissonance departs from the usual structure of the series , in which Dracula is resurrected and a member of the Belmont clan sets out to defeat him , in favor of a plot that takes place in between Dracula 's resurrections . Harmony of Dissonance incorporates other changes : a fusion @-@ spell system replaced the dual @-@ card system introduced in Circle of the Moon , and the graphics were also brightened and controls improved . In production at the same time was Castlevania : Aria of Sorrow (2003) , and as a result , the two share similar programming engines and gameplay elements . Originally slated for a mid @-@ June release , Harmony of Dissonance was not released until September 2002 . It was released in Japan on June 6 , 2002 , in North America on September 16 , 2002 , and in Europe on October 11 , 2002 . It was published on the Wii U Virtual Console on October 16 , 2014 , in North America .

= = = Audio = = =

On June 26 , 2002 , Konami published Castlevania : Circle of the Moon & Castlevania : Concerto of Midnight Sun Original Soundtrack (KMCA @-@ 162) . Soshiro Hokkai composed the soundtrack for Harmony of Dissonance with Michiru Yamane creating the additional stage music . Igarashi later noted that the quality of the music had been " sacrifice [d] " for the graphics of the game .

Notes

Tracks 1 through 19 from Castlevania : Circle of the Moon

Tracks 20 through 45 from Castlevania : Harmony of Dissonance

= = Reception = =

In the United States , about 126 @,@ 000 units of Harmony of Dissonance were sold , and in Japan , it was not considered a " huge hit " by Igarashi . Metacritic assigned it a score of 87 of 100 while GameRankings gave it an 84 % .

At the time of its release , Harmony of Dissonance received positive reviews from English @-@ language critics . GameSpot commended it as " not just a fine Castlevania game--it 's also one of the better Game Boy Advance games to come around in a while " . Gamespy stated : " Despite its unevenness , Castlevania : Harmony of Dissonance is a quality adventure that represents the best attempt yet made at miniaturizing the brilliance of Symphony of the Night . " While worrying about the loss of originality of the franchise and noting that " Harmony of Dissonance almost obsessively copies Symphony of the Night " , GamePro called it " a fun action game and a fine Castlevania game in its own right . " The improved graphics of Harmony of Dissonance , especially the backgrounds , 3D effects , and multi @-@ jointed bosses , received praise from reviewers , who called them " plentiful and visually stunning " , and " top @-@ notch " .

The soundtrack of the game was less well received . Critics panned the music as " easily the worst Castlevania soundtrack " and " muddy , plodding , and reminiscent of the days of four @-@ channel NES soundtracks " . Conversely , GameSpot found that the music was " decent " and occasionally "

fitting or even catchy " , but failed to live up to the high expectations of the series . IGN felt that while not " quite as bad as importers have made it out to be " , the songs " aren 't nearly as nice as they have been in past Castlevania adventures . " Reviewers also disliked the lack of difficulty with GamePro describing it as the game 's " biggest flaw " . Other criticism included predictable and easy boss battles , and " a much smaller explorable area and somewhat less compelling map design " .

Retrospective reviews , however , have been more critical of the game . Considering Harmony of Dissonance " one of the more disappointing titles of the series " and " the least @-@ impressive of the three GBA titles , " retrospective critics cited the dull castle design and frequent switching between castle layers as some of the game 's biggest flaws . PALGN 's David Low criticized the inclusion of the " possessed ally " element from previous Castlevania titles along with the game 's easier gameplay , the player character 's badly animated sprite , and the occasionally gaudy environments . Looking back on the series , Mark Bozon of IGN concluded : " Still Harmony of Dissonance shows off some decent visuals as an in @-@ between , mid @-@ generation game , and paved the way for GBA 's strongest Castlevania title , Aria of Sorrow . " Game Informer 's Tim Turi meanwhile felt that its design was among Castlevania 's best despite having among the worst music in the series .

Castlevania : Harmony of Dissonance was re @-@ released in North America in January 2006 , along with Castlevania : Aria of Sorrow , as part of Castlevania Double Pack . Both games are contained on a single GBA Game Pak . This pack also appeared in Europe later that year . It was picked as the IGN Game Boy Game of the Month for January 2006 .