

= Final Symphony =

Final Symphony is a symphonic concert tour first held at the Historische Stadthalle Wuppertal in Wuppertal , Germany on May 11 , 2013 and continues to date . The concert tour features arrangements of video game music selected from the Final Fantasy series , specifically Final Fantasy VI , VII , and X. It is divided into three acts : a symphonic poem for VI , a piano concerto for X , and a symphony for VII . The concert is produced and directed by Thomas Böcker , with arrangements provided by Finnish composer and musician Jonne Valtonen , along with Roger Wanamo and Final Fantasy X composer Masashi Hamauzu with consultation from Final Fantasy composer Nobuo Uematsu . The original works were composed by Uematsu and Hamauzu , and an introductory piece was composed by Valtonen . The premiere concert was performed by the Wuppertal Symphony Orchestra under conduction from Eckehard Stier , with guest performer Benjamin Nuss joining the orchestra on piano .

Following the initial performance , Final Symphony was performed in several other venues . It was first performed in London at the Barbican Centre by the London Symphony Orchestra and Benjamin Nuss on May 30 , 2013 . In 2014 it was performed five times : twice at the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan in Tokyo on May 4 , 2014 by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra and Katharina Treutler , on May 9 at the Musikhuset Aarhus in Aarhus , Denmark by the Aarhus Symfoniorkester and Treutler , on June 18 at the Stockholm Concert Hall in Stockholm , Sweden by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and Treutler , and on September 12 at the Tampere Hall in Tampere , Finland by the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra and Mischa Cheung .

A video of the Stockholm performance of the Final Fantasy VI Symphonic Poem was released on October 11 , 2014 , and a full album recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra at Abbey Road Studios was released on February 23 , 2015 by Merregnon Studios . The album , along with the concerts themselves , were heavily praised , both for the quality of the performance and for the quality of the arrangements , which overlaid themes from multiple pieces rather than relying on a more traditional medley .

= = Concert = =

= = = Production = = =

Thomas Böcker first began producing orchestral concerts of video game music in 2003 with the first Symphonic Game Music Concert in Leipzig , Germany . In 2008 , he , through his production company Merregnon Studios , began a series of four concerts of video game music that used longer , more elaborate arrangements of themes from the individual pieces of music from the games . This Symphonic series of concerts stood in contrast to the more standard concerts , which played straightforward orchestral versions of individual songs . The four concerts were Symphonic Shades ? Hülbeck in Concert ( 2008 ) , Symphonic Fantasies : Music from Square Enix ( 2009 ) , Symphonic Legends ? Music from Nintendo ( 2010 ) , and Symphonic Odysseys : Tribute to Nobuo Uematsu ( 2011 ) . Both Symphonic Fantasies and Symphonic Odysseys featured music from the Final Fantasy series composed by Nobuo Uematsu . Böcker has said that he considers Uematsu to be " the most famous composer of video game music and in general one of the most influential " , and that Uematsu 's 2002 - Music from Final Fantasy concert in 2002 was a big influence on his own concerts .

In May 2012 , Böcker announced that he was working on a concert of music solely from the Final Fantasy series , to be titled Final Symphony . The idea for the concert was first proposed by Uematsu in 2009 after Symphonic Fantasies ; the concert had featured Final Fantasy music as one of its four components , but unlike the other three the music had been a straightforward medley rather than a more complicated arrangement . While Uematsu had asked the team to keep the arrangements similar to those in other Final Fantasy concerts , after the concert he felt that an opportunity had been missed to create something unique like the other three arrangements ,

especially the Secret of Mana section . He encouraged Böcker to take more liberties with the source material if the opportunity arose , and hoped that another concert could be created in the future . Böcker proposed Final Symphony later that year to Uematsu , and got approval from Square Enix while coordinating a Tokyo concert of Symphonic Fantasies . Final Symphony is the first concert consisting entirely of new Final Fantasy arrangements in over ten years , since 2002 - Music from Final Fantasy .

Böcker and the arrangers intended the arrangements in the concert to be " about telling the stories of the games " . In order to " capture the atmosphere of the games " , they limited the concert to three games from the series , so as not to spread the concert too thin . They chose the games to be Final Fantasy VI , VII , and X , not only because they liked the music in the games but because they felt previous concerts , including to an extent Symphonic Fantasies and Odysseys , had failed to evoke the feeling of the games due to focusing on the battle music in an unbalanced manner . In an interview Böcker used Final Fantasy VII as an example , stating that only part of " the game 's dark , romantic , melancholic , and hopeful story " was being portrayed by solely orchestrating the battle music from the game . Böcker wanted to focus on " longer pieces [ and ] deeper storytelling " than other concerts like the Distant Worlds series , so as to offer fans " something they really never heard before " . Final Symphony was the first concert produced by Merregnon Studios without outside financial support , and Böcker regards it as the riskiest venture Merregnon Studios had undertaken to date , as they could only rely on their own belief that audiences would respond strongly enough to the concert for it to be successful despite the production costs of producing a concert of the quality they wanted .

Jonne Valtonen , Roger Wanamo , and Masashi Hamauzu created the arrangements for the concert . Valtonen and Wanamo had previously worked with Böcker on the concerts in the Symphonic series , and Böcker has stated that if they had been unavailable for the project he would not have created Final Symphony at all . Hamauzu , in addition to arranging the Final Fantasy X music , was one of the composers of the original pieces he arranged . Uematsu , who composed music for all three games , served as a consultant for the project , though he did not arrange any pieces . When they first began the project , Böcker , Valtonen , and Wanamo took a few months to play through the games , watch playthrough videos , and read reviews and analyses of the games . They did not research other arrangements that have been done of the pieces , as they feel the general approach to video game music orchestration is very different from their style . They then got together to propose which tracks would be arranged , and decide which soundtracks worked best as a piano concerto , a symphonic poem , or a symphony . They chose a symphonic poem for VI , a piano concerto for X , and a symphony in three movements for VII . Böcker gave the team direction , and coordinated the arrangers in discussing and deciding which tracks to arrange . During the process of actually creating the arrangements , however , Böcker was not involved ; he feels that the arrangers are " masters of their art " and should have the freedom to create what they want . Nevertheless , the arrangers were communicating via e @-@ mail sharing their work in progress with Böcker : " If there are questions , or if they wish to know my opinion , I am there " .

The Final Fantasy VI poem follows the journey of Terra Branford , " the heroine born with the gift of magic " . The poem explores the stages of her life through the game , as she escapes from slavery , faces her amnesia , discovers the source of her powers , and saves the world from the insane Kefka Palazzo . Final Fantasy VI was the first Final Fantasy game that Wanamo had played , and he wanted to tell the story of the game as it felt to him . Wanamo has described the arrangement as the most difficult one he had done to date . Originally , the poem was going to follow the story of the group of heroes , before Wanamo made Terra the focus , and ended up dropping the themes of the other heroes due to length . The Final Fantasy X piano concerto was arranged by Hamauzu not to tell the story of the game , but to express the " continuum " of the series through the lens of the game . While inspired by the game 's story , Hamauzu also drew inspiration from the rest of the franchise to make the concerto more than " a series of separate scenes and stories " . He feels that a hallmark of Böcker 's concerts is that they are not limited to directly translating the original works , but instead tie them to a wider creative process . Valtonen created the three movements of the Final Fantasy VII symphony to show three aspects of the game 's setting . The first movement , "

Nibelheim Incident " , follows the villain Sephiroth in his journey through the game ; the second , " Words Drowned by Fireworks " , explores the relationship between Cloud Strife , Aerith Gainsborough , and Tifa Lockhart ; while the third movement , " The Planet 's Crisis " , depicts the final clash between Cloud and Sephiroth . He tried to " bring out both the darkest moments as well as the heart " of the game .

= = = Performances = = =

The first performance of Final Symphony was in Wuppertal , Germany at the Historische Stadthalle Wuppertal on May 11 , 2013 . The concert was held twice that day , and was conducted by Eckehard Stier , who had previously conducted for Symphonic Fantasies in Tokyo . It featured Benyamin Nuss , who had also performed in Symphonic Fantasies , on piano for the Final Fantasy X piano concerto . The concert was performed again on May 30 , 2013 , at the Barbican Centre in London , England by the London Symphony Orchestra . It was the first concert of video game music by the orchestra . Stier and Nuss repeated their performances from the premier .

The following year , the concert was performed in four more locations : twice at the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan in Tokyo on May 4 , 2014 by the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra , on May 9 at the Musikhuset Aarhus in Aarhus , Denmark by the Aarhus Symfoniorkester , on June 18 at the Stockholm Concert Hall in Stockholm , Sweden by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra , and on September 12 at the Tampere Hall in Tampere , Finland by the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra . Stier conducted for all four performances , while Katharina Treutler replaced Nuss for the Tokyo , Aarhus , and Stockholm concerts , and Mischa Cheung performed in Tampere . The arrangements were slightly modified for the 2014 performances , and a new encore piece , " Suteki da ne " , was performed at the Tampere concert .

The Tokyo concert was the first video game music concert in Japan to receive a standing ovation , according to Merregnon Studios . It was described by both Dengeki Online and Famitsu as magnificent , with a bold and refreshing style that was met with " thunderous applause " . The London performance was also praised by critics ; Joe Hammond of Video Game Music Online , Ed Williams of The 405 , and Mariusz Borkowski of Gamemusic.pl all praised the concert for its powerful performance as both video game and classical music , and Audun Sorlie of Original Sound Version noted the fierce applause and standing ovations at both the London and Wuppertal performances .

In 2016 , Final Symphony was performed by the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra . It will make its North American debut this summer with a performance by the San Diego Symphony on July 21 , followed by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra on July 23 and the San Francisco Symphony on July 27 . An October 21 concert by the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra in New Zealand has been scheduled as well .

= = = Set List = = =

= = Album = =

On December 13 , 2014 , Merregnon Studios announced that they would be producing an album for the concert , to be published the following year . Unlike prior Merregnon Studios concert albums , the Final Symphony album would not be a recording of one of the performances but would instead be a studio recording of the London Symphony Orchestra at Abbey Road Studios , produced especially for the album . The version of the concert recorded was the one used in the final performance in Tampere , rather than the one originally performed by the London Symphony Orchestra in 2013 . The performance was recorded on December 15 ? 17 , was conducted by Eckehard Stier , and featured a piano performance by Katharina Treutler . Nobuo Uematsu supervised the production of the album . The album was published by X5 Music Group , who had previously published the Symphonic Fantasies Tokyo album for Merregnon Studios . It was released

as a digital album on February 23 , 2015 , while a preview of the album was performed on British radio station Classic FM on February 21 . Prior to the album 's release , the only available recording of the concert was a video of the Stockholm performance of the Final Fantasy VI symphonic poem by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra , released on their website on October 10 , 2014 . A physical version of the album was released on Blu @-@ ray in Japan on September 16 , 2015 , with releases in other countries to be announced .

The album was highly praised by critics . Stephen Meyerink of RPGFan described it as " the absolute top of the mountain in the world of video game music arrangement " . He claimed that the " complexity and passion " of the concert could be appreciated by any music fan , but urged even mild fans of the source material to immediately buy the album . He praised the album 's production values , saying that it was the closest a listener could get to the live performances from their home . Joe Hammond of Video Game Music Online also enthusiastically praised the album , declaring it not only the best album Merregnon Studios had ever produced but also " one of the best video game music albums ever made " . He noted both the complexity and quality of the arrangements , calling them out as superior to the ones in Symphonic Fantasies and Symphonic Odysseys due to their narrow focus , as well as the " world class " performance of the London Symphony Orchestra on the recording . Classic FM noted the album as a " spectacular arrangement " that they compared to the best of film music while naming it their album of the week . The Final Symphony album reached the top position on the iTunes Classical Charts in over ten countries , as well as the top five classical albums on the Billboard charts and the Official UK Charts .

= = Legacy = =

Final Symphony was followed by Final Symphony II , a concert of music from Final Fantasy V , VIII , IX , and XIII . It features long arrangements like the Final Symphony concerts . The majority of the music was originally composed by Nobuo Uematsu , while the Final Fantasy XIII suite was originally composed by Masashi Hamauzu . Valtonen created the arrangements for the Final Fantasy V section , Wanamo worked on the VIII and IX portions , and Hamauzu arranged his own compositions from XIII with orchestration by Valtonen . First announced was a concert to be performed at the Barbican Centre in London by the London Symphony Orchestra on September 12 , 2015 , and later an earlier performance on August 29 in Bonn , Germany by the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn was also announced . After the debut performances , the London Symphony Orchestra traveled to Japan to perform the concert there three times : in Osaka on September 27 , and twice in Yokohama on October 4 . 2016 performances of the concert will include a concert on April 1 at the Tampere Hall in Tampere , Finland by the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra , and an June 9 concert by the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra at the Konserthuset in Stockholm , Sweden .