

6/11/89

Dad,

The following is to help you get started thinking about the music for Prince of Persia:

Opening sequence

The Sultan's palace in the distance, surrounded by an ornate mosaic frame. The overall effect is reminiscent of the frontispiece of a children's picture book of tales from the Arabian Nights.

Against this background appear the words:

Broderbund Software presents

then:

a game by Jordan Mechner

then in big letters, the title filling the screen:

PRINCE OF PERSIA

The title disappears and is replaced by a text prologue whose content is, approximately, as follows:

It is a time of darkness. In the Sultan's absence his Grand Vizier, JAFFAR, has seized power, and throughout the land the people groan under the yoke of tyranny.

His thirst for power still unquenched, Jaffar has set his sights on the Sultan's lovely daughter... and on the throne. But the Princess's heart belongs not to the Grand Vizier, but to a young adventurer from a far-off land....

We now cut to the Princess's chambers. A couple of high barred windows, torches on the wall, a bed and cushions on the floor. The Princess is alone, maybe looking out the window. A dreamy, slightly melancholy melody--if this were Die Walküre this would be Sieglinde's theme. We'll call it the PRINCESS'S THEME.

The Princess's reverie is interrupted by a harsher, more menacing motif which we'll call the VIZIER'S THEME. The Princess turns to look offscreen and, sure enough, Hunding himself--oops, make that the Grand Vizier Jaffar--walks in. He stops just inside the doorway and we hear the full statement of the Vizier's Theme.

Slowly, menacingly, the Vizier crosses the room to where the Princess stands. She doesn't budge, just stays her ground. The Vizier walks right up to her until they're standing face to face. He can almost touch her. The music starts very low, building slowly, as the Vizier's tension & lust become too much for him to contain--until SUDDENLY the Vizier raises his hands high above his head (the music breaks off). The Princess flinches involuntarily. But the Vizier has no intention of touching her. Instead, in an alcove on the wall behind her, an shimmering HOURGLASS materializes. The Vizier drops his arms, turns on his heel and strides out. We hear the DOOR SLAM offscreen.

Left alone, the Princess turns to look at the new addition to her room. The sand has already started to flow. MUSIC indicates her awareness of her predicament.

A final page of text appears, something along the lines of:

A choice, and an hour to make it. Marry the Grand Vizier, or die.

~~Word~~  
Defenseless, the Princess's thoughts turn to the brave youth who is her only chance of rescue. ~~Better~~ perhaps, that she does not know the truth... that at this moment, in the dungeons far below the palace, he is himself a prisoner....

The MUSIC comes to some kind of crescendo or resolution (the end of the overture) and as it ends, the screen blacks out. This ends the opening sequence.

The whole sequence to this point should be considered a self-contained prologue that, taken by itself, tells the story and sets the mood.

After a suitable pause, (during which the user is encouraged to press a key to play the game), the opening titles replay--in silence this time--and are followed by a self-running demo that shows the hero racing to the rescue through all kinds of hair-raising dangers. When that's over, the whole thing starts again from the beginning.

### The game

The music for the opening titles is in many ways the most important, since it establishes the mood for the story that is to follow. In the game itself, the opportunities for music are more limited, since we have to stop the action every time we play a tune. Slight software advances since the days of Karateka now enable us to keep the torches

burning & the stars twinkling while the music plays, but that's all--the characters have to freeze wherever they happen to be. The musical fragments for the game itself must therefore be brief.

Other machines, including the Mac, Amiga, and Atari ST, have much more advanced sound technology and can play music simultaneously with the action, with sound comparable to that of a synthesizer. Many months from now, when these conversions are under way, we can (if we feel like it) expand upon the music we've already written to take advantage of this. For now, though, the priority is to get the Apple version out the door ASAP.

What follows is a list of some likely places for music cues:

- At the very beginning of the game, when the hero is thrown into his cell. (Since we first encounter the hero at a decidedly low point in his career, it's probably not appropriate to have a full-fledged heroic statement of the "hero's theme" at this point. A better place for such a statement might be in the opening titles, at the moment the words "PRINCE OF PERSIA" appear on the screen. The music that begins the game should suggest that our character is, for the moment at least, in dire straits.)
- when the hero kills a guard in battle (short "victory" tune)
- when the hero is killed (We might want two different death themes: a "heroic" one for when he's killed in battle, and an "ignominious" one for when he dies accidentally by, for example, losing his footing and plunging 5 stories to his death. Most of his deaths will be of the ignominious variety, so we would want this theme to be shorter and better able to withstand repetition.)
- when the hero finds & picks up the sword (We could steal the sword motif directly from Wagner--musically it would work fine, plus a few people would catch the joke and think we're really cultured, and nobody would sue.)
- when the hero climbs the staircase to the next level (This will happen 11 times in a complete game, so we could have up to 11 different versions for the different levels--or we could have music only for certain levels.)

- "Mirror" theme when the hero first comes face to face with the mirror and sees his own reflection--this should be a short, sinister motif, perhaps evocative of Jaffar's theme and of the "magic" theme which accompanied Jaffar's creation of the hourglass. It signals us that there is something bad about the mirror--specifically, Jaffar made it, it's magic, it's a trap.
- As you know, when the hero jumps through the mirror, his evil double--the Shadowman--jumps out the other side and slinks off into the shadows (later to reappear and play various nasty pranks on the hero such as drinking healing potions, shutting gates, etc. and otherwise thwarting his progress). Since the Shadowman is a major character in the story, it might make sense for him to have his own theme. It would be really cool if this theme could be some kind of demented version of the hero's own theme--for example, like the way the bandits' music in Seven Samurai was a perversion of the samurai theme. (I'll bring that CD with me along with Die Walküre, Lawrence of Arabia and a bunch of others that may prove inspirational.)

We can't really play the Shadowman theme at the moment of his creation, because I don't want to freeze the action just then, but there is a moment later on--at the end of Level 5--when the hero comes face to face with his double for the first time, and at that moment--when they're standing face to face--we could play the Shadowman theme in all its glory.

- At the dramatic climax, when the hero puts down his sword, walks unarmed towards the shadowman, and they merge--there's an opportunity for some music there, before the entire palace starts to collapse around our hero's ears (the Vizier's magic shattered) and he has to make a run for it.
- Shortly thereafter, the hero confronts the Vizier for the final battle. When they face off, we could play the Vizier's theme; and when the Vizier is killed (and plunges to his death on the stone floor two stories down) he could have some sort of fitting epitaph.
- Finally, when our hero is reunited with the Princess, there's a major music opportunity there. If we have time, and the inclination, we could also have an epilogue analogous to Karateka's which states, basically, that they lived happily ever after.
- For that matter, we could also have a "tragic" epilogue for those games in which the timer runs out before the

hero reaches the Princess. That's not a high priority but it might be nice. This would be different from the regular "death" music, in that the player can die hundreds of times within a single game, and resume play each time from the level at which he died (and will, most likely, every couple of minutes)--but once the timer runs out, that's it; after 60 minutes the game is over.

Perhaps this music should be an epitaph for the Princess, rather than for the hero, because it's her death that it signifies--as for our hero, he's presumably still down there in the dungeon, having failed miserably in his quest; it doesn't really matter what happens to him now.

I'm sure there are more music opportunities, but this should be enough to get you started. The rest can wait until I'm in NY and can show you the game.

Some general notes--I think we should try to avoid any overt similarity to the Karateka music. I've already stolen enough from that game and I'm too young to start making homages to myself. But I don't see anything wrong with ripping off Wagner, or Rimsky-Korsakov, or Miklos Rosza, or Maurice Jarre. I would also like to get as much "Persian" flavor into the music as we possibly can, especially in the opening title sequence (first impressions are so important). However, I do realize that this whole Wagnerian-leitmotiv approach is essentially European in origin, as are you & I. Basically, if this game ends up sounding as Persian as Abduction from the Seraglio was Turkish, or Aida was Egyptian, I think we'll be fine.

Hope all is going well at your end & that KVC/Atlantic isn't driving you too insane. Talk to you soon.

Love,