

Instrument of Evil: Pipe Organ in Musical Themes of Video Game Antagonists

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Poster Abstract

Popular culture often attributes pipe organ in multimedia to one of two connotations: holiness or evil. This presentation focuses on evil connotations in the musical material of three video game antagonists. Evil associations of pipe organ begin with nineteenth century operas such as Gounod's *Faust* (1859) and Puccini's *Tosca* (1900). Similarly, films such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954), and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986 originally on Broadway, 2005 on film) depict antagonists in possession or performing on the pipe organ. Video games such as *Super Castlevania IV* (1991) and *Earthbound* (1994) began to use pipe organ as a sign of evil around the mid 1990s.

This presentation provides three examples of video game music in comparison with several examples of pipe organ in film and television to exhibit relationships between composition for each respective medium. The first example follows the cultural codification of pipe organ representing usurper Kefka in the last battle of *Final Fantasy VI* (1994). Second, pipe organ accompanies the final clash with Bowser from *Super Mario 64* (1996) as a parody of its cultural association. Finally, pipe organ represents the epitome of absolute evil personified as the space alien Lavos in *Chrono Trigger* (1995).