

Song of the Weekend

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From the Lee Jackson Audio Community Discussion Group

(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ljackaudiodiscgroup>)

Entry: 20200502 – Hellero

This week's "Song of the Weekend" is Hellero, from the Apogee Software cult classic, "Rise of the Triad."

The title of the piece, "Hellero," is a portmanteau inspired by Maurice Ravel's "Bolero." I took Bolero, mixed in some Hell, and there you have it. It's almost as if you took the Bolero, converted it to 4/4, shortened it *considerably*, and convinced it to join the Dark Side. (FYI, the original Bolero is usually well over 15 minutes long: Hellero is 1:51 in length.)

As for the song's genesis, I wanted something sinister sounding - military, but fitting the feel of the rest of the game with the synths and the strings. That's where the twisted Bolero comes in. Whereas Ravel wrote his Bolero in 3/4 time, I wrote mine in 4/4 (or 12/8, it could be argued), more like a march (or like the "American Rhythm Bolero" ballroom dance, according to Wikipedia - something I knew nothing about at the time). Ravel's Bolero starts off quietly; mine begins bombastically. The whole thing fits to make an evil-sounding boss level song, which was the idea from the beginning.

One side note: I originally did not think much of this song. I felt it was harsh and not one of my best works. It took some serious convincing by Joe Siegler to make me think otherwise. Thanks, Joe!

Musical Analysis:

Hellero is a very short but complex piece, written in an A A' B song style with a brief introduction before it gets cranking. Most of the featured instruments are synths, however strings back up the synths in the A' and B sections.

The introduction begins with percussion pounding out the rhythm that will carry through 98% of the song (approximately). Various synths play fanfares built around tri-tones, leading to a mid-high register synth playing sixteenth-note triplet runs through the end of the introduction.

The A section features a single synth in the baritone range, playing a melodic line over a bass synth and percussion section, the tympani having been put away for the moment. The melody ascends in pitch as brief fanfare figures play beneath it, until the end of the A section when the melodic line descends rapidly to the root note of the key signature.

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The following A' section brings in a tenor synth an octave above the baritone, playing the same melodic line as before. The baritone occasionally breaks away from the melody to play a brief accompanying part before rejoining the tenor an octave below. High strings join in during the second half of the melody, emphasizing the root note at first, then stepping up one note at a time until they hit the fifth of the key signature. The strings and both synths then play a rapid downward run on the last beat of the section, linking to the B section.

The B section is more brutal than the melodic A and A' sections. Fanfare-like pulses in low "brass" synths drive the song along on each beat, rejoined by the tympani. The synths now begin to play intertwining note runs, first in the baritone, then the tenor, then in a soprano synth at half-tempo, joined by the high strings. The run figures then drop out, leaving the percussion (minus the tympani) and the high strings, who take dissonant steps up to a chord at the end of the B section. The tympani finally rejoin in preparation for the loop back to the introduction.

Phew! If you've sat with me through the end of this, you deserve a cookie. You also deserve a link to the original song. Thank you for reading, and for voting for your "Song of the Weekend"!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RO2k4WD4jzc>