Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle (2023), 54, 141–153

AUDIO REVIEW

Tim Summers, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time: A Game Music Companion*, Studies in Game Sound and Music (Intellect Books, 2021)

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Julianne Grasso (JG): We are reviewing the book *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* by Tim Summers. I'm being joined by Hyeonjin Park and Ariel Grez and we'll start with our introductions real fast. So, Ariel, take it away.

Ariel Grez (AG): Thanks, Julianne. I'm Ariel Grez and I'm a Chilean researcher. I'm currently a PhD student in Latin American Studies at the University of Santiago, Chile. I also teach at the University of Chile in the sound department. I love *Zelda*. It's part of my history so I'm glad that we can discuss it including those local perspectives, too. So I'm really happy to be here.

JG: Alright, Hyeonjin, you can go ahead next.

Hyeonjin Park (HP): I'm Hyeonjin Park. I'm a PhD candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles, and my research focuses on video game music. In relation to this particular book, *Zelda* has also played a very large part in my life.

JG: And I am Julianne Grasso. I am an assistant professor of music theory at Florida State University. I do research on video game music and other sorts of music in multimedia as well. I did my dissertation on video games and talked a bit about *Zelda* so I was really excited to see this book, to read through it and to have the opportunity to have this conversation.
So I guess we can start, Hyeonjin, with our brief review of the book.

HP: The book was very well structured in my opinion. It's *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time: A Game Music Companion*, which was written by Tim Summers, as Julianne mentioned earlier. It was published in 2021 and it's a very comprehensive guide to the music of *Ocarina of Time.* Summers breaks down his book into seven chapters and also has an introduction and an epilogue. The first chapter contextualizes the music of *Ocarina of Time* and touches on Nintendo's history, the composer Koji Kondo and his relationship with the *Zelda* franchise, and the Nintendo 64, which was the console *Ocarina of Time* was released on. The following chapters then focus exclusively on the music and sound heard in *Ocarina of Time.* The second chapter considers the importance of the ocarina in this game as well as the various songs that the player can – and needs – to perform to progress further into the game. Closely following is the third

chapter, which considers location cues heard in *Ocarina of Time*, such as the Overworld Theme heard on the Hyrule Field, as well as the various dungeons that the player will visit. The fourth chapter considers cutscene music as well as the character themes that appear in many of these cutscenes; the fifth chapter considers 'ludic cues', as Tim Summers calls it, such as combat music, the 'game over' cue, and so forth; the sixth chapter addresses a lot of the other things that maybe we would never consider, which would be the interface and sound effects of the game, so this ranges from the main menu's interface sounds to the enemy sound effects. He does address all of these sounds really in this book; and, the seventh chapter steps back a little bit to consider the legacy, impact, and reception of *Ocarina of Time*, and delves a little bit into fandom, and how players, or really musicians, have actually decided to engage with the music since the game's release.

JG: We are going to jump into our responses to the book and to the game, but I just wanted to very briefly talk about the game itself before we get into all these aspects about it. *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* is a video game that came out in 1998, in Japan, the US, and other countries, and we'll talk about localization and the different sort of releases, but these reports, at least in the English language, tend to focus on the US and Japan. The creator is Shigeru Miyamoto, the Nintendo CEO, and the music composer is Koji Kondo, both by this time – the mid- to late 90s – being pretty well known for different sorts of Nintendo properties like *Super Mario*, and this game is, I believe, the fourth canonical game [in the *Legend of Zelda* series] and is coming out after *Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* which came out on the Super Nintendo, so back in the 16 bit days when things were two-dimensional. So this on the Nintendo 64 is a leap in technology visually, gameplay-wise, music-wise, and sound wise. So that is the background into that, and so we can start with our conversation and our reactions.

AG: Well, the music of this game has helped to shape our experience of the game. As every person, as anyone who has played the game has an opinion that includes music and sound, I think we should start by discussing one of those opinions, and I think that there is a special place for talking about what the author's position is, and what the author's motivation for writing a book on a title like this is. It's very interesting that Tim Summers never states directly what his relationship with [this game] is, when it's obvious that he [has] played it, and that's very interesting because, on one hand, the book has this comprehensive approach and you know that the author is talking about a lot of variables in the game, and maybe that is why he's not trying to [place] too much importance on his own opinion, but his position related to the game is going to appear when you read it. For example, he shares with us a picture of his own console, and that's very interesting because he could share with us another picture – one of the cartridge or an official artwork – there are a lot of options, but he chose to share his own personal console. On the other hand, there are specific things in the text that tell us about his relationship with the game, and I think the most important is that he even goes to the level of talking with Navi.[1] I don't know if you interpret the epilogue in the same way but in the introduction, the author cites Navi with her ever-present "Hey! Listen!"; that is something that everyone of us has in their minds, and you can just read it and it sounds automatically. And, in the epilogue, he again cites Navi, "Hey, listen!", and he says "But I've been listening all along" – I think that that is the exact reference – and he then starts talking about the importance of the music, but you know that he's talking about his personal experience here. He even goes to the length of saying that listening to the music made him the hero, and that he overlaps with Link here in some way, and I think that's pretty interesting because anyone who played *Ocarina of Time* felt like Link in some way. Even, maybe, you discover yourself imitating his voice because it was the first game in which he yelled and we also have all the yells, all his voices, all his screams when he's damaged and all that's

[1]Navi is a fictional fairy who acts as Link's navigator throughout *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.*

sounding in our minds right now, so I would like to know, Hyeonjin, Julianne, what do you think of that? What is the position of the author and for whom does he write [ultimately]? Because he is a huge fan, you can see that, and he's writing for someone who also has an opinion on a canonical title like this, I think that's OK, he uses this comprehensive approach and some technical language, but this is also a book that that anyone can read to some extent.

JG: Those are really good questions about the author's relationship to the subject. I mean, it's something that I think we all in every sort of academic field grapple with; the subjectivity of the author and the thing that they're actually writing about. And I do think it's interesting in ludomusicology, the study of video game music – one can argue that ludomusicology is the study of any sort of games and music but for now we'll say video game music – a lot of us in that field sort of have these explicit relationships to the games. Like, we've played these [games we write about]. We may have played these when we were young – when we were [in our] formative years – and I think that there's that element, [that] you assume that about the author in a lot of ways, whether Tim Summers is actually coming out and saying it. And he does not explicitly say 'here's when I played it', 'here's how I played it', but he does drop these little hints and occasionally uses first-person pronouns to talk about his relationship with the music and the sound in the game. But otherwise does, I think, throughout the book try to keep a little bit of objectivity, a kind of scholarly look of, you know, this thing happens and it could mean this or the player – using the words 'the player' instead of 'I' or 'me' to have a sort of generalization about it but also acknowledging, at least implicitly, that, yes, this is his experience of playing. I think it's always an interesting question, and I would assume that the audience of the book would also be people who have played the game and could recognize maybe themselves already, and imagine these situations without having to play the game again in order to understand what's happening, so it would be interesting to think about this, I think, also from the perspective of someone who doesn't know this game or doesn't know any video games, and how that might read maybe a little bit differently.

HP: I think one thing, too, about wanting to write a book like this is that you really, really have to love the game to be willing to go deep into every musical cue and sound effect and just dig into all of those and expand on each cue, each sound effect. Being able to write a book just dedicated to one game already shares a lot about the author's relationship to the game, which is that there is definitely a very deep love for it. Without question, this book would appeal to other fans of *Ocarina of Time* but also the book does, as you mentioned, Julianne, have sort of this objective look to the music as well to maintain some distance so that it's not too personal in nature and makes it a lot more approachable for readers who might not be familiar with *Ocarina of Time*. But it definitely seems like a book that very much addresses a player's relationship with this particular game that I think is where the appeal is.

AG: I think that it's futile to hide that we have also played the game. I would like to share a little of my own relationship with the game to spark a little conversation on that too, so we can also be clear on why we are saying what we say when we discuss this book. Well, my family couldn't afford a Nintendo 64 when I was little and I won it in some sort of lottery at the inauguration of a mall, and this is important to share because [due to] my socio-economic background I couldn't afford any other game for a long time so I played and replayed *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* so many times that after reading the book I understood something that I obviously couldn't understand as a kid. For example, the great efforts of the composer to compose in a way [to avoid] listening fatigue. That was a thing that I didn't notice when I was a kid – I just enjoyed the game; I just enjoyed the music – but I could enjoy it because of a specific procedure that was there and that Tim shed some light on, and now I can enjoy the game maybe much more. I think that is something important to say and so it's important for us to always, when we're discussing

research and when we are discussing the cultural impact of specific games, to share this – what are our personal stories with the game and how that affects how we are reading this particular book. Jin,[2] Julianne?

JG: My relationship to the game was that I had played prior *Legend of Zelda* games at that point. I was still pretty young though, so I wasn't very good at any of these games. I had played mostly *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* for Super Nintendo. We had a household Super Nintendo in the basement and my older sister had it so that's why I got to play it. I was terrible at the game but I was amazed at the way that it felt like such a large explorational universe, which is, I think, what the developers had wanted to say – that Zelda was going to be that kind of game, an exploring adventure-action game – and I thought that was so amazing even back on the Super Nintendo. And when the family upgraded to the N64,[3] which was I think a little bit after it had to come out, we went to the mall and pre-ordered *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.* We'd never done that before and I don't think I've ever done that since, and when you pre-order it you get the golden cartridge. I still have my golden cartridge instead of the typical grey plastic. So you have the special golden cartridge. Nintendo has always valued the materiality around the game and the special cartridges and the special maps and the things that you can get if you buy it, and so I had this real sense of [the cartridge being] a very special object. And then playing it on the Nintendo 64, which as a kid it blew my mind that technology could even look like that – that games could ever be this good, that it could sound this good, that it could look this good. I was like 'graphics will never be better than these polygons', and I thought that it really took that idea of that expansive universe – what I thought was the most expansive in *A Link to the Past* – and in *Ocarina of Time* made it so much bigger, and this idea of its huge world was just so exciting to me as a child who in the 90s [didn't] have Internet yet, [didn't] really have a PC, so this idea a virtual explorational universe was something that was a video game thing at the time. It [was a] mind-blowing wondrous world.

HP: This is going to show my age but I was introduced to *Ocarina of Time* a bit later than the two of you, I think. My first introduction to *Zelda* was through *Super Smash Bros.: Melee* (2001), indirectly *Ocarina of Time*, since all the characters there were based on the *Ocarina of Time* versions of Link and Zelda and Sheik. Zelda was my main, specifically Sheik was my main and that was my fixation, and eventually I was given a hand-me-down of the Nintendo 64 and the golden cartridge of the *Ocarina of Time.* I got to play that when I was a teenager as opposed to a child, so this nostalgia for me is working a little differently here. My nostalgia stems more towards this fighting game, which then was like channelled into *Ocarina of Time.* As a result, I have particular fondness for characters like Sheik because of *Super Smash Bros.* I just remember so distinctly even after playing this game, despite all the technological advancements that have occurred since 1998 and the time I played this game maybe ten years later, it still blew my mind just how incredible and innovative the game was for its time. What really stood out to me too was the music because there are very few games I can think of that use music as tightly as *Ocarina of Time* does. That really stuck with me, and I still distinctly remember when the game ended and the ending music started the credit music. I was lying down on the floor just re-experiencing all those cues that you got to play, all those themes that you got to play, and the first thing I remember thinking was that I want[ed] to replay [the game] again, and I ended up doing that years later when the 3DS remastered version came out.[4]

AG: We have here three particular histories, or maybe four if you consider that we are also discussing Tim's point of view, on a soundtrack and a sonic experience. Of course these

[2]Hyeonjin Park is sometimes simply referred to in this audio review by their nickname 'Jin'.
[3]N64 is an abbreviation for Nintendo 64, the home video game console.
[4]The 3DS remastered version of *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* was released in 2011.

perspectives are not static. Jin, for example, played the game much later than both Julianne and I, and that brings up another conversation that there is nostalgia. Finally, we have been playing the game at different moments of our lives. For example, in preparing for this review, I replayed the game after a long, long time of not having touched the game in anyway on the 3DS, and my eyes got a little watery because it's so big and it's my childhood and all that, and much more after reading Tim's book because he informs us of how the music is constructed and how our experience is an answer [to that]. I think it's pretty important to make this connection between the subjective personal experience and what the game offers, and what the designer's team – not only obviously the composer (because there're a lot more people involved) – brings up as possible experiences of the game. These different points of view also articulate different points of conversation, different nostalgia, because it's impossible to talk about this game without thinking about our childhoods or our lives. We all played the game, we can't hide it. Each one of us maybe played the game once trying to get all items and all her pieces, and maybe playing the game another time we rushed it, and maybe more so if you think that we have grown up, we are older, we have less time and we have different audio equipment to listen to the game. This is an experience that changes through time, just as Link travels through time and he changes.

JG: That's a great point, that if we play, if we replay, if we approach the game in a different way, if we're listening in different ways, this is going to change our experience. As much as we're saying that Tim didn't have an explicit section of saying 'here is how I played the game and here's my relationship to it', I think the way that this reads with like 'here's all the cues' and 'here's what the meanings of the cues could be' and 'here's how the player might experience this', all ties into the sense of play; an experience in particular, rather than maybe, 'oh, here's just a list of the transcriptions of the music', and that's cool. But he's really tying it into experience, and tying it into gameplay, and tying it into, 'Oh, you've heard this particular cue. Maybe it's *Zelda*'s theme or something and you're hearing it here but, do you remember that you might have heard it elsewhere in a different cue buried within?' Like, this motivic analysis. He's bringing these musical analyses to bear on this sense of play as an experience, and so while he's not […] having [these] little nostalgia moments of, 'here's how I played it', the way that the analysis presents itself shows that that is how you analyse these games because you play them, you experience them, and in fact I think that a lot of other music analysis would benefit from an approach that takes experience and listening into play.

I thought it was really interesting, Hyeonjin, that your exposure to [*Ocarina of Time*] was from a *Super Smash Brothers* game, and Summers talks about this in one of the chapters about other games that use this music as a way of threading the tendrils of this world. It's almost like world-building. I mean, you know, down to economics, too, and advertising the game through other games, but this world-building through other intellectual property, other Nintendo games that are using similar themes, it's really interesting how Nintendo really does that very well, and how then your connection is therefore in this other angle, and that's really fascinating.

HP: Nintendo has a chokehold on us when it comes to nostalgia, I think. As I mentioned earlier, too, nostalgia is working for me a little differently from the two of you since you both played it on the Nintendo 64 when it came out and, for me, I approached it much later and was introduced to *Ocarina of Time*'s music and the characters through a different game. I think that's something Nintendo is very, very good at, especially with the *Zelda* franchise, and Tim Summers talks a little bit about it in this book as well. This world-building that happens, and this creation of mythology and being able to construct such an expansive universe through music specifically, and *Ocarina of Time* is at the centre connecting all of these other *Zelda* titles together. Like, the music that you've heard in *Ocarina of Time*, some of it might have appeared in previous *Zelda* games. A lot of the music you hear in *Ocarina of Time* appears in later *Zelda* games. It's acting as a sort of touch point for many of the *Zelda* games that make it such an important part of the *Zelda*

universe. Maybe nostalgia is just so strongly tied to this particular game of all the *Zelda* games is [because of] the way that music is functioning. And even if it's from […] for, like me, I still distinctly remember hearing the Lost Woods music for the first time in [*Super Smash Bros.*] *Melee* and thinking 'this is really obnoxious', but then playing it in *Ocarina of Time* I was just like, 'Well, this is still really obnoxious but I now have some context for it and it's a lot more interesting and engaging to me.' There was a sense of nostalgia that kicked in for me, too, being able to hear that music. I guess it's a reverse nostalgia since I'm playing a game that came out earlier, but there is so much to be said about experience, as you mentioned, and the way it impacts our listening experience as well.

AG: I think that the comprehensive approach of the book makes [it] possible for us to understand the procedures and the impact on further titles of the franchise. Obviously, a very good material for understanding not only the *Ocarina* title but also the whole series, and the spinoffs and all that, as Hyeonjin was stating. This game is like a point that connects all the titles in the franchise, so I think that it's a very good material for analysing the other titles of the franchise. And the other thing that I wanted to say was that, also on this comprehensive approach of Tim's work, it's obvious that he played the game, acquiring all items, all Golden Skulltulas – that closes a little cycle, no? That's why we are talking about our personal experience with the game, because how we play the game and how we experience music with the game, and listening and interacting with that music obviously has an impact on our work and how we write and for who we write, and I think that's very important. Now that we have discussed how personal experience not only affects the game experience but also how that affects how we write and how we communicate, that's a great point to start a conversation on this other thing. That is, what are we discussing? What is the music? How is it implemented? So I leave you with Julianne.

JG: So let's talk about technology, interactivity, basically what makes video game music what it is, and how *Ocarina of Time*, I think, exemplifies a lot of those things. Hyeonjin had summarized for us how Summers is going through basically every single musical cue, and some sound effects, too, that maybe aren't so musical sounding. That it's divided by, on the one hand, the ocarina, this musical instrument, this magical thing that is being used to do all sorts of things in the game, which we'll talk about, but also this generic video game kind of music; music that is for a certain location or for a certain character, for a certain event, mood, a battle moment, challenges, success and failure – these sorts of things. So, thinking of film music and film scoring but expanding that out to be more interactive, and that's video games in a nutshell, I suppose. And, of course, we just talked about how we all have different experiences and how we approached this, but the way that technology, and the way that the implementation of the music in this game maybe affected the way that we play, the way that we listen, the way that we understand music and sound, whether in this game or maybe even in a more general sort of way. And, I want to highlight one of the examples that Summers actually talks about. There's this chapter, I believe it is under the Location Cues chapter, and it's called Hyrule Field because that's the main area of the game. It is in all the *Zelda* games – well, most of the *Zelda* games – this just sort of open field area. In prior *Zelda* games, this is where the main *Zelda* theme would play, and, particularly in the first game and the third game – so, *Ocarina of Time* being the fourth – this was the same sort of theme that had this nice fanfare aspect to it. A little modal mixture. Some brassiness and some big orchestra. *A Link to the Past*, the game right before this one, took that original theme and just built it out with more real-sounding instruments, using this technology so you can trace the sense of the technology of the game sound being built up. And so now the N64 comes out and now we have *Ocarina of Time*, and now we have Hyrule Field again, and so players are perhaps – if you've played those older games – maybe expecting that same theme but even better now. Maybe more realistic-sounding instruments, maybe it sounds like a real trumpet not a midi trumpet, that kind of thing. But instead Koji Kondo and the developers decided to make something a little bit

different, and I really love the way that Summers takes this theme and shows us the different parts of it and how it changes based on what you're doing. And so the basic summary of this is that as you're moving through the field you're hearing different sets of, basically, four-bar phrases. If you are standing still and not moving, you'll hear a particular set which uses different instruments like harp and woodwinds and less percussion, versus when you're walking around and running around, playing sort of normatively I would say. You're hearing the brassiness, you're hearing the percussion, but then if you also are approached by an enemy, you start to hear maybe more dissonance, more percussion, a little bit more activity, and all of this is really subtle and so you don't really hear these sudden changes. It's all a part of this conglomeration of musical modules that rotate in and out, that suddenly reflect how you're playing. It's something that you really hadn't seen before – at least not in any complex sense – in earlier games, that this music would not just reflect something about the game but something about the playing, how the player is approaching gameplay. And so you're still hearing, he points out the motives that you're still hearing from that original *Zelda* theme that maybe you expected, they're coming in and out, but it's not the same thing because it is changing with how you're playing, and this is a lot of what video games started to do – and continue to do – is this really dynamic and interactive sound design to make it really reflect your integration with the game as a player. I'm curious if, you know, whether it's this example or other examples in the game, that kind of dynamic music when you played, did you notice it? Did you think it affected you, and things like that?

HP: No, it definitely affected me. Thinking about Hyrule Field, the one thing that really comes to mind is when enemies are approaching and then how the music sort of switches into this more militaristic-sounding thing just so smoothly, and just switches into that. I remember earlier games, it's very awkward transitioning would happen because they just didn't really do things like that. I'm thinking of SNES games and things, or the early *Pokémon* games where it was just very awkward transitions, but I just remember that smooth transition into that militaristic-sounding aspect of Hyrule Field. Even though I played it after other consoles have come out and there have been technological advancements, I still just remember thinking, 'Oh my gosh, this is such a smooth entrance into, like, telling me enemies approaching. You should probably get ready to fight them.' It was just so well handled. That is a pretty important leap, I think, that happened in *Ocarina of Time*, this ability to transition between different stems – well [Tim Summers] calls them tags – but just being able to play with the tags and make it so that you have these seamless transitions from one to the next. I mean, Hyrule Field really just shows all of that in its glory with all of these different transition sequences, the ways that you can interact with what's happening on screen based on your movements, and even when it's night and day, too, that also makes an impact. It really does affect the way you play the game to have these smooth transitions occur. Thinking about what existed prior to the N64 and seeing what they were able to do for *Ocarina of Time*, it's really outstanding.

AG: Broadening your enjoyment of the music and of the game in general by informing you of how the game is constructed, I think that excels for me in two chapters – the Hyrule Field one and the Ocarina one. Those are the two chapters that maybe I enjoyed the most reading the book because they changed my perspective on my playing experience. If I think of when I played the game when I was a little child, I obviously didn't notice that the composition was modular. I didn't even notice. I just played and the overworld felt so big and so massive with so many possible areas to traverse because this is *Zelda*, so you have geographic diversity, and I just enjoy it so much just walking around Hyrule Field, and now that I have studied and I have picked [up] this book, I know why. Now I know why I understood the greatness of Hyrule Field as a geographic location, and that is because the music doesn't stop – the area doesn't end and the music also doesn't end, and I think that those things are so enjoyable and more so when you know that they're happening, so this book, for me as a researcher but also as a player, has

enhanced my playing experience of *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, and not just this one but for future ones too.
Another thing from location cues that I want to mention is that, obviously, as a little child I didn't notice that the dungeon cues were so short. Even now that I know that they are very short, replaying the game now, it's so hard to listen to the repetition and that is because of how they're composed, and that is something that Tim has also brought for me with this book, so I can recommend this book also for that, for just playing the game again as a companion. That is what he aims for, too, in a way. Playing the game again and understanding more of the game, and living more the world of Hyrule but understanding on a sonic level why you're enjoying those cues and all that. And I think that also, as it's a canonical game, that this is a pretty good example for teaching about how to compose music for games and how to use these kinds of procedures because it's so well accomplished in its final result, but also because it's one of the first examples in this way, so if you are a teacher in the area of this kind of composition it can be a very great example and the book gives you all the material to do that.

HP: I think Tim Summers does a very good job just sort of showing the seamlessness of how music is functioning throughout *Ocarina of Time.* Again, it really makes people who've played the game really reflect on their experiences of playing it before having read the book but then also after having read the book just being, 'oh, there are things I've never noticed. That now makes a lot more sense', and that's what makes this book so enjoyable. You have an author who is bringing new information to you that you may not have considered or subconsciously have considered, and has now made it very plain to you that this is what's happening, and suddenly this interactive aspect of the game has changed and has added a new layer and new meaning to it. And, especially because so much of it is music related, because you're performing on an ocarina, that adds so many more layers now that someone has broken it down and explained [them] to you, like, 'This is what's happening; this is some contextualization of why this is as meaningful as it seems.'

JG: To talk about the guts of the book, I think the longest chapters and the longest sections are really about the ocarina and this centrepiece of this game which does appear in other games including Mario, I think. There's the magic flute. The magic flute is a trope. But this ocarina, this magical flute-like instrument that you can play in this game, and it is not just a side questy kind of thing that you can just have something to fiddle with, its really a centrepiece. And so one of the interesting things that I think Tim Summers does in this book besides just talk about 'oh, here's all the things you can perform', right? You could just talk about each of the ocarina cues and just talk about what they do, how they transport you to different places, all their magical things, but he's also integrating this into a larger consideration of the soundtrack and how a lot of these cues appear in other places and sort of create certain subconscious expectations about what you're going to hear and what things are going to be like. Talking about also the history of the ocarina, that was really interesting for me to read about. And why the ocarina? Why is this the instrument that Nintendo chose? Where the design of it, being from Italy, which surprised me, and the notion of the sweet potato being this whole ocarina culture is very, very fascinating, and I think it wasn't a sidebar. It really brings itself into a kind of social cultural aspect of this game rather than just being, 'OK, here's all the musical tracks', but really brings in this context I thought was really interesting.
But I want to have a conversation about this sense of performativity, musical performativity in this game. So it's not just these sort of background tracks that maybe you're not supposed to listen to so much but just absorb, but with the ocarina you could play these cues, play these little tunes that would do things, and then you could also just play it for fun without having it necessarily do musical things. You could play whatever little notes that you wanted to. This was something, I think, new, at least the complexity of this was new to the *Zelda* series. There were music games before but none of

them were sort of built into this action adventure mythical game. I'm only thinking of edutainment sort of music games at that point. I'd like to hear your perspectives of the ocarina, especially as music people, you know? What does it feel like to play a musical instrument in a game and have that be a ludic aspect, like something really core to the experience.

AG: First, I wanted to say that maybe Tim is more conscious of why Nintendo choose the ocarina than maybe Nintendo. He goes so deep on possible explanations of why the ocarina is the perfect instrument for the game. I don't know if they had a meeting in Nintendo [discussing this]. But that it's so well grounded, his perspective, on why this instrument is the perfect one because of this cross between simplicity and also mythical properties and all that. It's so informative of why it is the perfect instrument, he goes so deep that maybe he's more conscious [than] the producers of the game.

On what you were asking for, Julianne, I celebrate how he tells us and makes us notice that the different ways of playing the ocarina in *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* are so flexible. Each one of us has a different background in music. For example, I am a wind instrument player and *Ocarina* for me has a deep connection with wind instruments, but even a person that is tone deaf – if you wanted to say it in that way – can play the ocarina perfectly, and that is so interesting because the ocarina is finally democra[tic], a possibility for people that can never play an instrument and it's going to sound in tune. The rhythm of the performance doesn't matter in some instances, so you can play the incorrect rhythm and the system is going to register anyway and you are going to accomplish what you want to accomplish. The tune is going to sound, it is going to have an effect in the world, everything, so, for me, it was mind-blowing. Finally, I have been playing the game in a specific way and playing the ocarina in a specific way that has a lot to do with what I am, but a person who is not inclined to music, with a zero or near zero approach with wind instruments can play and can play it – I don't want to say correctly, I want to say effectively. He is going to achieve things with that, with his musicality, and I think that it's very […] it's also heart-warming, finally, because it's nice to be able to play an instrument and to accomplish things for everyone. They could for example make it that the system registered or asked for more precision in rhythm. They could have done that but they didn't for some reason, and that is discussed in the chapter in some way.

And the other thing that I wanted to bring up is that happens exactly like what he, what Tim, says in his epilogue. That you feel like you are Link because you are doing something, and he is playing the instrument but you're also playing it. He even mentioned that if you are using all the buttons in the controller, you are mimicking the ocarina's shape, and I think that that's very interesting. What he says on how playing the ocarina makes you interact with the fictional characters of the game. Finally, for example, you play for the frogs but you play with the Skull Kids, and those are two completely different things, and for someone who is not a musician, maybe this is one way in which he can live that experience of playing with someone else or playing for someone else, for an audience. That is something that a lot of people aren't going to be able to do in his or her life, so again, having read this chapter on the ocarina has expanded the game for me, and I can recommend it with much more feeling. I want people to play *Ocarina of Time*. I want people to be able to play for the frogs and with the Skull Kids. I think that it's going to be a great experience, obviously, and much more for a person that doesn't play an instrument. That was mind-blowing for me.

HP: I think something that I want to bring up more specifically in terms of a term that you're going about, Ariel, is *musicking* by Christopher Small,[5] this idea of music being a verb, and it's such a central part of *Ocarina of Time.* And Tim Summers goes into depth about this to sort of bring this idea of you being in the game and you being the player. You're the one who's playing the music, whether it's to follow whatever the notes are to perform a particular song or if it's just you pulling out the ocarina to just play whatever you want. And if you want to see it actually play

[5]Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

back to you or something, you can go to the scarecrows, as Tim Summers points out in the book, and you can create your own composition for the scarecrows to remember. This idea of musicking is such an integral part of *Ocarina of Time* and maybe why it's just so impactful for people is that they are not only just playing the game but they are also creating music themselves, and there's this intimate performance that's occurring with this particular engagement. Tim Summers mentioned this in the section that he talks about musicking. He mentions how looking more broadly at video games in general, musicking is such an important term that could be implemented. The ways that we engage with music and video games, it's just rife with opportunities to discuss how musicking functions, but *Ocarina of Time* just happens to be this exemplified version of what musicking can be.

JG: The musicking point is really interesting. Not just with the ocarina, I think, but also in the final chapter when Summers is talking about music elsewhere, basically, from this game. He's also talking about the soundtrack and these released soundtracks of games that have to encompass something about what that music would have sounded like without actually being what that music, perhaps, would have sounded like because when you play the musical sound in a different way, basically every time you play or however anyone else plays it will sound different. And so there's this sense of, I guess, musicking through playing even with these tracks that are maybe not even that inherently music performative, you are still enacting something about a musical performance, a musical soundtrack, and creating, I guess, for yourself that kind of soundtrack. So I think it really does, that sense of the word, really span a lot of different concepts with video games. And I also think with the ocarina connecting the sense of musical performance to the game itself – I hate, you know, that's like saying the music itself, sorry [light-hearted laughter], the game itself, the music itself, I mean – everything is so interconnected. He does talk about how, for instance, the scarecrow side quests where you can record your music and you can get something out of that, but you don't necessarily have to use the ocarina for something. You can just play it. And he does talk about if you press other buttons, the buttons that haven't been taught to you about how to play, like if you're just experimenting on your controller, you'll find how to pitch bend, you'll find how to do vibrato. These things have nothing to do with the game. They never have, you never have to use them. All it is just something, extra for you to play with, and the idea that that's buried in there is such a part of the whole conceit of the game as being this wondrous environment that you can explore and find the secrets to that seem never ending. When I discovered that as a kid just because I pressed the wrong buttons and all of a sudden there was vibrato and pitch bend and I'm like 'What?!' I thought it was a bug. I thought it was a mistake. And then I realized, and then I just kept playing around with it and I was like, 'Oh man. I think I hacked the game into being the instrument that I would want to play.' I just thought that was so cool, and that they really, kind of, purposely embedded some of this idea of an action adventure aspect into this idea of performativity and the idea of music. Obviously, speaking again from this nostalgic, rose-tinted glasses view, I like that he's talking about all of that intermingled musicality of this game.

AG: It's very nice to be able to think that music is a verb because it helps to understand yourself as a musician, not only when you play but anyone's experience with music as a possible and a valid music experience, so it is liberating to think with the concept that Christopher Small has proposed to us. When you think about the Hyrule Field chapter and the ocarina chapter with the concept of musicking in your mind, you get to the conclusion that you are performing music. For example, just by standing still on Hyrule Field, by choosing not to walk, you are forcing the game to sound another tag, another stem, that [is] different from which was sounding before, and that's very important. After reading the book and traversing Hyrule Field or playing the ocarina, I think that you are going to feel more empowered. You feel that you are in charge, in a way, of the music of the game.

HP: Something that we touch on but sort of circle around is this idea of the pedagogical use for this book and what we can maybe get out of this pedagogically. Before we jump into the book itself though, the game can be used as music pedagogy, and Tim Summers does bring that up a little bit and shows the musicality of playing the ocarina, for example, [which] we've been discussing. And there's sort of a learning experience that comes with it because you're given this opportunity to play the music the way that you're being taught to play or you just discovered that you can just press whatever buttons you want and it'll just introduce you to this whole new musical world. It also introduces you to an ocarina which is not an instrument that people will encounter everyday but now so many people know what an ocarina is because of this game. Because music is such an integral part of *Ocarina of Time*, it's rife with opportunities to learn about music in general. There's just so much to be said and Summers can only cover so much in one book but he does cover a lot. To talk about how *Ocarina of Time* can be used as a work that could be taught in the classroom, and then going alongside it is the book to help guide the classroom, or just taking examples out of the book. Like when he talks about the various songs that you can play, he breaks down, every single term that's included in the title, like 'Minuet of the Forest' or 'Bolero of Fire.' And being able to explain, this is what a minuet is, this is what a bolero is. Explaining why it's so effective in the way that it's been used, and just expanding on that is really adding so much depth to the music of this game but also can be used to teach students what these terms mean because he explains them in such a straightforward way. This book is just so rich in content for things that you can teach in the classroom because the game itself has so much that can be used to teach. I don't know if either of you have experience teaching *Ocarina of Time* in the classroom or not but it'd be interesting to hear what your thoughts are on using *Ocarina of Time* as music pedagogy but also the book; if you were able to put it into your syllabus, would you, and how would you go about teaching?

AG: Because of how the book is written, you can use it to structure a complete course from video game music, or as a central section of a video game music course at any level because he juggles a lot of important topics such as modularity, implementation, but also the usage of different languages. You can teach a lot about video game music just using *Ocarina of Time* as an example, and if you want to do that, this book is the perfect companion for your course. And if you're teaching music theory, there are a lot of specific examples, and as Tim also provides us with transcriptions, you can get some neat examples to show in class for teaching a lot of different subjects, and that's pretty interesting because, in general, I think that the students are a little bored of traditional examples. If you think about it, it's not a new game for them. This is a prehistoric game for students that are in college right now. Why not make them play the game and trigger the examples and what not. You can think about different strategies using the examples that appear in the book.

And you can also use it for teaching about music as a social phenomenon. He says to us about how Link relates to the world in which he lives and to the characters which he directs through music. It's a reflection about what music is and how we as a community interact through music, not only with what we do performing the music, but also in how we recognize ourselves, our personalities, I think he reflects on this. For example, what he says [about] some specific ocarina tunes as identifiers, as for example, the Zelda's Lullaby, as 'I am connected to the royal family.' Finally, if you think about it, that's an operation that every one of us does. I like this specific kind of music because this is what I am. This is who I am. It's a very good starting point for teaching about music as a human dimension of connection and communication.

JG: These are really, really wonderful points, particularly this idea of using the book or using this game with the book as a centrepiece of a larger more general video game music course, and then, kind of, using the different themes that come out of here to talk about other examples. But maybe

having students really dive into one single game, I mean, this is a good game for that. I think there's a lot going on, and we now have this companion that is pretty easy to read. It's at an undergraduate level I believe. Students would have to be able to read music to some extent, and it does, kind of, introduce aspects of tonal harmony without explaining too much, so probably a little above a music fundamentals course but not necessary[ily], you don't need all this music theory to get into it as long as students can read music and have a sense of harmony – in a basic way, it would be useful – but talking about aspects of melodic contour, aspects of rhythm and metre in ways that are easily digestible, and then being able to have these more comprehensive themes of how the music creates a certain world, creates certain experiences, relates on a larger scale. If students can really play a game, maybe for the whole semester, and they'll really, really understand where he's going with that. I think that would be really great, and I don't think there's another volume similar to this. I mean, we do have Andrew Schartmann's 33 1/3 volume about Koji Kondo's *Super Mario* music but that's just a few tracks.[6] It's not as comprehensive as this is. So I think all of those ideas are so useful and interesting. It's important to know also that Tim Summers wrote the volume *Understanding Video Game Music.*[7] That does read more like a textbook. It's general and has a lot of examples. It has vocabulary built into it and a nice glossary of terms, and it sets out certain parameters that students can really follow along with. But I do think that maybe even for even a more advanced class where you really want to get into, 'okay, but what is it like to really play through a full game?', and 'what is it like to really critically approach something through this experience?', then this is, I think, a great resource.

HP: You brought up some really great points, Ariel and Julianne. Something else that also came to mind, too, is sort of thinking about the research aspect, since we talked quite a bit about pedagogy, but what benefits does this have for researchers? Personally, something that he hints at, and I understand why he didn't expand on it more, he essentially planted the seeds to allow future scholars to expand on what he wrote based on some of the interpretations that he provides that are a bit more subjective in nature. The most notable one that comes to mind is the few times he mentions the relationship between Link and Sheik and the intimacy that comes with music-making together and, sort of, the potential romantic aspect that comes out of it and the complications of Sheik's character being androgynous. But then – spoiler alert, Sheik is Princess Zelda – Sheik is being presented as male. And Summers does a really interesting but very, very brief analysis of how you can bring in aspects of identity into analysing music, and he sort of touches on this a little bit throughout *Ocarina of Time*'s various cues, thinking about how music is drawing from these particular cultures and whatnot. And this is also a really great way for researchers to think about music beyond music itself. He doesn't expand on it a lot because I could tell that he wants us to focus on the many, many, many cues that exist in this game, but he presents it so that people can actually think about that and challenges them, in a way, to realize that music is more than just the music and just performing it.

Another aspect that he also brings up, too, that he pretty much dedicated the last chapter to is reception studies and fandom studies and thinking about the ways that *Ocarina of Time* has sat in fans' minds for years. I mean, over twenty years later, people are still obsessed with this game, and why is that? People are still making covers of music from this game, and he touches a little bit on that. This book does present a lot of small but very powerful opportunities for researchers to expand on these ideas and potentially consider writing more on these topics in other games. He's just presenting a small model for researchers. And, I guess tying it back to pedagogy, students are also being introduced to this idea as well, where it's not just about the music itself but there is also meaning attached to this music and that's something really, really important for music scholars

[6]Andrew Schartmann, *Koji Kondo's Super Mario Bros. Soundtrack* (Bloomsbury, 2015).
[7]Tim Summers, *Understanding Video Game Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

to consider and address as they think about music. But I'd love to hear your thoughts on how this book can help scholars and researchers.

JG: In the most basic way, having transcriptions of a lot of these tracks is just so useful because for most video games you don't have nice little scores from their composers – whether they exist or not – so that's just immediately useful. And having certain diagrams that are laid out really nicely; just such a logistically useful thing. But I think that your points about how this book acts like almost its own sort of Hyrule Field where it is sort of linking to other potential areas that other folks can explore, perhaps, a lot more because, I mean, really, there's so much potential in this game and I think Summers realizes and knows that and points to these things and then is sort of like, 'Well maybe this is a basis for a classroom discussion or a research paper or another book.' That is a really exciting place to start because even though we've been studying video game music for what feels like a long time, it is still relatively new and there aren't that many central resources and, you know, we can say what we want about avoiding canonization always citing the same people, which is always a risk, but it is nice to have certain handhold things to cite and things to rely on, while we go off and do expansions on this work and it's really, really nice to be able to have that in this field.

AG: I was thinking of this exact same metaphor that Julianne said, no? This is some sort of Hyrule Field. You can traverse on this book for a long time, but you can also go to other areas and explore. I think that it sparks interest. I am more interested in making research on this game, and I think that also it's going to have an impact on making video game research as a valid topic because there is a book that is so comprehensive and so you can say that it's a serious topic. Having a comprehensive book, it can be a sign that this research topic can be very deep.
As a final reflection, I think that this book is an opportunity for conversation and for talking about very different topics. For discussing our personal experience, for example, but also discussing technical aspects of how the game is implemented and connecting all those topics, so I think that is a book that even if you can expand some topics that are not that deeply approached in this book, can make for hours and hours of conversation, and with very different kinds of people, too – with researchers, with video game enthusiasts – so I am very happy to be able to be here with Julianne and with Jin, because we just started discussing what you can discuss, sharing your thoughts and experiences on both *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* as a game, and also on this book.

doi:10.1017/rrc.2024.8