

CYTHERA

20th ANNIVERSARY SOUNDTRACK

liner Notes

Music by
RANDY PRINGEE

Cythera: 20th Anniversary Soundtrack

Volume I, The MIDI Years

Revisited

1. Cythera Theme (Classic), 1:37
2. Land King Hall (Classic), 3:34
3. Underground (Classic), 2:06
4. Overworld (Classic), 2:18
5. Odemia (Classic), 1:16
6. Danger (Classic), 1:13
7. Seldane (Classic), 1:39
8. Pnyx (Classic), 0:57
9. Catamarca (Classic), 1:52
10. Cademia (Classic), 1:17
11. Kosha (Classic), 2:40
12. Underground Remix (Classic), 2:08
13. City of Mystery (Classic), 1:13

Total Album Time, 23:42

Resynthesized

14. Cythera Theme (Flute Resynth), 1:38
15. Land King Hall (Resynth), 3:34
16. Underground (Resynth), 2:09
17. Overworld (Choral Resynth), 2:19
18. Odemia (Resynth), 1:15
19. Danger (Resynth), 1:15
20. Seldane (Choral Resynth), 1:40
21. Pnyx (Resynth), 0:58
22. Catamarca (Resynth), 1:52
23. Cademia (Resynth), 1:19
24. Kosha (Resynth), 2:40
25. City of Mystery (Resynth), 1:15

Total Album Time, 21:51

Alternates & Extras

26. Cythera Theme (Choral), 1:38
27. Underground (Synth), 2:09
28. Underground (Effects), 2:08
29. Overworld (Strings), 2:18
30. Odemia (Alternate), 1:15
31. Pnyx (Alternate), 0:59
32. Catamarca (Choral), 1:52
33. Cademia (Alternate), 1:20
34. Kosha (Alternate), 2:40
35. Cythera Theme (Original), 1:39
36. Overworld (Original), 2:18
37. Seldane (Original), 1:42

Total Album Time, 21:52

Total Volume Time, 1:07:25

Volume II, A Modern Approach

Remastered

1. Cythera Theme, 1:38
2. Land King Hall, 3:35
3. Underground, 2:07
4. Overworld, 2:21
5. Odemia, 1:17
6. Danger, 1:16
7. Seldane, 1:45
8. Pnyx, 0:59
9. Catamarca, 1:51
10. Cademia, 1:19
11. Kosha, 2:38
12. City of Mystery, 1:20

Total Album Time, 22:04

Reimagined

13. When the Time is Right (Cythera Theme Choral), 1:41
14. Space (Overworld Strings), 2:20
15. Stairway (Land King Hall Piano), 3:34
16. On the Edge of the World (Odemia Piano Solo), 1:16
17. The Plague (Catamarca Choral), 1:53
18. Ruin of the Tyrants (Cademia Woodwinds), 1:18
19. Comana's Fall (Kosha Harp), 2:41
20. Exile of the Mages (Pnyx Violins), 1:00
21. Hidden Majesty (Underground Strings), 2:07

22. The Threat of War (Danger Harpsichord), 0:50

23. Legacy of the Elementals (Seldane Strings), 1:41
24. The Magisterium (City of Mystery Saxophone), 0:53

Total Album Time, 21:08

Suites & Medleys

25. World of Cythera (Synth Suite), 1:57
26. Rule of the Houses (Brass Medley), 2:56
27. Land's End (Exploring Suite), 3:30
28. Contemplating the Void (Pensive Piano Suite), 4:15
29. Age of the LandKing (Orchestral Suite), 5:06

Total Album Time, 17:41

Total Volume Time, 1:00:53

INTRODUCTION

The Beginning

On August 27, 1999, Ambrosia Software released Glenn Andreas' *Cythera*, an open-world role-playing game that introduced players to a fantasy land filled with magic and mystery. *Cythera* was similar in spirit to other games like the early titles of *Ultima*, and while it didn't achieve tremendous commercial success, it has enjoyed a consistent fan following even many years after its release.

The music of *Cythera* was recorded by Randy Pringle around the fall of 1997. Randy Pringle is a talented musician and composer whose interests span a variety of musical platforms. Having some of his compositions included in feature films and television shows, along with recurring live performances in his band, he sought out video game music as a new challenge in the 1990's.

Cythera was his first foray into that space and indeed posed an interesting challenge. As was popular for video games of the era, *Cythera's* music had to be encoded in the Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) format, so it was all recorded on a single Roland X-P50 keyboard -- different from the ensemble recordings of film music or a collection of performers in a band.

MIDI as an Art

Video game music was so different at the time because of storage constraints. MIDI files encode musical notes, instruments, channels, and more as a sequence of commands, allowing them to store complicated, multi-track compositions in a few hundred or thousand bytes (kB). In comparison, digital audio can take millions of bytes (MB) to store even a short snippet of music. Megabytes are no longer a limiting factor in video game design today, which has enabled an increase in large-scale orchestral productions of music for video games, but the disk storage savings were considered very worthwhile during the peak of MIDI's usage.

While MIDI files save space, they trade audio quality. Digital audio ensures that the listener hears mostly an exact representation of what was recorded, but MIDI music depends heavily upon the synthesizer used to interpret the commands. This meant that listeners could hear radically different music, depending on their drivers and sound cards used to synthesize MIDI files. Composing MIDI music which could sound good and remain somewhat consistent across a variety of configurations became an important skill for video game musicians to master.

Game developers like Blizzard Entertainment were well aware of MIDI's limitations. When they released *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans*, the first game in their popular *Warcraft* franchise, it featured entirely MIDI music on MS-DOS. Upon release of the Macintosh version the next year, they included digital audio versions of the music. This decision was partly due to the Mac's capability to stream music with other data simultaneously from mixed-mode CDs, but it also allowed the composers to synthesize their music with high-quality Roland and Yamaha products to ensure it sounded its best.

The Apple Way

Apple offered another solution to its developers: the QuickTime Music Architecture (QTMA) format. QTMA was Apple's implementation of MIDI using a standardized set of software synthesizers packaged with their QuickTime video player. QTMA provided developers and musicians a relatively easy way to store and play music that would sound the same to every Mac user.

Glenn Andreas integrated support for QTMA into Delver, his video game engine which drives all of *Cythera's* capabilities. Delver featured a number of sophisticated capabilities for its time but unfortunately did not see adoption beyond the release of *Cythera*, owing largely to Apple's move from the classic Mac platform to the Unix-based Mac OS X in 2001.

Delver's reliance on QTMA meant that all of *Cythera's* music was ultimately converted from Randy Pringle's MIDI files into QTMA. This limited the quality since QuickTime's synthesizers are not as powerful as the Roland ones initially used by Randy Pringle, but after some experimentation, he was able to find a recording workflow which yielded MIDI sounds similar to the QTMA music listeners would hear, helping him to create the final tracks we've all come to know and love.

The most notable change prompted by the divide between Roland's MIDI's and Apple's QTMA's Drums. In Randy Pringle's words: "Even though the drum parts were nice, they weren't realistic enough, and they just decided they didn't want the drums."

Read More

[First Gig: Making MIDI Music](#) - In this guest article for *Gamasutra*, Randy Pringle discusses his experiences working with Glenn Andreas and Andrew Welch in making the music for *Cythera*.

[Delving into Details](#) - This short write-up by Glenn Andreas details some of the technical capabilities of the Delver engine used by *Cythera*.

A Conversation With Randy Pringle

Back in February of 2011, a few years after Cythera's 10th anniversary and the release of the original soundtrack, I set out to get in touch with Randy Pringle. Initially, I was hoping that he might have old MIDI files from the game that could be released. While he could not find any of the old files, the more interesting result of my search for Randy Pringle was the brief phone conversation we had and his subsequent recurring visits to the Cythera web board. He has graciously provided insights and details about his memories of preparing Cythera's music. The bulk of our first conversation is transcribed below, and it is a very worthwhile read.

Seth: All of us thought it would be wonderful to hear a little of the backstory from you because we love the music! The game wouldn't be what it is without the music.

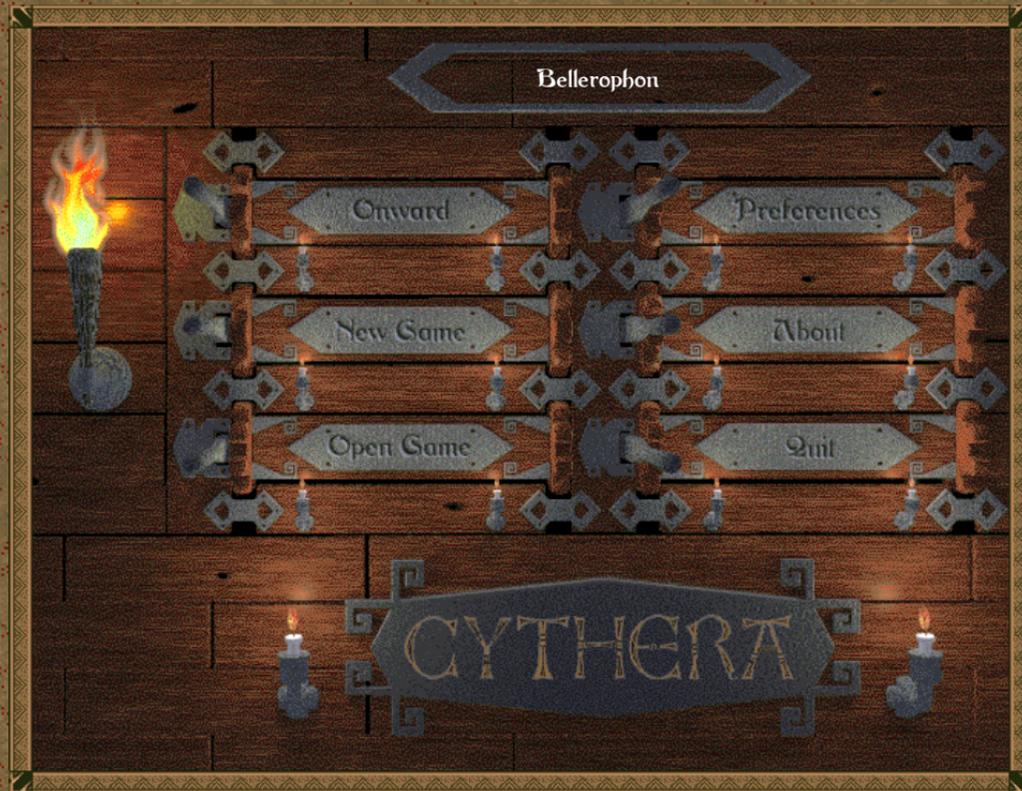
Randy Pringle: Fantastic; that is so wonderful. The beginning of digital recording was around the time period I recorded that. It was done with MIDI, and I was actually laid up in my basement, so I didn't walk very far. I was using a Macintosh with 8 megs of RAM, had one little speaker to hear the music out of. I think I did have a couple of monitors set up, but anyways, it was a Roland keyboard and a Macintosh Performa 475 with 8 megs of RAM. I was running Free Style sequencing software... It was very primitive, and it was the beginning of the digital recording age so that was the top of the line, at least that I knew of.

S: I know Ambrosia was at the forefront of the digital release era because most of their games were downloaded from online. At the time, I remember spending half an hour to download a 7 MB game!

RP: Exactly, I had dialup. I had a 14.4 modem... I'm sending huge WAV files and MP3 files up now that I could never have done before.

S: Oh I know; back then you had to send tiny files! I was reading about the old format and MIDI, and it made me wonder how many MIDIs you actually composed for them that you sent in? Did you send in a bunch of different songs, and they just picked a few?

RP: Well, this is how Glenn and them worked that out. They wanted a song for a specific part of the game. They wanted one to be... wonder if I still have the original email, that'd be nice if I did. They wanted one to be melancholy and sad; they wanted one to be enthusiastic and regal, perhaps even



partially, I think the wording they used was "royalty." I can't remember exactly how they said it, but they wanted specific moods for specific parts of the game, and I just tried to write in order to make that happen as best I could. Songs just kind of come to me as I write them; I write on the fly.

S: You're very talented because in playing the game, I can hear a lot of different styles that go into it. Like one part is heavily woodwinds, and the next part is all guitar. It's a very broad range because you have the royal sounding theme and majestic music and then something more peaceful.

RP: Oh yes! Majestic was one of them.

S: So you've been doing digital stuff for a while?

RP: Yeah, music just drove me into this, because I'm 52 years old, and I did not grow up with computers. And once I realized that I could record the music on the computer and redo it without having to splice tape or redo the whole song, ah man, I had to have it! The last twenty years of my life, since about that time period, has been devoted to collecting these new technologies. Some of the equipment is expensive, and I'm not really famous or anything, I don't have a lot of income. But that's where I want to go with it, I want to go into film music. And I don't really want to be famous or anything; I just want to be able to pay the bills off.

S: Well, it's nice to be recognized for your work, too. I know a lot of us who play this game, and we just love hearing about your experiences with it.

RP: I think that's wonderful; I just love it! In fact, I wish I still had a copy of it... It probably wouldn't work on my new Mac.

S: Yeah, it doesn't play on the new Macintosh's unless you emulate it... In the game development business, it's really hard to keep up.

RP: I can imagine. I took a little programming... It went a little over my head, but I got a glimpse of it. I probably won't retain any of it, I can't even remember the terminology, but I think it's amazing... The website design is something I do know how to do; [[Absolute Studio's](#)] my home-made website... I should put a little something on the website about [[Cythera](#)]. That's what I want to do with that site; I want to give people a little history about how I worked my way into the industry. It's been a long road, I've done a lot of research and studying.

S: How did you happen to find Ambrosia Software in the first place? Did they find you or did you know about them?

RP: I went to a website that listed all the different game companies on it, and I just sat there and wrote emails to different production companies. Some of them I never heard from again, and it seemed like Ambrosia just hit. I can't tell you how many cassettes and CD's I've sent to different places, but you just never hear from them... Actually, just like a needle in a haystack, it was a miracle that I found Ambrosia. Nowadays, I believe most businesses have in-house production, musicians within the company, so it's a pretty hard business to break into.

S: Yeah, I imagine so; I know the game music industry has changed a lot. It used to be all bleeps and bloops, then it progressed to the MIDIs, and now everything is CD-audio quality music.

RP: You bet. I've got two different types of software that I use for my orchestration now. They use gigafiles; it takes gigs of information to make the violin sound like a real violin, and it's very realistic. I use EastWest and GigaStudio... It sounds like there's a real musician in the room with you. And all the effects are included, you can make it sound like you're in an airplane hangar if you want to. And the drums they have now are just fantastic. Back when the MIDIs were the only thing you could use, the cymbals didn't really have any sustain, and it wasn't very realistic. As a matter of fact, the drums they didn't even want there, it was too busy. The first few songs I gave them, I had drums with them, and even though the drum parts were nice, they weren't realistic enough. And they just decided they didn't want the drums. Most of them actually don't have drums, if not all of them.

S: I think a couple do... They're all very good songs. To look at a list of what they wanted and then be able to create all those various themes amazes me. It's truly a wonderful thing that you've done.

RP: Well thank you... Well, I gotta go play tonight with the Grey Matter band.

S: You do live performances as well? I think that's great... I appreciate your time, and it was very nice talking to you.

RP: You too. Take care.

Randy Pringle Continues To Compose, Perform, Design, and Jam! Be Sure To Check Out [AbsoluteStudio.Net](#) To Keep Up With Him!

20th Anniversary Soundtrack

A Long Time in the Works...

The original release of Cythera's music featured audio recorded directly from a computer playing Cythera. This provided fans a means of listening to the music that was an accurate representation of what played in-game, but it did not support re-synthesizing with new sound fonts and flexible instrumentation like a raw MIDI file would. QuickTime's instruments haven't aged very well, leaving fans with a strong desire to obtain the original MIDI files and update the music.

Attempts to extract the music files from the game were continually unsuccessful until 2014 when Bryce Schroeder discovered the details of the Delver engine's archiving format. He was able to decrypt the files and restructure their internal resources into independent parts, including the QTMA files saved in the game. After further analysis of the QTMA and MIDI formats, a cross-converter was written that recreated the original MIDI files from the QTMA ones ripped from the game data.

This Release...

This release features all of the original MIDI files released with Cythera. The MIDI files themselves are available for download so that anyone can play them with different synthesizers, edit them in a music recording app, draw inspiration for new Cythera-inspired remixes, etc. Given the freedom of working with MIDI files, the choice is yours!



In addition to the MIDI files themselves, this release showcases new, high-quality, and resynthesized versions of Cythera's music. The tracks were synthesized using several MIDI interpreters and then converted to a lossless digital audio codec.

Also, Apple's Logic Pro was used to create several sets of tracks, and the corresponding project files for each of these has been made available as well. All the music is spread across two CDs worth of audio, comprising two volumes of approximately six distinct albums that each reveal a different flavor of Cythera's music.

Disc 1

Volume I on the first disc is entirely focused on MIDI and the classic audio sound. It's first album is a recreation of the original release of Cythera's music in higher definition and reorganized to match the track order used in Cythera's data files. The second album follows this same ordering but delivers a new level of quality for Cythera's music. Each of Cythera's music tracks has been resynthesized in one or more premium sound fonts which demonstrate the best sound the MIDI files can create. These tracks contrast nicely with the first part of the disc and show how much MIDI synthesizers have improved over the basic instrument set Apple made available with QTMA back in the 1990's. The third album on this disc is a collection of alternate versions of the same cues, experimenting with different combinations of sounds and further exploring the capabilities of MIDI synthesizers.

Disc 2

Volume II on the second disc explores how Cythera's music can sound beyond the limitations of MIDI. The MIDI command protocol is still used to facilitate communication between digital music devices, but MIDI is no longer heavily used as a file format because modern synthesizers support many more types of higher-quality instruments. For instance, Apple's Logic Pro X supports reading MIDI note commands but can assign the notes to any type of instrument or effect in its library in order to synthesize sound that would not be possible in the original, 128-instrument MIDI format.

The first album of disc two comprises a set of tracks generated with the updated instruments in Apple's Logic Pro X. This collection of Cythera's music sounds similar to the classic and updated MIDI albums on the first disc, but each track makes use of instruments and/or higher-

definition audio than is possible with any of the MIDI-based tracks. The second album in Volume II plays heavily with different instrumentations in Logic Pro X, giving a taste of the type of alterations possible with just a little editing of the MIDI files. In acknowledgement of the original release of Cythera's music, these tracks are arranged to follow the ordering of that soundtrack. Furthermore, their names have been changed to, hopefully, help evoke a sense of the stories they tell. Some of the titles match the old names given by Randy Pringle, others are drawn from Glenn Andreas' descriptions of the tracks, and several are new. The third and final collection of tracks on disc two, the sixth album overall, is an assortment of suites which combine new instrumentations and arrangements of different tracks to highlight certain thematic elements of Cythera. Each of the Logic Pro X source files is available for this volume of tracks as well.

Mastering

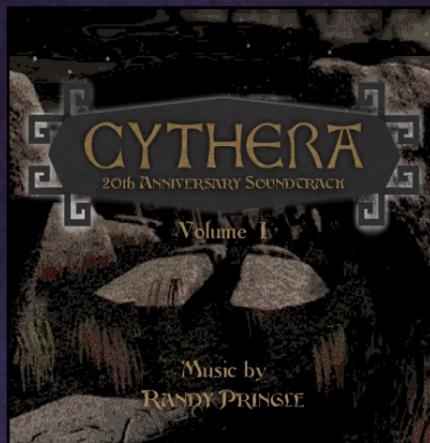
Both discs have been mastered to the recommendation of -16 Loudness Units relative to Full Scale (LUFS) for streaming audio. LUFS is a common measure of effective loudness based on decibels (dB) and quantifies the apparent volume level over the course of an entire song. In order to preserve the dynamics of each track, with Land King Hall having a softer theme than Odemia for instance, the LUFS for every song has been individually analyzed and balanced within approximately +/- 2 dB of -16 LUFS. Effectively, this results in a minor compression of the dynamic range of the soundtrack but allows for a smooth listening experience across the complete set of tracks.

This release is a very comprehensive set of tracks representing the sounds of Cythera, and with the availability of the MIDI and Logic Pro files comes the opportunity for others to make and enjoy their own renditions of Cythera's music. Cythera has never sounded better!

Visit CytheraGuides.com To Download All the Music, Source Files, and More for the 20th Anniversary Soundtrack!

LINER NOTES

Volume I, The MIDI Years



On this disc, the different sounds of MIDI are explored using both old and new synthesizers. A variety of sound fonts and instrumentations provide alternative versions of familiar tracks which showcase the capabilities and limitations of the MIDI format.

The artwork is a reference to the original Cythera soundtrack release. It is the nighttime image of what may be presumed to be Seldane ruins. This was used as the artwork on the old album, but the image quality has been dramatically improved and the light levels increased. The result is a familiar cover to the former MIDI soundtrack that is sharper, larger, and brighter but still ultimately a night setting, just as Volume I seeks to be a better version of the Cythera soundtrack that is still MIDI at its core.

Cythera: Revisited

This first sub-album was generated using the QuickTime instruments available in QuickTime 4.1.2 Pro, as emulated by SheepShaver. QuickTime instruments were removed from macOS as of QuickTime X in favor of non-MIDI synthesizers like GarageBand and Logic Pro X, so there are no updated QuickTime instrument sets beyond any minor changes which were enacted between QuickTime 4 and 7. These differences were found to be negligible in comparative testing.

By generating the music with QuickTime 4, these MIDI tracks sound virtually identical to the in-game Cythera music that would be played from a QTMA source. There are small discrepancies due to the inherent differences between QTMA and MIDI (for instance, QTMA allows finer control over

pitch bend effects), but this album revisits Cythera with closely-matching audio from the original game in lossless quality.

1. Cythera Theme (Classic)

This tune plays every time Cythera launches and loops over the game's main menu, making it the closest track to a generic theme for Cythera. Glenn Andreas originally described it as somewhat upbeat and majestic, although Randy Pringle's ultimate interpretation evokes more of a pensive mood. It was first released in February of 1999 on the old Delver website under the title "When the Time is Right."

Cythera Theme introduces some of the elements of Cythera's music that will become common in later tracks, namely a core melody carried on woodwinds or voices supported by the gentle strumming of a guitar or bass. This track actually uses both vocals and woodwinds, but QuickTime's vocals are notably lacking, making differentiating the two somewhat difficult.

This track also introduces the importance of volume and panning to Cythera's music. In MIDI, volume allows the composer to adjust the specific levels of each instrument, and panning (AKA left/right balance) provides control over the stereo qualities of the music. When mixed together, the unique settings of volume and panning can be used to create distinct effects. Randy Pringle uses the feature in several tracks, with one instrument playing a tune in one ear while another instrument harmonizes a different melody in the other. In this track, the main theme is tilted to the right ear while backing strings are more audible in the left ear.

A fourth, less prominent component of this track is the inclusion of pure synthesizer sounds like a saw wave and the goblin synth pad. A surprising number of Cythera's tracks make use of such synthesized sounds, positioning the music as an unusual but compelling combination of traditional and slightly-ancient sounding themes intermixed with spacey, digital effects.

2. Land King Hall (Classic)

While Cythera Theme earns the name as Cythera's main theme for playing over the main menu, Land King Hall's music may be the one most widely recognized as Cythera's main theme. This track was released in February of 1999 on Delver's old website under its actual name, "Stairway," making clear reference Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven" which inspired the

guitar melody used here. It was the only piece of Cythera music available for many years.

This song is very simple in regards to instrumentation, using only one woodwind (blown bottle), an acoustic guitar, and a fretless bass. In this way it is similar in spirit to Cythera Theme, although it has its own distinct tune. This track again uses stereo, with the guitar playing in one ear and the blown bottle in the other. Glenn Andreas described the tune as needing to be formal and soothing but a bit alien.

3. Underground (Classic)

Heavy synthesized sounds return in full force with Underground, the song that plays in most of Cythera's underground and cave locations. This tune is meant to be spooky and mysterious, and the use of synthetic sound here, particularly the echo drops, helps foster an image of large, dark, and watery caverns.

Underground is one of the few tracks that relies extensively on drums. It's also the first track to include a prominent introductory section. The music builds with echoing, synthetic sounds before giving way to a simple refrain played on the flute. Several other Cythera tracks use this technique of bridging a strong opening with a noticeably different melody and instrumentation later in the song.

There is an underlying, bubbling sound which can be heard at the beginning, which is most likely the Goblin synth effect. Strangely, this channel is audible in the MIDI version of the music but is not really heard in-game. While minor changes in QuickTime instruments may be expected between the MIDI and QTMA synthesizer, the more likely reason in this case is that QTMA provide additional commands for controlling specific notes and pitches that are not fully available in the MIDI format.

4. Overworld (Classic)

Cythera's overworld theme is similar to Underground in many regards. Again, the music builds before turning to drums and woodwinds (clarinets this time) to lead the rest of the track. Like Underground, World is another exploration song with a lengthy introduction, and it's probably the song players hear most in Cythera. The MIDI version of this track plays one octave below the in-game version. This is also likely due to QTMA directives not mapped into the MIDI file.

Unlike *Underground*, which was meant to be dark and mysterious, *Overworld* is a powerful theme. Glenn Andreas' instructions for this track were that it be sweeping, majestic, and catchy. Randy Pringle combined several types of vocals, clarinets, synth pads, drums, and a few other instruments to achieve this sound.

5. Odemia (Classic)

Odemia is the first of the "city" themes, all of which have their own distinct voice. Odemia is truly a treat with its strong, yet thoughtful, melody. It embodies the idea of an isolated fortress very well.

The initial request for this piece was something simple and rustic. The final work's main feature is a honky tonk piano with a cello and other strings overlaid. Rather than drums, a percussive element is provided by tubular bells.

6. Danger (Classic)

The danger theme appears in *Cythera* many of the times where a player would need to fight. Glenn Andreas wished for the track to sound intense and dramatic, even stressful. A flute whistles the main tune, but rather than a contemplative or exploratory melody like we've heard with the woodwinds before, it is paired with a piano and eerie synthetic voices. The final part of the puzzle is a pounding timpani, which beats slightly off to the right side, and when all parts come together, the result is a song that successfully imparts a sense of urgent concern.

7. Seldane (Classic)

The Seldane music needed to be both alien and mysterious. On some level, this suggests a hybrid of the alien aspect of Land King Hall's tune with the mystery of the underground caverns. Thematically, this makes a great deal of sense given that the Seldane live underground and have strong ties with Land King Hall and the Void. In practice, this track is neither one nor the other. While it certainly has elements from both of the earlier tracks, Seldane is very much its own song. The music is sad in a way, and it communicates the essence of ancient history of a lost civilization.

This piece is entirely synthesized. What sounds possibly like vocals in QuickTime's rendition is actually a combination of the MIDI breath noise and halo pad. Drums beat steadily in the

backdrop to keep time, and the synthetic goblin sound adds atmosphere. Perhaps most shocking is that one of the instruments is actually a helicopter! QuickTime's version of a helicopter is indistinguishable from other generic echoing sounds, but in certain synthesizers, the helicopter sound effect can be a jarring presence. This is an excellent example of how working with MIDI files to obtain consistent audio across platforms can be frustrating, but thankfully, QTMA is very standard across Macs, meaning the helicopter had the desired effect and was likely never identified by any players.

8. Pnyx (Classic)

Pnyx is the shortest track in *Cythera*'s music, but it stands out for its extensive use of vocals and brass. Not only is this the first track to heavily feature brass, but it is also the only one to rely on vocals as the centerpiece. The original description was for a complex and formal effect, but this version is probably more majestic than anything else. Because Pnyx is meant to be a place of magic and wonder, it is a very fitting theme.

9. Catamarca (Classic)

Catamarca is another piece that begins with a distinctly different opening than the later portions of the track. At first, it features saxophones, strings, flutes, a rock guitar, and a rock organ. Then, it turns to trumpets, flutes, and an acoustic guitar backed by drums for the remainder. Even though this technique appeared before in the *Underground* and *Overworld* tracks, it may be in *Catamarca* for a different reason.

Originally, Glenn Andreas had intended to put two versions of the *Catamarca* theme in the game -- one to play before curing the plague and one after. The former needed to be depressing and tense while the latter was to be upbeat and fun. One may reasonably argue that each of these moods is enveloped in the single, final track. The introduction is a bit more tense and downcast, while the rest of the track is a catchy, uplifting ditty.

Although not the longest song in *Cythera*'s soundtrack, *Catamarca* does feature the most instruments in one track. It includes 14 MIDI channels -- 14 instruments -- in all, which is about twice the average number of channels in the other tracks. This may be further proof that two themes were merged into one, or it may simply indicate that Randy Pringle wished to develop the song with a larger ensemble of instruments than the others.

10. Cademia (Classic)

Glenn Andreas called Cademia "impressive, sweeping, old, sophisticated" when discussing this track. While each of these elements can be heard in the final version to some extent, the strongest aspects of Cademia's music speak to its age and sophistication. It is relatively short, and it seems to have a somber mood. The track relies heavily on synthesized sounds, the main melody being carried by a square wave synth, but additional instruments like a harp, a flute, and other synth sounds provide atmosphere. Overall, Randy Pringle chose an appropriate tone for Cademia, mixing its suppressed sense of grandeur with a sort of grace representing times passed.

11. Kosha (Classic)

Kosha is the last track that was released with Cythera and the final "city" theme. It is also the longest single track in the album. Glenn Andreas desired for Kosha to sound stoic and portray an almost military presence, which Randy Pringle accomplished through considerable use of percussion, a slightly accelerated tempo, and a core, repeating ditty that marches the song forward. Tambourines shake relentlessly in the background, driving the rest of the beat. A soothing guitar strum loops over the tambourine, layered with bass, trumpets, and an African kalimba punctuating its sections.

The most prominent instrument is the woodwind: a set of panpipes. Not only are panpipes important to this track because they are the most easily heard and are responsible for giving it such a distinctive sound, but they also have relevance within the context of the game. In Cythera, players must obtain panpipes to open a secret passage in Kosha before they can complete the primary mission. Perhaps the selection of instruments here is a subtle hint as to the importance of panpipes in Kosha?

After about one and a half minutes, the song seems to trail off and end. However, much like the persistence of House Comana, the central power of Kosha, the theme continues and returns for a full reprise. This reprisal is unusual in Cythera's music and does not appear in any other music in the game. Nevertheless, it makes Kosha the longest-running song and helps provide a sense of completion before reaching its true closing — and the ending of the actual Cythera soundtrack.

12. Underground Remix (Classic)

Underground Remix is the first of two bonus tracks that were included with the original release of Cythera's soundtrack. Each have been made available in this release, synthesized losslessly using QuickTime 4.1.2. This track was released online by Randy Pringle as part of a guest article he wrote for *Gamasutra* in November of 1997. It is nearly identical to the final version of Underground featured in the game, apart from a few minor changes. For example, the timing of the drums differ during the introductory section, and the volume levels have been adjusted.

13. City of Mystery (Classic)

This second bonus track was also released on *Gamasutra's* website in 1997. It was never included in Cythera in any form, but we can assume it was meant to be either used as the Seldane theme or the Pnyx track. Pnyx is a particularly likely option since Glenn Andreas' described the magisterium as a mysterious city. If that was indeed the intention of this song, Pnyx would have had a much more foreboding atmosphere, relying heavily on synth instruments over the formal and majestic sounds of brass and choir. Because this tune wasn't featured in Cythera, Randy Pringle has used it in various capacities over the years, releasing one or two different forms on his website and some soundtracks in the past.

Cythera: Resynthesized

The second album of Volume I begins to branch into new sounds for Cythera. The original tracks have been resynthesized using newer software and instrument sets than those that were available in the mid- to late-90's. QuickTime's synthesizers were an effective way of providing a small, complete set of MIDI instruments which worked the same on all Macs, but Yamaha and Roland provided better-sounding synthesizers even during the days of QTMA. Software synthesizers have become increasingly available, and new sound fonts continued to appear during the height of MIDI's popularity. Sound fonts, like typographical fonts on a computer, allow the same synthesizer to replay a MIDI track with different instrument sounds. One sound font may be particularly good at brass, another at vocals, etc. Today, MIDI is a largely defunct song format. It is used to facilitate communication between digital music devices like keyboards and recording software like GarageBand but not as much a storage format for a complete song. Nevertheless, a few synthesizers and sound fonts are still around.

Stairway "Land King Hall"

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A snippet of the beginning of the blown bottle part in Land King Hall's theme

The Cythera: Resynthesized album was generated using Timidity, an open-source MIDI synthesizer. Timidity includes the FreePats sound font by default, which has some high-quality instruments but is missing several of the standard MIDI set. Three other premium sound fonts are employed in this album. First is General User, a complete set of instruments developed for general MIDI use. As the name implies, the font is not specialized for any particular purpose, but it has vocals which are unusually good for MIDI. The second is Arachno, a font which attempts to bring a sort of archaic sound to the MIDI; it is especially good for some drums and woodwinds. The final sound font is Timbres of Heaven — a huge sound font with some of the most complex implementations of instruments out there for MIDI. It produces very good overall sound, especially for orchestral types of tracks, but the vocals are surprisingly lacking compared to General User. Each of these four sound fonts are used in different songs to achieve distinct effects, detailed in the notes that follow.

14. Cythera Theme (Flute Resynth)

Arachno creates a new, sharper sound for the Cythera Theme. Minor changes were made to the instrumentation to give it a more soothing effect. The synthetic goblin sound was replaced with choral ooh's, and the main vocals were changed to a flute. From QuickTime's basic instruments, it could be hard to distinguish woodwinds from voices, and using the flute here with underlying vocals makes the best use of available sounds. None of the sound fonts' choral ooh's carried the theme as strongly as a woodwind.

15. Land King Hall (Resynth)

This track is a direct resynth of the original using FreePats. While FreePats is missing a number of standard instruments, it need only an acoustic guitar, blown bottle, and fretless bass for this song. The guitar sounds especially good in FreePats. Its implementation of blown bottle emphasizes the mystical, alien elements of Land King Hall.

16. Underground (Resynth)

General User makes its first appearance in Underground. Minor changes have actually been applied to the beginning of this song. A couple of strong synth instruments (Sweep Pad and Ice Rain) were replaced to give a sound more like the original. QuickTime's instrumentation could make it difficult to pick out the synth effects, but they are more apparent in newer sound fonts. For this reason, the Underground version with heavily synthetic elements has been included but

as an alternative track later in the volume. Here, the Star Theme and Bowed Glass synths create a good mix of new and old aspects for Underground, yielding a familiar but still new rendition.

17. Overworld (Choral Resynth)

Again, the differences between synth and “real” instruments in QuickTime are hard to find. This track sounded like a choir in the game but is actually mainly the Halo Pad synth. The original version as generated by Timidity is included later, but for the Resynthesized album to showcase the best versions of these tracks we’ve seen so far, the choral resynth is the main version.

General User returns, this time to show the power of strong vocals. Choral aah’s voice the main refrain as the music builds. This track makes extensive use of stereo sound, with a clarinet playing in each ear to impart multi-phonic harmonies. Towards the end, the mix of woodwind and vocal effects create a compelling world theme that beautifully illustrates the wonder of exploring the world of Cythera.

18. Odemia (Resynth)

Odemia is just as powerful and thoughtful as before, but there is one important change from the original. Previously, tubular bells provided the underlying percussive element, but while this effect was not distracting in QuickTime, every modern sound font has surprisingly loud bells. The bells were replaced by a reed organ in this rendition by General User.

19. Danger (Resynth)

Timbres of Heaven is used for this resynthesis. No changes have been made to the track, being that Danger is a relatively simple song in terms of the number of channels and its length. It does demonstrate one interesting quality of the Timbres of Heaven sound font — namely, the depth that it adds. Each instrument has a distinct sound and, more importantly, a unique set of acoustic properties that make every part sound as though it is coming from a different place while being all around you. This track relies very little on stereo panning, but Timbres of Heaven still builds a surrounding atmosphere that is very appropriate for Danger.

20. Seldane (Choral Resynth)

The original version of Seldane featured a helicopter, which had to be removed because it is

distracting in newer sound fonts. Also, the original’s main theme was played by a Breath Noise, but it could also be interpreted as sounding like a choir in QuickTime. The choral version, which replaces Breath Noise with Choir Aah’s, has been chosen as the lead version for this release, and General User’s excellent vocals portray a fitting theme for the Seldane.

21. Pnyx (Resynth)

General User is a natural selection for this track because of its heavy reliance on vocals. One minor change was to replace the Voice Ooh’s sound with trombones. The former doesn’t sound particularly realistic, and by adding the latter, Pnyx has a more powerful mix of choir and brass for a truly powerful theme for the home of the mages.



22. Catamarca (Resynth)

While the introductory portion of this track can be a bit overwhelming in QuickTime, the audio is actually more evenly balanced when played in Timidity. General User is used to create the version heard here with no other track changes applied.

23. Cademia (Resynth)

This rendition by Arachno is almost identical to the original QuickTime version. With no instrument changes, the only audible effect is the slightly-improved vocals providing background atmosphere for the track.

24. Kosha (Resynth)

Kosha is resynthesized by General User directly from the original MIDI. We can hear the instruments have a sharper, more up-to-date quality. Additionally, the panpipes sound very clear; in QuickTime, they could sound off-key at times. This version is a gentle resynth that would fit very well playing inside the game.

25. City of Mystery (Resynth)

The other bonus track, Underground Remix, is not worth including since the differences between it and the original are not significant compared to those between the original and resynthesized versions. However, being that City of Mystery has no counterpart anywhere else

in the resynthesized tracks, it has been added to the end of *Cythera: Resynthesized* to provide full coverage of the earlier release with updated material. There are no changes to instrumentation, and this version by General User sounds much like the one we heard from QuickTime.

Alternates & Extras

The final portion of Volume I is devoted to alternate tracks as generated by Timidity. The tracks featured here utilize new instrumentation and sound fonts to demonstrate how *Cythera* could sound based on the existing music.

26. Cythera Theme (Choral Alternate Resynth)

This version of the *Cythera* Theme is synthed with Arachno as before but restores the initial Voice Ooh's in favor of the flute. It has most of the same qualities, but the vocals in Arachno are not quite as strong as the flute, which is why it was selected as the alternate version.

27. Underground (Synth Alternate Resynth)

Underground is played with General User in this track, using the exact same file as the source. We hear that the original has much more synthetic sounds when voiced by newer software than QuickTime. This was the motivation for making this track the alternate.

28. Underground (Effects Alternate Resynth)

This track is also generated from the original version of Underground but uses the Timbres of Heaven. Timbres of Heaven uses much more effects-laden sounds for its synth pads. For instance, Echo Drops have a conspicuous ringing attribute, and the ocean waves are very pronounced. Both of those traits help reinforce the idea of wandering large, underground caverns, so this is a worthy interpretation of the original track.

29. Overworld (Strings Alternate Resynth)

Just as the choral performance replaced the Halo Pad synth with Choir Aah's, this song swaps Halo Pad out with Slow Strings. Played by Timbres of Heaven, the result is an Overworld theme which sounds nearly orchestral in a rudimentary form.

30. Odemia (Alternate Resynth)

Odemia is generated by Arachno in this alternate. The origin is the same as the one used in *Cythera: Resynthesized*, which had removed the tubular bells in favor of a reed organ. Tubular bells are still distracting in Arachno, so the original variant is not included in this release, but this version does allow us to hear Odemia with a more pronounced honky-tonk piano.

31. Pnyx (Alternate Resynth)

We hear the timpani more in this version of Pnyx created by Timbres of Heaven. As in *Cythera: Resynthesized*, the Voice Ooh's were changed, but Choir Aah's were added instead of a trombone. If the other version was a little brassier, this one would have more vocals, but Timbres of Heavens focuses on percussion and brass more than vocals either way. Voice Ooh's don't sound very realistic in any of the sound fonts used in this release, so these variants have been selected in place of the original.

32. Catamarca (Choral Alternate Resynth)

The choral interpretation of Catamarca by General User is the best example we've heard yet of how great an impact the instrumentation has on a final piece. By replacing the opening guitars and saxophones with voices, Catamarca takes on a unique tone. The beginning has the same sense of sadness and tension as the original, but it incorporates a heroic element too.

33. Cademia (Alternate Resynth)

Cademia sounds very similar to all the other variants here. This version synthesized by General User in Timidity illustrates how the synth pads can differ between sound fonts.

34. Kosha (Alternate Resynth)

The alternate version of Kosha is generated with Timbres of Heaven, and while there are no instrument changes, there are several traits distinct to this sound font. First is the strong bass element to the acoustic guitar, encouraging it to reverberate more as other instruments play in the foreground. The panpipes sound less realistic in Timbres of Heaven than General User,

but this gives them a ethereal quality that is appropriate for the odd city of Kosha.

35. Cythera Theme (Original Resynth)

This track is the original version of the Cythera theme as extracted from the game data, played by General User. Notably, the saw wave lead that opens the song is not really heard in-game. The general synth quality of this track when heard with new sound fonts is less than desired, which is why earlier tracks saw certain changes, but this original, updated performance is included for completion.

36. Overworld (Original Resynth)

As in the previous track, Overworld relies on synth effects quite heavily at times, but these are not really heard in QuickTime's version. This is the original MIDI, led by a synth Halo Pad, resynthesized by General User. It may not sound as realistic as the choral or strings variants from before, but it does compare quite well with the original Overworld theme as an updated form of an old song.

37. Seldane (Original Resynth)

Volume I closes with the Seldane theme. As with Pnyx and its voice ooh's or Odemia and its tubular bells, this version of Seldane is actually not quite the original. The helicopter effect still had to be removed, but the Breath Noise lead is retained in favor of any form of strings or vocals. This is the last track for which a resynthesized form of the original version had yet to be released, and the calming, thought-provoking voice given to it by FreePats makes it the perfect ending to Volume I. This track also concludes our journey through the sounds of Cythera's music from the years of MIDI's dominance.

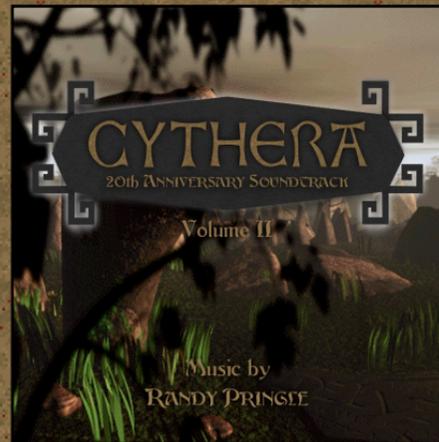
Volume II, A Modern Approach

While Volume I on the first disc revisited the classic sounds of Cythera and then explored the various MIDI synthesizers and sound fonts available today, Volume II goes beyond the limits of the MIDI format. The same MIDI source files were imported in Apple's Logic Pro X to generate the music heard on this disc. Logic Pro X, like other modern music composition applications, provides much more control over the music than just MIDI.

First, there is no longer any need to be constrained by the standard 128 instruments defined in MIDI. Users can download thousands of different software instruments and any of them can be used to synthesize any of the notes specified in the MIDI data. The first sub-album, *Cythera: Remastered*, applies new software instruments to the Cythera tracks, but with the constraint that each resulting song should sound as much like an updated version of the original as possible.

Another important feature is the visual note editor in Logic Pro X. This makes manipulating volumes, balances, velocities (note intensities), and more very easy, and it encourages new arrangements. The second and third albums use such modifications to create new variants and suites of themes that give a taste of the types of music we could imagine for Cythera next.

The cover art for Volume II builds on the artwork from Volume I, but now we see the Seldane ruins in a fuller scene with daylight. The constraints have been broken and Cythera's music is now open for all fans to have and enjoy in new ways. Symbolically, we can hope that the night has passed, and the sun is rising on a new era of Cythera's music.



Cythera: Remastered

The centerpiece of the 20th Anniversary Soundtrack, this remastered collection of tracks was generated in Logic Pro X with the intention of matching the original music closely but with updated quality and better overall sound. There are small changes to instruments, loudness, and balances throughout. The order of presentation is identical to *Cythera: Revisited* and *Cythera: Resynthesized* on Volume I.

1. Cythera Theme

Rather than a synth or vocal lead, the English Horn was selected to lead Cythera's theme in the remastered version. Backed by soft strings and lightly-echoing voices, this rendition of the Cythera Theme evokes the sense of visiting times of ancient past, like our hero does in the game. There is a twinge of sadness thanks to the subdued effect of the English Horn, but the song is never lost in it thanks to the strumming guitar providing some counterbalance.

2. Land King Hall

Back in Land King Hall with the simple gathering of an acoustic guitar, flute, and bass, very little has changed about this song. It has the same sense of strange calmness but with clearer and more realistic instrumentation.

3. Underground

Exploring the underground still sounds spooky and mysterious, but most of the synth pads have been replaced with synth bells. Stereo is more utilized now, with the opening chimes bouncing from ear to ear, provoking a sense of echoing caverns. Rather than sea shore effects, ice mallets in the distance serve to further this illusion of wondrous, large caves. The flute also has a shimmering effect in keeping with the rest of the song.

4. Overworld

A full choral interpretation is selected over a synth voice for the overworld theme. Female and male ensembles build the track into an assortment of drums, woodwinds, strings, and an organ. Rather than both woodwinds being a clarinet as in the original, one has been replaced with an English Horn to emphasize the high (clarinet) and low (english horn) parts of the harmony,

increasing the dynamic range. Dream Voice, a Logic Pro synthesized instrument which sounds like a mix of echoing boys and female choirs, takes a prominent place near the end of the song, giving it a beautiful closing which is perfect for music about exploring the world of Cythera.

5. Odemia

It was difficult to get a sound for Odemia that matched the original. QuickTime's tubular bells are unique. Odemia has a powerful opening, but the lead oboe and underlying strings are not sufficient to provide it. An organ was added for this purpose. The honky tonk piano was also replaced with a generic grand piano. The strings were amped up in order to emphasize the unrelenting attribute of the original track. It may sound a little different than the original Odemia, but it shares the core traits. The sheet music for the beginning of Odemia shows the extent of the polyphony used in this track. The parts shown are oboe, strings, piano, and bells.

The image displays a musical score for the beginning of the track 'Odemia'. It features five staves of music. The top staff is a bass clef line, likely representing the oboe part. The second and third staves are grouped together with a brace on the left and represent a piano part, with the second staff being the right hand and the third being the left hand. The fourth and fifth staves are also grouped with a brace on the left and represent a string part, with the fourth staff being the right hand and the fifth being the left hand. The music is in 4/4 time and begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score shows a complex polyphonic texture with many notes and rests across all parts.

6. Danger

Danger is nearly identical to the classic version. The flute is slightly more prominent in this mix, but the effects are the same.

7. Seldane

As in *Cythera: Resynthesized*, the choral performance of Seldane is preferred to the classic one featuring Breath Noise. Like we've discussed before, QuickTime's specific instruments are open to different interpretations, and a choral version of this track is perfectly reasonable. It is also in keeping with the larger goal of Volume II to create higher-quality and more realistic tracks. A female chamber choir voices the main theme, with drums and male vocals layered underneath.

8. Pnyx

Like Odemia, Pnyx has a strong opening but relies on choirs and brass to deliver it. This rendition has a full horns section, in addition to a separate set of French Horns as in the original. Both female and male chamber choirs support the vocals, but the lead is actually a boys' choir. In conjunction with the booming timpani, this track is quite similar to the classic version with cleaner vocals.

9. Catamarca

Catamarca is an interesting case. In QuickTime, the opening is very loud relative to the rest of the song owing to the instruments it uses like rock guitars and saxophone. The resynthesized version was more balanced across the entire song. So, too, is the Logic Pro X version. Very few changes were made, using mostly the suggested mapping of instruments from MIDI. Once the main, upbeat tune picks up in the middle, Catamarca can become quite an encouraging song. It may be the best theme to express what daily life is like in Cythera.

10. Cademia

The synth saw wave is retained for Cademia since it is an important part of the track's character. Dream Voice and a harp play in the background while the flute and saw wave vie for attention in the foreground, giving Cademia that distinct mix of old sophistication that Glenn Andreas had intended for the city.

11. Kosha

The important instrumentation for Kosha is unchanged. The only difference is that the guitar and panpipes sound better. However, the Star Theme synth pad from the classic version has been removed in favor of bells, which are a more noticeable bolster to the percussion of the drums than what the original version had.

12. City of Mystery

City of Mystery has always been a synth-heavy track, and it is no different here. There was no need to make changes since this song is only included for completion. The other bonus track from the original, Underground Remix, is not sufficiently different from Underground and its other variants on this release to warrant inclusion.

Cythera: Reimagined

This last full album of Cythera's music explores new instrumentations and mixes for the music. The first two changes that bear mentioning are the track ordering and naming. For these songs, the order has been restored to match the the original Cythera soundtrack release. It is not a drastically different organization than the source order used for each of the other albums so far, but there is a sense of completion that comes from closing the soundtrack with the Seldane theme. It is also a nice homage to the original release since that was the first time that Cythera's music became widely available to the fans outside of the game. The titles of each track are also unique. In some cases, the original name given by Randy Pringle has been used; others are new.

The idea behind *Cythera: Reimagined* is to have fun with the classic tunes while still creating a full set of Cythera songs which encourages others to try out mixes of their own.

13. When the Time Is Right (Cythera Theme Choral)

"When the Time is Right" is the title that was given to this track when it was uploaded on the Delver website in February 1999. Unfortunately, it wasn't saved at the time, and the MIDI was unavailable for years, until now. This is a rendition of the Cythera Theme that is very much like the one on *Cythera: Remastered* except the English Horn has been replaced by an ensemble chamber choir. A choir is a natural lead for this track since the classic version sounded as though it could be either woodwind or voice.

14. Space (Overworld Strings)

Named “Space” on Delver’s website, this was another MIDI from 1999 that was lost until this release. This version is similar to the one by Timbres of Heaven on Volume I, but the cellos deliver a more memorable finale. In strings, one can hear the inspiration of other well-known exploration themes, like the opening of *Star Trek* — perhaps also the idea behind the name.

15. Stairway (Land King Hall Piano)

“Stairway” was the only MIDI from Cythera that fans could enjoy for a long time. Also released on Delver’s website in 1999, it was saved and later uploaded to Ambrosia Software’s website. The original track has been included with this soundtrack in addition to the final version pulled directly from the game data.

The variant here is unlike any we’ve previously heard. The strumming guitar has been replaced by a Boesendorfer Grand Piano, which has a distant, atmospheric sound. Because of its range, even when played over headphones or small speakers, it retains the ability to give a tremendous sense of depth. The foreground woodwind has also been replaced with piano, a Steinway Grand. This piano plays a bit higher and louder than the Boesendorfer. Together, they form a pleasant duet, and Land King Hall sounds truly wonderful in piano.

16. On the Edge of the World (Odemia Piano Solo)

This new title is a reference to Odemia’s position on the eastern edge of Cythera as a relatively isolated fortress. It also acknowledges the aspect of loneliness that can be heard when Odemia’s theme is played by a single piano. The piano selected for this track is the Yamaha Grand. The Yamaha is between the Steinway and Boesendorfer in terms of loudness and depth, and, with some minor new arranging, it delivers a striking performance.

17. The Plague (Catamarca Choral)

The opening of Catamarca is converted into a choral refrain for this track. While it still has an element of heroism like we heard in the choral variant on Volume I, this version sounds a bit sad. That reinforces the idea that this song was a mixture of what was originally two tracks — a tense one for the times of the plague and an uplifting one for after the cure. The title acknowledges the times of worry and depression due to the plague in the small town.

18. Ruin of the Tyrants (Cademia Woodwinds)

The saw wave synth has been replaced by an English Horn so that the theme is now carried by a duet between the horn and flute. Cademia is a fading reminder of the grandeur of the days during the height of the Tyrant’s reign. As it now falls into disrepair, the characters that visit there are wandering through the ruins of the Tyrants. The title also references the fact that it was in Cademia that Alaric appeared at the Third Tyrant’s court and brought about the Tyrant’s end, or ruin.

19. Comana’s Fall (Kosha Harp)

Kosha is played by a harp and flute here instead of guitar and panpipes. Paired with the removal of trumpet fanfares and kalimba drums, this rendition tells a more sad tale of Kosha’s success than the Comana brothers would have everyone believe. Backed by their treachery of siding with the Undine, it is very likely that they were directly responsible for the death of their father, the elder of Comana. By their betrayal, they brought about not only the fall of their father, but the failure of their house as well.

20. Exile of the Mages (Pnyx Violins)

There are no trumpets or choirs to be heard here, only violins playing over the soft striking of a celesta. This delivery of the Pnyx theme recalls a terrible time of Cythera’s past when mages were exiled by the tyrants. All those who had magic, or were suspected to, had to flee for fear of being hunted down and killed. Alaric ended the exile of the mages when he enacted the rule of the houses, but for many years, Pnyx was the only safe haven for practitioners of magic.

21. Hidden Majesty (Underground Strings)

This track uses a combination of cellos, violas, and violins to play Underground’s opening. There are not as many changes as in some other songs, with the flute and bells remaining, but it still treats us to a form of Underground that we haven’t heard before. The title draws on the fact that many of Cythera’s secrets and wonders are found deep within underground caverns.

22. The Threat of War (Danger Harpsichord)

An abbreviated version of Danger, “The Threat of War” alludes to the scheming of those who

would bring about the end of Cythera. During the game, there is a constant, looming threat of evil. There is a good chance that by working with the Undine, House Comana could spark a new stage of the Elemental War, one which would include the humans. Such a war would almost certainly bring about the destruction of the humans on Cythera.

The part of the flute is now played by an English Horn, and a harpsichord replaces the piano. About three-quarters of the way through the original song, all other instruments pull back and allow the focus to turn to the harpsichord as it brings this version to an ominous conclusion.

23. Legacy of the Elementals (Seldane Strings)

Violins perform this version of the Seldane theme. The classic Breath Noise sounded more like a choir, but strings are a good match for the Seldane as well. There is little left of the elementals by the time of Alaric's rule, so this song is an evocative reminder of the ruins and buried cities that are their legacy.

24. The Magisterium (City of Mystery Saxophone)

The last track of *Cythera: Reimagined* tries something completely different for City of Mystery. All of the synth effects have been stripped out, and in their place are strings led by a tenor saxophone. It is an enjoyable, jazzy sound to Cythera.

The name is selected based on the theory that Pnyx is the "City of Mystery." Pnyx is described as mysterious in the game, but since this track was never used for Cythera, it is unlikely we'll ever know the original intention. If it was indeed meant for Pnyx, this version gives a more upbeat take on the Magisterium than we've heard before.

Suites & Medleys

The final sub-album in Volume II, and of the 20th Anniversary Soundtrack overall, is a collection of five longer suites and medleys that mix together the tracks we've heard before in new and unfamiliar ways. Each track is designed to focus on a specific type of Cythera's sounds — brass, synth, etc. The instruments, songs, and titles are all selected around the central theme of the track. Hopefully, these songs showcase the possibilities of modern software with Cythera's music and help promote ideas among fans to encourage others to create more new Cythera music!

25. World of Cythera (Synth Suite)

This suite encapsulates many ideas about Cythera: it's beauty, splendor, sounds, power, mystery, and more. Synth is a perfect central figure to build the track around in ways that can explore these different themes. Synth effects were an important part of the original Cythera soundtrack, even though QTMA could make it hard to distinguish what was meant to sound synthetic or real in the game.

It opens with the finale of *Overworld* before rapidly moving into a variant of *Danger*. The Authentic Strings synth padded by Beautiful Melody make a very good version of *Danger* which we haven't yet heard. *World of Cythera* briefly visits *Cademia*, a key part of Cythera's history, before coming to a close.

26. Rule of the Houses (Brass Medley)

Rule of the Houses begins with the upbeat tune of *Catamarca*. This was selected to start the track because *Catamarca* has a sense of daily life in Cythera that many other tracks do not. After playing part of *Catamarca*'s music, we turn to a reprisal of *Kosha*, but rather than guitar and panpipes, it is played by brass and flute. The third piece is a return to *Pnyx*, but the choir takes a back seat to the horns in this version.

This is technically more a medley than a suite because there are no new arrangements or bridges between songs. That is, in each of the other suites, some alterations have been made to the music in order to smoothly transition between the different tracks being featured, but portions of *Catamarca*, *Kosha*, and *Pnyx* are played one after another directly in *Rule of the Houses*.

Brass is used in several of Cythera's songs, *Catamarca* being a good example, so it was given a chance to shine on its own here. *Catamarca* and *Pnyx* were selected for inclusion based on their pre-existing reliance on brass, and *Kosha* was added as an experiment in a new sound for the town. These three tracks also hold meaning when considering the title. *Rule of the Houses* is based on the idea that the houses ensure orderly, everyday life (in *Catamarca* and others) but rely on the power of the mages (*Pnyx*) to avoid the system plunging into chaos (as the Comana brothers resigned *Kosha* to failure through their thirst for power).

27. Land's End (Exploring Suite)

Land's End is a suite of songs targeted around a theme rather than a type of sound. The song moves through portions of Underground, Seldane, and Overworld tracks, with some varying instrumentation in each. For example, Dream Voice appears in Underground in place of strings, and Overworld includes a harpsichord. These songs are all related to the wonder and mystery of exploring Cythera. The title Land's End ties not only to the idea of wandering the depths of Land's End Volcano but also the idea of exploring from end-to-end of the island over the course of the game.

28. Contemplating the Void (Pensive Piano Suite)

This suite references the Void, evoking the image of standing on the edge of the abyss and watching as the streams of purple and blue glide by, the only indication of the passage of time. It is a mixture of a suite focused on a theme and specific instrumentation. There is a pensive mood to the tracks, but this is largely due to the selection of piano and flute as the main instruments. The Steinway Grand Piano is used in favor of the other software pianos which can sound more distant since it gives the track a sense of being close by and personal.

First, it opens with an abbreviated version of the Cythera Theme. Then, it glides into a shortened reprisal of Land King Hall in piano and flute, an interesting hybrid of the guitar/flute and piano/piano duets previously featured. The ending of Land King Hall morphs smoothly into Odemia's piano solo as played on the Steinway, although it needs to move up an octave quickly. Odemia finally turns to Cademia in the key of A, moved from E major, for a short conclusion much like the one heard in World of Cythera.

29. Age of the LandKing (Orchestral Suite)

The finale of the 20th Anniversary Soundtrack is a small attempt at demonstrating how Cythera could sound in orchestra. Inspired partly by the release of some of Blizzard Entertainment's video game music in orchestral form, this track has full brass, basses, cellos, flutes, oboe, timpani, and choir. The relative positions of each section of the orchestra have been maintained, but this song, like some others on this album, has the left/right balances adjusted to pull the listener back from the stage and give a sense of listening in a grand music hall.

Age of the LandKing opens with the Cythera Theme like we've never heard before. It crescendos into glorious brass and strings before quieting into a peaceful oboe. The power of Cythera returns in full force with Odemia brought to life by all the sections of the orchestra. This is a highlight of the track, and indeed the entire soundtrack, which exemplifies how excellent Cythera's music truly is.

From Odemia, the orchestra plays through parts of Cademia and Danger. Then, the cellos and choir take center stage for Pnyx and portions of the Seldane theme. The music builds again as the final moments of Land King Hall play out. Rather than a quiet ending, the full orchestra gives voice to a heroic series of notes before closing against the pounding of timpani.

This orchestral suite is the longest single track on the release, and it walks the listener through all the important parts of Cythera's compelling story — from the introduction of Cythera and the LandKing to the power, wonder, age, and beauty of its world, as well as the dangers and mystery it contains. By returning to Land King Hall at the end, the finale is a fitting closing. It makes reference to the end of the game, leaving us to ponder the Fate of Alaric and what might happen to Cythera next.

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Timidity, FreePats, General User, Arachno, and Timbres of Heaven are all freely available online: wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/timidity

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New arrangements, mastering, original artwork, liner notes, and all other materials for this release by Seth Polsley: cytheraguides.com

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