

The Music of “Arcane”

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One of the most defining aspects of any piece of media is often its music. This is because it can easily set the tone or be used to drive a specific scene. Throughout the entirety of “Arcane,” there are a multitude of examples of music being used as a force in order to move the story. This can range from the fight scene consisting of themes such as a relationship broken by time, the death of a beloved character, and a fight between sisters and even lovers.

The biggest aspect of writing music for an overarching story is the introduction of leitmotifs. Leitmotifs are described as a recurring musical idea throughout a story which can reflect a specific character or idea. Using this idea, it can be easier for the watcher to connect with this character and potentially even give hints about something happening in the future. Throughout the story of Arcane, we have characters such as Viktor or Jinx that have a multitude of recurrences, therefore there are a lot of moments where the composers decided to imbue their themes into the music playing in the background or the artists who wrote music for their scenes. For example, “Paint the Town Blue” by Ashnikko was written in order to emphasize the aspects of Jinx that are bold and dauntless, and of course the fact that she has blue hair as well. At this point in the story she is now seen as this hero to the people from her city and wants to spread her ideas even further.

Music doesn’t have to be just strictly about characters, which can be seen in the final episode of the series, where we encounter a tender moment between two of the characters, Viktor and Jayce, as they begin to realize the truth of their missions and what they were supposed to do. In the background, the song “I Promised You” by Ray Chen, which I won’t even begin to dissect the title of because that would be a whole other discussion, plays as the two characters begin to accept their fates. The music does something rather interesting during this: it plays in a 3/4 time signature, which also happens to be the same time signature waltzes are written in. It could be said that the song was written with these two in mind as waltzes tend to be moments shared by two people who feel extremely bonded, and as these two face impending doom, the only thing they can do is hold on another as the music begins to swell before it finally collapses after they disappear. The scene leaves you stunned, as it all falls to silence, leaving you to wonder what even happened or if it was real.

Overall, learning to really listen to the music in any given media can help accentuate the connection between it and the viewer. Although being able to recognize these sorts of things does require some musical knowledge, at the end of the day anybody has the capacity to appreciate music and they should do so more often in their lives. As it will help them notice the level of detail put into the media they consume.