

Sonata: Game Project

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Version: Draft

Enter a world of conflict as you take on the role of an adventurer in an Empire torn by a civil war with a group of rebels. Find others to join your party, decide to help the rebels or stand by, explore dungeons with loot, and do the quests to help develop your characters and advance the optional storyline in a dynamic world where your choices will affect the outcome and the gameplay.

This project is intended to create a game similar in style to an early Final-Fantasy game, such as Final Fantasy II or III. Therefore, the game will not be too complex. However, it will emphasize the storyline, similarly to the SNES Final Fantasy games; for instance, all characters will have predefined names. The project also takes inspiration from Starcraft and Starcraft II UMS maps, where many heroes and enemies have special abilities, strategy is a must, and leveling/grinding is deemphasized. (A Gamasutra article, Grinding Can Be Fun, noted that Planetside still had levels, but everyone was equally powerful - levels simply gave choices and variety. That may be interesting.)

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Overview

Picture a generic JRPG game: 2D orthographic views, 32x32 pixel-art tiles, bitmapped graphics, and so on. This game is intended to be similar. The setting will be fantasy, of course, with both realistic and imaginative aspects. As for the characters, I am planning to use my classmates, perhaps stereotyping their characteristics in order to make heroes and villains out of them. A storyline will be present, but it is not required and will not always be the main focus; also, there will be many sub-stories and side quests.

Concept

You are in a world of evil; gain allies and fight your way out. Having to make important choices and limited time are motifs that will be used in the gameplay, storyline, and character development. Meanwhile, there will be some simplistic simulation of economy to weight these choices more heavily. Also, the game will try to raise ethical and moral questions (TODO: make this better-defined, as it currently is quite arbitrary)

Background Story

TODO: Make a real story.

Sonata: Game Project - Objective

Main Conflicts:

- Revolution/rebellion/civil war
- Making choices with limited time and unforeseeable consequences
- Elemental Inbalance (as in Final Fantasy I/III/V)?
- Something about a rebellion against a mad king. (Final Fantasy II/VI)
 - Internal power conflicts
 - Battles and losses
 - Corruption and incompetence
 - What else goes into a revolution?
- Empire that has problems unifying?
 - Resentment
 - Ethnic division (interesting characters)
 - War (internally and on borders)
 - Far-flung provinces (this would make for interesting settings)

At the beginning, the player would choose one hero; their starting locations are scattered throughout the land, so one would have to explore to find others to add to the party.

Objective

Defeat the forces of evil, and kill the Mad Emperor Kyle.

Gameplay

Final Fantasy-style gameplay is to be expected, although elements from other games will be incorporated. There will be an emphasis on:

- Character development/progression (The Hero's Journey)
 - Options for character development: character classes such as in Final Fantasy V that can be mixed, as well as skills such as in The Elder Scrolls that can be trained independently
 - Some leveled, some static strengths (such as in Oblivion)
 - A good/evil system as in Oblivion
- Making choices and affecting the outcome of the storyline
 - Different quest paths
 - Nonlinear gameplay/world exploration
 - The story isn't required, but it will be hard to miss (e.g. a rebellion would affect many aspects of the world)
 - Nonstatic world based on quests completed/storyline
 - Destroyed cities
 - Unavailable quests
 - NPCs who will not talk to you
 - Towns whose gates are closed to you
- Action, less grinding

Sonata: Game Project - Objective

- Single-player
- Strategy (especially in character development and progression)
- Turn-based battle, semi-random encounters
- Contiguous maps (chokepoints to load the next map)
- Third-person gameplay
- Keyboard-based interaction (mouse can be used to interact with GUI)
- Game should start relatively easy (depending on character chosen) and progress in difficulty
- Should provide several hours of gameplay (remains to be seen)
- Interactive storyline - provide the story through action and quests, with few cutscenes (since those are hard to make and don't give the player any control, and because many would need to be made for differing combinations of choices throughout the game)

Example gameplay - starting the game and creating a new character

1. No loading movies; just a screen

- This could possibly be a blank white screen; as resources load, outline an image, then fill it in with color slowly - when done, it is the loaded scene?

2. Title screen with options

3. New game - pick a character; short background story and description of abilities/strengths/weaknesses provided.

4. Short movie/cutscene introducing background story of game

5. Tutorial (opt-out) of gameplay

1. Purchasing items at a shop

2. Battle system (turn-based FF style, with cooldown)

- Addendums to system:

- In some areas, such as the invasion of Pandemonium Castle and the assault on the last city, gameplay outside the battle may still continue; other enemies and allies can join your battle, and you can join other people's battles, which are semi-fought on the world map in front of you.

- Some abilities and items will have a cooldown before they can be used again; alternatively, they may give different turn cooldowns than a normal attack.

- Level-dependent as well as static effects and damage

- Introspection of party members as well as enemies (weaknesses...)

3. Using an inn

4. Leveling up

5. Performing quests

6. Introduce some simple, non-weighty choices to help the player get used to making them

Details

Characters

Some will be implemented as main characters: an independent starting place, background story, complex level progression, specialized quests, and so on. Others will be supporting characters: they will be added to the party by various quests. They are listed under the character that is needed to unlock them. Some characters have special/unique skills for certain classes, and gain certain unique bonuses.

- Santiago (Crusader?/high damage)
 - Jenny (Mage-type)
 - Cami (Hunter/archer)
- Elona/David (Mage-type)
 - Pick either one; other is accessible as a quest
- Danielle (Beastmaster/summoner) + Kirsten (something to do with music)
- Alex Shin (Ninja/stealth)
 - Ryan (Health/tank)

List of classes:

Scholar

- Spells learned from books
- Reusable scrolls, etc
- Strong magic/alchemy skills
- Long cooldown

Crusader

- High damage and resiliency
- Long cooldown
- Religious skill buffs
- Combat-oriented skills

Beastmaster

- Weak, depends on minions
- Strong alchemy skills
- Long cooldown

Ninja

- High damage, low resiliency
- Short cooldown
- Stealth-oriented skills
- Focuses on targeted damage
- Need to differentiate with Hunter

Mage-Types

Sonata: Game Project - World/Locations

- Variable damage, low resiliency
- Magic: combat, defense, or stealth-oriented
- Possible classes:
 - Mage
 - Wizard
 - Caster
 - Scholar (could be merged)
 - Warlock
 - Sage
 - Archon

Healer

- Quick cooldown, low resiliency, no/little damage
- Defense-oriented
- May or may not be magical

Huntress

- High damage, quick cooldown, medium resiliency
- Stealth-oriented
- Focused on targeted damage
- Need to differentiate with Ninja

Enemies will not be playable, but will have a main role in the storyline.

- Kyle (Mad emperor: Oddness/final boss)
- Quinn (General: Damage/health/final boss)
- Elona (Mage-type)

World/Locations

The north and west are bounded by mountains, while the east and south are bounded by a large lake. A central island contains the capital city of the Empire, Sil Rosaria, which is surrounded by a smaller lake. Around this lake, the seven major cities of the Empire are situated (perhaps they are extensions of the capital).

Sil Rosaria (The Rose City)

This is the capital city of the Empire and mostly inaccessible (lower-level parties would have trouble reaching it; higher-level parties cannot enter it unless they have done none of the Rebel Quests, which is the Main Quest)

Castle Pandemonium

This is the base of the Rebels (taken from Final Fantasy II, may need to be renamed).

Other locations are tentative.

Controls

This game will be keyboard-based, though some aspects of the UI are accessible by mouse. See an early Final Fantasy game for specifics.

Graphics

- Two-dimensional
 - Orthogonal tilemaps
 - 48x48 or 64x64 tiles? (32x32 would be easier to make, though)
 - Pixel-scrolling (early Final Fantasy games were tile-scrolling, though)