

THE ANIME SOUND:
An Analytical and Semiotic Study of Contemporary Anime Music

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses prominent musical elements found in anime (Japanese animation). The resulting analyses show that several elements contribute to extramusical expression (emotion, storytelling) and meaning (aesthetics, sociocultural values, identity). The research material in this thesis situates anime music in both the topics of global pop music theory and media studies, particularly Japanese aesthetics in entertainment multimedia. Analyses and discussions presented in this thesis benefited from academic discourse in the field of music theory, specifically pop music theory (Peres 2016, Biamonte 2010, Duinker 2019) and semiotics (Greimas 1970, Simeon 1996).

To aid the unfamiliar reader, the first chapter (Introduction) should give sufficient background before tackling the three subsequent theoretical chapters. Prominent musical aspects in anime music, such as the opening sequence format (“OP format”), and the timbrally bright pre-introduction (“call section”) within the OP format, are both products of my research and analysis. Other musical aspects already discussed academically or in public music theory are further analysed here, such as the “Royal Road” progression and the “Japanese augmented sixth.” Readers from wider expertise within music, such as composition and global studies, should find in this thesis an introduction to the world of media music from across the globe.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse traite des éléments musicaux importants trouvés dans l'anime (animation japonaise). Les analyses qui en résultent montrent que plusieurs de ces éléments contribuent à l'expression extramusicaire (émotion, narration) et au sens (esthétique, valeurs socioculturelles, identité). Le matériel de recherche de cette thèse situe la musique d'anime à la fois dans le domaine de la théorie musicale, la théorie de la musique pop mondiale et des études des médias, en particulier l'esthétique japonaise dans le multimédia de divertissement. Les analyses et les discussions présentées dans cette thèse ont bénéficié du discours académique dans le domaine de la théorie musicale, en particulier la théorie de la musique pop et la sémiotique. Pour aider le lecteur non familier, le premier chapitre (Introduction) devrait donner suffisamment d'informations de base avant d'aborder les trois chapitres théoriques suivants.

Les aspects musicaux proéminents de la musique d'anime, tels que le format de la séquence d'ouverture (“format OP”) et la pré-introduction brillante (“section d'appelle”) dans le format OP, sont tous deux des produits de mes recherches et analyses. D'autres aspects musicaux déjà discutés académiquement ou dans la théorie musicale publique sont analysés plus en détail, tels que la progression “Royal Road” et la “sixte japonaise.” Les lecteurs d'une expertise plus large dans le domaine de la musique, tels que la composition et les études ethnographique, devraient trouver dans cette thèse une introduction de la musique médiatique du monde.

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PREFACE

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, Tân Nazaré (né Tânia F. Nazaré Rodrigues), and is submitted in the partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts at McGill University in Montréal, Québec. All analytical perspectives provided henceforth are the products of research and data collection performed by the author under the supervision of McGill's department of music research.

NOTICES

1. This thesis includes links to anime series titles which require parental guidance.
2. Where not otherwise stated, all music transcriptions were made by the author.
3. All efforts were made to view anime series episodes or any other relevant visual materials presented in this thesis from legitimate sources that credit the author. In no way is this thesis encouraging the use of websites that break copyright law (i.e., piracy).
4. In this thesis, Japanese names are presented in reverse order (last name, first name) as per East-Asian tradition, unless part of their name is not of East-Asian heritage (e.g., Joe Hisaishi). Some fictitious anime characters are referred to by their first name instead.
5. Spoiler alert!

GLOSSARY

<i>Anime</i> (アニメ)	Term derived from the English word “animation” (i.e., Japanese cartoons).
Animation style	Refers to the different animation techniques, such as 2D or 3D animation, used in anime production studios.
<i>Anime</i> adaptation	Anime produced from a manga or novel source.
<i>Anime</i> original	Anime produced without a written source (i.e., a studio original).
<i>Anisong</i>	Music genre; contraction of the words “anime” and “song.”
Art style	The drawing style in which characters and the world appear.
<i>Gagaku</i> (雅楽)	Japanese court music from c. 10 th century.
J-pop	Japanese popular music genre from the 1990s and onwards.
MAL	Western anime database website; https://myanimelist.net .
<i>Manga</i> (漫画)	Japanese comics.
<i>Mangaka</i> (漫画家)	Japanese manga (comics) artist.
<i>Nō</i> (能)	Japanese dance-drama from the 14 th century.
OP and ED	Anime opening and ending credit sequences.
OVA	Original video animation (i.e., anime film).
SFX	Sound effect.
VGM	Video game music.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Japanese *animēshon* (アニメーション, “animation”) or simply known as *anime*, is thought to date back to 1907 (Matsumoto and Tsugata 2006). One of the oldest surviving anime is a short 3-second-long clip entitled *Katsudō Shashin* (活動写真, “Motion Picture,” anon., Figure 1.1). Since then, and especially in the 1960s with series such as *Tetsuwan Atomu* (鉄腕アトム, “Astro Boy,” Figure 1.2) by Tezuka Osamu (手塚 治虫, 1928–1989), anime became increasingly popular among Japanese audiences. In the West, anime became especially well-spread during the technological boom of the 1990s and the advent of the public internet. Nowadays, anime has been made globally accessible through popular online entertainment streaming platforms such as Crunchyroll and Netflix. This surge is thanks, in part, to the Japanese government’s culture promotion strategy “Cool Japan,” in effect since 2013.



Figure 1.1 – A single frame of *Katsudō Shashin* (活動写真, “Motion Picture;” anon., 1907), thought to be the oldest anime in history (Matsumoto and Tsugata 2006).



Figure 1.2 – Visual representation of *Tetsuwan Atomu* (鉄腕アトム, “Astro Boy,” 1963) as seen on Tezuka Osamu’s official website: <https://tezukaosamu.net/en/anime/30.html>.

Anime series genre categories are named according to different age and gender demographics: children (子供向け, *kodomomuke anime*), teenage girls (少女, *shōjo anime*) and boys (少年, *shōnen anime*), adult men (青年, *seinen anime*) and adult women (女性, *josei anime*). Series are then further categorised by their plot themes such as action (also generally referred to as *shōnen*), fantasy, romance, comedy, and slice-of-life (slow-paced anime on the topic of daily life), among dozens of other themes. As such, anime's appeal is wide-ranging, and as one might suspect, so is its music.

1.1. The Anime Sound

Anime, just like any other entertainment medium for the small or big screen, features an original soundtrack (OST) and sound effects (SFX) to support or foreshadow plot and character developments and represent many aspects of the series' world. At times, sonic materials stand alone in delivering contextual information (e.g., an intended emotion) or intertextual information, such as musical references to other, more familiar, signifiers (e.g., the Westminster Bells tune as it is heard in Japanese schools to signal the end of a school day). Anime soundtracks feature many different genres of music, but Japanese contemporary popular music—henceforth referred to as J-pop—is the most popular genre showcased.

J-pop is an eclectic genre; while it derived from earlier Japanese styles of popular music like *enka* (演歌, “speech song”) and *kayōkyoku* (歌謡曲, “popular song”), Western pop music also played a major role in the development of the genre, especially since the 1920s (Yano and Hosokawa 2017, 349). J-pop is an umbrella genre that includes the subgenres of *aidoru* (アイドル, “idol pop”), *bōkaroido* (ボーカロイド, in reference to the Vocaloid vocal synthesiser), *vijuaru kei* (V 系, “visual style,” similar to glam rock), among other subgenres (Koizumi 2002, 110). Today, we are presented with a rich musical style complex that appeals to listeners from around the globe.

With some exceptions, the music genre in anime opening and closing credit sequences is in the genre of J-pop, while the rest of the series' original soundtracks might feature other genres ranging from traditional Japanese music (e.g., 雅楽, *gagaku* and 能, *nō*) to Western-style pop, jazz or classical genres.

Music in Japan became steadily westernised soon after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, specifically, since the music education reform and the founding of the Tokyo Academy of Music, fronted by Izawa Shūji (伊澤修二, 1851–1917) and American music educator Luther Whiting Mason (1828–1896) (Herd 2017, 364). The first repertoire to be “westernised” were school songs, collectively known as *Monbushō Shōka* (文部省唱歌, “Songs from the Ministry of Education”), or simply known as *shōka*. The new school repertoire book compendium was first imported from the USA and featured Scottish folk melodies (Yano and Hosokawa 2017, 346). Other aspects incorporated into *shōka* and military repertoires include a merger between the *minyō* and *ritsu* scales, becoming the *yō* scale, $\hat{1}-\hat{2}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}-\flat\hat{7}$, and a subsequent hemitonic modification, known as the *in* scale, $\hat{1}-\flat\hat{2}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}-\flat\hat{7}$ when ascending, and $\flat\hat{6}-\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\flat\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ when descending (Tokita 1996, 5–6).¹

The music school education reform also resulted in the emergence of a new genre, *sōshi-enka* (壮士演歌, “hero ballads”). This was a genre that synthesised *shōka* and military repertoires to appeal to a wider audience. *Sōshi-enka* was less politically inclined and included topics like “unfulfilled ambitions” and “worldly success” (Yano and Hosokawa 2017, 347). During the 1910s, the genre *shosei-bushi* (書生節, “youth song”), yet another iteration of the Western/*shōka*/military synthesis, became popular among young college students, and for the first time, it included Western instruments such as the fiddle (*ibid.*). Vocal ornamentation commonly heard in traditional Japanese genres (e.g., 拳, *kobushi* singing ornamentation) became less prominent, and

¹ The *in* scale may at times be referred to as *insen* scale. This nomenclature is specific to *koto* and *shamisen* music as a tuning scale.

lyrics began including topics of humour and love (*ibid.*). Stylistically speaking, *shosei-bushi* is the closest and most plausible precedent to J-pop as it is now heard on the radio and in anime.

Nowadays, anime soundtracks and credit sequences are not always composed at the same stage of production, resulting in various degrees of musical relevance to the series plot/theme, especially in series that are produced without a written source such as a novel or *manga*. Similar to cartoon production in the West, composers may have a limited amount of information about the series during the musical production of its main themes or character themes. For example, Jeremy Zuckerman and Benjamin Wynn, the composers for the Western animation series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005; created by Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko and produced by Nickelodeon), composed the soundtrack as the series was being broadcast, without being revealed the whole plot.² For anime series which have a written source, it is undoubtfully easier to draw out contextual information to be translated into music, but nevertheless, composers are sure to receive critiques if the music strays away from the thematic essence of the original novel or manga.

Throughout this thesis, I present how music is set to anime soundtracks and credit sequences, and the use of specific SFX to hint at plot themes or character development.

1.2. State of the Field

Though there are virtually no theory-focused publications on the topic of anime music, content creators on the web media platform YouTube who analyse music in anime are increasingly more difficult to ignore. Notable topics discussed in these YouTube channels include the “Japanese augmented sixth chord” (Taipale 2017; the author also calls it the “Blackadder chord”),³ common

² Jeremy Zuckerman and Benjamin Wynn, interview by Mike Brennan, *Soundtrack.net*, April 7, 2008: <https://www.soundtrack.net/content/article/?id=252>. “We saw characters’ names change, characters’ looks change, costume design change... So we had a pretty intimate relationship with the project from the get go. However the story arc was never completely revealed to us. [The creators] gave us a lot of insight into the main characters and what motivated them. But they didn’t reveal everything to us.”

³ The name “Blackadder” is unrelated to the British television series with the same name.

chord progressions such as the “Royal Road” progression (王道進行, *ōdō shinkō*; Mousavi 2021),⁴ among other harmonic analyses of Japanese animation film soundtracks, including harmonic and formal analyses of Joe Hisaishi’s compositions for Studio Ghibli animation studio films (Robles-Rendon 2021).

Western research in globalised multimedia music, in particular anime music, is limited but an emerging field of study due to its recent global popularity. Most existing academic publications are in the field of musicology and very few, if any, can be found in the field of music theory. Two North-American academic journals which focus on both anime and manga, *Mechademia* (The University of Minnesota Press) and *JAMS* (or Journal of Anime and Manga Studies; Illinois Open Publishing Network), feature the research of key historical events surrounding the evolution of anime music, at times discussing the expressive affects of certain soundtracks; however, these discussions most often do not engage analytically with the music. The most analytically or semantically focused articles include Stacey Jocoy’s “Musically Locating the Iconoclastic Anime Samurai” (2021) and Paul Ocone’s “Dis/joint: Unification of Sound, Music, Narrative, and Animation in Liz and the Blue Bird” (2021). On the topic of J-pop, Carolyn S. Stevens’ *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, Authenticity, and Power* (2008) provides a detailed chronology of the history of J-pop as part of an evolving society and its popularity across the globe while describing some of its most prominent musical characteristics.

Other recent publications which deal with specific anime soundtracks are Kunio Hara’s *Joe Hisaishi’s Soundtrack for My Neighbor Totoro* (2020) and Rose Bridges’ *Yōko Kanno’s Cowboy Bebop Soundtrack* (2017). There are a few dissertations dealing with anime music, specifically, Travis J. Shaver’s “Taking the Tradition Out of Traditional: the Shakuhachi in the *Naruto* Anime” (2021) discusses the use of the *shakuhachi* in the soundtrack to *Naruto*, and Michelle Jurkiewicz’s “The

⁴ The name “Royal Road” is related to the Japanese expression “the easy way” (王道です, *ōdō desu*) and is likely in reference to the progression’s easy-flowing (i.e., voice-leading) chords.

Otaku Lifestyle: Examining Soundtracks in the Anime Canon” (2019) deals with the soundtracks to *Death Note* (デスノート, 2006), *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (新世紀エヴァンゲリオン, 1995), and *Cowboy Bebop* (カウボーイビバップ, 1998). Just as before, these publications remain as musical discussions within the field of musicology, and thus do not engage analytically with the soundtracks.

Since the latest “Revised and Expanded Edition” of the book *The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917* (Clements and McCarthy 2001), there has not been another publication in the West discussing anime plots and cataloguing other details of the most recent anime shows. Undoubtedly, the reason lies not only in the increasing number of shows airing globally—making an encyclopedia incomplete within a season—but also due to the ease of access the internet currently offers. Websites such as MyAnimeList (<https://myanimelist.com>; hereafter referred to as “MAL”) give the same, if not more detailed information than any print publication could ever hope to attain. MAL’s integrated social component invites anime fans to write reviews of anime series, give them a score, and add series as their favourite (all valuable ranking metrics), in addition to many other features that have been added in recent years, such as an embedded streaming player in partnership with Crunchyroll. Series information, such as production staff, plot summaries, and release dates, can be added by any user and is published after it is reviewed by MAL’s anime expert team of moderators.

Research for this thesis relied, in part, on the MAL database to gather information such as the names of production staff, plot summaries, release dates, target audiences, and the spelling of the series titles in the original Japanese language (including *rōmaji*), among other basic information. Finally, it is worth noting that certain anime series included in this thesis were chosen by their overall popularity among MAL users, by the overall popularity of their soundtrack composer(s), and by the researcher’s own familiarity with the series.

1.3. Chapter Outline

Over the course of three chapters, this thesis addresses the need for a theoretical and analytical approach to anime music, further contributing to cross-cultural or global music analysis in the field of popular music theory and multimedia analysis. The following subsections present an outline of each chapter.

Chapter Two: Common Compositional Elements in Anime Music

This chapter introduces some of the most prominent compositional elements in anime music and contextualises these elements within the field of contemporary popular music theory research in the West. The chapter begins with the analysis of a common formal structure present in credit sequences, here referred to as the “OP format.” The analysis unveils that the OP format shares certain characteristics with contemporary Western pop music and as described in Asaf Peres’ “The Sonic Dimension as Dramatic Driver in 21st-Century Pop Music” (2016). The second part of the chapter introduces the “Royal Road” progression, a progression commonly used in J-pop. The Royal Road is contextualised with other popular progressions used in Western pop music of the 20th and 21st centuries (Moore 1992; Biamonte 2010; Temperley 2011; Duinker 2019). The third part of the chapter discusses the “Japanese augmented sixth” chord as it is used by composer Tanaka Hidekazu: the chord is analysed both in regard to its function in harmonic and semantic contexts. The final part of this chapter discusses the balance between Eastern and Western instrumentation in anime music, unveiling that the use of each type of instrumentation is functional, and thus more than merely a “novelty layer” (Lavengood 2020).

Chapter Three: Semiotic Analysis of Aesthetic Concepts and Prominent Extramusical Signs in Anime Music

This chapter takes a semiotic turn in the analysis of other prominent musical elements present in anime soundtracks, with a focus on aesthetic, sociocultural and identity concepts. These concepts are collectively referred to as “extramusical signs.” This discussion includes some background information for the unfamiliar reader and, where necessary, provides examples from traditional Japanese customs and philosophy, further contextualising certain concepts that are centuries old. Since anime music fits in the category of multimedia music, its analysis will benefit from methods currently used in other genres of visual entertainment music, such as semiotic analysis. As such, the second part of this chapter is a short case study marking a semiotic juxtaposition between some of the extramusical signs introduced hitherto, and how these appear in the soundtrack to *Sono Kisekae Ningyō wa Koi o Suru* (その着せ替え人形は恋をする, “My Dress-Up Darling,” 2022). This case study is supported by Algirdas J. Greimas’ “semiotic square” (1970), later adapted to film music by Ennio Simeon (1996).

Chapter Four: Musical Representation in the Series *Naruto* and *Naruto: Shippūden*

This final chapter presents the soundtrack to the *Naruto* franchise (ナルト, 2002) as a case study to further consolidate what has been introduced in this thesis thus far and to better understand how composers musically convey certain expressive aspects of an anime series’ narrative. In particular, this chapter will discuss how composers musically represent a series as a whole (both through credit sequences and main soundtrack themes), a musically implied target audience, and the series’ characters and their distinct emotions as these are depicted in the visuals or in the series plot.

* * *

A progression between each analytical chapter presented in this study can be identified as follows: Chapter Two describes what one can hear and what its intended meaning is (e.g., the “burning” sensation of Jp⁺⁶); Chapter Three describes what one can see or contextually interpret from the interaction of visual and sonic signs which, in turn, convey a musical representation and meaning (e.g., bright timbre is *kawai*); and finally, Chapter Four puts the theory in practice by presenting a case study.

CHAPTER TWO: COMMON COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS IN ANIME MUSIC

“How to Sound Like Joe Hisaishi,” “5 Ways to Make Your Music Sound Anime,” and “How to Make an Anime Intro Song in 5 Minutes” are a few of the video titles one can find uploaded on YouTube from creators who identify and explore certain common compositional elements in anime music. This chapter will discuss some of these compositional elements, specifically: (1) the formal structure of opening and ending credit sequences, (2) the “Royal Road” progression, (3) the “Japanese augmented sixth” chord, and (4) the balance of Eastern and Western instrumentation in anime music. This chapter is the most theoretically dense, illustrated by music transcriptions and lead sheets from anime music soundtracks and credit sequences. Given the lack of formal academic discourse on this topic, it is worth mentioning that this chapter relied at times on the vast Japanese popular culture community on the internet, specifically their YouTube tutorials, blog posts, Reddit comments and Discord discussions. Relevant sources will be cited in the text below.

2.1. The Opening and Ending Credit Sequence Format

Opening and ending credit sequences, abbreviated here to “OP” and “ED,”¹ are short musical sections presented at the beginning and end of every episode in an anime series. This section will discuss prominent formal characteristics in two OPs and one ED. Most notably, this comparison will highlight certain sectional functions that parallel or go beyond those described in recent research on contemporary popular music, specifically, Asaf Peres’ (2016) “sonic functions.”

¹These abbreviations are common among anime fans. The term “OP” is not to be confused with the gaming term “op,” meaning “overpowered,” or the acronym “OP,” meaning “original poster” on websites such as Reddit.

In the anime fan community, OPs and EDs are also collectively known as *anisong*, a contraction of the words “anime” and “song,” and are nowadays most often, if not always, composed by Japanese bands who are formed solely to write for anime OPs and EDs.² Several anime production studios are now affiliated with record companies who subsequently list and record these Japanese bands: for example, Aniplex Studios is owned by Sony Music Entertainment Japan, and Bandai Visual Studios merged with the record label Lantis. Production studios also benefit from music agent organisations, a service made popular since the 2000s, such as the Japan Anime Music Lab (“JAM Lab,” <https://www.timmjp.com/en/jam/>) currently listing nearly 200 anime J-pop bands and solo artists, or MONACA Creative Music Studio (www.monaca.jp) which catalogues many available orchestral arrangers for anime and videogame soundtracks. In my research, I have found that bands signed to record labels or agents usually release anisong tracks as singles which are then collated with the rest of the soundtrack album. However, independent bands who are invited to write an OP or ED will most often release an anisong track among other unrelated tracks in their albums.

The OPs and EDs heard in anime episodes are usually adapted from a full-length track, that is, the tracks are initially around the same length as an average pop track, averaging at around 2 to 4 minutes long. At times, these tracks are composed while the series is still in its pre-production stages. The visuals that accompany the OP or ED are usually produced in the later stages of production and most often show selected scenes from the series or can comprise completely new material, usually featuring the series’ main characters.

The Opening Credit Sequence

Out of the two credit sequences, the OP carries the most contextual weight, both visually and musically. It usually does not exceed 90 seconds in length, and it serves to (1) introduce the title of

² These bands are at times similar to “supergroups;” for example, bands that unite a few well-known artists.

the series, usually within the first few seconds of the OP; (2) to introduce the main characters and other key visual aspects which hint at the series' plot; and (3) to credit the producing staff. In my research with the aid of the MAL anime database, the 90-second limit imposed on the OP is a practice observed since the early 1970s—this is suspected to be linked to Japan's television broadcast practices since then, where a short 30-second commercial was inserted between the OP and the anime episode proper.³ The musical genre of the OP is usually consonant with the accompanying animation or art (drawing) style and normally hints at the series' target audience and its plot genre.⁴ At times, plot hints can be very literal: for example, the bebop-style OP “Tank!” by the band Seatbelts for the anime series original⁵ *Cowboy Bebop* (カウボーイビバップ, 1998), or a count to 99 in the OP also entitled “99” by the anisong band Mob Choir, in the anime adaptation of *Mob Psycho 100* (モブサイコ100, 2016).⁶

In my research, I found that most OPs of the 1990s feature a timbrally bright, loud and memorable introduction beginning, what I will be referring to in this thesis as the “call” section: that is, a short and distinct section often heard only once, positioned at the very start of the OP and right before a (calmer) introduction section, functioning as a call for the viewer’s attention that their favourite anime is about to start. Some of the most iconic OPs in anime history which feature a call section are *Bishōjo Senshi Sailor Moon* (美少女戦士セーラームーン, “Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon,” 1992) with eerie, sci-fi alien-like synth swipes and church bells; *Rurouni Kenshin: Meiji Kenkaku Romantan* (るろうに剣心 -明治剣客浪漫譚-, “Wandering Kenshin: Romantic Tales

³ <http://www.myanimelist.net>. For example, the 1972 opening “Mūmin no Theme” (“Mūmin’s Theme”) by Fujisato Toshiko for the anime series *Shin Mūmin* (“New Mūmin”) is the earliest example found just 2 seconds shy of the 90-second OP format. Since then, the majority of OPs are exactly 90 seconds long. Anime series prior to the 1970s feature OPs of various lengths, mostly unconcerned with broadcasting practices.

⁴ A discussion on the relation between musical genre, target audience and anime plot genre will take place later in Chapter Four, §4.2.3 “Musical Representation of the Series’ Target Audience.”

⁵ An “anime adaptation” is an adaptation of an already published manga; on the other hand, an “anime original” does not have a manga counterpart and is usually written and produced by the same production studio.

⁶ The musical reference in this OP concerns the main character Kageyama Shigeo, an adolescent psychic who unpredictably becomes overpowered and has his psychic powers reach or surpass 100%.

from the Meiji Era,” known in the West as “Samurai X,” 1996) and its thrash-like distorted guitar; and the previously mentioned series *Cowboy Bebop* (1998) with a brief *fortissimo* brass call.

This 90s-style “call” section is comparable to Robin Attas’ (2015) “buildup introduction,” although all the examples presented by Attas lack timbral brightness and loudness; this effectively positions the “call” section closer to the classical *premier coup d’archet*, a “strong, unanimous attack at the beginning of a piece” (Latham 2011). However, since the early 2000s, the call section is no longer a distinct section as it was in the 90s, and it is now fused with the introduction section, while still retaining its bright/loud/busy characteristics: this new call/intro hybrid section is now often a shortened version of an equally loud, texturally busy and timbrally bright section presented later in the OP, such as a chorus or a post-chorus section.

The adaptation from the original full-length track to 90 seconds usually results in an abridged verse-chorus song form, referred to in this thesis as the “OP format.” It most often includes the following sections: the call (either as a distinct section or a call/intro hybrid as described above), one verse (usually the first verse of the original full-length track), a pre-chorus, a chorus, and an outro section (often a shortened version of a post-chorus or coda). The first⁷ OP of the 2006 anime adaptation *Gin Tama* (銀魂, “Silver Soul”) entitled “Pray” by J-pop artist Tommy Heavenly⁶, illustrates the conventional OP format adaptation (Figure 2.1.1, middle column; other examples of conventional OP format adaptations are shown in Appendix 1). This particular OP does not include a distinct 90s-style call but uses instead a snippet of the post-chorus section.

⁷ Unlike Western cartoon opening sequences, in anime series, especially the long-running ones, OPs and EDs usually change every new season (every 13–24 episodes).

<i>Original track</i>		<i>OP format</i>		<i>Sonic Function</i>
00:24*	Intro (post-chorus)	→ 00:00 “Call”	→	“Call”
00:46	Verse 1	→ 00:11 Verse	→	Setup
01:08	Pre-chorus 1	→ 00:33 Pre-chorus	→	Buildup
01:29	Chorus 1	→ 00:54 Chorus	→	Climax
01:54	Post-chorus 1			
02:04	Verse 2			
02:26	Pre-chorus 2			
02:48	Chorus 2			
03:12	Bridge			
03:33	Solo			
03:55	Chorus 3 (drop)			
04:30	Post-chorus 2	→ 01:19 Outro	→	Climax (cont.)

Figure 2.1.1 – Sectional breakdown of Tommy Heavenly6’s “Pray” for the anime adaptation *Gin Tama* (2006; left column), the OP format adaptation (middle column), and corresponding sonic functions (right column). The original track is available at: <https://youtu.be/HY1rLlmrill> (*timestamps include the 24-second cinematic intro).

The OP adaptation is available at: https://youtu.be/OQYcEEkG_VO.

***Gin Tama* (銀魂, “Silver Soul”) (2006)**⁸

“As the founder of Yorozuya, a small business for odd jobs, [Sakata] Gintoki often embarks on endeavors [sic] to help other people—though usually in rather strange and unforeseen ways. Assisted by Shinpachi Shimura, [...] Kagura, [...] and Sadaharu, [...] the Yorozuya encounter anything from alien royalty to scuffles with local gangs in the ever-changing world of Edo.”

— MAL, <https://myanimelist.net/anime/918/Gintama>.

Due to globalisation, both genres of J-pop and anisong share formal characteristics with contemporary pop music in the West and thus stay consistent with Asaf Peres’ (2016) “sonic functions.” Peres’ research shows that Western contemporary pop relies on musical parameters such as textural density (e.g., the sudden disappearance of the drums may indicate a buildup section), expansion in register amplitude (e.g., filter sweeps), and changes in rhythmic intensity

⁸ When the soundtrack of a specific anime series is discussed, these text boxes are added to provide a brief plot summary to further contextualise the musical aspects discussed with the plot theme of the anime in question.

and timbre, to mark sectional functions, rather than the harmonic markers common in earlier styles of Western pop music. These sonic functions are presented in the cycle “setup,” “buildup” and “peak” (later renamed to “climax”), often corresponding to a verse, pre-chorus, and chorus cycle.

However, two main differences arise when a full-length anisong track is adapted into the 90-second OP format: (1) usually only one setup–buildup–climax cycle is possible within this time limit and, most importantly, (2) the “call” section, which Peres identifies as a setup to the verse (139), becomes a section which is timbrally and texturally identical to a “climax” section but with a slightly different sonic function: whereas an energetic “climax” section in Western pop usually prompts the audience to join in singing or dancing (e.g., a dance chorus; Barna 2020), the “call” section may feature the same musical content as a “climax” section but it instead primes the audience by foreshadowing an upcoming “true climax.” This climax-foreshadowing aspect of the “call” section is in line with Peres’ description of all three formal sections as “anticipatory to some degree” (56). In “Pray,” we are presented with the following sonic functional layer cycle: the “call,” which is a shortened adaptation of the climactic chorus or post-chorus, the “setup” which is the first verse, the “buildup” which is the pre-chorus, and the “climax” which is the chorus, and post-chorus (Figure 2.1.1; rightmost column).

Of course, there are examples of OPs which do not fit the conventional OP format cycle. A popular OP which surprises any anisong aficionado is “Jungle P” by 5050, adapted as the ninth OP of the anime adaptation *One Piece* (1999). This OP totals 2 1/2 minutes long (150 seconds), and features nearly all the sections of the original full-length track version with the exception only of the saxophone solo and the outro section, thus extending the OP format cycle and shuffling certain sonic functional sections (Figure 2.1.2, middle and rightmost column respectively). This is not the only time this particular anime series featured a lengthy OP: in fact, *One Piece* fans expect

exactly this. To accommodate the fixed broadcast length, these episodes do not have an ED (ending credit sequence).

<i>Original track</i>		<i>OP Format</i>		<i>Sonic Function</i>
00:00 Intro	→	00:00 “Call”	→	“Call”
00:04 Chorus	→	00:02 Chorus 1	→	Climax
00:17 Post-chorus	→	00:15 Outro 1	→	Climax (cont.)
00:30 Verse 1	→	00:22 Verse 1	→	Setup
00:43 Pre-chorus	→	00:35 Pre-chorus 1	→	Buildup
00:57 Chorus	→	00:48 Chorus 2	→	Climax
01:10 Post-chorus	→	01:01 Outro 3	→	Climax (cont.)
01:23 Verse 2	→	01:08 Verse 2	→	Setup
01:36 Pre-chorus	→	01:21 Pre-chorus 2	→	Buildup
01:50 Chorus	→	01:34 Chorus 3	→	Climax
02:03 Saxophone solo				
02:16 Rap solo	→	01:48 Verse 3	→	Climax (cont.)
02:30 Chorus (drop)	→	02:01 Pre-chorus 3	→	Buildup
02:44 Chorus	→	02:14 Chorus 4	→	Climax
02:57 Outro				

Figure 2.1.2 – Sectional breakdown of “Jungle P” by 5050, the ninth OP of the anime adaptation *One Piece* (1999). Sections highlighted in grey on the leftmost column are the ones present in the OP. The original track is available at: <https://youtu.be/CFWku15Nlps>. The OP adaptation is available at: <https://youtu.be/o7sZWSVH37g>.

One Piece (1999)

“Monkey D. Luffy, a 17-year-old boy who defies your standard definition of a pirate. Rather than the popular persona of a wicked, hardened, toothless pirate ransacking villages for fun, Luffy’s reason for being a pirate is one of pure wonder: the thought of an exciting adventure that leads him to intriguing people and ultimately, the promised treasure.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/21/One_Piece.

The Ending Credit Sequence

The ED is shorter in length, usually lasting for 60 seconds. It mainly serves to credit the series' staff and is, at times, interspersed with a preview of selected scenes from the next episode. The ED carries the least amount of contextual weight: that is, EDs may not hint at the series plot and intended target audience. Finally, EDs may contain a call-like section, however, it is more common for EDs to blend with the soundtrack of the episode, so that not much attention is drawn to the fact that the episode has ended. With regard to its form, the ED is roughly comparable to the OP format, and as such, I opt to present a more peculiar example.

The anime adaptation of *Ergo Proxy* (エルゴプラクシー, 2006) shows an ED that is extended to 90 seconds and adapts Radiohead's "Paranoid Android" (*OK Computer*, 1997). Note that it is rare to see an OP or ED adaptation of a track that was not written especially for an anime series, and even rarer is the occasion where a non-Japanese band is featured in a credit sequence.

<i>Original track</i>			<i>ED adaptation</i>	
00:02	Intro to part I		→	00:00 Intro (no "Call")
00:20	Verse 1	verse	→	00:18 Verse
00:49		end refrain	→	00:47 Chorus
01:10	Verse 2	recap. verse		
01:39		end refrain		
01:59	Intro to part II		→	01:08 Outro
...				
(etc.)				

Figure 2.1.3 – Sectional breakdown of Radiohead's "Paranoid Android" (*OK Computer*, 1997) according to Brad Osborn (2017, 36). Sections highlighted in grey are the only ones present in the ED of the anime *Ergo Proxy* (2006). The original track is available at: <https://youtu.be/fHiGbolFFGw>. Adapted ED track available here:

<https://youtu.be/AYyCkM5Bxkg>.

Ergo Proxy (2006)

“Thousands of years ago, a global ecological catastrophe doomed [Earth]; now, life outside these domes is virtually impossible. To expedite mankind’s recovery, ‘AutoReivs,’ humanoid-like robots, have been created to assist people in their day-to-day lives. However, AutoReivs have begun contracting an enigmatic disease called the ‘Cogito Virus,’ which grants them self-awareness.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/790/Ergo_Proxy.

Brad Osborn (2017, 36–7) calls the track by Radiohead a “three-part suite.” Figure 2.1.3 reflects his analysis of the beginning of “Paranoid Android” (left column) and the resulting ED adaptation (right column). The ED adaptation stays consistent with all other credit sequences discussed so far, which includes an introductory section (a call or a call/intro hybrid; however in this ED there is no significant timbral or textural contrast in this section), a verse, a chorus and an outro section. Since the track “Paranoid Android” is longer than the average track (and consequently, each section is also made longer), the ED adaptation only manages to include the original sections “intro to part I,” and both parts of “verse 1” (as shown in Figure 2.1.3), effectively reinterpreting these sections in the ED as intro, verse and chorus respectively, with a few seconds of the “intro to part II” adapted as the outro section. The distinction between the verse proper and the end refrain is tenuer but possible; Osborn also calls this section a “verse/chorus pair” (*ibid.*, 35). The musical characteristics which support this interpretation are the subtle harmonic and timbral changes, the simple but repetitive motive found both in the vocals and the guitar (D–E), and the robotic voice repeating the phrase “I may be paranoid, but not android,” in reference to the song’s title (*ibid.*).

* * *

Opening and ending credit sequences are iconic and are made especially memorable in order to effectively grab the audience’s attention. The OP follows similar functional conventions

to those of Western contemporary pop music (corresponding to Peres' "sonic functions" in 21st-century pop music), but with an added climatic start: a functional section here labelled as the "call" section. This section fulfils the practical need to grab the attention of a distracted viewer and, much like the tritone call in *The Simpsons*, may become the most iconic musical feature of an entire series.

2.2. The Royal Road Progression

The *Ōdō Shinkō* (王道進行, *Ōdō*, "Royal Road" and *shinkō*, "progression") became particularly popular in 1970s Japan, but its origins date back to the 1920s when Japan was motivated to import genres such as European folk and American jazz and military music (Yano and Hosokawa 2017, 349). Its name, specifically the word *ōdō* (王道), is related to the Japanese expression "the easy way" (王道です, *ōdō desu*) and is likely in reference to the progression's easy-flowing chords (i.e., parsimonious voice-leading), an aspect to be discussed below. In its most simple form, the Royal Road progression loops through three chords, IV–V–vi, and may include a cadential suffix such as a ii–V–I gesture to provide the otherwise absent tonic. The more complex form, and certainly one of the most common forms of the progression, often includes chord iii before the minor tonic, or IV–V–iii–vi. In the educational television series *Kameda Ongaku Senmon Gakkō* (亀田音楽専門学校, "Kameda Music College") by the television broadcaster *Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai* (日本放送協会, "NHK," Japan Broadcasting Corporation), specifically, the episode which discusses the *Ko Akuma Kōdo Shinkō* (小悪魔コード進行, "Little Evil Chord Progression;" another name for the Royal Road progression), the presenters describe it as the most popular progression responsible for the "J-pop sound," and show examples from as early as 1975, among others in the early 2000s.⁹ As will be discussed in this section, the progression remains prominent in J-pop and anime music to this

⁹ Seiji Kameda, Fumie Ono, and Sukima Switch, "亀田音楽専門学校" ("Kameda Ongaku Senmon Gakkō"), Educational television series episode (NHK, November 6, 2014). Available here: <https://youtu.be/1GTwKGKByxk>, timestamp 5:54.

day.

The Royal Road progression is similar to a number of popular progressions used in Western pop music. For example, in Western rock music of the 1960s, it can be described as the “Aeolian progression” (Moore 1992; Biamonte 2010) while favouring a minor tonic interpretation of the progression (e.g., \flat VI– \flat VII–i, as opposed to IV–V–vi). In post-millennial Western pop music, the progression is known as a “plateau loop” (Duinker 2019) favouring an “Ionian” interpretation of the progression (e.g., IV–V–vi, and not \flat VI– \flat VII–i). This “Ionian” interpretation also highlights the progression’s “hybrid tonic” as theorised by Ben Duinker (2019), who proposes that “IV or (less often) VI or vi chords can function rhetorically as tonic” (1.1). On the other hand, the progression’s tendency to position the subdominant as a point of return was previously theorised by Brett Clement (2013) as belonging to the Lydian universe; for example, in the Lydian progression loop I-II-iii, where chord I is emphasised as a point of return, it becomes identical to the shorter form of the Royal Road progression, IV-V-iv (106-107). These three modal interpretations which concern the progression’s harmonic centres, the “Aeolian,” “Ionian” and “Lydian,” are useful in the analysis of harmonic function in the Royal Road progression as heard in anime music.

There are a few variants to the Royal Road progression. Figure 2.2.1 highlights the most common variants I found in my research. The “common intervallic bass patterns (scale steps)” (leftmost column) indicate the most common bass movements of each variant: for example, chord V in all variants is usually approached by an ascending step from chord IV (+1 scale degree step). Each variant is then presented in each harmonic interpretation, “Aeolian,” “Ionian” and “Lydian” (middle three columns). Finally, all variants were given a descriptive name which best reflects the most salient harmonic function between its chords (e.g., most prominent voice-leading or most prominent tonal centre; rightmost column).

Common intervallic bass pattern (scale steps)	Ionian interpretation (Duinker 2019)	Aeolian interpretation (Moore 1992; Biamonte 2010)	Lydian interpretation (Clement 2013)	Closest descriptive nomenclature
+1, +1, 0	IV – V – vi (–vi)	♭ VI – ♭ VII – i – i		“Ionian Royal Road, submediant ending”
+1, -3, +4	IV – V – iii – vi	♭ VI – ♭ VII – v – i		“Aeolian Royal Road, with minor dominant”
+1, +1, -4	IV – V – vi – iii		I – II – iii – vii	“Lydian Royal Road, leading-tone ending”
+1, +1, +3	IV – V – vi – I ⁽⁶⁾		I – II – iii – V ⁽⁶⁾	“Lydian Royal Road, dominant ending”

Figure 2.2.1 – The Royal Road progression variants in the form of intervallic bass patterns, different modal interpretations, and the resulting appropriate descriptive name.

The first variant—the one most similar to both the “Aeolian progression” (Moore 1992; Biamonte 2010) or the Ionian “plateau loop” type “open passing loop” (Duinker 2019)—is described here as the “Ionian Royal Road, submediant ending” variant (IV–V–vi–vi). Here, the “submediant ending” describes the longer rest on submediant harmony, though this may not make $\hat{6}$ the strongest tonic centre, merely hinting at vi or $\hat{6}$ as an “alternative” tonic. The next variant, “Aeolian Royal Road, with minor dominant” (\flat VI– \flat VII–v–i) is best interpreted in the Aeolian mode since the most salient voice-leading feature is between the last two chords (v–i). This variant is also analysed in the previously mentioned NHK series *Kameda Ongaku Senmon Gakkō*. It is worth noting that this progression is usually accompanied by a $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ melody, further solidifying the dominant-to-tonic quality in the progression v–i. The next variant, the “Lydian Royal Road, leading-tone ending” variant (I–II–iii–vii) is essentially a switch between the two last chords of the “Aeolian Royal Road, with minor dominant” variant. This variant presents salient harmonic voice-leading conventions that are best interpreted as characteristic of the “Lydian” universe: in this case, chord vii serves as leading-tone harmony (albeit minor instead of

diminished) towards chord I. The last variant, the “Lydian Royal Road, dominant ending” ($I-II-iii-V^{(6)}$), can be misleading: the progression does end on the major tonic chord if interpreted in the Ionian mode; however, as is true in most cases in anime music, this chord is presented in first inversion (I^6) and is thus not a strong arrival on a tonic harmony. This ending chord is then best interpreted in its Lydian version as the dominant chord of the first tonic chord in the progression (V^6 looping back to I).

It is worth noting that the two Lydian-interpreted variants described here are identical to two versions of the “plateau loop” type “ascending passing loop” as analysed by Duinker (2019, 4.2); however, they still remain best interpreted particularly within the context of J-pop and anime music as Lydian-type variants due to the use of inversions in the case of the “Lydian Royal Road, dominant ending,” or dominant-to-tonic voice-leading in the case of the “Lydian Royal Road, leading-tone ending.”

To showcase how these Royal Road variants work within the context of anime music, we first turn to the OP of the anime adaptation *Shigatsu wa Kimi no Uso* (四月は君の嘘, “Your Lie in April,” 2014) entitled “Hikaru Nara” (光るなら, “If It Shines”) by J-pop band Goose House. The opening track presents two different variants of the Royal Road progression: the “Aeolian Royal Road, with minor dominant” and the “Ionian Royal Road, submediant ending” (Figure 2.2.2).

Shigatsu wa Kimi no Uso (“Your Lie in April”) (2014)

“Arima Kōsei is a child prodigy known as the “Human Metronome” for playing the piano with precision and perfection. [...] When his mother suddenly passes away, the subsequent trauma makes him unable to hear the sound of a piano, and he never takes the stage thereafter.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/23273/Shigatsu_wa_Kimi_no_Uso.

00:04 (Call)

D E C♯m F♯m → Aeolian Royal Road, with minor dominant (♫ VI– ♫ VII–v–i)

00:09 (Intro)

D E C♯m F♯m “ “
Bm E D

00:21 (Verse)

A E F♯m
Ameagari no niji mo rin to saita hana mo,
C♯m D
Irozuki afuredasu.
Bm C♯ F♯m B
Akaneiro no sora aogu kimi ni,
Bm C♯
Ano hi koi ni ochita.

00:45 (Pre-chorus)

D C♯m Bm A
Shunkan no doramachikku firumu no naka no hitokoma mo;
Bm C♯m D C♯7
Kienai yo kokoro ni, kizamu kara.

01:00 (Chorus)

D E F♯m (F♯m) → Ionian Royal Road, submediant ending (IV–V–vi–vi)
Kimi da yo, kimi nanda yo,
D E F♯m (F♯m) “ “
Oshiete kureta.
D E F♯m (F♯m) “ “
Kurayami mo hikaru nara,
D E F♯m (F♯m) “ “
Hoshizora ni naru.
D E F♯m (F♯m) “ “
Kanashimi wo egao ni,
D E F♯m (F♯m) “ “
Mou kakusanaide.
D E C♯m F♯m → Aeolian Royal Road, with minor dominant (♫ VI– ♫ VII–v–i)
Kirameku donna hoshi mo,
D E F♯m (F♯m) → Ionian Royal Road, submediant ending (IV–V–vi–vi)
Kimi wo terasu kara.

(etc.)

Figure 2.2.2 – Lyrics and chords to “Hikaru Nara” (“If It Shines”) by Goose House.

The original track is available at: https://youtu.be/IeJTNN8_jLI.

Since the chords between each variant are closely related, it is possible to switch between each variant quite smoothly, a change that is hardly noticeable to the untrained ear: for example, in the chorus section, after six repetitions of the “Ionian Royal Road, submediant ending” variant (IV–V–vi–vi), a switch happens between this variant and the “Lydian Royal Road, leading-tone ending” variant (I–II–iii–vii), and then straight back to the previous variant to end the chorus section.

In light of a possible argument in favour of interpreting all Royal Road progression variants presented here solely in the Ionian or Aeolian interpretations, I would like to point that in the majority of anisong tracks I have researched, neither an Ionian or Aeolian tonic is equally emphasised by both the melody and harmony, further suggesting a “melodic-harmonic ‘divorce’” (Temperley 2007). For example, in “Hikaru Nara,” the tonic centre of A major (the Ionian tonic) is very prominent in the melody but never fully supported by the harmony. The melody in the call, intro and chorus sections constantly hover over the tonic centre of A, while the harmony never steers away from the Aeolian tonal centre. The only cadence into A major (plagal cadence) occurs at the end of the intro section (D–A),¹⁰ where it quickly dissipates as the verse begins.

The next example comes from the OP of the anime adaptation *Code Geass: Hangyaku no Lelouch* (“Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion,” 2006), entitled “Colors” by J-pop band Flow.

Code Geass (2006)

“In the year 2010, the Holy Empire of Britannia is establishing itself as a dominant military nation. [...] Lelouch Lamperouge unfortunately finds himself caught in a crossfire [...]. He is able to escape, however, thanks to the timely appearance of a mysterious girl named C.C., who bestows upon him Geass, the ‘Power of Kings.’”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/1575/Code_Geass_Hangyaku_no_Lelouch.

¹⁰ One could interpret this cadence as not fully resolved; however, plagal cadences are particularly common in 20th- and 21st-century pop music.

00:04 (Call/Intro)

F# G# A#m C# → Lydian Royal Road, dominant ending (I–II–iii–V⁽⁶⁾)

00:13 (Chorus)

N. C. F# G# C# A#

Jibun wo, sekai sae mo kaete shimae sou na,

F# G# F#

Shunkan wa itsumo sugu soba ni.

Figure 2.2.3 – Lyrics and chords “Colors” by Flow.

The original track is available at: <https://youtu.be/FUH9S44D1BM>.

This OP features the “Lydian Royal Road, dominant ending” (I–II–iii–V⁽⁶⁾), which effectively positions chord IV (the Ionian subdominant) as tonic functioning. As the track continues, it uses another familiar Western pop progression in the chorus section, IV–V–I (F#–G#–C#), now treating chord IV (F#) as subdominant functioning. While not unheard of, this progression is not as common in J-pop: chord I is most often substituted with chord vi (producing an evaded cadence) or a return to chord IV, as shown in the last chorus chord progression of “Colors” below (IV–V–IV or F#–G#–F#).

Although not exemplified, the “Lydian Royal Road, leading-tone ending” variant (I–II–iii–vii) also commonly appears in credit sequences: the same type of harmonic function is apparent as in the other Lydian progression. In other words, both Lydian variants end in a dominant-functioning chord towards the Lydian tonic.

* * *

Both examples shown here use the Royal Road progression in the call, intro and chorus sections—in my research, it became clearer that the Royal Road most often appears during the main (i.e., most memorable) formal sections of the track: the call, which usually contains a memorable melodic “hook” as previously discussed, and the chorus section.



Figure 2.2.4 – Two possible suffix cadences to the Royal Road progression variant “Aeolian Royal Road, with minor dominant,” as heard in the NHK’s *Kameda Ongaku Senmon Gakkō*.

Available here: <https://youtu.be/1GTwKGKByxk>, at minutes 13:07 and 14:18.

Finally, one aspect not yet illustrated in the examples above is the addition of a suffix progression—either a ii–V–I cadential progression or a ii–V–vi evaded cadence. In the previously mentioned educational NHK series “Kameda Music College,” these two suffixes are shown as potential endings for the Royal Road progression variant “Aeolian Royal Road, with minor dominant” (Figure 2.2.4). The Royal Road progression thus remains one of the most popular progressions in J-pop and anime music. Effectively, the progression became a common compositional tool among anime fans who also write music and who want their music to “sound more like anime” or to evoke the essence of “J-pop.”

2.3. The Japanese Augmented Sixth

The names *Bunsū-aug* (分数-aug, “Fractional-augmented”), *Ikisugi* (イキスギ, “Extravagant”), “Blackadder” and “Japanese Augmented Sixth,” all describe the same dissonant chord used in anime and videogame music (VGM) in recent years.¹¹

¹¹ These names have different origins: *Bunsū-aug* was popularised amongst online anime blogs, *Ikisugi* is thought to have been coined by anime and VGM composer Tanaka Hidekazu, and both “Blackadder” (unrelated to the British television series) and “Japanese Augmented Sixth” were coined by VGM composer Joshua Taipale (2019).

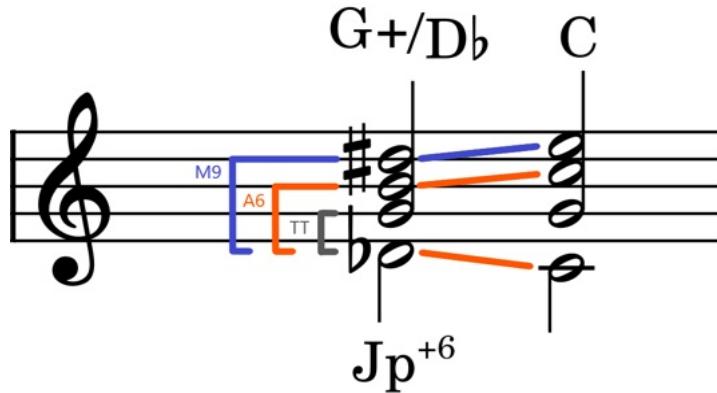


Figure 2.3.1 – The Japanese augmented-sixth chord built on D \flat , and resolved towards the tonic chord of C major. The bracketed intervals in grey, orange and blue, are usually resolved as shown.

The chord comprises an augmented chord stacked a tritone away from an independent bass note (Figure 2.3.1). Due to the symmetry of the augmented triad above the bass, it is possible that it may be spelled and labelled differently, which at times can obscure the chord's intended harmonic function: i.e., the augmented chord can be respelled as B⁺/D \flat or D \sharp /D \flat , including any enharmonic spellings, while no change is made in its pitch class content or 0248 set class. The interval between the bass note and the chordal third of the augmented triad makes an augmented sixth interval; this allows the chord to resolve in the same way as one would resolve a European augmented sixth chord (though the Japanese one is more likely to resolve directly to the key's tonic than to the dominant).

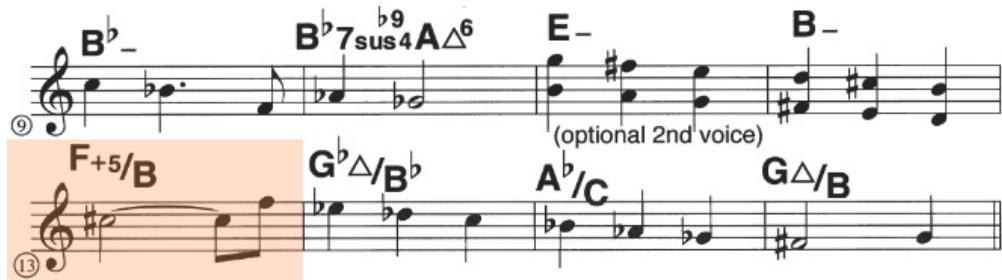
In this thesis, the chord will be referred to as a type of augmented sixth chord, favouring the name “Japanese Augmented Sixth” (with the short-hand Jp⁺⁶) as suggested by VGM composer Joshua Taipale (2019). This nomenclature is purely for the sake of familiarity within the music theory academia, and the shorthand for consistency with other labels such as It⁺⁶ or Fr⁺⁶. The nationality in the chord’s name solely intends to underline its use within a specific Japanese musical style.

While it is not the point of this section to directly equate the Jp⁺⁶ with all other European augmented sixth chords, this is still a particular chord which emphasises the resolution of an augmented sixth interval to the tonic—although there are a few instances where other augmented sixth chords provide dominant function, it is still more common for them to function as predominant.

There is no exact date when the Jp⁺⁶ was first used in the context of anime and VGM; however, it has been popularised in recent years by the anime and VGM composer Tanaka Hidekazu (b. 1987). Taipale (2017) has compiled several examples of the chord in a video for his YouTube channel “Ongaku Concept” (available at <https://youtu.be/pei5ldtbI7U>), especially within the context of VGM. The chord is not unique to recent Japanese music: there are a few appearances in the classical canon that are worth presenting here. For example, it appears in Robert Schumann’s “Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen” from *Dichterliebe* (1840; Figure 2.3.2a), and in Maurice Ravel’s *String Quartet in F Major: I. Allegro moderato, très doux* (1903; Figure 2.3.2b); and in the genre of jazz, it appears in Anne Wolf’s *Moon at Noon* (2015; Figure 2.3.2c).

Figure 2.3.2a – Robert Schumann’s “Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen” from *Dichterliebe*, 1840, mm. 16–17.

Figure 2.3.2b – Maurice Ravel’s *String Quartet in F Major: I. Allegro moderato, très doux*, 1903, mm. 127–129

Figure 2.3.2c – Anna Wolf’s *Moon at Noon* as published in the *Real Book Belgium* (2015): mm.9–16.

Japanese Augmented Sixth as Functional Harmony in Anime Music

Since Tanaka Hidekazu has made use of the Jp⁺⁶ in several of his compositions for anime in recent years, this section may resemble a short case study focused on his music. The first example comes from the anime adaptation *The iDOLM@STER Cinderella Girls* (アイドルマスター シンデレラガールズ, 2011), specifically, its OP track entitled “M@GIC☆” (read as “Magic Star,” Figure 2.3.3). In this excerpt, Tanaka makes use of the Jp⁺⁶ three times, all highlighting a dominant function: the F^{+/B} resolves to the temporary tonal centre of B[♭] M⁷ (mm. 27–28); similarly, G^{#+}/D resolves to D[♭] M⁷ (or C[#]M⁷, mm. 35–36), and E^{♭+}/A resolves to A[♭] M⁷ (mm. 39–40). This example shows that not only does the root of the augmented triad hint at a dominant function but also that the lowest note (the note a tritone away from the augmented triad) is always a semitone higher than the target harmony’s root note (most often written as #1 but also appearing spelled as ♭2), making possible an efficient parsimonious voice-leading towards a tonic centre.

***The iDOLM@STER Cinderella Girls* (2011):**

“Shimamura Uzuki is an aspiring student who dreams of being an idol. After failing her first audition, a producer from 346 Productions tells Uzuki that she has been chosen for the “Cinderella Project,” a new idol group.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/23587/The_iDOLMSTER_Cinderella_Girls.

Verse 1 (0:26)

20 Vocals: D♭M9 FM9
 Ko-ro-n-a to-ki sot - to tsu bu - ya-ku Echo: (tsu - bu - ya-ku)

Bass

24 D♭M9 FM9 Cm6 Flutes: Faug/B (Jp⁺⁶)
 i - ta - mi - to - me no ju - mo - n ga a - ru no Echo: (a - ru no).

28 B♭M7 B♭m7/E♭ Dm7 G7
 A-su wa mot - to ka - ga-ya - i - te yu-ku!" So-re wa Ji - bu - n

32 Bm7 E7 G♯m7♭5/F♯ F♯ G♯aug/D (Jp⁺⁶)
 ha - ge-ma - su he - ru ni ka - - wa-ru Su - su - n - de mi -

Pre-chorus (0:47)

36 D♭M7 B♭M7 E♭7 E♭aug/A (Jp⁺⁶)
 yō, mi-ga - i - te mi - yō. Ho - ra, u -

40 A♭M7 Fm7 E♭7/B♭ Gm7♭5 Gm7♭5 C
 ta dance ko - no ega - o, so-shi-te ko-ko-ro o grow-ing up!

Figure 2.3.3 – Tanaka Hidekazu’s “M@GIC☆” (mm. 20–44) with harmonic analysis.

 The track is available at: <https://youtu.be/OLEg8P-owfI>, 0:29.

The examples above (in addition to the ones compiled by Taipale 2017) consistently position the Jp⁺⁶ as a dominant functioning chord, with the augmented sixth interval resolving outward to $\hat{1}$. Moreover, the root of the augmented triad is most often spelled with $\hat{5}$ of the target harmony, solidifying the functional intention of the chord. The Jp⁺⁶ has close parallels with whole-tone dominant chords (for example, a dominant ninth chord with a sharpened fifth) common in impressionist music, and the procedure of tritone substitution common in jazz, resulting in a dominant seventh chord on $\flat \hat{2}$ resolving downward by semitone to the tonic. However, much like the familiar European augmented sixth chords, the Jp⁺⁶ can also serve as a secondary or predominant harmony.

For example, the buildup section in the OP “Guilty Eyes Fever” by Honda Yuki from the anime adaptation *Love Live! Sunshine!!* (ラブライブ！サンシャイン!!, 2016) shows a chain of Jp⁺⁶ chords in a chromatic sequence by descending whole tones, leading to C dominant-seventh harmony in the key of F minor (Figure 2.3.4). The augmented sixth interval in the last Jp⁺⁶ chord (D \natural and C) does not resolve to the expected C \sharp but instead to a C octave, continuing the descent by whole tones.

E⁺/F[#] D⁺/E C⁺/D C⁷

Jp⁺⁶ Jp⁺⁶ Jp⁺⁶ V⁷

Figure 2.3.4 – Pre-chorus excerpt of *Guilty Eyes Fever* by Honda Yuki.
Original track available here: <https://youtu.be/UcG5RpI6DTg>, 2:27. This example is also as presented in Taipale (2017) available at: <https://youtu.be/pei5ldtbI7U>, 2:26.

Here, the characteristic outward resolution of the augmented sixth interval is absent, suggesting the chromatic prolongation of a whole-tone scale rather than a tonally functional progression.

Japanese Augmented Sixth as Semantic Function in Anime Music

The dissonance in the Jp^{+6} provided by the augmented triad above the bass has the potential to highlight another functional role unparalleled to the other augmented-sixth chords. The chord can be used in isolation from its usual harmonic function, and can instead have a semantic function, such as a metaphor. To illustrate this, we turn to another example by Tanaka, specifically, the 2016 anime adaptation *Shakunetsu no Takkyuu Musume* (灼熱の卓球娘, “Scorching Ping Pong Girls”). Figure 2.3.5 shows a transcription of the OP track entitled “Shakunetsu Switchi” (灼熱スイッチ, “Burning Switch”) written by Tanaka and performed by anisong band Suzumegahara Chūgaku Takkyūbu (雀が原中学卓球部, The Suzumegahara Middle School Table Tennis Club). The first Jp^{+6} chord in this example (upbeat to m. 57) is not used as part of a cadential progression but is instead what prompts the chorus section—a chaotic chorus section which could otherwise resolve in the key of E minor (see harmonic progression in mm. 54–56). According to Tanaka, this was an intentional decision in order to give way to “more heat” in the chorus section as requested by the anime series director. The sonic “heat,” in this case, is the dissonance of the Jp^{+6} , which serves as a metaphor to hint at the title of the series.¹²

¹² Tanaka Hidekazu, “アツくてかわいい作品を彩る、音楽の秘密に迫る！ MONACA 田中秀和・広川恵一インタビュー（前編）” (“Close to the secrets of music that color hot and cute compositions! MONACA Interview with Tanaka Hidekazu and Hirokawa Keiichi (Part 1)”), interview by Hirokawa Keiichi, Nizista, December 1, 2016, <https://nizista.com/views/article2?id=01d2c720b60511e6ba545ba7c1b7cf8c>. “The director said he wanted to make an OP which emphasises the duality of the girls’ daily lives and their intense passion for ping-pong [...]. He also specifically said, ‘I want to emphasise the girls’ cuteness in [the verse], and the hotness in the chorus.’ At first, I thought that there was no need to make such a clear distinction, then I received a comment with the first draft saying ‘I want more heat.’”

The musical score consists of five staves of music with lyrics in Japanese. The vocal parts are labeled 'Vocals' and 'Bass'. The harmonic analysis is indicated above the vocal parts.

- Measure 54:** Am7, B7, Em, B+/F (Jp⁺⁶). The bass part has a sustained note under the Em chord. The lyrics are "...ki - mi ni su - ma-shu su - ru yū - jō (friendship)".
- Measure 58:** F#dim7, G9no5, C6, F#m7, B. The bass part features a complex eighth-note pattern. The lyrics are "so-re-to-mo rai - ba ryō - hō ne ko - ta - e wa shi -".
- Measure 62:** Em, D#m, Dm, G+, G+/D♭ (Jp⁺⁶). The bass part has a sustained note under the G+ chord. The lyrics are "- n - ke-n shō - bu no na - ka a-ma - i (sweet)".
- Measure 66:** C6, Bm, E7, Am7. The bass part has a sustained note under the E7 chord. The lyrics are "ki - mo - chi na - ra yu - ru - sa na - i su - ki da".
- Measure 69:** D7, G. The bass part has a sustained note under the G chord. The lyrics are "wo ka - ta - chi ni shi ta - i etc.". The score ends with a double bar line.

 Figure 2.3.5 – Tanaka Hidekazu’s *Shakunetsu Switch* (mm. 54–71) with harmonic analysis.

OP version available at: <https://youtu.be/oMxDsPsrv-c>, 1:03.

Shakunetsu no Takkyuu Musume (“Scorching Ping Pong Girls”) (2016)

“In the world of Japanese ping pong, a mighty king has fallen. An underdog team suddenly breaks the indomitable Ōdō Academy's nine-year winning streak, creating a power vacuum as players everywhere are given hope that they too can reach the national tournament.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/33031/Shakunetsu_no_Takkyuu_Musume.

Later in the chorus, Tanaka writes two brief tonicisations toward E minor and A minor, connected via a chromatic descending bass which results in the addition of more dissonant harmonies distant from the tonic of G major, including a second Jp⁺⁶ chord (mm. 64–65). This second Jp⁺⁶ chord moves by its standard resolution to C6 (can also be read as Am/C), and can be interpreted as part of a cadential progression which concludes the chorus section. Interestingly, in this chromatic passage, the melody seems to never steer away from the diatonic mediant (or $\hat{3}$), somewhat assuring the listener that, in the end, all things resolve to the stability of the major tonic, G major (m. 70–71).

Concluding Thoughts

There may be additional functions and properties of the Jp⁺⁶ chord not discussed in this section; its high degree of symmetry and harmonic ambiguity makes it a very flexible chord. Even so, the analyses provided here—showing the Jp⁺⁶ as dominant, predominant, and semantic (i.e., a harmonically non-functional chord carrying a metaphorical suggestion of “hotness”)—indicate that the Jp⁺⁶ chord is not to be constrained to a rather niche subsection of Japanese pop culture, but carries a variety of functions similar (but not identical) to those of the well-documented European augmented sixth chords.

2.4. Eastern and Western Instrumentation Balance

Japan's increasing focus on Western music practices began during the Meiji Restoration (1868), a time when "Japan believed it had to import and imitate nearly everything from European countries in order to catch up" (Ogawa 1994, 27). To assimilate imported Western musical styles, so as not to offend the Japanese ear, the blend between Eastern and Western instrumentation became progressively popular. For example, after World War II, instruments like the *tsugaru-shamisen* were seen performing alongside westernised *enka* (genre, "speech song" or "ballad") artists (Peluse 2005, 62).

Since the early 1970s, entire anime series have been dedicated to Western instrument playing: for example, an anime series about piano and violin playing, like *Shigatsu wa Kimi no Uso*, discussed in a previous section. Traditional Japanese instrument practice, on the other hand, has been showcased in anime only since the mid-2000s: the *shamisen* (by far, the instrument best represented) is seen in the OVA (original video animation) *Nitabō: Tsugaru-shamisen Shiso Gaibun* (仁太坊–津輕三味線始祖外聞, "The Founder of the Tsugaru-Shamisen," 2004) and *Mashiro no Oto* (ましろのあと, "Those Snow White Notes," 2021); the *taiko* is seen in the OVA *Aki no Kanade* (アキの奏で, "Aki's Performance," 2015); and the *koto* in the series *Kono Oto Tomare!* (この音とまれ!, "Stop This Sound!," 2019). This section is not concerned with the visual representation of musicking in anime, whether it is Western or Eastern instruments, but is instead concerned with the balance of Eastern and Western instrumentations in anime music.

The use of a single Eastern instrument among many Western ones is a trope of 1980s Western pop music, the affective surprise of which has been analysed by Megan L. Lavengood (2020) as a type of "novelty layer." However, in the context of anime music, such an interpretation will not be as relevant since we are primarily dealing with an Eastern medium for an Eastern audience who are highly familiar with Western timbres. The present analysis intends to show

how anime music (OPs, EDs and soundtracks alike) usually strikes for a balance within this polarity, through either the isolation or the seamless blending of traditional Eastern timbres with Western ones.

The anime *Mashiro no Oto* (2021), mentioned above, offers a fitting example of isolation between Eastern and Western instrumentation in the OP track entitled “Blizzard” by the J-pop band Burnout Syndromes. Figure 2.4.1 shows a breakdown of its formal sections, indicating which instruments play a role in the rhythm, bass, harmony and melody layers. The beginning of the track can be split into three short subsections: (1) a short melodic fragment accompanied with strings which hint at the chorus melody (the “Call” section with a Western-only instrumentation); (2) a *kakegōe*¹³ shout which prompts a shamisen solo interspersed with a Western-style band (“Intro part 1” with a mixture of instrumentation); and (3) a full band introduction which blends the *shakuhachi* with strings, electric guitar, electric bass and drums (“Intro part 2” with a mixture of instrumentation).

Following this rather busy introduction, the texture thins out as the first verse begins, removing the traditional instruments and decreasing both the harmonic and rhythmic textures (i.e., Western-only instrumentation).

***Mashiro no Oto* (“Those Snow White Notes”) (2021)**

“Sawamura Setsu runs away from his small home village following the death of his grandfather, the legendary shamisen master Sawamura Matsugorō [...]. Grieving, Setsu heads for Tokyo, hoping that the big city can inspire him to discover his own unique playing style.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/42590/Mashiro_no_Oto.

¹³ A *kakegōe* shout is a type of shout used in Japanese traditional performances to signal other players of sectional changes.

<i>Section</i>	<i>Rhythm</i>	<i>Bass</i>	<i>Harmony</i>	<i>Melody</i>
00:00 Call (Chorus)	n/a	n/a	Synth violins	Vocals, backing vocals
00:08 Intro part 1	Drums	Electric bass	Electric guitar	<i>Shamisen</i>
00:14 Intro part 2	Drums	Electric bass	Electric guitar	<i>Shakuhachi, shamisen</i>
00:22 Verse	Drums	Electric bass	Electric guitar	Vocals
00:36 Pre-chorus	Taiko	(Electric bass)	Choir	Vocals, <i>shakuhachi</i>
00:50 Buildup (same as Intro)	Drums	Electric bass	Electric guitar	Shamisen
00:57 Chorus	Drums	Electric bass	Electric guitar	Vocals, <i>shamisen</i>
01:21 Coda (same as Intro)	Drums	Electric bass	Electric guitar	Shamisen
01:30				

Figure 2.4.1 – Timeline with sections and instrumentation of “Blizzard” by the J-pop Burnout Syndromes, the OP of *Mashiro no Oto*. This model of texture was first presented by Allan Moore (2012, 19–21). Sections highlighted in orange indicate a Western-only instrumentation, blue highlights indicate an Eastern-only instrumentation, and green highlights show a mixture of instrumentation from East and West. A recording of the OP version is available at: https://youtu.be/hrz8_uUyxDA.

In the pre-chorus section, the *shamisen* and the *shakuhachi* make a reappearance; however, now most of the Western instruments introduced thus far are removed (i.e., Eastern-only instrumentation): apart from the vocals and subdued electric bass which stay constant, the melodic layer is complemented by the *shakuhachi*, the rhythmic layer is now filled by *taiko* and other smaller traditional percussion instruments, and the harmonic layer is now supported by a choir. The only Western timbre in this section is the electric bass; however, it is only prominent for part of the section, suggesting only a mild timbral mixture (hence, the electric bass appears in

parentheses and in green in Figure 2.4.1). The remainder of the OP features a mixture of instrumentation throughout.

This verse/pre-chorus orchestral dichotomy resembles the musical diegetic dichotomy present in all episodes in this series: the *shamisen* is heard in scenes featuring the Japanese instrument (diegetic) versus the Western-style instrumentation in the series soundtrack (non-diegetic). The first episode of the series begins with Sawamura Setsu's grandfather—the *tsugaru-shamisen* master Sawamura Matsugorō—playing the *shamisen* for a small audience. This scene introduces the anime's main topic, *shamisen* artistry. The pictured audience is enthralled by the master's signature song “Shungyō” (“Spring Dawn”). The next few scenes show the funeral of Setsu's grandfather, and Setsu's departure to Tokyo as he claims that he has lost his “*shamisen* sound” after his grandfather's death, and will attempt to find it elsewhere. Interestingly, these scenes have no background music, implying that the sound is “lost.” We are introduced to the series soundtrack surprisingly late in the episode, at three minutes and a half, when Setsu bumps into a passerby in Tokyo: the soundtrack comprises piano and spiccato strings from here on until the end of the episode. The sound of the *shamisen* only returns nearly halfway through the episode when Setsu is practising at a Tokyo riverbank.

This example is representative of the whole series' musical structure: *shamisen* playing is always diegetic and the Western orchestration soundtrack remains non-diegetic. This positions the soundtrack as adjunct to the implied mood of each scene (e.g., melancholic piano for sad scenes and vamp rhythms for comedic scenes)¹⁴ while the diegetic *shamisen* is reserved for scenes of character development—in this case, when Setsu is attempting to find his true *shamisen* artistry.

¹⁴ In the episode discussed, compare the soundtrack in a sad scene in minute 3:56, and the following comedic scene in minute 4:35. Episode available on *Crunchyroll* (paywalled): <https://www.crunchyroll.com/those-snow-white-notes/episode-1-desolate-810728>.

There are other examples of this apparent diegetic dichotomy: for example, in *Nitabō*, the *shamisen* is only heard diegetically with a non-diegetic Western orchestration soundtrack heard throughout other scenes; in *Aki no Kanade*, the sound of the *taiko* remains diegetic, with a non-diegetic Western orchestration soundtrack; and in *Kono Oto Tomare!*, the diegetic sound of the *koto* is absent until much later in the second episode of the series, while the rest of the accompanying soundtrack is mostly comprised of Western orchestration.

Other examples of anime series that seamlessly blend Eastern and Western instruments rather than creating a separation are the soundtracks to the *Naruto* franchise (ナルト, 2002, to be discussed in Chapter Four) and *Sengoku Basara* (戦国バサラ, “Samurai Kings,” 2009), both of which blend the *taiko*, the *shamisen*, and the *shakuhachi*, among other traditional instruments, with the genre of rock; *Dororo* (どろろ, 2019) blends several Japanese traditional instruments with jazz; *Sarusuberi* (百日紅, “Miss Hokusai,” 2015), the OVA *Kimetsu no Yaiba: Mugen Ressha-hen* (鬼滅の刃 無限列車編, “Demon Slayer: Infinity Train,” 2020) and *Saraiya Goyou* (さらい屋 五葉, “House of Five Leaves,” 2010) blend the *shakuhachi* and the *taiko* with Western orchestral scoring, the latter of which most notably mixes these together with the accordion.

* * *

Anime music seems to thrive between the blending and isolation of Eastern and Western timbres in both contextual situations (e.g., when the traditional instrument is featured as the main plot subject) or simply by the composer’s choice (to be discussed further in Chapter Four). The analysis presented here intends to show how anime music composers do not observe a separation between Eastern and Western instrumentation and/or genres; rather, it is a complementary unity, two parts that strike a functional balance.

2.5. Chapter Conclusions

This chapter analysed some of the most common compositional elements which contribute to the “anime sound.” Some of these elements are: the musical conventions in opening and ending credit sequences which are iconic and memorable in nature, and catch the audience’s attention through the use of bright timbres in what is referred to here as “call” sections; the Royal Road progression used since the 1970s and still one of the most popular progressions in J-pop and anime music; the analysis of the Japanese augmented sixth and its function (the Jp^{+6} as dominant, predominant, and semantic) indicates that it is a chord that has versatile functional possibilities, comparable (though not identical) to other European augmented-sixth chords; and finally the analysis of anime music orchestration suggests that there exists a special balance between Eastern and Western timbres in anime music, especially in anime series dedicated to traditional Japanese instruments.

CHAPTER THREE: SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF AESTHETIC CONCEPTS AND PROMINENT EXTRAMUSICAL SIGNS IN ANIME MUSIC

Japanese aesthetics are inextricably fused with Japanese sociocultural values and identity, and subsequently, can be found translated into other mediums such as music. Aesthetic concepts are not static but are in constant development: for example, the Japanese minimalist movement can be traced back to the Zen Buddhist tradition and to the concept of *ma* (間, “blank” or “negative space”); similarly, the aesthetic concept of *fūryū* (風流, “refined”)—which later turned into *iki* and *ga* (粹, “chic” and 雅, “elegant” respectively)—can now be identified in the contemporary aesthetic concept of *kawaii* (可愛い, “cute;” Masubuchi 1994; Shiokawa 1999, 94).

This chapter is split into three main parts: the first part briefly touches on two prominent aesthetic concepts which date back to fourteenth-century Japan, and have a direct musical realisation—these are subsequently identified in anime music; the second part presents another three aesthetic concepts which do not have a direct musical realisation but remain interpretative—these concepts are tied to Japanese sociocultural values and identity, collectively referred to in this thesis as “extramusical signs;” the third and last part of this chapter is a short case study drawing a semiotic juxtaposition between music, visuals and plot, and the aesthetic concepts or extramusical signs discussed prior as these are presented in the anime adaptation *Sono Kisekae Ningyō wa Koi o Suru* (その着せ替え人形は恋をする also known as *Kisekoi*, 着せ恋, “My Dress-Up Darling,” 2022).

The analysis of these concepts and their subsequent semiotic juxtaposition is, in part, related to topic theory within the field of music theory (e.g., Ratner 1980; 1995 and Mirka 2014) and to the semiotic interpretation of musical topics as signs (e.g., Agawu 1991; 2014). The present analysis will follow the understanding of the semiotic sign as theorised by Charles S. Peirce (1931);

however, it will not delve further into topic music theory literature specifically, due to its narrow applicability to Western period practices. Instead, it will include another semiotic tool more relevant to the study of multimedia music, specifically, Algirdas J. Greimas' semiotic square (1970; 1983) and its later adaptation to film music by Ennio Simeon (1996).

3.1. Aesthetic Concepts and Their Musical Realisations

Not surprisingly, anime series may present several prominent aesthetic concepts translated into the series plot, genre, target audience, music (both diegetic and non-diegetic), visuals (art style and animation style), characters' mannerisms and identity, and the representation of the world in which characters live. Older aesthetic concepts may be portrayed in anime in ways close to the original conceptual definitions (e.g., an anime series set in the Edo period would present characters clothed in period attire); however, since anime is evidently a contemporary medium, the older concepts presented therein may at times be only partially realised, misrepresented, or completely transformed from the original definition into a contemporary vision.

The Unsettling Tension of Ma (間)

The aesthetic concept of *ma* (間, “blank” or “negative space”) can be defined in various ways according to different disciplines: in the field of architecture, for example, renowned Japanese architect Isozaki Arata (磯崎 新, 1931–2022) describes *ma* as the space between two objects, where the gap in between harbours more importance than the adjacent objects (Isozaki 2017). In the visual arts, *ma* remains best represented by the sixteenth-century painter Hasegawa Tōhaku (長谷川 等伯, 1539–1610) and his iconic screen divider entitled *Shōrin-zu Byōbu* (松林図 屏風, “Pine Trees Screen,” c. 1574–1600, Figure 3.1.1).



Figure 3.1.1 – Hasegawa Tōhaku (長谷川 等伯, 1539–1610), *Shōrin-zu Byōbu* “Pine Trees Screen” (c. 1574–1600).

Digital object catalogued in the Tokyo National Museum, available here:

https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_collection/index.php?controller=dtl&colid=A10471.

In the field of performative arts, there are a few interpretative traces of *ma* left by the fourteenth-century Japanese aesthetician and *nō* theatre master, Zeami Motokiyo (世阿弥 元清, c. 1363–c. 1443). Zeami wrote extensively on the aesthetics of *nō* theatre (Tokita and Hughes 2017, 27), including how to realise the concepts of *yūgen* (幽玄, “mysterious grace”) and *jo-ha-kyū* (序破急, lit. “start, fragment, halt,” to be discussed later). Zeami taught *nō* in a spiritual manner, greatly influenced by the Zen Buddhist tradition (Rimer and Masakasu 1984, xlvi).

“Etenraku” (越天楽, “Heaven Music”),¹ one of the most popular *gagaku* (雅楽, lit. “elegant music,” court music) pieces thought to date back to Heian Japan (794–1185 CE), is an excellent example of musical *ma*. In this court piece, *ma* is expressed in the breathing pauses between individual notes produced by the ensemble’s woodwind section, but also, “[i]n each beat of the wooden clappers [*hyōshigi*] or the hand drum [*tsudzumi*], *ma*—the space created before and after the beat itself—produces beauty as well as tension [...]” (Shimosako 2001, 553).

¹The piece’s title is usually appended with the name of a mode, such as *hyōjō*, *ōshiki*, *banshiki*. The *hyōjō* mode (equivalent to the Western Dorian mode on E) is the most popular mode performed live.

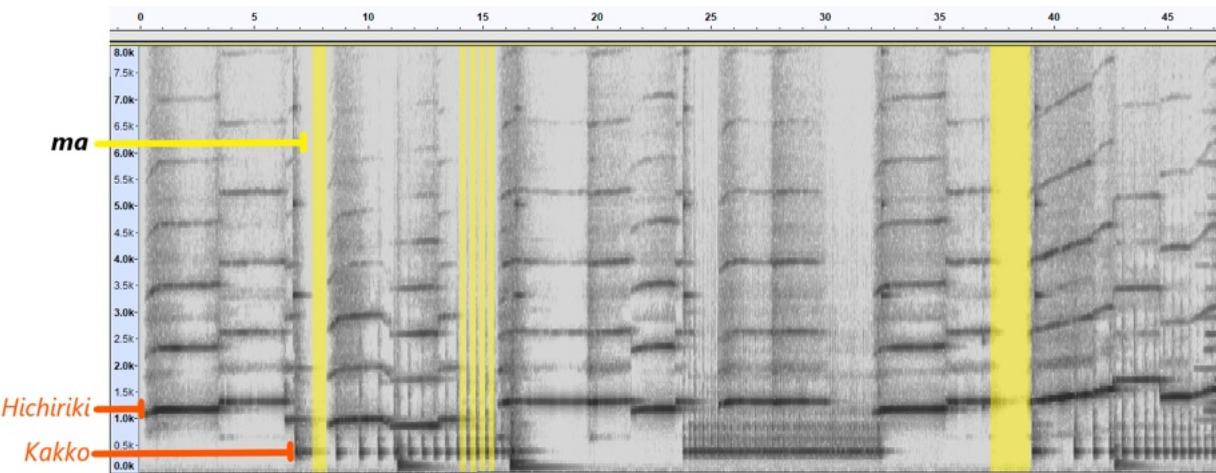


Figure 3.1.2 — Spectrogram of the first forty-five seconds of “Etenraku no Hyōjō” (trad.), performed by the Nippon Gagaku Kai (日本雅楽会, The Japan Gagaku Society) (1972). Silent areas are highlighted in yellow and interpreted as *ma*. The original record is available at: <https://youtu.be/86BWg4zGh7I>.

As Shimosako Mari (2001) further defines it, “[*m*]a, or silence, is actually a unit consisting of a single sound and its lingering ‘after-sound,’ considered an introduction to the next sound. In order to make the next sound vivid, the *ma* must create tension” (553). This implies that depending on the players’ interpretation of “Etenraku,” *ma* can be made shorter or longer, thus creating different levels of tension throughout the piece. Figure 3.1.2 shows a spectrogram of the opening section of “Etenraku,” as it was performed in 1972 by the Nippon Gagaku Kai (日本雅楽会, The Japanese Gagaku Society). The sections highlighted in yellow show the *ma* in between the adjacent sounds made by the *hichiriki* (double-reed flute) and the *kakko* (drum). A transcription of this piece is available in Terauchi Naoko’s “Surface and Deep Structure in the Tōgaku Ensemble of Japanese Court Music (Gagaku)” (2011, 34).

Analysing this traditional concept within the context of anime music certainly calls for a contemporary explication. The soundtrack to the 2013 anime adaptation *Aku no Hana* (惡の華, “Flowers of Evil”) shows a fitting example of contemporary *ma*. The series features a light soundtrack, mostly relying on drone-like synth strings and the occasional piano note; in all, a rather sparse soundtrack. In the last scene of the first episode, the audience sees the series’ main

protagonist, Tasuga Takao, standing silently in an empty classroom. Takao is suddenly startled by the noise of his classmate's gymnastics uniform falling to the ground. At this very moment, the audience is startled by the ED (ending credits track), an adaptation of the track "Hana" (花, "Flower," 2001) by the electronic *avant-garde* Japanese band Asa-Chang & Junray. The first twenty seconds of this ED track comprises only an underwater sound effect (most likely a low-pass filter) and a robotic voice speaking with unnatural pauses in between each syllable.

These unnatural pauses may affect the viewer directly, perhaps with a rather unsettling feeling of tension, foreshadowing Takao's decision to steal his classmate's gymnastics uniform. This robotic voice solo is only dispelled after 20 seconds into the ED track with the entrance of the synth flutes and double bass.

***Aku no Hana* (悪の華, "Flowers of Evil") (2013)**

"Kasuga Takao, a high school student fascinated by poetry, reveres Charles Baudelaire [...]. On a normal day, Takao forgets his copy of *The Flowers of Evil* in the classroom. When returning to retrieve it, he steals the sports garments of Saeki Nanako—a model student who [Takao] calls his muse and a femme fatale."

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/16201/Aku_no_Hana.

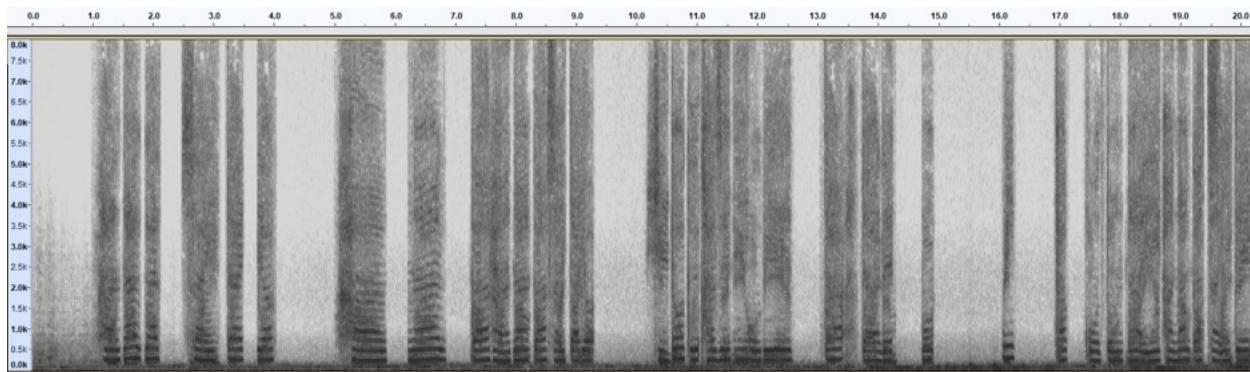


Figure 3.1.3a – Spectrogram of "Hana" (花, "Flower;" 2001) by Asa-Chang & Junray, later adapted as the ED of the 2013 anime series *Aku no Hana* (悪の華, "Flowers of Evil"). A recording is available at: <https://youtu.be/tDNj7mqOud0>.



Figure 3.1.3b – Two screenshots of episode 1, minute 21:18, of *Aku no Hana* (悪の華, “Flowers of Evil”), showing a gymnastics uniform falling to the ground (left) and the moment when Takao realises that the uniform on the ground belongs to his female classmate and love interest (right). The episode is available for streaming at HiDive:

<https://www.hidive.com/stream/flowers-of-evil/s01e001> (paywalled).

Figure 3.1.3a shows a spectrogram of the first twenty seconds of this ED, and two screenshots of the accompanying scene, as previously described (Figure 3.1.3b). Throughout the series, this ED (or the slightly altered versions of the ED) reappears at tension-rich points, each time evoking the same tension-invoking characteristics of *ma*.

Another iconic scene where the use of complete or near-complete silence exudes the essence of *ma* is in the battle between Uzumaki Naruto and Uchiha Sasuke in the 2007 anime adaptation *Naruto: Shippūden* (ナルト- 疾風伝, the second part to the *Naruto* franchise).² Finally, it is worth noting that whereas all silent or near-silent soundtrack compositions could potentially allude to contemporary *ma*, they can only become suitable representations of the aesthetic concept when the silence in between each sound carries the specific function of tension (as described by Shimosako 2001, 553); in anime, this is usually supported by the visuals, plot or other contextual information.

² See the beginning of this battle between the two main protagonists of *Naruto: Shippūden* here: <https://www.crunchyroll.com/watch/GR2PW1Q8R/the-final-battle>, 9:08. The *Naruto* series franchise will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four. Another great example, this time from a Western series inspired by Japanese models, is the final battle between Zuko and Azula in the series *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, Season 3, Episode 21, where the sparse soundtrack and low-pass filter draws the viewer’s attention to stillness, focus, and emptiness. The episode is available for streaming at: <https://www.netflix.com/ca/title/70142405>, 1:08.

The Stress-inducing Aspects of *Jo-ha-kyū* (序破急)

In *gagaku* music (and later in *nō* theatre), the aesthetic concept of *jo-ha-kyū* (序破急, lit. “start, fragment, halt”) describes a three-step rhythmic format which can permeate anything from entire programmes to specific pieces, sections, phrases, or even a single note (Rose and Kapuściński 2010). The rhythmic element of *jo-ha-kyū* is indicated as follows: *jo* “begins at a slow speed,” *ha* “accelerates throughout,” and *kyū* “brings it to an abrupt end.” The exact reason why this form became prominent in Japanese traditional arts is convoluted and can only remain speculative; furthermore, the exact implied meaning of each component in *jo-ha-kyū* and even how many repetitions each component should occur can change according to different practitioners or researchers. For example, Donald Richie’s (2007) description of the concept (1) does not define *ha* as “accelerating” but as an “establishing” section, implying that the rhythm in *ha* is pronounced but stable, (2) he defines *kyū* as a “climax” and not as a drop in energy, and (3) adds a final *jo* section, effectively transforming the concept into a four-part format (i.e., *jo-ha-kyū-jo*): “[t]he introduction *jo* [...] is to be of a slow but free rhythm; the exposition *ha* is to be in the establishing rhythm[;] the *kyū* is the rhythmic climax, relatively fast, followed by a final return to the *jo* tempo” (Richie 2007, 65).

Although the concept originated within the context of Japanese traditional arts, other contemporary genres such as J-pop (and therefore, anime music) also feature it. Coincidentally, both musical examples previously used to describe *ma* are excellent examples of *jo-ha-kyū*. On the small-form level, the *kakko* in “Etenraku” shows a rhythmic phrase which increases in speed and draws to an abrupt end (Figure 3.1.4a); on the large-form level, the ED to *Aku no Hana* goes through each stage of *jo-ha-kyū*, where the longer *ha* aligns with Richie’s (2007) description of an “establishing” section (Figure 3.1.4b).

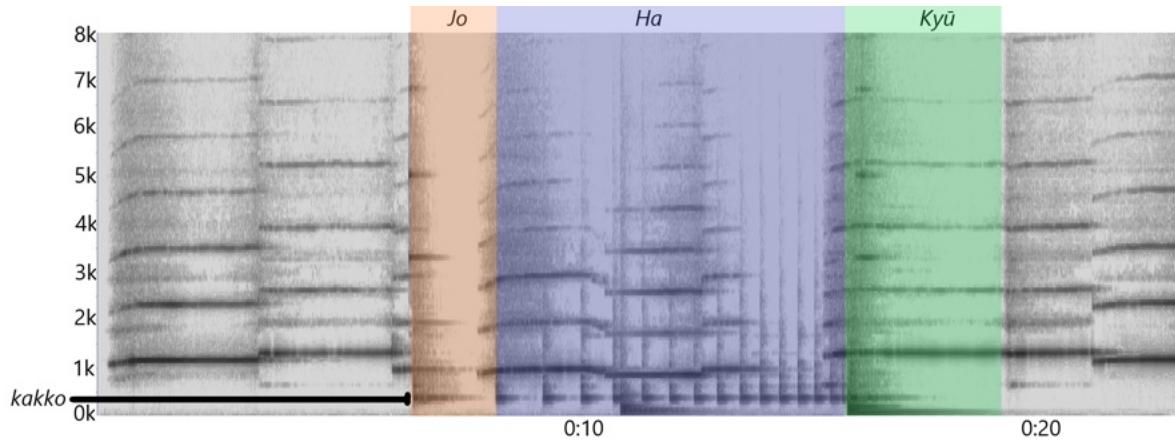


Figure 3.1.4a – Spectrogram of the first twenty seconds of “Etenraku no Hyōjō” (trad.), performed by the Nippon Gagaku Kai (日本雅楽会, The Japan Gagaku Society) (1972). The original record is available at: <https://youtu.be/86BWg4zGh7I>.

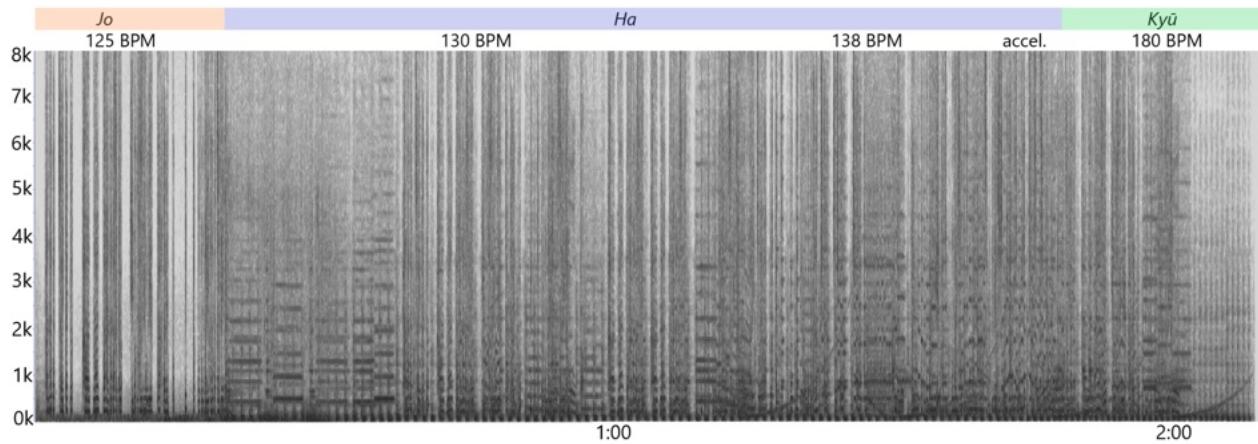


Figure 3.1.4b – Spectrogram showing overall speed in BPM in the extended ED “Hana” (花, “Flower;” 2001) by Asa-Chang & Junray, later adapted as the ED of the 2013 anime series *Aku no Hana* (惡の華, “Flowers of Evil”). A recording is available at: <https://youtu.be/tDNj7mqOud0>.

The stress-inducing aspect of *jo-ha-kyū* is perhaps best explained by analogy to physical experiences, like the increase in one’s heart rate under stressful situations. Soundtracks that imply stressful situations, such as a countdown, usually feature an accelerating rhythm: for example, SEGA’s videogame *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* (1992) features rhythmic acceleration throughout the track in an underwater level on which Sonic is gradually running out of air.³

³ A recording of this track is available at: https://soundcloud.com/kotaku_uk/drowning.

3.2. Prominent Extramusical Signs

Other aesthetic concepts that do not have a direct musical realisation can still seep into an anime soundtrack—these are extramusical (i.e., lying outside of music). They are conceptual signs which rely on a sociocultural interpretation of an aesthetic concept which is then suggested in music.

This section describes two main aesthetic topics, class (*iki* and *zoku*) and gender (*kawaii*), and how these appear contextually transcribed into anime soundtracks.

The Social Class Aesthetic of *Iki* (粹) and *Zoku* (俗)

The upper-class aristocracy and nobility are usually associated with aesthetic concepts such as *iki* (粹, “chic”) and *ga* (雅, “elegance”). In my research, I found that most anime soundtracks that characterise these privileged social groups, especially in the context of a modernised and globalised world, usually feature Western instrumental timbres and genres such as jazz or classical music. Period anime, particularly in series depicting the Japanese nobility, usually feature traditional Japanese timbres and styles such as *gagaku*. On the other hand, disadvantaged social groups are usually characterised by aesthetic concepts such as *yabo* (野暮, “unrefined”) and *zoku* (俗, “vulgar”), the antonyms to *iki* and *ga*. These are musically represented in anime with a wider variety of musical styles such as rock and hip hop, styles which are (sadly) also stereotypically connected to the working class or to disadvantaged social groups.

The anime adaptation *Spy x Family* (2022) is a fitting example of a representation of the modernised upper class, alluding to the aesthetic concepts of *iki* and *ga*. In this series, the school in which the young protagonist Ania Forger is enrolled—the Eden Academy—is visually nearly identical to the real-life Eton College main building in Windsor, England (compare Figures 3.2.1a and b). Eton College is known to be one of the most prestigious schools in the United Kingdom, so it is not difficult to position the anime plot subject as pertaining to an upper social class. However,

it may not be immediately apparent to the viewer that the interiors of the academy (Figure 3.2.2a) and the mannerisms of the school staff (especially of certain school professors) reinforce this allusion to *ga* (“elegance”). For example, in the scenes which feature Professor Henry Henderson, whose interest lies not only in his own adherence to elegance but also in the observance of elegance from both his pupils and their respective families. Whenever he sees a high degree of elegance, he is overcome by passion and screams “elegance!” (Figure 3.2.2b).

***Spy x Family* (2022)**

“In [the] Ostanian city of Berlint, Twilight dons the alias of “Loid Forger.” However, his true intention is to gather intelligence on politician Donovan Desmond, who only appears in public at his sons’ school: the prestigious Eden Academy. He will enroll [his fake daughter] Anya in Eden Academy, where Loid hopes [for the] opportunity to meet Donovan without arousing suspicion.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/50265/Spy_x_Family, adapted.



Figure 3.2.1a — Photograph of the entrance to Eton College, England, UK. *Getty Images*.



Figure 3.2.1b – Screenshot of the entrance of Eden Academy in *Spy x Family* (2022), episode 4, minute 2:00. This episode is available to stream at: <https://www.crunchyroll.com/watch/G9DUE1EM1/the-prestigious-schools-interview> (paywalled).



Figure 3.2.2a – Screenshot of the Eden Academy faculty room in *Spy x Family* (2022), episode 4, minute 13:48.



Figure 3.2.2b – Screenshot of Professor Henry Henderson, whose catchphrase is to scream “elegance!,” *Spy x Family* (2022), episode 4, minute 6:46.

Musically, in the scenes where Professor Henderson is in the scene, the soundtrack features the minuet style with a Baroque harpsichord; however, the vast majority of the series’ soundtrack is in the more *iki* or “chic” style of jazz, somewhat allusive to the *James Bond 007* film franchise.⁴

The 2019 anime adaptation of *Kaguya-sama wa Kokurasetai: Tensai-tachi no Renai Zunousen* (かぐや様は告らせたい～天才たちの恋愛頭脳戦～, “Kaguya Wants to be Confessed To: The Geniuses’ War of Love and Brains” or “Kaguya-sama: Love is War”), is a fitting example of aristocratic elegance, showing a pairing of rococo visuals and Baroque music. The protagonist Kaguya belongs to a wealthy and powerful family, the Shinomiya family. Each time Kaguya reminisces on how things are dealt with in the Shinomiya household, or when she is seen in her quarters, the scenes are visually saturated with ornate furniture and excessive draping (Figure 3.2.3). Musically, the track “Kaguya-sama” (かぐや様, “Lady Kaguya” composed by Haneoka Kei), which usually accompanies the scenes described above, features a trilling harpsichord and pizzicato strings.

⁴ The soundtrack’s allusiveness to *James Bond 007* film franchise is especially consonant with the plot theme of this anime.

***Kaguya-sama wa Kokurasetai* (“Kaguya-sama: Love is War”) (2019)**

“At the renowned Shuchiin Academy, Shirogane Miyuki and Shinomiya Kaguya are the student’s top representatives. However, despite both having already developed feelings for the other, neither [is] willing to admit them. The first to confess loses, will be looked down upon, and will be considered the lesser.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/37999/Kaguya-sama_wa_Kokurasetai_Tensai-tachi_no_Renai_Zunousen.



Figure 3.2.3 – Screenshot of Kaguya’s bedroom. Episode 1 of *Kaguya-sama wa Kokurasetai* (“Kaguya-sama: Love is War,” 2019). The accompanying track “Kaguya-sama” (かぐや様, “Lady Kaguya”) is available at: <https://youtu.be/-81PSoMeTUM?t=1945>, minute 32:25.

The dichotomous *yabo* (“unrefined”) and *zoku* (“vulgar”) may not be musically defined as clearly as in their opposite forms. These aesthetic concepts are mainly expressed by sound effects, unexpected instrumentation choices, or intertextual melodies (melodies inspired by other more familiar melodies which carry a sociocultural meaning). These topics are positioned here as opposite to *iki* and *ga*, but it is worth noting that the musical genres connected to these opposite topics are not to be interpreted here as negative or less valuable than any other genre—indeed,

musical genres have no opposites, and it is beside the scope of this thesis to define what is or what is not the opposite of “elegant” or “chic” music.

The anime adaptation *Gin Tama* (銀魂, “Silver Soul,” 2006; already discussed in Chapter Two), a comedy *samurai* anime, shows various examples of musical *yabo* or *zoku*—in fact, the writer Sorachi Hideaki (空知英秋, b. 1979) has clearly emphasised crudeness and vulgarity for comedic purposes. For instance, the pilot episode shows the main protagonist, Sakata Gintoki, picking his nose as he lies on the sofa and reads the latest issue of *Shōnen Jump* (a popular youth comic magazine; Figure 3.2.4). Gintoki is criticised by his fellow team member Shimura Shinpachi for lounging lazily instead of performing his adult responsibilities. Gintoki’s behaviour can be interpreted as both unrefined (an adult reading a comic targeted to younger audiences) and vulgar (picking one’s nose).



Figure 3.2.4 — Screenshot of the pilot episode of *Gin Tama* (2006). This episode is available to stream at: <https://www.crunchyroll.com/watch/GRWEXZWJR/you-guys-do-you-even-have-a-gintama-part-1>, minute 9:05.

The soundtrack accompanying this scene is entitled “Ore mo, Mō Janpu Sotsugyō Shinakya Ikenē Toshi Dayo Nā” (俺も、もうジャンプ卒業しなきやいけねえ歳だよなあ, “I’m Too Old to Graduate from Jump”) and features an unimaginatively repetitive guitar solo with flat note-bends, an arpeggiated bass line and a cowbell. At thirty seconds in, a kazoo enters rather unexpectedly, highlighting the undeniable comedic component in this series.

Another character in this series, Hata Ōji (usually referred to as *Baka Ōji* or “stupid prince) is represented in a similar fashion, this time highlighting this character’s *naïveté* and general lack of intelligence. The track “Yo no Chāmupointo” (余のチャームポイント, “My Charm Point”) features yodel singing, beatboxing and sparse synth melodies (available at: <https://youtu.be/OaP6p9whWR8>). Just as in the scene with Gintoki reading *Jump* while picking his nose, the comedic substance tied to Hata Ōji through this soundtrack is palpable. Moreover, the intertextual significance of yodelling as a singing style of Alps herders is thus not automatically connected to royalty but rather to the less refined folk—this tells the viewer that Prince Hata is not to be taken seriously.

The Gendered *Kawai* (可愛い)

As previously noted, the contemporary aesthetic concept of *kawai* (可愛い, “cute”) can be traced back to older aesthetic concepts such as *iki* and *ga*, all of which are synonymous with elegance and refinement. In addition to these connotations, the concept of *kawai* also encodes aspects which are mostly associated to younger characters (i.e., children), feminine characters, *bishōnen* (美少年, “beautiful men”) characters, or characters who exhibit specific “cute” personality traits, such as innocence.



Figure 3.2.5 – Screenshot of Kamui Kanna, a young *kawaii* character from the 2017 anime adaptation *Kobayashi-san Chi no Meidoragon* (小林さんちのメイドラゴン, “Miss Kobayashi’s Dragon Maid”).

Visually, *kawaii* characters are usually displayed with round facial features and oversized eyes (otherwise known as “anime eyes”), and are usually clothed in feminine garments, most often in hues of pink and purple; the background is usually bright, at times featuring flowers, sparkles or bubbles (Figure 3.2.5).

In my research, I found that the *kawaii* aesthetic is most often musically represented by soft and bright instrumental timbres, such as the *glockenspiel*, music box, flute, or high-register and simple melodies in the piano, and other bright sound effects (SFX). Oftentimes, the recorder may be featured in a soundtrack to further characterise a younger (or childish) character, since the recorder is generally taught in primary schools in Japan (and certainly in several other countries). Finally, the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic content in *kawaii* tracks is usually uncomplicated and can be compared to nursery rhymes. A further discussion of the *kawaii* aesthetic will ensue in the next section of this chapter. Since *kawaii* alludes to femininity, it is worth noting that a discussion on the musical representation of different target audiences of different genders is presented later in Chapter Four.

Concluding Thoughts

Aesthetic concepts are embedded in the daily lives of Japanese people and are thus found in many entertainment mediums, and most certainly in anime. The study of both traditional and contemporary aesthetics expressed in anime visuals, plot, etc., provides sufficient ground for exploring how these concepts are translated into music. In some cases, aesthetics are translated quite literally (for example, silence is an expression of *ma*, or accelerating rhythms is an expression of *jo-ha-kyū*), but in other cases, there needs to be a certain degree of interpretation (i.e., contextual or extramusical), like the identification of a musical trope (for example, *kawaii* is expressed by soft and bright timbres), and the aesthetics of social class are expressed via classist music genre stereotypes.

3.3. Semiotic Analysis of the Soundtrack to *Kisekoi* (着せ恋, “My Dress-Up Darling”)

This short case study draws a semiotic juxtaposition between some of the aesthetic topics discussed thus far, and the visual and other contextual aspects in the 2022 anime adaptation *Sono Kisekae Ningyō wa Koi o Suru* (その着せ替え人形は恋をする or simply 着せ恋, *Kisekoi*, “My Dress-Up Darling”). As previously stated, this section will make use of a semiotic tool particularly relevant to the study of multimedia music: Algirdas J. Greimas’ semiotic square (1970; 1983) and its later application to film music by Ennio Simeon (1996).

Introduction to Algirdas J. Greimas' Semiotic Square and its Applicability to Anime Music

Greimas' semiotic square—similar to Aristotle's square of opposition (Ackrill 1963)—places two opposing concepts and draws a semantic relation between them, where the horizontal axis shows opposition and the diagonal axis shows contradiction; an extra vertical axis is usually added to denote an implication (such as in Hutchison 2016, 67). In the case presented in Figure 3.3.1, the “happy” emotion is connected as follows: (1) it opposes the “sad” emotion (horizontal axis), (2) it contradicts the “not-happy” (diagonal axis) and (3) is complemented by what is “not-sad” (vertical axis).

The subsequent application of the semiotic square to the analysis of film music by Simeon (1996) effectively adapted the square to include not one, but two sets of opposing concepts: his example shows two opposing tonal qualities, “dissonant music” and “non-dissonant music,” and two opposing character qualities, “‘good’ character” and “‘non-good’ character” (1996, 349; adapted in Figure 3.3.2). This added pair of opposing concepts makes possible the comparison of seemingly unrelated items which carry related semantic meanings. In essence, one can use the semiotic square to easily relate certain aspects of an anime soundtrack to its plot and visuals; in turn, some of these musical aspects may correspond to certain aesthetic concepts. For instance, the aesthetic concept of *ma*, as it may be identified aurally, can then be juxtaposed with certain visual or sonic characteristics (Figure 3.3.3). This comparison unveils a possible antonym to the aesthetic sparsity of *ma*: for example, one can conclude that *legato* phrases or continuous sounds are a sign of a non-tense (i.e., calm) scene.

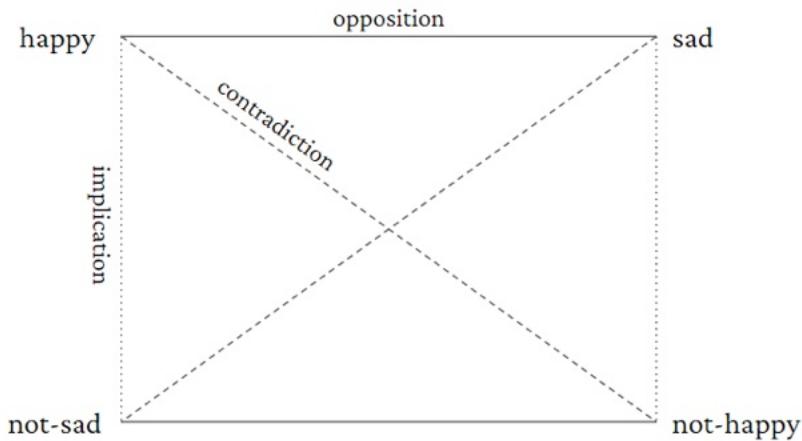


Figure 3.3.1 – Greimas' semiotic square applied to the opposing emotions “happy” and “sad.”

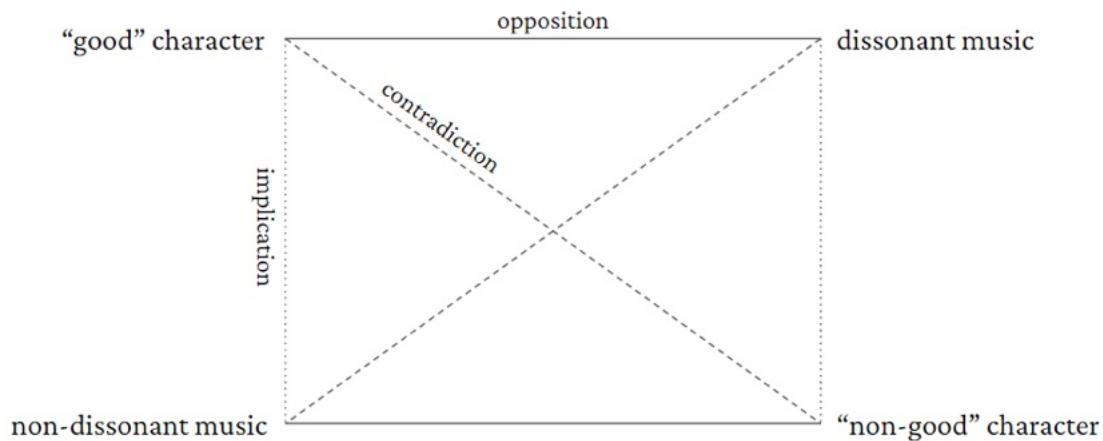


Figure 3.3.2 – Greimas' semiotic square applied to opposing characters and music.

Figure adapted from Simeon (1996, 349).

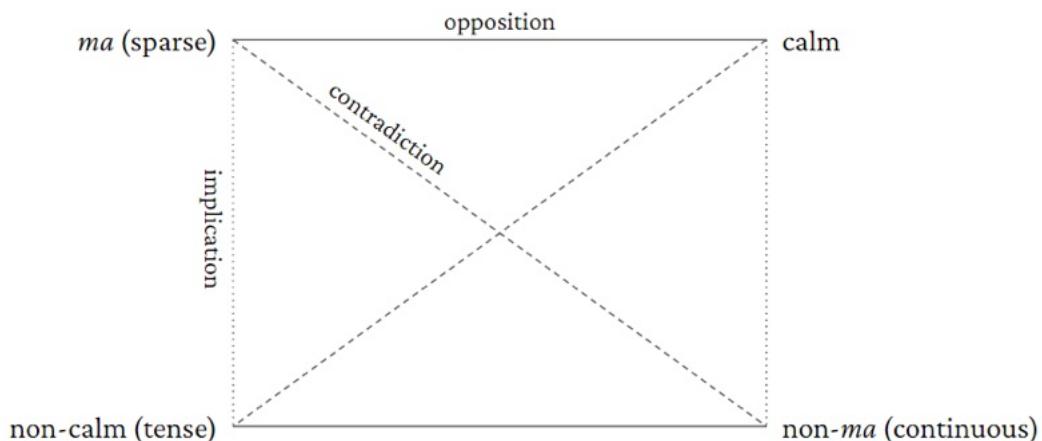


Figure 3.3.3 – Juxtaposition of the musical *ma* and the visual/plot indications of calmness and tension.

Analysis of Extramusical Signs in *Kisekoi* (着せ恋, “My Dress-Up Darling”)

The recent release of *Kisekoi*, a romantic slice-of-life *seinen* (adult men) anime, has had a positive reception among audiences across the globe, especially for its faithful adaptation of the manga's original story and the art style by Fukuda Shinichi (福田晋一, active from 2009) and for its state-of-the-art animation by CloverWorks Studios. Most notoriously, the series' plot features a clash of traditional customs (traditional *Hina* doll making) and modern customs (*cosplay*; contraction of the words “costume” and “play”).

Kisekoi (着せ恋, “My Dress-Up Darling”) (2022)

“Gojō Wakana spends his days perfecting the art of making [*Hina*] dolls [...]. While his fellow teenagers busy themselves with pop culture, Gojō [...] goes to great lengths to keep his unique hobby a secret, as he believes that he would be ridiculed [if it] were revealed. However, [...] Kitagawa [Marin] discovers Gojō’s prowess with a sewing machine and brightly confesses to him about her own hobby: *cosplay*.”

— MAL, https://myanimelist.net/anime/48736/Sono_Bisque_Doll_wa_Koi_wo_Suru.



Figure 3.3.4 – Official Japanese visual teaser to *Sono Kisekae Ningyō wa Koi o Suru* (その着せ替え人形は恋をする or simply 着せ恋, *Kisekoi*, “My Dress-Up Darling,” 2022).

The traditional *versus* contemporary dichotomy is mostly presented by the two main characters' backgrounds and mannerisms: Gojō Wakana who is most often seen in a traditional *samue* (作務衣, traditional Zen working uniform) when not in school, and his hobby is to make *Hina* doll dresses for his grandfather's shop; and Kitagawa Marin who presents herself in *gyaru* (ギャル, “gal”) fashion and who is an anime *otaku* (nerd) and a *cosplay* enthusiast (Figure 3.3.4). Although these characters are presented here as “polar opposites,” this opposition is softened throughout the series as the two characters get closer to one another: Gojō comes to realise that his skill is well spent in *cosplay* and that, ultimately, it makes Kitagawa happy (a subject of high importance for Gojō), and Kitagawa recognises that Gojō’s outstanding skill in *Hina* doll making is commendable and praiseworthy.

Musically speaking, the soundtrack comprises only Western instruments, mainly in the genres of Broadway-show style tunes and contemporary French waltz (e.g., Yann Tiersen’s soundtrack to “Amélie”), and so it does not clearly reflect the visual and contextual dichotomy between the traditional and the modern which is central to the series plot. Still, other extramusical signs already discussed are present: for example, *ma* is expressed via sparse tracks such as “Sōzō” (想像, “Imagination”) and “Magyaku no Sekai” (真逆の世界, “The Opposite World”), the latter of which plays most often in tension-rich scenes depicting the culture shock between the two characters’ backgrounds.

Most interestingly, the musical depiction of the aesthetic of *kawai* is an unconventional one: since the whole series’ soundtrack is non-thematic (i.e., tracks represent more than one character, place or plot device), the aesthetic representation of *kawai* is mainly identified in the visuals or plot, and by a choice of SFX. For instance, in the scene where Kitagawa is immersed in her *otaku* world while describing one of her favourite *eroge* (contraction of the words “erotic” and “game”) characters, Gojō sees Kitagawa as a “scary” (*kowai*) figure (Figure 3.3.5). Visually, the

background suddenly turns darker, half of Kitagawa's face is in shadows, and her pupils are considerably smaller (cf. Figure 3.3.4)—all these are characteristics that oppose the *kawaiī* aesthetic as it was described previously. Even though this scene does not feature a specific soundtrack, the post-production SFX added here is clearly alluding to the non-*kawaiī*: a deep and sparse drum beat SFX saturated with reverb, and high-frequency noises, similar to a blackboard scratch or a scream.

In contrast, as Kitagawa continues describing her favourite *eroge* character, the visuals begin showing what Kitagawa is imagining, specifically, this *eroge* character's physical attributes: a *kawaiī* figure (as literally described by Kitagawa), clothed in an elegant frilly gothic dress, with delicate facial expressions, blushed cheeks and oversized pupils. The visuals also feature a background tinged in purple, adorned with purple roses and with a few bright sparkles (Figure 3.3.6).

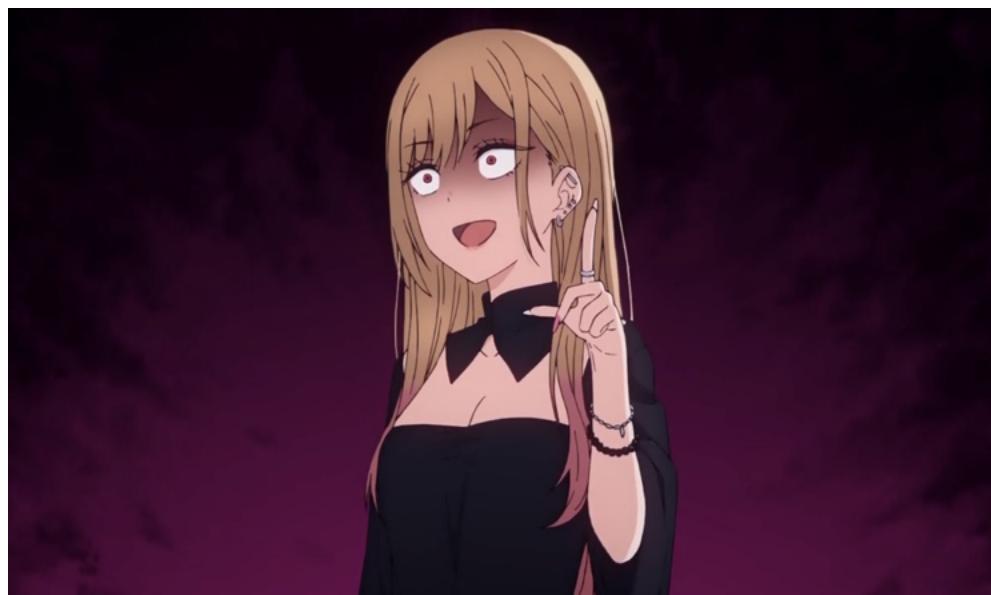


Figure 3.3.5 – Non-*kawaiī* Kitagawa, *Kisekoi* (2022), episode 2, minute 3:39. This episode is available to stream at (**warning:** this is a mature *seinen* anime series and thus may contain scenes of sexual character, unsuitable to younger audiences): <https://www.funimation.com/v/my-dress-up-darling/wanna-hurry-up-and-do-it> (login required).



Figure 3.3.6 – Cropped screenshot of Shizuku, an *eroge* character, episode 2, minute 4:02. This episode is available to stream at (warning: this is a mature *seinen* anime series and thus may contain scenes of sexual character, unsuitable to younger audiences): <https://www.funimation.com/v/my-dress-up-darling/wanna-hurry-up-and-do-it> (login required).

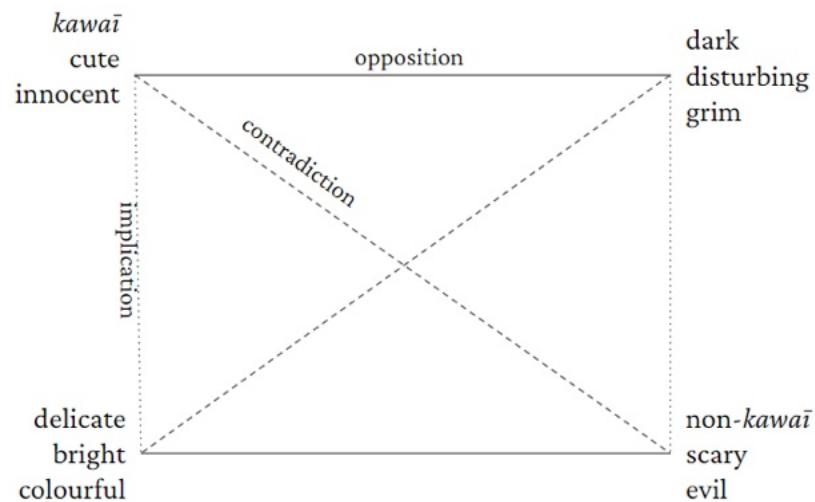


Figure 3.3.7 – Juxtaposition of the *kawaii* aesthetic and timbral/visual characteristics in *Kisekoi* (2022).

The soundtrack playing at this point is, as predicted, not clearly indicative of the *kawai* aesthetic; however, the sparkly and timbrally bright SFX added in post-production signal the intended extramusical meaning. We are thus presented with two aesthetic opposites, each related to apparent sonic or visual components: the aesthetic *kawai*, defined as “cute” or “innocent,” is here visually and sonically represented as bright, delicate, and colourful; and the non-*kawai*, defined as “scary” or “evil,” is represented as dark, disturbing, and grim. This division can then be expressed in a semiotic square, as shown in Figure 3.3.7 (above).

This comparison is highly productive: seemingly unrelated items are thus sketched in a logical semantic relation of implication (vertical axis), opposition (horizontal axis), and contradiction (diagonal axis). Essentially, allowing the analyst to musically relate otherwise subjective aspects such as the aesthetic of “cuteness” to either what is being shown in the visuals or other contextual information.

3.4. Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has defined some of the most prominent Japanese aesthetic concepts (subsequently embedded in sociocultural or identity concepts) and has analysed how these are usually encoded in anime soundtracks. Other concepts not covered in this chapter that are surely worth researching further include fandom (e.g., *otaku*, *moe*) and other concepts within the umbrella of identity, such as nationality (or the musical depiction of a character’s nationality in anime). Other prominent sociocultural concepts not covered here will be discussed in the next chapter, namely, *natsukashī* (懐かしい, “nostalgia”) and *furusato* (故郷, “hometown”).

CHAPTER FOUR: MUSICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE SERIES

NARUTO AND NARUTO: SHIPPŪDEN

The anime series *Naruto* is an adaptation of the manga series of the same name, illustrated by Kishimoto Masashi (岸本 斎史, b. 1974) and released in Shueisha's *Weekly Shōnen Jump* magazine for fifteen years between 1999 and 2014. By 2019, the manga series became one of the best-selling manga series of all time having reached 250 million copies sold worldwide.¹ Studio Pierrot produced the anime adaptation in cooperation with TV Tokyo, splitting the manga into two parts: the first part, *Naruto*, aired in Japan between 2002–2007 and comprises 220 episodes, and the second part, *Naruto: Shippūden*,² aired between 2007–2017, comprising 500 episodes.

Anime fans from all over the world will have at least heard of this series title as it became one of the most popular anime of all time, referred to as one of “the big three” together with *One Piece* (1999–present), and *Bleach* (ブリーチ, 2004–2012).³ Anime fans can equally recognise some of the series’ soundtrack themes and OPs. The soundtrack for the first part of the anime series was composed by Masuda Toshio (増田 俊郎, b. 1959) in collaboration with Musashi Project, a Japanese folk-metal fusion band comprising traditional instruments such as the *tsugaru-shamisen*, *shakuhachi*, *nōkan*, and *taiko*, alongside a Western rock band orchestration.⁴ The band is relatively popular in Japan, especially since its earlier formation with *tsugaru-shamisen* player, Agatsuma Hiromitsu (上妻宏光, b. 1973), who became one of the key artists in the popularisation of the use of this traditional instrument within the genres of metal, jazz and flamenco (Peluse 2005, 68).

¹ Kishimoto Masashi, 「NARUTO —ナルト—」作者・岸本斎史さん 新連載『サムライ8(エイト)ハ丸伝(ハチマルデン)』スタート 君も完璧じゃなくていい (“NARUTO author Kishimoto Masashi’s new series *Samurai Eight: Hachimaruden* starts: ‘You don’t have to be perfect’”), *Yomiuri Shimbun Online*, May 13, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190504200712/https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/culture/20190502-OYT1T50164/>.

² The name *Shippūden* can be interpreted as two separate words, *shippū* “strong whirlwind” and *den* “legend,” most likely in reference to the main character’s spiral tattoo on his torso.

³ Zach Godin, “What Are the New ‘Big 3 Shonen’ Series?”, *Crunchyroll News* (blog), May 4, 2018, <https://www.crunchyroll.com/anime-feature/2018/05/04-1/what-are-the-new-big-3-shonen-series>.

⁴ The Musashi Project is known in Japan as 六三四 Musashi or “634 Musashi.” The number 634 corresponds to the number of strings on the guitar (6), *tsugaru-shamisen* (3), and bass guitar (4).

Takanashi Yasuharu (高梨康治, b. 1963), at the time Musashi Project's keyboardist and also a composer and arranger, became the main composer for the second part of the series, alongside the members from his new band Yaiba (刃~yaiba~, “Sword”). Takanashi’s contribution to the soundtrack for the first part of the series, “Ai to Hi” (“Sadness and Sorrow;” to be analysed later), continues to be praised by fans, and has become one of the most well-known tracks in the whole series. Figure 4.1 lays out the information pertaining to the soundtrack releases in compact disc (CD) format, in a total of six volumes: three CD volumes for the first part of the series, *Naruto*, and three CD volumes for the second part, *Naruto: Shippūden*. Henceforth, to distinguish between the two series’ parts, a shorthand will be used throughout the chapter to refer to each part of the series and its related soundtrack releases: “*Naruto*” will solely refer to the first part of the series and “*Shippūden*” to the second part of the series. The whole series or complete soundtrack will be referred to as the “*Naruto* franchise.”

This chapter presents the soundtrack to the *Naruto* franchise as a case study to further contextualise what has been presented in this thesis thus far and to understand how composers translate certain visual or contextual aspects of an anime series into music. After a brief plot summary for both parts of the series, this chapter is then divided into three main topics: (1) the musical representation of the series as a whole, especially the implied gender of the target audience; (2) the musical representation of the series’ characters; and (3) the musical representation of different emotions as these are depicted in the visuals or the plot. Apart from a much-needed contextualisation of the topics covered so far in this thesis, this case study was written not only to contribute to the widening of the academic scope of the discipline of music theory, but also to serve the music theorist or music semiologist in understanding how international animation composers interact with visuals, communicate visually intended emotions, and represent characters from distant or fantastical worlds.

	<p><i>Naruto Original Soundtrack</i></p>	<p>Released: 2003 20 tracks</p>		<p><i>Naruto: Shippūden Soundtrack</i></p>	<p>Released: 2007 28 tracks</p>
	<p><i>Naruto Original Soundtrack Vol. II</i></p>	<p>Released: 2004 23 tracks</p>		<p><i>Naruto: Shippūden Soundtrack Vol. II</i></p>	<p>Released: 2009 28 tracks</p>
	<p><i>Naruto Original Soundtrack Vol. III</i></p>	<p>Released: 2005 17 tracks</p>		<p><i>Naruto: Shippūden Soundtrack Vol. III</i></p>	<p>Released: 2016 25 tracks</p>

Figure 4.1 – Soundtrack releases in CD format for the anime adaptation *Naruto* and *Shippūden*.

4.1. Plot Summary

Part One: *Naruto* (2002–2007)

A nine-tailed fox spirit, a powerful demon known as Kyūbi, was contained inside the body of Uzumaki Kushina, but as she gives birth to Uzumaki Naruto, the seal is broken and the spirit causes the near-complete destruction of Konohagakure (“Hidden Leaf Village,” also simply known as “Konoha”). Many lives were lost, including the lives of Kushina and the Fourth Hokage Namikaze Minato, the head of the village and Naruto’s father. Moments before his death, Minato managed to control the Kyūbi’s rampage by sealing this terrifying beast inside his own child,

Naruto. Naruto grew into a lively and loud orphan child, with an insatiable drive to succeed as the next Konoha Village's head (Hokage). Little did he know of what was sealed in him or even who his father was, since the village people were ordered by the Third Hokage (once retired but now village head once more after the death of Minato) to never speak of the destruction caused by the Kyūbi, but to instead nurture Naruto. Fearful, the village people could not help but be influenced by their memories, and as a consequence, Naruto is ostracised by the community and nicknamed the “demon child.” At twelve years of age, Naruto finally learns that he is Kyūbi’s host through Mizuki, once a Konoha school instructor, and now a village traitor.

Now in *shinobi* (ninja) school, Naruto joins forces with Haruno Sakura and Uchiha Sasuke in completing missions assigned to them by the locals. Together, they form “Team 7” under the instruction of their *sensei* (teacher), Hatake Kakashi, and learn to effectively control their *chakra*—the *shinobi* power which allows them to cast *jutsu* (spells). With a few successful missions in their portfolio, Team 7 is ready to sit the *chunin* (middle school) exam, where a passing mark will allow the team to embark on higher-level missions and move a step closer to becoming full-fledged *shinobi*. As the school exam starts, a wanted village renegade named Orochimaru invades Konoha, kills the Third Hokage, and manages to escape alive. After the death of the Third Hokage, a new Village head needs to succeed: Jiraiya, a legendary Konoha *shinobi* and rightful successor as head of the village rejects this position but requests that he and Naruto go in search of the most suitable candidate after himself, Senju Tsunade.

As the search went on, we discover that the villain Orochimaru intends to lure Team 7’s Uchiha Sasuke to join him and exploit his rare inheritance, the *sharingan*. Sasuke is easily lured in since their motives align: Sasuke wants to train with a powerful *shinobi* and kill his elder brother, Uchiha Itachi. His brother is responsible for the death of every single Uchiha Clan member with the exception of Sasuke. As Sasuke abandons the village to join Orochimaru, Tsunade, now

retrieved and appointed the Fifth Village Hokage, sends a search party, including Naruto, to find Sasuke before he is turned as evil as Orochimaru. Naruto and the rest of the search team are unable to coerce Sasuke to return to the village; however, this does not diminish the incomplete Team 7's spirit. In order to retrieve Sasuke, the Team needs to become stronger: Haruno Sakura becomes Tsunade's apprentice and Naruto leaves Konoha to train with Jiraiya-*sensei*.

Part Two: *Naruto: Shippūden* (2007–2017)

After his training with Jiraiya-*sensei* is complete, Naruto returns to Konoha Village. Naruto learns that an evil organisation called the Akatsuki (“Dawn”)⁵ is abducting other demon hosts like himself. While the reason for these abductions is still unknown, it is suspected that the Akatsuki are harvesting the power from these powerful beasts, and killing their hosts in the process.

On the other side of evil, Team 7's Sasuke has, by now, gathered enough power to overtake Orochimaru and go on his own mission: to kill his elder brother Itachi, who happens to be a member of the Akatsuki. The brothers fight and, already overtaken by illness, Itachi dies in battle. Later, Sasuke learns from Tobi, the Akatsuki's leader, that the government of Konoha Village ordered Itachi to kill the entire Uchiha Clan. Itachi was bound by authority to obey this request; he duly accepted it but only on the condition that Sasuke was to be spared. Confused and flooded by rage from learning the truth, Sasuke joins the Akatsuki with a new motive, to annihilate Konoha Village from existence. In an epic battle between the Akatsuki and the Konoha Village *shinobi*, many lives are lost. Naruto, using a portion of the—yet untamed—Kyūbi's power, stops the Akatsuki's raid. After the dust settles and the villagers account for their losses, they finally start seeing Naruto as a hero of Konoha Village, no longer a demon child.

In an attempt to lure all five heads from other *shinobi* villages, the leader of the Akatsuki,

⁵ The name *Akatsuki* can also be interpreted as two separate words, *aka* and *tsuki*, meaning “red moon.” This foreshadows the organisation’s ultimate evil plan, to be discussed later.

Tobi, disguises himself as Uchiha Madara, a Konoha Village founder thought to be dead for centuries. Madara reveals his ultimate plan to the Five Village heads: combine their forces, harvest the power from all tailed beasts and cast the *Mugen Tsukuyomi no Jutsu* (“Infinite Moon Deity Spell”) to submerge the *shinobi* world into a utopian illusion—an illusion which Madara’s believed would stop the world from self-destruction at the (not so small) price of stealing humanity’s free will. The Village heads decline this proposal and instead create a *shinobi* alliance between all villages to defeat Madara, under the suspicion that he is working together with the Akatsuki. The Fourth *Shinobi* World War thus begins.

In an attempt at protecting Naruto—and ultimately the untamed beast inside him—the Konoha Village superiors find it best to keep the war a secret from Naruto and send him on a training mission to a distant island to learn to fully control the Kyūbi’s power. But even with all their efforts in place, Naruto still finds out about the war and escapes the island to fight for his village. Soon after Naruto arrives at the scene of war, many lives have already been lost. In addition, the Akatsuki have done the unthinkable and resuscitated the most powerful *shinobi* in history: powerful *shinobi* legends including the actual Uchiha Madara, previous village heads, friends and criminals alike, all bodies of which are controlled by the Akatsuki and made to fight against the Five Villages. While their bodies move on their own, the resuscitated *shinobi* have full control of their speech and retain their past memories. Aware of this, Sasuke takes the opportunity to question the past Hokages on the true meaning of being a Konoha *shinobi* and concludes that the world is worth saving after all, promptly rejoining Team 7.

In a final attempt by the Akatsuki at gathering the tailed beasts and plunging the world into the planned utopian illusion with the *Mugen Tsukuyomi no Jutsu*, Madara’s resuscitated body becomes possessed by the ancient spirit of Ōtsutsuki Kaguya *Hime* (Princess), known to be the mother of *chakra* and the strongest enemy of all. With Team 7’s collective force, they stop the spirit

of the princess.

All that is left to complete is the original mission: to bring Sasuke back to Konoha Village.

Naruto and Sasuke fight each other to near death until Sasuke is convinced that the connection he has with Konoha Village, Team 7, and the whole *shinobi* world is worth preserving. In the end, Team 7's *sensei* Hatake Kakashi becomes the Sixth Hokage and pardons Sasuke for all his crimes.

After Kakashi retires, Naruto becomes the Sixth Hokage of the Konoha Village.

4.2. Musical Representation of the Series as a Whole

Some of the compositional elements introduced in Chapter Two are present in *Naruto* and *Shippūden*; specifically, the OP format and the balance of Eastern and Western instrumentation. The use of specific musical elements to hint at the series' visual/plot characteristics as discussed in Chapter Three is also prominent here. This section will contextualise and highlight new aspects related to these elements and will direct the discussion into how these elements represent the series as a whole, specifically, how the series presents itself to a target audience.

Opening Sequences

The first OP to *Naruto* is an adaptation of the classic rock track “Rocks” by the Japanese band Hound Dog, released in 1986. The adaptation does not entirely respect the OP format⁶ as it includes two extra sections from the original track: part of the bridge and part of the “repeat and fade” outro. Adding these two sections effectively extends the OP-equivalent outro section (Figure 4.2.1, see the rightmost column in orange), but still remains safely within the 90-second mark as

⁶ As a reminder, in Chapter Two, §2.1.1, I suggest the following definition of the term “OP format:” a 90-second adaptation from an original track, which is then used as an anime opening credit sequence (OP). The OP format cycles through a bright-timbral “call” section (which usually presents the series title), an intro section (at times this is a continuation of the call section), a verse, a pre-chorus, a chorus, and an outro section (usually adapted from a post-chorus or outro sections of the original track).

other sections are shortened, namely, the introduction, riff 1, bridge and the outro (Figure 4.2.1, see sections marked with an asterisk). The fact that “Rocks” was not written primarily to serve as an OP is perhaps why so many sections needed adjusting.

Presently, it is not so common for an OP to be adapted from a track released years before the anime airs, but it was relatively common in the 1990s and early 2000s: while the commercialisation of anime was still on the rise (the “90s anime boom”), anisong bands whose sole purpose is to compose for anime were not as common, leaving the anime production team to resort to adaptations of older songs which fit the plot of the anime or intended target audience.

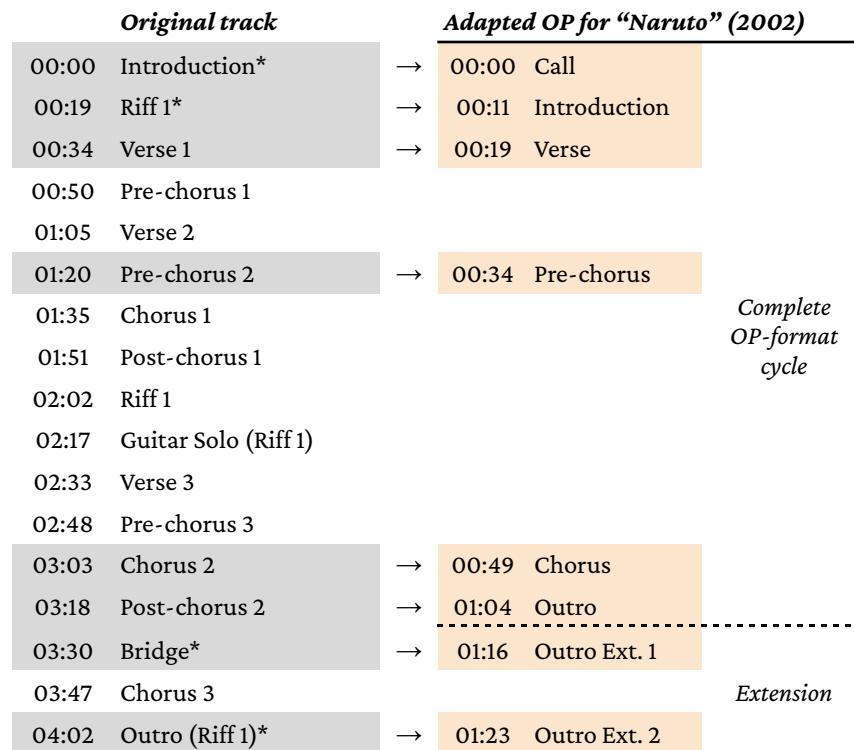


Figure 4.2.1 – Sectional breakdown of “Rocks” by Hound Dog (1986). Sections highlighted in grey are the ones present in the OP; the asterisk indicates when a section has been shortened to fit the OP length.

The original track is available at: <https://youtu.be/6m-0lrV8f1Q>.

The OP track is available at: <https://youtu.be/q1aq9GEHR8Q>.

Going forward some 200 episodes, the first OP to *Shippūden* is another adaptation of a previously released track, “Hero’s Come Back!!” by Nobodyknows+ (2007). Figure 4.2.2 shows a similar problem: after the whole OP-format cycle is heard, the 90-second mark is still not met, and so the OP cycles through another verse, a pre-chorus and a chorus section (see section marked as “extension” in Figure 4.2.2).

Whereas the unusual form of these two OPs might potentially weaken my description of the OP format as a common compositional tool used in anime music, it is worth highlighting that these two OPs are analysed here to identify alternative ways that existing tracks were adapted as OPs. Most later succeeding OPs for both *Naruto* and *Shippūden* follow the OP format as strictly as the examples presented in Chapter Two (see Appendix 2, rightmost column).

<i>Original track</i>		<i>Adapted OP for “Shippūden” (2007)</i>	
00:00	Introduction*	→	00:00 Call
00:10	Pre-chorus	→	00:10 Pre-chorus 1
00:29	Chorus 1	→	00:29 Chorus 1
00:47	Post-chorus 1*	→	00:47 Outro
01:06	Verse 2, 3 & 4		
02:01	Chorus 2		
02:20	Post-chorus 2		
02:29	Verse 5*	→	00:51 Verse 1
02:47	Verse 6 & 7		
03:15	Verse 8*	→	01:00 Pre-chorus 2
03:24	Chorus 3 (drop)	→	01:10 Chorus 2
03:43	Chorus 4		
04:01	Outro (post-chorus)		

Shortened OP-format cycle

Extension

Figure 4.2.2 – Sectional breakdown of “Hero’s Come Back!!” by Nobodyknows+ (2007). Sections highlighted in grey are the ones present in the OP; the asterisk indicates when a section has been shortened to fit the OP length.

The original track is available at: <https://youtu.be/ipBCtl0j4O8>.

The OP track is available at: <https://youtu.be/vxvP9zSOL7s>.

Soundtrack Instrumentation

For many fans (particularly young Western audiences), the *Naruto* franchise may be the first time they hear traditional Japanese instruments such as the *shakuhachi*, the *shamisen*, and the *shō*. It may also be the first time they hear these instruments in the context of a rock band. There are, of course, many other instances of traditional Japanese instrumentation in anime soundtracks, OPs, and even as part of a rock band;⁷ still, *Naruto* remains the single most popular example of an Eastern and Western instrumentation balance, with the vast majority of its soundtrack featuring traditional instruments within the context of rock music. Figure 4.2.3 provides a list of some of the most recognisable tracks from the series' soundtrack—as perhaps expected, the most recognisable tracks of the series are the ones released in the first CD volumes of each part of the series.

Arguably, the series' soundtrack blends instruments of both East and West seamlessly (see green highlights depicting a mixture of instrumentation within each functional layer in Figure 4.2.3), making it difficult to claim that the soundtrack's use of traditional instrumentation is aiming to surprise the listener or, timbrally speaking, as a “novelty layer” (Lavengood 2020). In addition to the traditional timbres described above, the soundtrack is further infused with a *pastiche* (or possibly the addition of short snippets from a pre-existing recording) of the Japanese traditional folk song “Etenraku” (“Heaven Music,” discussed in Chapter Three, §3.1.1), primarily familiar to native audiences (see a transcribed score in Terauchi 2011, 34). Small excerpts of this song are often used in anime, especially in period anime plots. In the case of the soundtrack to *Shippūden*, “Etenraku” represents the oldest and most traditionally poised character in the series, Ōtsutsuki Kaguya, a theme which will be discussed later.

⁷ Instances including the OP to *Mashiro no Oto* (2021) analysed in Chapter Two, §4.1, “Eastern and Western Instrumentation Balance.”

Soundtrack	Title	Rhythm	Bass	Harmony	Melody
<i>Naruto, Vol. I</i>					
Track 2	“Ore ga Naruto Dattebayo”	Drums	Electric bass	Marimba, synth keyboard	Electric guitar, <i>shakuhachi</i>
Track 8	“Ai to Hi”	n/a	Acoustic guitar	Synth strings, Acoustic guitar	<i>Shakuhachi</i> , piano, <i>shamisen</i>
Track 21	“Naruto no theme”	Taiko, kakegōe, drums	Electric bass	Shamisen, electric guitar	<i>Shakuhachi</i> , electric guitar, <i>shamisen</i> , <i>hichiriki</i>
<i>Shippūden, Vol. I</i>					
Track 8	“Departure to the frontlines”	Taiko, snare	Double bass	Synth orchestra	Synth strings, electric guitar
Track 10	“Akatsuki”	Timpani	Double bass	Synth orchestra	Organ, Gregorian chant-like choir
Track 13	“Loneliness”	n/a	Harp	Synth strings, <i>Taishōgoto</i> (or similar)	Kokyū (or similar), fiddle

Figure 4.2.3 – A few popular tracks from both parts of the series’ soundtrack and instrumentation in each functional layer. Orange highlights indicate Western-only instrumentation, and green highlights show a mixture of instrumentation from East and West.

Musical Representation of the Series’ Target Audience

As already mentioned, opening sequences serve to (1) introduce the title of the series, (2) introduce the series’ main characters (accompanied with other key visuals which hint at the series’ plot), and (3) credit the producing staff. The following discussion proposes an additional purpose: OPs use musical genres to hint at the gender of an intended target audience. Figure 4.3.4 lists some of the most popular anime series (MAL, as of October 2022) for different target audiences (*shōnen*, *shōjo*, *seinen*, and *josei*) and the genre of the series’ first OP.⁸

⁸ Here, targeted audiences are gendered. Rather than representing the biological sex of the viewer, words such as “boys,” “girls,” “men” and “women,” are only to be interpreted as gender.

Anime Series Title	Audience	OP Genre
<i>Shingeki no Kyojin</i> (“Attack on Titan”)	<i>Shōnen</i> (boys)	Rock-opera, military orchestra
<i>Death Note</i>	<i>Shōnen</i> (boys)	Pop-rock
<i>One Punch Man</i>	<i>Seinen</i> (men)	Alternative metal
<i>Tokyo Ghoul</i>	<i>Seinen</i> (men)	Emo-rock
<i>Fruits Basket</i>	<i>Shōjo</i> (girls)	J-pop
<i>Natsume Yuujinchou</i> (“Natsume’s Book of Friends”)	<i>Shōjo</i> (girls)	J-pop
<i>Usagi Drop</i> (“Bunny Drop”)	<i>Josei</i> (women)	J-pop
<i>Shouwa Genroku Rakugo Shinjuu</i> (“Showa and Genroku Era Lover’s Suicide Through Rakugo”)	<i>Josei</i> (women)	Jazz

Figure 4.3.4 – Most popular anime series (MAL, as of October 2022) targetted at different genders and age-ranges, and their OP’s genre.

This comparison shows that anime for boys and adult men (*shōnen* and *seinen*, respectively) mainly use the genres rock and hip hop in their OPs, and anime for girls and adult women (*shōjo* and *josei*, respectively) use the genres J-pop and pop-rock ballad in their OPs. This may also suggest that not only the genre within these OPs hints at a specific target audience but also that certain music genres represent certain audiences. This binary dichotomy is further stressed by culturally gendered plot genres: superheroes and war are plot themes usually directed at boys and men, while school life, fantasy, and romance are themes directed at girls and women. The choice of musical genre to accompany these topics is thus rather predictable: in the case of an instrument or timbral choice, anime for boys and men have OPs with electric guitars using distortion and busy rhythmic sections, while anime for girls and women have OPs with piano, clean acoustic guitars, and less punctuated rhythmic sections. It is then expected that *Naruto*’s “Rocks,” a track in the genre of classic rock, hints at a *shōnen* target audience. In fact, the vast

majority of OPs in both *Naruto* and *Shippūden* are in some subgenre of rock: 8 out of 9 OPs in *Naruto* and 14 out of 20 OPs in *Shippūden* (a complete list is shown in Appendix 2; see the fourth column).

Research on gender stereotyping in Japanese popular music is well in agreement with the above discussion: Christine Feldman (2009) argues that Japanese rock is more popular among men; Jennifer Milioto Matsue (2009) studied Japanese punk rock and notes that the genre is most popular among men; and Ian Condry (2006, 164–5) has noted that hip-hop is deemed manly and that women follow J-pop trends (167). In the case of “womanly” J-pop, Japanese women’s interests in the genre usually come from preconceived gendered notions: that Japanese women “should” like artists who represent womanhood as a synonym for being reserved, poised, and emotionally controlled. Koizumi (2002) studied Japanese school teenagers of both feminine and masculine genders and notes that boys usually listen to rock (specifically, the genre *vijuaru kei*), and strive to distinguish themselves from their male peers by listening to obscure rock bands; and that girls mostly conceal their preferences and opt to mention well-known pop idols, in order to fit in with their female peers (111–3). In the end, it is likely (if not obvious) that both genders listen to all genres, regardless of their gender-assigned genre of music; however, in anime OPs, this binary representation is still present and genres still function as stereotypical gender markers.

4.3. Musical Representation of the Series’ Characters

Comparable to the use of character themes or *leitmotifs* in film music, anime soundtracks, especially multiseason series, include themes for individual characters, themes for groups of characters (e.g., a theme for heroes and a theme for villains), and themes for non-character items such as locations and emotions. As with many anime series, the most popular and most played

tracks within a series usually surround the main character and, consequently, these tracks become recognized as the main musical themes for the entire series—the same is found in the *Naruto* franchise. The whole soundtrack can thus be split into four main categories: (1) the main character's themes (which later become the main musical themes for the entire series), (2) the supporting characters' themes, (3) the antagonists' themes, and (4) other themes which represent emotions. This section will discuss the first three categories of themes and how these themes represent the key characters in the *Naruto* franchise. The last category, themes which represent emotions, will be discussed in the following section.

Main Character or Series Themes

Uzumaki Naruto

Uzumaki Naruto is an energetic and positive character (Figure 4.4.1). In the first episode of the series, Naruto is musically introduced by the OP track “Rocks”⁹ (previously analysed), and by the occasional *kakegōe* shout heard throughout the episode.¹⁰ The *kakegōe* shouts foreshadow the beginning of the first main theme, “Naruto no Theme” (“Naruto’s Theme” *Naruto, Vol. I*, track 21), which plays as Naruto achieves his first heroic act, saving Iruka-*sensei* (Figure 4.4.2). This track becomes the most played track in the series to represent both Naruto (especially when doing something heroic) and later, the series as a whole.

⁹ The first episode of the series does not have an opening sequence visual and uses the track “Rocks” during the episode proper.

¹⁰ *Kakegōe* shouts are used throughout the series soundtrack but are particularly prominent in the first episode. As a reminder, a *kakegōe* is a type of shout used in Japanese traditional performances to signal other players of sectional changes.



Figure 4.4.1 – Screenshot of the main protagonist, Uzumaki Naruto (*Naruto*, episode 1, 19:43).



Figure 4.4.2 – Main melody and harmony in “Naruto no Theme” (“Naruto’s Theme” *Naruto*, Vol. I, track 21). Recording available at: <https://youtu.be/IrxMWAGYUkI>, 0:16.

For variety, this main theme is re-orchestrated (for example, “Hi no Ishi o Tsugushatachi” or “Those Who Inherit the Will of Fire,” *Naruto*, Vol. III, track 23, notably changes the tonality of the original melody to the parallel major; see also the track “Gekiha,” or “Crushing,” *Shippūden*, Vol. II, track 3). The versions where the theme is at a slower tempo featuring a solo piano is intending to depict different levels of heroism or other emotions like nostalgia (for example, “Michiwa Tsuzuku” or “The Road Continues,” *Shippūden*, Vol. III, track 24; more on the topic of nostalgia later in this chapter).

Another most-played track is “Ore ga Naruto Dattebayo!”¹¹ (“I am Naruto, Believe It!,” *Naruto*, Vol. I, track 2) which represents Naruto in his most boisterous and playful manner through the use of syncopated rhythms and leaping melodies in the synth marimba, orchestrated amongst

¹¹ *Dattebayo* is a speech tic turned catchphrase, used by Naruto. The word does not have a specific meaning in Japanese, and subsequently has no literal translation to English, but it is usually transcribed as “you better believe it.”

other instruments such as the synth *kokyū*, unison *shakuhachi*, distorted electric guitar, electric bass, and drums. While this track is not heard in later episodes, it remains, even if only subjectively, the best depiction of Naruto's energetic personality.

Supporting Character Themes

Haruno Sakura

Haruno Sakura is usually depicted in the series as the supportive character (Figure 4.4.3). The instruments used in her theme, “Sakura no Theme” (“Sakura’s Theme,” *Naruto*, Vol. I, track 10) show the gender-specific instrumentation described earlier in this chapter: the synth xylophone, clean acoustic guitar, synth flute, and inconspicuous drums. Sakura’s theme is generally not heard as much as any other theme in the series and is played in the first part of the series, primarily in regard to her love interest, Uchiha Sasuke. The theme remains in the realm of pentatonicism in F major, with marked dotted rhythms (Figure 4.4.4). It is apparent that the theme was written to depict the character’s sensibility and nurturing attitude with the use of instruments of soft and bright timbres, much like a children’s lullaby, and alluding to the *kawaiī* aesthetic (as described in Chapter Three, §3.2.2). It may also be apparent that Sakura’s theme is in a major key as opposed to her contemporaries in minor keys (Sasuke’s theme is discussed later), adding another uncomplicated characteristic comparable to children’s lullabies and the *kawaiī* aesthetic.

Sakura’s minute musical representation is comparable to how the character is portrayed in the series. Fujimoto Yukari’s chapter (2013) on the evaluation of female audience readers of the *Naruto* manga publications reflects that Sakura—and the vast majority of all female characters in the series—are secondary and portrayed as “conspicuously conservative” (172–173): that is, women in *Naruto* are weaker, motherly, concerned only with love, diligent and—most relevant to the *kawaiī* aesthetic—they are foolish but cute (175–176).



Figure 4.4.3 – Screenshot of the supporting character, Haruno Sakura (*Naruto*, episode 1, 2:30).



Figure 4.4.4 – Main melody and harmony in “Sakura no Theme” (“Sakura’s Theme,” *Naruto*, Vol. I, track 10).
Recording available at: <https://youtu.be/tcC0tK8UdJ4>, 0:22.

Uchiha Sasuke

Naruto’s school rival and Sakura’s love interest, Uchiha Sasuke presents himself as a quiet and mysterious character with a difficult past (Figure 4.4.5). The track “Sasuke no Theme” (“Sasuke’s Theme,” *Naruto*, Vol. II, track 5) translates the character’s darkness and mystery with a blues-style guitar loop sliding from F to G, a chromatic bassline against a G minor chord on the synth keyboard (Gm/F – Gm/E – Gm/Eb – Gm/E; somewhat alluding to Monty Norman’s *James Bond 007*, 1960) theme’s bassline, and sustained notes on a synth pan-flute (Figure 4.4.6). The most prominent instrument in this track is the synth pan-flute; however, the instrument which later becomes truly associated with Sasuke is the blues-style slide guitar, like in “Hyōhaku”

(“Wandering,” *Shippūden*, Vol. II, track 12) and later in “Junkyōsha” (“Martyr,” *Shippūden*, Vol. III, track 20).

The slide guitar which first represented mystery and quietness, becomes, in “Hyōhaku,” a Wild West aesthetic timbre which matches the character’s lonely quest as he deserts Konoha Village, becoming a wandering renegade in search of revenge. The last iteration of Sasuke’s theme heard towards the end of the series, “Junkyōsha,” also features slide guitar but in the context of a villain, as Sasuke becomes the *shinobi* world’s last antagonist.



Figure 4.4.5 – Screenshot of the rival character, Uchiha Sasuke (*Naruto*, episode 3, 18:53).

A musical transcription for "Sasuke no Theme" (mm. 4–13). The transcription includes three staves:
 - **Clean Guitar:** Shows chords F and Gm with a 'slide' instruction above them. The number '4' is written below the staff.
 - **Pan Flute:** Shows a melodic line starting with a rest, followed by notes on the second and third beats of each measure.
 - **Synth:** Shows a harmonic line consisting of sustained chords throughout the measures.
 The time signature is 4/4, and the key signature is one flat.

Figure 4.4.6 – Transcription of “Sasuke no Theme” (“Sasuke’s Theme,” *Naruto*, Vol. II, track 5), mm. 4–13 (continues overleaf). This transcription is an approximation of the original. Recording available at:

<https://youtu.be/rBKC2JtaqDo>, 0:12.

The musical transcription consists of two staves. The top staff is for electric guitar, and the bottom staff is for bass. Chords are indicated above the staff with labels: F, Gm, B_b, C_m, E_b, F, F, Gm, and Gm. Measures 7 through 13 are shown.

Figure 4.4.6 cont. – Transcription of “Sasuke no Theme” (“Sasuke’s Theme,” *Naruto*, Vol. II, track 5), mm. 4–13. This transcription is an approximation of the original. Recording available at: <https://youtu.be/rBKC2JtaqDo>, 0:12.

Antagonist Themes

Orochimaru

Orochimaru is a wanted criminal who becomes the main antagonist for the first part of the series (Figure 4.4.7). The character is first introduced with the track “Orochimaru no Theme” (“Orochimaru’s Theme,” *Naruto*, Vol. II, track 13), with orchestration comprising a pipe organ, synth choir, *shakuhachi*, *shamisen*, electric guitar, and vocals. Notice how the organ part alludes to Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Toccata con Fuga* in D minor (BWV 565), specifically in its tonality and melodic content (cf. Figure 4.4.8).

Here, Bach’s *Toccata con Fuga* becomes an even more useful reference since this is a piece

already greatly associated with other villain characters, the best example of which is in Terence Fisher's 1962 adaptation of *Phantom of the Opera* (the Phantom plays the piece in his pipe organ). At end of the second section of Orochimaru's theme, one can find another near-identical reference to *Toccata con Fuga* when the organ plays an ascending arpeggio and the soprano voice sings a 4–3 suspension, cadencing into D minor—a melodic contour of which is almost identical to measure 3 of the *Toccata* section, albeit with no *Tierce de Picardie* (compare highlights in Figures 4.4.9a & b).

Later, the character is mostly associated with an arrangement of the original theme, “Orochimaru ~Sentō~” (“Orochimaru ~Battle~,” *Naruto, Vol. II*, track 15): a faster version of the original theme with more punctuated rhythms, thus better suited for battle scenes. Orochimaru's theme foreshadows the themes of later antagonists, especially with the use of the pipe organ and synth choir in the themes representing the next antagonists, the Akatsuki.



Figure 4.4.7 – Screenshot of the first antagonist, Orochimaru (*Naruto*, episode 30, 14:03).

The musical score consists of five staves of music, each representing a different instrument or part of the score. The instruments are identified by labels on the left side of the first staff:

- Organ:** The top staff, written in treble clef, 4/4 time, and B-flat major. It features a continuous pattern of eighth-note pairs.
- Electric Guitar:** The second staff, also in treble clef, 4/4 time, and B-flat major. It includes a dynamic marking ff (fortissimo) and a performance instruction "(drop D)".
- Bass Line:** The third staff, written in bass clef, 4/4 time, and B-flat major. It consists of sustained notes with slurs.
- Drums:** The fourth staff, written in bass clef, 4/4 time, and B-flat major. It features sustained notes with slurs.
- String Section:** The fifth staff, written in bass clef, 4/4 time, and B-flat major. It consists of sustained notes with slurs.

The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Measure numbers 13, 15, 17, and 19 are explicitly labeled above the staves. Measure 21 begins with a repeat sign and a "2." above the electric guitar staff, indicating a continuation of the theme.

Figure 4.4.8 – “Orochimaru no Theme” (“Orochimaru’s Theme,” *Naruto*, Vol. II, track 13), mm. 13–21. This transcription is an approximation of the original. A recording is available at: https://youtu.be/szUJc6Fc_j0, 0:37.

Musical transcription of "Orochimaru no Theme" (mm. 29-33). The transcription shows two parts: "Synth Choir" and "Church Organ". The "Synth Choir" part consists of two staves: treble and bass. The "Church Organ" part also consists of two staves: treble and bass. Orange highlights and arrows point to specific melodic movements in the organ part, specifically the G-E-F section, which is compared to Bach's Toccata con Fuga.

Figure 4.4.9a – “Orochimaru no Theme” (“Orochimaru’s Theme,” *Naruto*, Vol. II, track 13), mm. 29–33.
This transcription is an approximation of the original. Highlighted sections and arrows pointing to the melodic movement G–E–F show a clear resemblance to Bach’s *Toccata con Fuga*. A recording is available at:

https://youtu.be/szUJc6Fc_j0, 1:46.

Musical score for Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Toccata con Fuga* in D minor, BWV 565, mm. 1–3 (Rust 1867). The score is for organ, with two staves labeled "Manuale" and "Pedale". The "Manuale" staff is in treble clef, and the "Pedale" staff is in bass clef. Orange highlights are placed on specific melodic segments in both staves, corresponding to the highlighted section in Figure 4.4.9a.

Figure 4.4.9b – Johann Sebastian Bach’s *Toccata con Fuga* in D minor, BWV 565, mm. 1–3 (Rust 1867). Orange highlights are to be compared with Figure 4.4.9a. Recording available to stream at: https://youtu.be/Pi0IuyTS_ic, 00:08.

The Akatsuki

The Akatsuki—an international criminal organisation—collectively become the main antagonists for the majority of *Shippūden* (Figure 4.4.10). There are several tracks associated with individual members in the organisation; however, the most played is the track “Akatsuki” (*Shippūden, Vol. I*, track 10) representing the organisation more generally. The track features the pipe organ and chant-like vocals, a similar instrumentation (as previously discussed) to Orochimaru’s theme, timbrally categorising the Akatsuki as antagonists. Curiously, the chant melody in the theme’s introduction resembles John Williams’ “Duel of the Fates” (1999) from *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (cf. Figures 4.4.11a and b).



Figure 4.4.10 – Screenshot of one of the first visual appearances of the Akatsuki in the series (*Naruto: Shippūden*, episode 2, 10:22).



Figure 4.4.11a – Chant melody and harmony of “Akatsuki” (*Shippūden*, Vol. I, track 10). This transcription is an approximation of the original track. Recording available at: <https://youtu.be/4NDfNmfdhTM>.

$\text{♩} = 66$ Em/G Esus²/A Esus⁴/F♯ Em/B B⁵/A Cm
 Ko- rah, Ma - tah, Kor - ah, Rah - tah - mah.
 Length = 4 mm.

Figure 4.4.11b – Melody reduction of John Williams’ “Duel of the Fates” from *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (1999). Figure as shown in Frank Lehman (2022). Recording available at: https://youtu.be/D_2bluVPsb0.

While it is not confirmed that the track “Duel of the Fates” was an influence in the composition of the “Akatsuki,” it is aurally highly suggestive and formally fitting. Furthermore, the tracks also line up contextually: the “Duel” track also represents an antagonist character in the *Star Wars* franchise, Darth Maul, a Sith (the antagonist group).

Even though both tracks are of different lengths (“Akatsuki” spans 2:02 and “Duel” spans 4:14), the formal structure of the “Akatsuki” is nearly identical to the first 3:07 minutes of the “Duel.” Figure 4.4.12 places the two tracks side-by-side and shows that, apart from the A section repetitions in “Duel,” all other sections line up and aurally resemble one another.

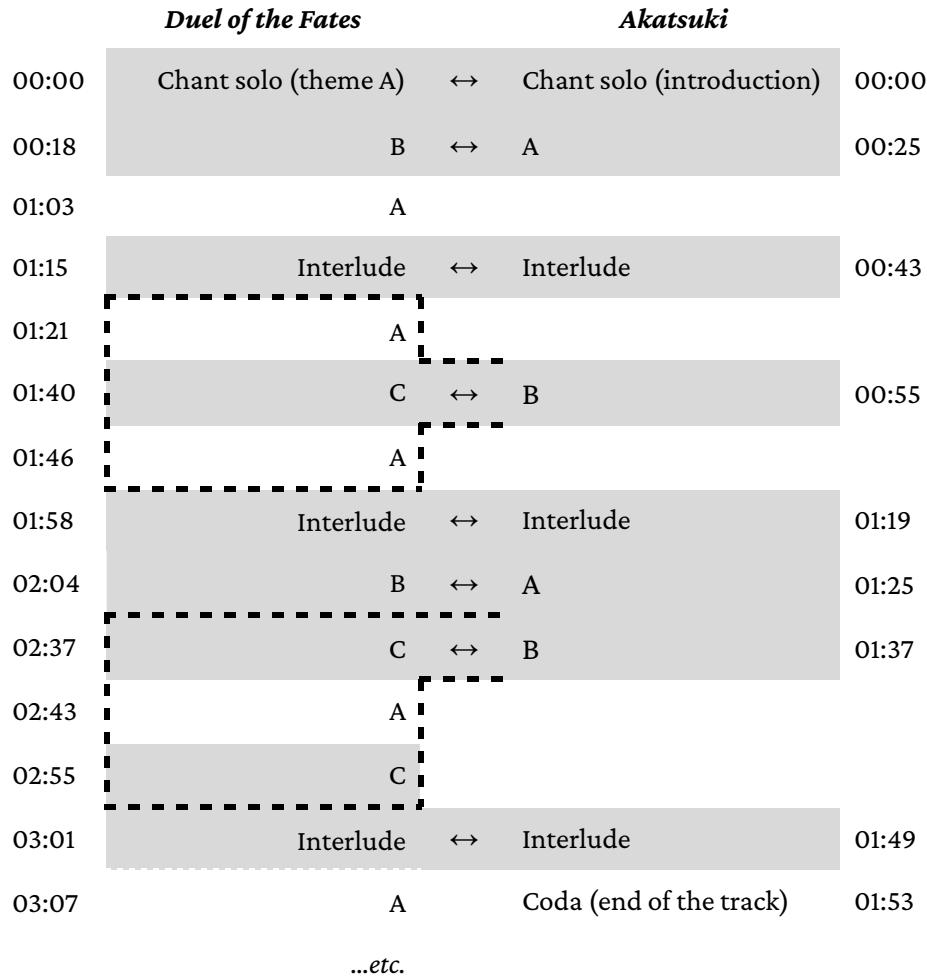


Figure 4.4.12 – Sections of Williams’ “Duel of the Fates” and the equivalent sections in the track “Akatsuki” (*Shippūden*, Vol. I, track 10).

The most strikingly similar aspects are: (1) as previously mentioned, both chant solos match in melodic gesture, (2) the interludes match in their rise in energy towards a cadential gesture (in addition, both interludes are heavy in brass timbres), (3) the “Duel” B sections and the “Akatsuki” A sections are similar in their thinning of texture and drop in energy, and (4) the “Duel” C sections are similar to the “Akatsuki” B sections in their marked rhythms in the vocals (as stated, all subsequent A section repetitions in the “Duel” are missing in the “Akatsuki,” and the B sections are thus positioned beside the “Duel” section groups A-C-A, and later, C-A-C).

Ōtsutsuki Kaguya

As one of the last antagonists of the series (the very last is Sasuke), Ōtsutsuki Kaguya (also known as *Usagi no Megami* or “Rabbit Goddess” due to her rabbit-like horns) is one of the oldest beings in the *shinobi* world and is regarded as the great legend who made it possible for the common folk to control *chakra* (Figure 4.4.13). Kaguya’s theme, “Ōtsutsuki Kaguya” (*Shippūden*, Vol. III, track 6), features a near-complete traditional Japanese orchestration, with a synth drone, *shō*, *ryūteki* (transverse flute), synth xylophone, *shamisen*, *kokyū* (string fiddle), dulcimer (or similar), vocals (Western-style chant and contemporary-style solo voice).¹²

Featuring such a traditional orchestration is quite topical: the oldest being in the world of *Naruto* is represented by the oldest musical tradition in Japan. Kaguya’s theme also includes short snippets (pastiche or sampling of an original recording) of the traditional folk song “Etenraku” (see transcription in Terauchi 2011, 34), further associating the character with what is old, traditional and highly respected.



Figure 4.4.13 – The mother of *chakra*, Ōtsutsuki Kaguya (*Naruto: Shippūden*, episode 470, 6:41).

¹² A recording of the track is available at: <https://youtu.be/oRqnJE4LzWY>.

Visually, Kaguya is presented as a Japanese traditional character: she wears a ceremonial *kimono* marked with *tomoe* (a traditional Japanese-Shintō symbol), her skin is covered in white foundation (possibly *oshoiroi*) and safflower (*beni*) lipstick, and her eyebrows are shaped in what could be interpreted as Heian-style *hikimayu*. Naruto's teacher and legendary Konoha *Sennin* (Sage), Jiraya-*sensei*, is another character with an equally traditional musical representation with matching clothing and mannerisms: his theme ("Jiraya no Theme" or "Jiraya's Theme," *Naruto*, Vol. III, track 15) begins just like an opening to a *Kabuki* theatre's first act.¹³

Concluding Thoughts

The analysis of the main character, supporting characters, and antagonist themes have shown that musical representation in the *Naruto* franchise is usually in line with the character's lore: specifically, the music is highly suggestive of certain aspects of each character's personality, their life's purpose, or how they choose to present themselves. Each individual character's personality was musically translated via the choice of genre: in the case of Naruto, his themes are energetic and heroic; Sakura's themes depict her inherent nurture and empathy towards her teammates; Sasuke's themes depict loneliness or revenge. Antagonist characters are represented mostly via specific timbres such as chant or culturally familiar tropes that usually represent villains: for example, Orochimaru's themes allude to Bach's *Toccata con Fuga* and the Akatsuki's theme alludes to the "Duel of the Fates" from the *Star Wars* franchise. Finally, the soundtrack makes use of traditional instrumentation to depict older, more traditional characters like Kaguya and Jiraya.

¹³ A recording of the track is available at: <https://youtu.be/q8hx7gKMJWI>.

4.4. Musical Representations of Different Emotions

One can argue that, in isolation, music can only represent that which is pre-conditioned (i.e., musical tropes), for example, the main opposing “musical emotions,” like a major key representing a positive emotion (e.g., happiness) and a minor key representing a negative emotion (e.g., sadness). Similar to film music, when analysing anime soundtracks against their visuals, it is possible to further specify an intended emotion within the two main major/happy and minor/sad juxtapositions, such as emotions of loneliness, despair, and longing. This section builds on the previous section, now analysing the themes for non-character features, specifically the emotions transmitted via the pairing of music and visuals in the *Naruto* franchise.

Sadness, Sorrow, Loneliness

A fan of the *Naruto* franchise is likely to describe the track “Ai to Hi” (“Sadness and Sorrow,” *Naruto*, Vol. 1, track 8) along the lines of “a tearjerker song.” The track is heard several times throughout both parts of the series, either in its original form or as a re-arrangement. The association between the track and the implied feeling of sadness is likely due to the context in which this track is heard: for example, in the scene where Naruto is in the shadow of a tree, sitting on a swing of his school playground, watching his school peers celebrating their school graduation with their parents. Naruto is an orphan, so his feelings of sadness and loneliness are visually communicated to the audience via (1) the distance between him and his peers and their parents, (2) the tree’s shadow in which Naruto sits as opposed to his peers basking in the sun, and (3) his sad facial expressions, contrasted by smiles of his peers (Figure 4.5.1).



Figure 4.5.1 – Screenshots of the first episode of *Naruto* (2002) “Enter: Uzumaki Naruto.” Available for streaming here: <https://www.crunchyroll.com/watch/GYK5PJ7R/enter-naruto-uzumaki>, 07:11.

This same scene is repeated several times as a “flashback”¹⁴—that is, the repetition of key scenes released in a previous episode—and each time it is repeated, the track “Ai to Hi” most often accompanies it, inevitably reinforcing the association between the musical content of the track and the intended emotion depicted by the visuals and plot. The track is later heard in the context of other characters’ sadness or suffering: for example, when Sakura is restrained by an enemy gripping her hair and breaks free by cutting the hair she so proudly grew to please Sasuke.¹⁵

The musical content in “Ai to Hi” (Figure 4.5.2), contains certain components which are pre-conditioned in the audience’s memory as signifiers of sadness or sorrow, like the use of a slower tempo, soft piano timbre, and a minor tonality. Other aspects which can hint at the intended emotion but are not as apparent to the audience are: (1) the absence of a leading tone in favour of a subtonic scale degree that only partially resolves the melodic line (e.g., mm. 13–14), or a less dramatic $\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ (e.g., mm. 16–17); (2) in a similar fashion, the absence of a dominant-to-tonic harmonic progression in the key of E minor, in favour of a subtonic-to-tonic progression (D major

¹⁴ Flashbacks present a compound nostalgic effect which I describe in this thesis as “nostalgic analepsis,” to be discussed later.

¹⁵ *Naruto*, episode 32, timestamp 11:28. Available to stream at: <https://www.crunchyroll.com/watch/GYP813KGY/sakura-blossoms>. As discussed in §4.4.2, this scene complies with the stereotypical view that women are mostly concerned with their love interests.

to E minor); (3) the absence of a tonic chord in the key of G major while its dominant chord is clearly emphasised (disregarding the brief cadences in mm. 9–10 and 18–19, since the melody stays on $\hat{3}$), potentially suggesting a “double tonic complex” of E minor–G major (Bailey 1985; Nobile 2020); (4) the suspensions delaying the resolution into the chord of D major (mm. 16, 18, 20 and 22), creating a more expressive or languid melodic contour; and finally, (5) another languishing moment in the descending $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ countermelody in the violins over E minor harmony (e.g., mm. 11 and 17). These more subtle features, perhaps more covert to the average audience member, play a part in subliminally transmitting a sense of non-resolution in its melody, ambiguity in its harmony, and languishing in the use of suspensions.

The figure consists of four staves of musical notation for a single instrument, likely a violin, given the context. The music is in common time and uses a treble clef. Measure 7 starts with an Em chord, followed by a C chord, a D chord, and a G chord. Measure 11 follows a similar pattern. Measure 16 begins with a C chord, followed by a D chord, an Em chord, a C chord, a D chord, a G chord, and a D chord. Measure 20 begins with a C chord, followed by a D chord, an Em chord, a C chord, a D chord, and an Am chord. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth note patterns, with some notes connected by beams and others as separate strokes. The harmonic analysis is indicated by bolded chord symbols placed above specific notes in each measure.

Figure 4.5.2 – Melodic line with chord symbols of “Ai to Hi” (“Sadness and Sorrow,” *Naruto*, Vol. I, track 8).
A recording is available at: <https://youtu.be/kr7pv2fin8>, 0:30.

Tragedy, Despair, Disaster

The track “Aikōhenno” (“Scene of a Disaster,” *Shippūden, Vol. I*, track 11) accompanies scenes of tragedy, death and, as the title translation implies, disaster. Its allusion to Samuel Barber’s *Adagio for Strings Op. 11* (1936) is apparent—this composition is by now a musical trope which is often referenced in film and television in the West to accompany scenes of death and tragedy.

Objectively speaking, the two musical examples are dissimilar in certain aspects (their tonalities, instrumentation, *tactus*, etc); however, the more subjective “sense of despair” often connected with Barber’s composition is highlighted in “Scene of a Disaster” by its repetitive use of the scalar minor third movement from the tonic (Figures 4.5.3a and b). As Deryck Cooke (1959) points out, “[t]o base a theme on the tonic, only moving out as far as the minor third, and returning immediately, is to ‘look on the darker side of things’ in a context of immobility, neither rising up to protest, nor falling back to accept. Composers have frequently used this progression to express brooding, an obsession with gloomy feelings, a trapped fear, or a sense of inescapable doom, especially when it is repeated over and over” (Cooke 1959, 140). In this example, the visuals only complement the already established feelings of doom, for example, in the final battle between Naruto and Sasuke as the whole world is slowly becoming trapped in the fake utopian illusion.¹⁶

The musical score consists of two staves of music. The top staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are eighth notes. The chord progression is Am, E, F, Em, Dm, Am, E, Am. The bottom staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are eighth notes. The chord progression is E, F, Dm, Am, E, F, Dm, E. Measure numbers 10 and 11 are indicated above the staff.

Figure 4.5.3a – Melodic line with chord symbols of “Aikōhenno” (“Scene of a Disaster,” *Shippūden, Vol. I*, track 11).
Recording available at: <https://youtu.be/cGr32lG1rdI>.

¹⁶ *Shippūden*, episode 477, timestamp 12:50. The episode is available to stream at: <https://www.crunchyroll.com/watch/GRZXQ2M3Y/naruto-and-sasuke>.



Figure 4.5.3b – Melodic line of mm. 1–8 of Samuel Barber’s *Adagio for Strings Op. 11* (1936). Recording available at: <https://youtu.be/WAoLJ8GbA4Y>.

Homesickness, Longing, Nostalgia

The track “Kikyō” (“Homecoming,” *Shippūden, Vol. I*, track 3) usually accompanies scenes which depict feelings of *furusato* (故郷, “longing for one’s hometown”), and *natsukashī* (懐かしい, “nostalgia”). This track is heard after a few minutes into the first episode of *Shippūden*, when Naruto is returning home from two and a half years of training with his *sensei*, Jiraya. Naruto passes through the Konoha Village gates and climbs a tall light post, at the top of which he (and the audience) can see a panoramic view of the village (Figure 4.5.4). Naruto shouts “*Natsukashī!* The village hasn’t changed one bit! Everyone, Naruto Uzumaki is back!” The scene is then interrupted by a short commercial break, and on its return, Naruto is still seen at the top of the light post and proceeds to rephrase his previous line, at which point, the track “Kikyō” starts playing. In this instance, “Kikyō” is complementary in the depiction of *furusato* or *natsukashī*—the audience is already aware that Naruto is returning home after a long period of time, and surely, he has been feeling homesick.



Figure 4.5.4 – Naruto arrives in *Konoha* Village. Screenshot of the first episode of *Naruto: Shippūden*, 16:06. Available for streaming here: <https://www.crunchyroll.com/watch/GRWEX4QMR/homecoming>.

From the beginning of this episode until the start of this scene, feelings of nostalgia are clearly foreshadowed: in one scene, we see Konohamaru, a young and boisterous ninja-in-the-making who is (yet again) in trouble with the villagers, just like Naruto once was; in the next scene, the camera pans through the streets, the people, and all the familiar visuals that remind the audience of the very first episode in the series. By the time “Kikyō” is heard, the audience is well-primed with feelings of nostalgia. While there is no doubt that if the track was not played in this scene, the same emotion could be evoked by the visuals and context, there are certain compositional elements in the track that make it a strong *furusato* or nostalgia signifier: its melodic shape, phrase structure, dotted rhythms and, most interestingly, the sonoric similarity with traditional Celtic folk songs on the same topic of longing. The latter is indeed unusual; the association between Celtic folk music and the *furusato* signifier may not be immediately obvious to the viewer.

Figure 4.5.5a shows a transcription of the melodic line of “Kikyō,” and for comparison, Figure 4.5.5b shows an example that is alluding to the same *furusato* topic: William Arms Fisher’s

“Goin’ Home” (1922; an adaptation of the *Largo* movement of Antonín Dvořák’s 1893 *Symphony No. 9 Op. 95* “From the New World”).¹⁷

The musical score consists of five staves of music. The first four staves are in common time (indicated by a '4') and the fifth staff is in 12/8 time (indicated by a '12'). The key signature changes throughout the piece. Chords labeled include C, F, G, C, Dm, F, G, C, Dm, F, C, F#dim, G, C, F, G, C, Dm, F, C, and D. The melody is primarily in the soprano voice, with harmonic support from the piano or organ.

Figure 4.5.5a – Melodic line and harmony of “Kikyō” (“Homecoming,” *Shippūden*, Vol. I, track 3).

Recording available at: <https://youtu.be/9cHCkUYqmOk>.

The musical score consists of five staves of music. The lyrics are as follows:

5
Go - in' home, go - in' home, I'm a-go - in' home Qui - et like, some still day,

8
I'm jes' go' ing' home. It's not far, jes' close by, Through an o - pen door;

11
Work all done, care laid by, gwine to fear no more. Moth - er's there 'spec - tin' me,

14
Fa - ther's wait - in' too; Lots o' folk gath - re'd there, All the friends I knew,...

Figure 4.5.5b – Melodic line of William Arms Fisher’s “Goin’ Home” (1922).

Recording available at: https://youtu.be/aPC_9mxvWzk, 00:23.

¹⁷ The exact inspiration for this composition is debatable. Dvořák’s symphony theme and the lyrics to the “Goin’ Home” adaptation by Fisher are thought to be based on African-American spirituals.

Both these tunes share similar pitch collections (they are mostly pentatonic), similar melodic contour, roughly have the same phrase structure (ABA) and feature dotted rhythms, all aspects of which are idiomatic to Celtic folk music.

“Goin’ Home” is, in fact, one of the most influential songs in Japanese school music books since its record release under the name “Ieji” (“The Way Home”) in 1931 (Nishimura 2014, 15). There are several adaptations of the lyrics, the most well-known of which are the lyrics by Horiuchi Keizō (堀内敬三, 1897–1983; Nishimura 2014, 6), still drawing on the feelings of longing for home. The tune has become so embedded in Japanese culture as a signifier of *furusato* (i.e., longing and returning home) that even nowadays the same tune is played daily at 4 p.m. on the streets of Nakano City (Tokyo prefecture) to signal the children playing outside that it is time to go home.¹⁸

A Side Note: Nostalgic Analepsis

In order to advance the series’ plot but at the same time thread it with what has already been laid out in previous episodes, producers have resorted to flashbacks—also known as analepsis—to quickly reference a distant event in a previous episode. In the interest of a weekly episode broadcast with as few interruptions as possible, certain episodes contain near-complete repetitions of previous episodes, with very little plot advancement—these are usually described as non-canonical or “fillers.” In communication with a friend who has watched *Naruto* and *Shippūden* in its entirety, it became clearer that flashbacks are one of the defining characteristics they do not enjoy, but to a certain extent find it “helpful to remember what has happened some 200 episodes ago.”

¹⁸ “子どもの帰宅を促すための音楽を、毎日夕方に放送しています” (“Evening Broadcast to Encourage Children to Go Home”), *Nakano City Official Website*, October 20, 2017, <https://www.city.tokyo-nakano.lg.jp/dept/157700/d024843.html>.

Whether apparent or covert, the pre-conditioned signs which define “Ai to Hi” as sad or “Kikyō” as nostalgic come primarily from the audience’s own past experiences which may come from sources completely unrelated to the series. However, since these tracks are used throughout the series, the audience creates an inevitable association between the music and the specific context in which the music is heard; the context becomes so intertwined with the music that the feeling of “analeptic nostalgia” emerges as an extramusical connotation. To explain this, take, for example, a viewer watching the 600th episode, who is reminded of the very first episode through a flashback; the audience’s own memory from their past, as they were watching this episode for the first time, evokes a feeling of nostalgia (e.g., “I was 10 years old when I saw this episode!”). One can suspect that the further away from the current episode the flashback is coming from, the more likely it is for analeptic nostalgia to occur; however, this may only occur in long-running series such as the *Naruto* franchise.

4.5. Chapter Conclusions

This study of the *Naruto* franchise soundtrack helps us better understand how music is scored for anime. This chapter analysed several aspects of the series’ music and concluded that: (1) the series’ OPs are mostly conformant with the OP format (except in cases where the source song requires a different approach to adaptation); (2) the intended target audience gender is hinted at by specific genres in the OPs; (3) the East-West instrumentation balance in the series soundtrack is seamless and does not strike the listener as a “novelty layer” (Lavengood 2020); (4) key characters are musically represented with regards to their gender, personality and lore; and (5) emotions are often translated into the soundtrack via musical intertextuality.

In part, thanks to the long-lasting popularity of the series, the compositional methods used in the *Naruto* franchise have undoubtedly shaped viewers' expectations of anime music. Among other production members, especially prolific were the composers Masuda Toshio and Takanashi Yasuharu, the groups Musashi Project and Yaiba, and the several bands and solo artists who composed for the series' OPs and EDs. The analyses provided within this chapter are by no means exhaustive, but they cover some of the most salient compositional elements which amplify or complement storytelling.

Finally, it is highly likely that the five main points described at the beginning of this section—the OP format, musical target-audience hints, instrumentation balance, musical identities, and musical emotions or plot hints—can be found in other anime soundtracks or other aspects could be as salient and as easily distilled into a new case study. Although soundtracks containing thematic material (i.e., a theme per character/emotion/etc.) are easier to compile and analyse, other non-thematic soundtracks are potentially as easy to distil into the different categories of emotions/themes, by using the same approach used in this case study.

Among the series already mentioned in this thesis, examples of soundtracks which could expand this research are the soundtrack to *Gin Tama* (2006) by Audio Highs, for its vast musical representation of different species within this series alternative Edo Japan, and the soundtrack to *Spy x Family* (2022) by (K)NoW_NAME, for its use of different music styles such as big band, electronic music and ballads to represent different character's state of affairs, either as a happy family or as a spy/murderous family.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis concludes with a brief discussion of the topics this study has addressed over the course of three analytical chapters. But before that, I would like to emphasise that it was never the objective of this study to provide an exhaustive analysis of all musical elements used in anime soundtracks: rather, this thesis has highlighted some of the most prominent musical elements, including those discussed in Western online communities and on platforms such as YouTube and MAL in the context of public music theory. It was also not the objective of this study to reduce the field of anime music analysis to only the elements presented here: anime music, much like film music, is a broad category of multimedia music and is an eclectic genre. Anime music is undoubtedly functional in quality just like any other multimedia music genre, so depending on the anime series being analysed, we are sure to see a different musical environment.

Specific musical elements can be heard across a multitude of anime series—these are the common compositional elements presented in Chapter Two. Elements such as the “OP format,” the “Royal Road” progression, the “Japanese augmented sixth” and the Eastern and Western instrumentation balance are effective in catching the viewer’s attention, making the anime more memorable and appealing to its intended target audience. These are some of the elements that make a soundtrack sound like it was composed for anime and can be representative of Japanese pop culture. Further research is needed to include other common elements such as the use of languages (Japanese and others, usually English) to create another juxtaposition or balance between the East and the West. Another interesting topic for further analysis, broadening the field to the inclusion of more J-pop analysis, is the use of extremely fast tempos in certain J-pop subgenres such as *bōkaroido* (Vocaloid) and how this impacts the listener’s experience.

Certain aspects of the traditional side of Japanese culture can seep into the contemporary: Chapter Three shows that a blend of old and new aesthetics is at work in different anime genres. The analysis presented in this chapter enumerates some of the most prominent extramusical signs in anime soundtracks which support character and plot development. My research on extramusical signs in anime music has benefited from literature in the fields of semiotics, which will be especially pertinent to discuss in future research: specifically, the medium's effectiveness in communicating intended emotions or depicting identity, largely in the same way as other multimedia music does.

Chapter Four consolidates the knowledge laid out in the previous chapters and contextualises it by analysing the soundtrack of one of the most popular series in recent anime history, *Naruto* and its sequel *Naruto: Shippūden*. The progression between each analytical chapter presented in this study is perhaps already apparent: Chapter Two describes what one can *hear* and what is its intended meaning (e.g., the “burning” Jp⁺⁶); Chapter Three describes what one can *see* or contextually *interpret* from the interaction of visual and sonic signs which, in turn, convey a musical representation and meaning (e.g., bright timbre is *kawaii*); and finally, Chapter Four puts the theory in practice.

To sound like anime music a composition might feature some of the musical elements discussed in Chapter Two. Extramusical signs such as aesthetics, sociocultural values and identity that reference Japanese culture, further contribute to the emergence of the “anime sound,” as argued in Chapter Three. The analysis of these compositional elements and extramusical signs highlights the importance of anime music as a multimedia music genre on par with film music. Through this perspective, I hope to have made a strong case for the relevance of the topic of anime music to the disciplines of music theory and multimedia studies.

This study shows that certain tools currently used in music theory, like the “sonic functions” and semantic musical models, are effective in the analysis of multimedia music such as music for anime. In essence, it highlights its relevance to a diverse range of contemporary mediums. Recent publications in the field of pop music theory are usually limited to Western popular music from the 1960s onwards. This thesis contributes to the diversification of the field of music theory through the inclusion of contemporary non-Western genres in a multimedia context.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Two Additional Examples of the “OP Format”

<i>Original track</i>	<i>OP format</i>	<i>Sonic Function</i>
00:02 Choral Intro		
00:21 Intro cont. (post-chorus)	→ 00:00 “Call”	→ “Call”
00:36 Verse 1 (A)	→ 00:15 Verse	→ Setup
00:57 Pre-chorus 1	→ 00:36 Pre-chorus	→ Buildup
01:07 Chorus 1	→ 00:47 Chorus	→ Climax
01:27 Post-chorus 1		
01:39 Keyboard solo		
01:50 Verse 2 (B)		
02:11 Bridge 1		
02:22 Bridge 2		
02:43 Guitar 1 & 2 solo		
03:15 Interlude		
03:49 Verse 3 (C)		
04:10 Pre-chorus 2		
04:20 Chorus 2 (drop)		
04:40 Coda (based in post-chorus) →	01:07 Outro	→ Climax (cont.)

Figure 6.1 – Sectional breakdown of Linked Horizon’s “Guren no Yumiya” (紅蓮の弓矢, “Crimson Bow and Arrow”) for the anime adaptation *Shingeki no Kyojin* (進撃の巨人, “Attack on Titan” (2013). Verses are annotated with an extra letter “A,” “B” and “C,” since each verse presents completely new material. The original track is available at: <https://youtu.be/2B6nj38AdDQ>. The OP adaptation is available at: https://youtu.be/8OkpRK2_gVs.

Appendix 1 (Cont.): Two Additional Examples of the “OP Format”

<i>Original track</i>		<i>OP format</i>	<i>Sonic Function</i>
00:00	Intro	→ 00:04 Call	→ Call
00:14	Verse 1	→ 00:18 Verse	→ Setup
00:38	Pre-chorus 1	→ 00:41 Pre-chorus	→ Buildup
01:03	Chorus 1	→ 01:07 Chorus	→ Climax
01:28	Post-chorus 1		
01:43	Verse 2		
02:07	Pre-chorus 2		
02:32	Chorus 2		
02:58	Solo 1		
03:38	Chorus 3		
04:02	Coda (based in post-chorus)	→ 01:32 Outro	→ Climax (cont.)

Figure 6.2—Sectional breakdown of Kanako Itō’s “Hacking to the Gate” for the anime adaptation *Steins;Gate* (2011). The original track is available at: <https://youtu.be/ZGM90Bo3zHO>.

The OP adaptation is available at: <https://youtu.be/dd7BILZcYAY>.

Appendix 2 – Opening sequence (OP) genres and OP format in *Naruto* (2002–2007) and *Naruto: Shippūden* (2007–2017).

Naruto OPs

<i>OP number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>OP format</i>
1	“Rocks”	Hound Dog	Classic-rock	No
2	“Karuka Kanata”	Asian Kung-Fu Generation	Punk-rock	Yes
3	“Kanashimi o Yasashisa ni”	Little by Little	Pop-rock	Yes
4	“Go!!!”	Flow	Punk-rock	No
5	“Seishun Kyōsōkyoku”	Sambomaster	Alt-rock	Yes
6	“No Boy, No Cry”	Stance Punks	Punk-rock	Yes
7	“Namikaze Sateraito”	Snowkel	Indie-rock	Yes
8	“Re:member”	Flow	Punk-rock	Yes
9	“Swaying”	Hearts Grow	Jpop	Yes

Shippūden OPs

<i>OP number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Genre</i>	<i>OP format</i>
1	“Hero’s Come Back”	Nobodyknows+	Hip hop	No
2	“Distance”	Long Shot Party	Punk-rock	Yes
3	“Blue Bird”	Ikimono-Gakari	Jpop	Yes
4	“Closer”	Inoue Joe	Pop-rock	Yes
5	“Hotaru no Hikari”	Ikimono-Gakari	Jpop	Yes
6	“Sign”	Flow	Punk-rock	Yes
7	“Tōmei Datta Sekai”	Motohiro Hata	Pop-rock	Yes
8	“Diver”	Nico Touches the Walls	Pop-rock	Yes
9	“Lovers”	7!!	Pop-rock	Yes
10	“New Song”	Tacica	Pop-rock	Yes
11	“Totsugeki Rokku”	The Cro-Magnons	Punk-rock	No
12	“Moshimo”	Daisuke	Pop-rock	Yes

(cont.)

13	“Niwaka Ame ni mo Makezu”	Nico Touches the Walls	Pop-rock	Yes
14	“Tsuki no Ōkisa”	Nogizaka46	Jpop	Yes
15	“Guren”	Does	Punk-rock	Yes
16	“Silhouette”	Kana-Boon	Pop-rock	Yes
17	“Kaze”	Yamazaru	Pop-rock	Yes
18	“Line”	Sukima Switch	Jpop	Yes
19	“Blood Circulator”	Asian Kung-Fu Generation	Punk-rock	No
20	“Karanokokoro”	Anly	Jpop	No

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already greatly associated with other villain characters, the best example of which is in Terence Fisher's 1962 adaptation of *Phantom of the Opera* (the Phantom plays the piece in his pipe organ). At end of the second section of Orochimaru's theme, one can find another near-identical reference to *Toccata con Fuga* when the organ plays an ascending arpeggio and the soprano voice sings a 4–3 suspension, cadencing into D minor—a melodic contour of which is almost identical to measure 3 of the *Toccata* section, albeit with no *Tierce de Picardie* (compare highlights in Figures 4.4.9a & b).

Later, the character is mostly associated with an arrangement of the original theme, “Orochimaru ~Sentō~” (“Orochimaru ~Battle~,” *Naruto, Vol. II*, track 15): a faster version of the original theme with more punctuated rhythms, thus better suited for battle scenes. Orochimaru's theme foreshadows the themes of later antagonists, especially with the use of the pipe organ and synth choir in the themes representing the next antagonists, the Akatsuki.



Figure 4.4.7 – Screenshot of the first antagonist, Orochimaru (*Naruto*, episode 30, 14:03).