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Modulation and Chromatic Mediants in Japanese Anime Songs*

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ABSTRACT: Modulation often demarcates formal zones in Western art music, one notable example being the contrasting tonal settings of themes in sonata expositions. In popular music styles from the mid and late twentieth century, observers have likewise identified a frequent modulation of a verse in minor to its relative major upon the arrival of the thematically contrasting chorus. Following this, I characterize in this article a system of chromatic modulations found commonly in an understudied genre of modern Japanese popular music—anime songs—where sections are tonally related by minor third transpositions.

Modulations directly relate to formal structure in anime songs. The prechorus and postchorus sections operate as tonal transitions, functionally poised to establish subsequent key centers. These modulations are also harmonically diverse, using both classically normative resolutions as well as chromatically modulating cadential resolutions of dominant function sonorities. The repertory of anime songs provides excellent models for studying how harmony and tonality intersect with form in popular music.

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Introduction

[1.1] The Japanese TV anime song (*anison*) "Idol" by superduo YOASOBI (2023), set as the music to the opening credits of the drama anime *Oshi no Ko*, was a record-breaking international success. "Idol" peaked at #7 on the *Billboard* Global 200 chart, became the first Japanese popular song to top the *Billboard* Global Excl. (excluding) US chart,(1) and, as of 2024, the music video sits at over 500 million views on YouTube.(2) Despite the popularity of anime songs, this repertory is still in the early stages of discourse within the English language academic music theory community (Nazaré 2023),(3) especially when compared to scholarship on music from the other major sector of

globalized Japanese popular screen media: Japanese video games (Anatone 2023; Mc Glynn 2023; Merlini 2023; Armstrong 2021; Atkinson 2019). Recent scholarship from Maxwell Ramage (2023) and Tân Nazaré (2023) formalizes some examples of known compositional elements of anime songs, such as the verse–prechorus–chorus formal architecture,(4) the Royal Road Progression,(5) and the Japanese augmented sixth chord.(6) Outside of academic publications, anime songs have also notably drawn observers within public music theory, an area gaining academic recognition in recent *Music Theory Spectrum* articles (Rodgers 2025; Jenkins 2025). Several high-profile music theory YouTube channels such as Ryan Leach (2022) and David Bennett (2022), among others, have created videos about chord progressions in Japanese anime and video game music. These projects have often seen viewership range from several hundred thousand to several million views per video, demonstrating great public interest in Japanese popular music theory beyond academic venues. There has also been English translations of two volumes of Chino Kayano's *Japanese Music Harmony* series (2020a; 2020b) which offer extensive taxonomy and examples of harmonic schemas found in Japanese popular music. Building on the work of both academic and public-facing theorists and observers, this article aims to elucidate additional tonal, harmonic, and formal features of this repertory.

[1.2] Most modern anime songs fall under the larger eclectic genre of J-pop, which emerged during the 1990s. Although J-pop shares some musical elements with post-1960s Western pop/rock, J-pop also brandishes aesthetics novel to both these repertories as well as the older *enka*, *ryūkōka*, and *kayōkyoku* styles of Japanese vocal music popular during the first three quarters of the 20th century (Ramage 2023; Nazaré 2023; Stevens 2012; Moody 2006; and de Ferranti 2002). Anime songs are perhaps the most accessible and prevalent form of J-pop in the context of global engagement. Carolyn Stevens (2012, 30) argues that "anime seems to be the main vehicle for delivering J-pop to a worldwide audience," and Mattia Merlini (2023, 31) likewise points to anime music as being "popular worldwide… seen as quintessential products of contemporary Japanese popular culture." Increasing numbers of anime productions have been licensed for global audiences in recent years through streaming platforms such as Netflix and Crunchyroll, furthering the intercultural reach of the music genre.(7)

[1.3] While post-millennial anime songs are compositionally intertwined with J-pop (with the two terms used almost interchangeably here), it is more precise to view the convergence of the two genres as a stylistic formulation from the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, the origin of anime songs can be argued to extend further back to the early *Shōwa* era (1926–1945), where Japanese animation began featuring vocal music, as in the 1931 record talkie *Kuro Nyago* ("The Black Cat") (Itō 2015; and Hotes 2012). During the stylistic genesis of modern anime during the late *Shōwa* era (1945–1989), anime songs first emerged as a parallel current within Japanese popular music. As *kayōkyoku* gained international renown in the 1960s and 1970s through hits like Kyu Sakamoto's "Sukiyaki"—which topped the *Billboard* Hot 100 in 1963—anime like *Astro Boy* (1963) and *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974) likewise produced popular theme songs resonating with Japanese audiences well beyond the shows themselves (Itō 2015). The rise of the Japanese pop idol and voice actor (*seiyū*) industries, together with television broadcasting, digital media distribution platforms, and the advent of J-pop,(8) further integrated anime songs within Japanese popular culture. J-pop further expanded internationally throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, particularly in East and Southeast Asia (Mōri 2014; and Wai-Ming 2008), with anime songs achieving broader global visibility more recently alongside Japanese TV anime entering the Western mainstream (Daliot-Bul and Otmazgin 2017). The modern anime song repertory will be the focus of the article.

[1.4] Despite many distinctive stylistic features, which will be outlined in the next section, anime songs can nonetheless be productively examined using analytical approaches developed by Western popular music theory. Recent scholarship has focused on tonality and form in Anglophone pop/rock corpora, exploring how these musical dimensions shape genre identity.(9) Regarding tonality, Walter Everett (2004) classifies rock music into six tonal systems of varying degrees of compatibility with common-practice tonal structures. Nicole Biamonte (2010) offers modal readings of double-plagal and Aeolian progressions found in rock music that deviate from classical tonal practices, while Mark Spicer (2017) addresses how the absence or transience of tonic sonorities in popular music can manipulate tonal expectations. Studies have also commented on

the tonal ambiguity of chord progressions such as the Axis Progression (Richards 2017) and Royal Road Progression (Ramage 2023). In response, theorists have proposed adaptive frameworks including the concepts of the *double tonic complex* (Nobile 2020b) and *binary tonal system* (Ramage 2023), by which to reconcile the frequent dualist relative major-minor tonal pairings of these harmonic idioms.

[1.5] Similarly, research on form in popular music has also deepened in scope. Jay Summach (2011) traces the emergence of the verse–prechorus–chorus cycle (grounded in Everett's [1999] statement–restatement–departure–conclusion model)—and its gradual displacement of verse–chorus form. Nathan Cobb (2025) further refines this model in recent post-2015 pop songs, where Cobb defines a "compound AAB" model with rotational boundaries of each cycle defined by changes in musical texture. Cara Stroud (2022) surveys types and functions of postchoruses, while Michael Callahan (2013) identifies a common sentential lyrical-phrase structure found in the Great American Songbook. Megan Lavengood (2021) analyzes how complement and cumulative choruses add thematic variety to closing chorus repetitions.(10) Drew Nobile (2022, 2020a) assigns specific harmonic and energetic roles to the sections of the verse–prechorus–chorus rotation cycle.(11)

[1.6] Tonality and form in popular music often intersect. In a previous issue of this journal, Christopher Doll observed that the chorus of rock music is often a "predictable place at which to encounter an expressive relative-major relocation" (2011, abstract). Doll's work foregrounds not only specific harmonic gestures, but specific tonal gestures as being localized to sectional boundaries in popular styles. New work (Ramage 2023; de Clercq 2021; Nobile 2020b) has now highlighted tonal ambiguity in the relationship between relative major and minor key centers in popular music, expanding the nuance around tonal-sectional division as Doll discusses. Building on Doll's insights, this study focuses on a particular tonal strategy in anime songs—modulations by minor-third chromatic mediants and submediants—that produces sharp contrast between sections and offers more pronounced examples of tonal-sectional division.

[1.7] The analysis of chromatic mediant transformations, drawing from the work of Richard Cohn (2012) and David Kopp (2002), has seen application in studies of screen music (Murphy 2023; Heine 2018; and Lehman 2018, 2013a, 2013b) and Western popular music (Forrest 2022; 2017; and Capuzzo 2004). Theorists have also analyzed chromatic mediant transformations emerging from the Romantic-era *Musikdrama* of Richard Wagner (Bribitzer-Stull 2012; and Hunt 2007) and the Italian operas of Gioachino Rossini and others (Rothstein 2023; 2008). Jason Yin Hei Lee (2025) traces the origins of chromatic mediants of PL relation in Western art music even further back to the Baroque and Classical eras. Lee proposes the term *bifocal transition*, when the dominant in a minor key resolves to the tonic of its relative major (i.e., a V–III resolution in minor or a III–I resolution in major) around sectional boundaries. While these studies have admirably characterized chromatic mediants from a semiotic perspective—tracing musically evoked tropes and clichés in film, text expression in popular music, or the conventional narrative semantics across time and space—chromatic mediant *modulations*, and particularly their role in formal structure, remains comparatively underexplored.(12)

[1.8] This article applies prior scholarship on both form and tonality of popular music to identify normative tonal behaviors of chromatic mediant modulations found at formal boundaries in anime songs. I organize my argument here into six analytical sections: First, I discuss generic audiovisual conventions of the anime song and perform a corpus study to examine the role of tonality in formal structure. In the two subsequent sections, I dissect two closely related chromatic mediant modulation types identified from the corpus study and provide a catalog of modulation techniques in the prechorus. Afterwards, I examine the role of these chromatic mediant modulations in the postchorus and draw comparison between verse–prechorus–chorus form and sonata form. I follow by demonstrating how the normative resolutions of modal and diatonic dominants found near modulating sectional boundaries can facilitate broad expressive chromaticism outside of a traditional definition of modulation. I conclude with a brief semiotic analysis on the narrative role of chromatic mediant gestures outside of anime songs, in the cinematic soundscapes of films and video games.

Form, Harmony, and Tonality of the Anime Song

[2.1] Like YOASOBI's "Idol," many of the most popular anime songs are *opening songs*, set as the music to the title and credits sequences in Japanese television anime. These openings follow a robust structure built from a set of audiovisual tropes that has been reproduced consistently over the past three decades (Nazaré 2023). The opening song typically contains a single verse–prechorus–chorus rotation, lasting around 90 seconds. The title of the anime appears on screen during either in the intro or verse, while the song title appears during the chorus. Lyrics typically parallel the setting of the anime, and the overall style, instrumentation, and tempo of the music tend to reflect the anime genre.(13) Opening songs are often diegetic, where characters are shown on screen singing, or semi-diegetic, where one or more voice actors of the characters sing the opening song without an explicit in-universe performance.(14) Alongside these features, anime openings also draw on additional extramusical conventions in their audiovisual structure, such as placing action scenes in the chorus, introducing the extended cast and antagonists in the prechorus, and generally foreshadowing plot points of later episodes.(15) Many of the features here can be described as similar to sonata theory first-level defaults (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006), or as basal, essential features of an anime opening topic (Frymoyer 2017; Dickensheets 2012; and Ratner 1980).

[2.2] These opening tropes are so well-known that they have been parodied by anime such as the 2013 slice of life/comedy anime series *Tesagure! Bukatsu-mono*. The opening song "Stand Up!!!!," performed by the voice actors of the four main characters, features self-referential lyrics that describe the events of the opening sequence with very literal audiovisual text painting in real-time (**Video Example 1**). As a parody, "Stand Up!!!!" also implements archetypal formal and harmonic characteristics of the anime song style. The song moves through a single verse–prechorus–chorus cycle, with authentic cadences at the end of the verse and chorus sections and a half-cadence (HC) at the end of the prechorus. The diatonic I, IV, V, and vi triads frequently found in Western popular music—along with ii and iii—serve as the primary structural harmonies. Both expressive (i.e., ♭VII) as well as functional (i.e., V/ii) chromatic sonorities are also present, but they are used sparingly.

[2.3] The consistency and reproducibility in style of anime opening songs was a main motivation for this article. Although many of the audiovisual tropes of the opening are well-established anecdotally, these observations—especially this apparent consistency in musical form—have not yet been studied in a systematic manner within published music theory scholarship. Therefore, to better understand the formal setting of anime songs and elucidate additional uncharacterized formal-harmonic features, I conducted a brief corpus study. I surveyed the songs from the opening sequences of the most popular TV series on the anime database MyAnimeList, until I found one hundred songs set in a verse–prechorus–chorus form (**Appendix**).(16) As expected, most songs surveyed (92.6%, 100/108) were set in the form, truncated to a single introduction–verse–prechorus–chorus cycle with a total duration of approximately 90 seconds (**Example 1.1**). This configuration is commonly known as the "TV-size" or "OP" format of anime songs (Nazaré 2023) and is essentially a single "A" rotation of compound AABA′ form (Covach 2005). The postchorus section, which would double as the introduction of the second "A" cycle in the full-length J-pop/anime song (**Example 1.2**) can also be occasionally found in the OP format.

[2.4] Ramage (2023) proposes a relatively stable phraseological 16 + 8 + 16 measure structure for the J-pop verse-prechorus-chorus rotation (see endnote 4). Although this structure is indeed common from my own empirical understanding, the extent to which these proportions (and specific antecedent-consequent phrase relationships) operate as structural norms has not been reported. To assess this phraseology at the corpus level, I present plots of the measure counts (**Example 2.1**) and the normalized-to-tempo duration (**Example 2.2**) of sections from verse–prechorus–chorus form songs surveyed in this corpus.(17) Note that the median lengths of the verse, prechorus, and chorus suggest that the chorus is typically slightly longer than the verse, with the median prechorus length being shorter than both the verse and chorus respectively ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that, although Ramage's proposed structure is indeed a common sectional setting, the large variability in section lengths between songs point to there also being other common structures of sections in the verse-prechorus-chorus rotation in the repertory. However, the approximate 90-second total

song duration is surprisingly seldom perturbed and accommodates the variability of individual sectional durations.

[2.5] The boundary sections of each rotation cycle—the introduction and postchorus—are even more variable in length and duration than most core (verse, prechorus, and chorus) sections. The postchorus is absent in 61% of songs, and its presence appears to be related to tempo. I report boxplot distributions of tempo in **Example 2.3**: one distribution with all songs containing postchoruses, and the other with all songs where the postchorus is absent.(18) The median tempo of the distribution containing postchoruses is more than 20 BPM faster than that of the distribution without postchoruses ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that, to retain the 90-second total song duration, the postchorus may be jettisoned when the tempo is slow, or alternatively, appended on only at faster tempos.

[2.6] Video Example 1 contains one additional salient tonal-formal feature that I did not discuss: the chromatic modulation entering the chorus. As frequent modulations across sections appear as a common feature of anime songs, I sought to evaluate their presence across songs at the corpus level. For corpus analysis, I divided the modulation feature into tonal and formal aspects to review. On the tonal aspect, I reviewed the corpus for frequency of modulations and number of modulations per song. 41% of the anime songs of this corpus contained at least a single chromatic modulation, 21% contained at least 2 modulations, 7% contained at least 3 modulations, and 3% contained four modulations. Next, I assessed the incidence of specific modulation intervals by relating the closest intervallic distance between the major tonics of sections before and after a chromatic modulation. For example, a prechorus in C major moving to a chorus in B major would be given the intervallic notation *−m2*. This method discounts modulations between relative major/minor tonal centers, but as prior literature from numerous popular music scholars have argued, relative major/minor tonal centers are frequently interchanged in the context of tonality in pop/rock styles such that they do not represent true tonal departures.(19) These data are reported in **Example 3.1**. The modulation in Video Example 1 also has a formal role as it demarcates musical sections/zones like that of common-practice forms.(20) On the formal aspect, I set up formal categories to organize the modulations. I use the terms *intersectional* and *intrasectional* modulations, each in combination with the sub-rotation section(s) (intro, verse, prechorus, chorus, postchorus) where the modulation occurs. An intersectional modulation sees the tonal shift occurring either at the cadence of a sectional boundary or the downbeat of the subsequent section. Intrasectional modulations occur near an antecedent-consequent phrase transition within a section. These data are reported in **Example 3.2**.

[2.7] Several modulation intervals and sections are notable from the two grouped bar plots.(21) In particular, the +m3 and −m3 modulations combined markedly account for over half (38) of the 72 modulations. Although modulation types such as the stepwise +m2/M2 “pump up” found commonly in Western popular styles (Doll 2011) are also found here (19.4%, 14/72), they are still far from the prevalence of the +/−m3 modulations. Incidentally, +/−m3 modulations as J-pop clichés have also been independently observed by YouTube content creator akabex (2025) following the submission of this article.

[2.8] For common modulation sections, the prechorus-to-chorus modulation makes up around 45.83% (33/72) of all sectional modulations, whereas the verse-to-prechorus and intro-to-verse modulations slightly trail behind at 18.05% (13/72) and 16.67% (12/72), as the second and third most common sections respectively. Intrasectional modulation intervals are far less common than their intersectional counterparts. This high frequency of modulations associated with the prechorus point to its role as a mediator of intersectional tonal transitions, and presents a natural point of entry for subsequent tonal-sectional analyses.

[2.9] Returning to the intervals of modulation, the +/−m3 modulations share several properties when considered as two parts of a system. Firstly, transforming a major tonic triad by these intervals results in chromatic mediant and submediant triads termed the upper flat mediant and lower sharp mediant respectively by Kopp (2002). These two chromatic mediant triads, ♭III and VI, partially outline the minor third equal division of the octave. The associated modulations are additionally reciprocal to one another, as a +m3 transformation of the tonic followed by a −m3

transformation—and vice versa—will result in a return to the tonic. Lastly, the +/−m3 modulations both express a combination of a relative and parallel tonal relationship to the tonic. This is aptly shown by the neo-Riemannian *PR* and *RP* labels for the +m3 and −m3 transformations of a major triad respectively (Lehman 2013a). The upper flat mediant's tonal area is the result of moving to the relative major of the parallel minor of the global major tonic, while the lower sharp mediant's tonal area is the result of moving to the parallel major of the relative minor of a global major tonic. I will use the term *PR modulation* for the +m3 modulation and *RP modulation* for the −m3 modulation, as this terminology clarifies how these chromatic modulations as well as their transformed tonic sonorities relate to one another. The following three sections of this article consist of case studies of harmonic schemas from different anime songs used to facilitate the PR and RP modulations and their roles in establishing verse–prechorus–chorus form.(22)

The PR Modulation

[3.1] **Video Example 2**, an excerpt of the prechorus and chorus of "Terminal Terminal" performed by Emiri Katō, demonstrates a simple, normative harmonic schema of the prechorus-based PR modulation. Starting with a predominant expansion in the prechorus (Nobile 2022; 2020b), the song then begins to ascend by step in m. 5. The bass line moves chromatically into ♭VI and ♭VII by m. 7, with these sonorities functioning as predominant and dominant respectively in the tonal center of ♭III. This boundary HC then resolves into the ♭III tonic on the downbeat of the chorus, thus completing the I–♭III prechorus-to-chorus PR modulation circuit. **Video Example 3**, an excerpt of the prechorus-to-chorus of "ODDS&ENDS" performed by Hatsune Miku/ryo, contains a similar harmonic pattern and presents an example of the PR modulation in J-pop more broadly as a non-anime Vocaloid song. Instead of ♭VI, the iv chord here introduces the lowered $\hat{6}$—i.e., $\hat{4}$ in ♭III—before the sonic buildup in m. 7–12 and arriving on the dominant of ♭III as the final structural harmony of the prechorus. The PR modulation leverages expressive modal mixture as chromatic functional harmony. The ♭VI, iv, and ♭VII triads, which are often associated with backdoor progressions in jazz music such as the backdoor IV–V and backdoor ii–V (Coker 1991), are now repurposed for a genuine HC in ♭III in the PR modulation.

[3.2] Another common, and closely related schema of the PR modulation occurs where ♭VII, i.e., V/♭III, resolves deceptively into the relative minor tonic of ♭III. **Video Example 4**, the prechorus–chorus boundary modulation of TRUE's "Sincerely," contains an example of this PR pattern. Although it seems as if a P-transformation (a modulation to the parallel minor) would be the most succinct neo-Riemannian labeling of this modulation, the delayed arrival of the chorus's major tonic in m. 20 instead suggests a double tonic complex. ICHIKO's "I Say Yes" (**Video Example 5**) presents another permutation of the prechorus–chorus boundary PR modulation, with an even stronger tonicization of the parallel minor over its relative major.(23) The cadential V in m. 8 functions as V/vi in ♭III, allowing resolution into ♭III: vi on the downbeat of the chorus. The prechorus's ♭VI^7 chord in m. 5 of this example, although usually functioning as a chromatic pivot chord for ♭III (IV^7/♭III), now moves back to a diatonic ii–V cadential progression in the original E♭ major key of the prechorus. This sets up a tonally ambiguous predominant complex where the typical point of tonal departure, the arrival of lowered $\hat{6}$, is briefly evaded.

[3.3] Video Examples 2 through 5 have demonstrated three functional schemas in modulating to the upper flat mediant: using ♭VII as V/♭III to resolve into the new tonic, using ♭VII to set up a V–vi deceptive resolution in ♭III, and using V as V/vi in ♭III to lead to a half-cadence on the relative minor of ♭III. All three of these schemas additionally share the use of either ♭VI or iv^6 as a predominant on the approach to the chorus boundary to prepare the modulation with "flat-sided" sonorities. However, there are instances of direct modulation too. **Video Example 6**, from Folder 5's "Believe," contains a prechorus-to-chorus PR modulation with nearly no harmonic indicators preceding the modulation. Here, a PL transformation of the diatonic dominant results in a resolution directly into the tonic of the upper flat mediant (V–♭III). This is also a type of chromatically modulating cadential resolution commonly found in Hollywood film music (Lehman 2013a).(24)

[3.4] Prechorus-based modulations can also occur at the verse-to-prechorus boundary, or in rare cases, intrasectionally.(25) If the tonal objective of the prechorus is to bridge the PR–RP relationship between the verse and chorus in songs featuring these modulation types, the verse-to-prechorus modulation can achieve the same effect as that of the prechorus-to-chorus modulation. Konomi Suzuki's "This game" (**Video Example 7**) contains a two-part verse that moves into the tonal center of ♭III entering the prechorus. This example uses the ♭VI triad as IV/♭III in the same way as the prechorus–chorus boundary modulations in prior examples do. One notable difference, however, is that the hypermeter is shifted such that the downbeat of the prechorus introduces a predominant of the new tonal area. This shift allows the verse–prechorus boundary modulation to retain the same harmonic trajectory as Nobile's normative verse–prechorus–chorus functional circuit by containing a predominant-initiating prechorus (2022, 2020a). **Video Example 8**, AKINO's "Extra Magic Hour," has a similar prechorus harmonic-formal structure but also initiates a *second* PR transformation on the tail end of the prechorus. The ♭VI chord here quickly falls into a diatonic dominant to arrest the second "redundant" modulation. A subsequent reciprocal RP transformation then moves the diatonic dominant to the dominant of the relative minor (V–III), adding even further tonal distance from any possible modulation into a global ♭V tonal center.(26) The chorus begins with IV acting as a partial tonic via a local deceptive resolution.(27)

[3.5] The partial tonic is an idea that Ramage posits to characterize IV in the Royal Road Progression. As an off-tonic chord initiating the progression, Ramage notes the tendency of IV to display certain "tonic-like" qualities outlined by Nobile (2016), David Temperley (2011), and Daniel Harrison (1994). These include hypermetrical stress as well as the harmonization of $\hat{1}$ and $\hat{3}$—what Harrison identifies as scale degrees characterizing tonic—in IV and IV^7 respectively. The post-transformation chorus initiating IV^7 in **Video Example 9**, a prechorus-to-chorus excerpt from "Connect" by ClariS, functions as a partial tonic too. Although in Video Example 9, IV is transformed from an A♭ triad to a C♭ triad across the PR modulation, V/vi would have prepared the partial tonic initiation of the chorus in the same way as Video Example 8 had the transformation not occurred. This serves as a case of a direct PR modulation of the partial tonic. Compared to Video Example 6, which subverts the authentic resolution with a chromatically modulating cadential resolution into a PR-transformed tonic, Video Example 9 subverts the local deceptive, partial tonic V/vi–IV resolution with the substitution of a PR transformed IV.

The RP Modulation

[4.1] The RP modulation has a similar collection of harmonic gestures as its PR sibling, including resolving directly into VI or resolving to the minor submediant of VI in prechorus–chorus boundary modulations, as well as resolving to the predominant of VI in verse–prechorus boundary modulations.

[4.2] In major, the III triad—although itself not diatonic—has secondary dominant function via resolution to two diatonic sonorities: a local deceptive resolution, V/vi–IV, and a local authentic resolution, V/vi–vi (Ramage 2023). The functional principle behind RP modulation is that the modulation arises from when III does not act as a dominant of the relative minor, but rather, acts from the relative minor's parallel major (i.e., the tonic-to-tonic RP relationship, I–VI). In the same way that PR modulations use ♭VII as a functional V/♭III, RP modulations use III as a functional V/VI. **Video Example 10**, "departure!" by Masatoshi Ono, demonstrates this with a structurally archetypal prechorus-to-chorus modulation. The bass rises stepwise from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{5}$, before the RP dominant, III, sets up the resolution into the lower sharp mediant on the downbeat of the chorus.

[4.3] The local V–I resolution via III acting as V/VI is not the only way for III to distance itself functionally as the dominant of a diatonic vi. The RP modulation also frequently uses the deceptive resolution of III in the same way that PR modulations use the deceptive resolution of ♭VII. **Video Examples 11** and **12**, excerpts from Kalafina's "to the beginning" and CHEMISTRY's "Period," both respectively contain this movement, i.e., VI: V–vi. This deceptive motion is quite common in RP modulations as the harmonic function of the III triad as V/vi often already implies a tonal

preference for the relative minor as its normative dominant. In this way, resolving to the relative minor of the RP tonal center retains the minor preference in these double tonic complex systems.

[4.4] **Video Example 13**, Nana Mizuki's "No Limit," features the most functionally complex modulation here with a relative minor authentic cadence in the lower sharp mediant's tonal center by RP transforming III. Measures 7 and 8 briefly tonicize III in D, the F♯-major triad, with its own secondary dominant (VI: V/V–V), thereby seemingly establishing it as the terminal prechorus–chorus boundary dominant. A further salient RP transformation of III then transposes the dominant to a D♯-major triad, III/VI, which now sets up V/vi–vi in the global VI (B major).

[4.5] Frank Lehman (2013a) identifies the prevalence of the subtonic half-cadence (S-HC), ♭VII–V, in the Aaron Copland-inspired film music of late 1950s Westerns. When considering triadic relations, this harmonic gesture aptly receives the same neo-Riemannian label, RP, as with the RP modulations encountered here. As the frequent RP transformation of dominants in anime songs extends beyond the subtonic triad in both modulating and non-modulating settings, I use the systematic term *RP half-cadence* (RP-HC), following Lehman, to describe an umbrella phenomenon where sectional boundary dominants are transformed by RP. As one may note from the video score annotations, many of the examples here feature the RP transformation of the diatonic dominant—the V–III dominant complex—as a common harmonic gesture at the prechorus-to-chorus sectional boundary independent of modulations. When III resolves with a deceptive or authentic resolution in the major mode, RP *modulation* occurs. When III resolves instead with a minor mode deceptive or authentic resolution, there is no change of tonal centers. Video Example 13 shows that this pattern can then be extended one additional RP transformation to still stay within the orbit of the tonal area of VI, as long as a local authentic or deceptive minor resolution is used.

[4.6] Like PR modulations, RP modulations can also occur at the boundary of the verse and prechorus. **Video Example 14** contains a case of a verse–prechorus RP modulation, where a Picardy-Aeolian cadence of the verse section's consequent phrase results in a direct modulation into the new tonic (mm. 16–17). This tonic functionally doubles as V/IV and the subsequent arrival of a new predominant in the prechorus—IV in the tonal area of VI—confirms the modulation. The prechorus ends with another example of a non-modulatory RP-HC gesture via a local diatonic deceptive resolution into the chorus's partial tonic IV.

Postchorus Modulations and Formal Considerations

[5.1] In addition to prechorus modulations, postchorus modulations also contribute significantly to establishing tonal-sectional boundaries. Although postchorus modulations account for only a small number of the 72 modulations in the earlier corpus survey, only 41 of the 100 songs feature a postchorus in their OP format to begin with. Indeed, a secondary modulation *must* reciprocate the prechorus modulation to create a path back to the tonal center of the verse for the next verse–prechorus–chorus rotation in full-length songs.(28) This reciprocity is the underlying principle for why the PR/RP modulations should be considered as a system: if the verse-to-chorus transition (i.e., the prechorus) contains a modulation, the chorus-to-verse transition (i.e., the postchorus) must contain a reciprocal modulation. From the examples of either PR or RP modulating prechoruses I have identified three broad categories of common postchorus modulation types:

I. Postchoruses that stay in and end on a closed cadence in the chorus's tonal area (on any tonic or partial tonic sonority: $IV^{(7)}$, $vi^{(7)}$, or I) and chromatically leap into the verse's tonal center.

II. Postchoruses that start in the chorus's tonal center but end on an open cadence in the verse's tonal center, which then diatonically resolves entering the verse.

III. Postchoruses that immediately start in the verse's tonal center via a chromatic resolution of some chorus boundary sonority (most often a sonority with dominant function).

[5.2] **Video Example 15**, the postchorus of ICHIKO's "I Say Yes," demonstrates the archetype of a PR-RP Type-I postchorus modulation. Recall from Video Example 5 that this song contained a PR modulation from the verse-to-chorus transition, so the RP reciprocal transformation can be

expected to occur before arriving at the second cycle's verse. The HC in m. 8 at the chorus-postchorus boundary evades a cadence with I^6 before the eight-measure postchorus leads into an authentic cadence in G♭. A brief arpeggio of the dominant of VI in the second half of m. 16 sets up a chromatic pivot chord (V/VI) to functionally resolve into the verse's key of E♭, but there is little hypermetric preparation or tonal ambiguity leading up to this chromatic modulation. The postchorus stays completely within the chorus's tonal area.

[5.3] **Video Example 16**, the postchorus transition of Nana Mizuki's "Fearless Hero," demonstrates the archetype of a PR-RP Type-II postchorus modulation. The reciprocal postchorus PR modulation closely resembles that of prechorus PR modulations seen in prior examples, using an ascending harmonic sequence leading to ♭VI and ♭VII, which act as IV and V of ♭III respectively. The HC in ♭III allows a natural deceptive resolution into vi/♭III (relative to the key of the chorus), setting up the second verse cycle. Type-II postchorus modulations contain a harmonic circuit most similar to typical prechorus–chorus modulations since the tonal transition is primed via chromatic harmony prior to the sectional boundary proper.(29)

[5.4] **Video Example 17**, the postchorus of Konomi Suzuki's "This game", demonstrates the archetype of the PR-RP Type-III postchorus modulation. This type of modulation is less comparable to prechorus types as there is almost no functional preparation for the modulation. Rather, the chorus's boundary iii here markedly resolves into vi^7/VI.(30) **Video Example 18**, the chorus-to-verse transition of Nana Mizuki's "No Limit," contains a descending bass line cliché in the final 4-bar chromatic descent of the 12-bar chorus. This leads to an open cadence on V in the chorus's key which functions as V/vi in ♭III, before resolving into the new tonal area. The local II–IV PR transformations (or IV–♭VI in a B Dorian reading) in the postchorus additionally aids in establishing a degree of harmonic bifocality via modal interchange, to ensure a more tonally seamless transition. Regardless, both Video Examples 17 and 18 still represent a category of postchorus modulations that are relatively direct.

[5.5] I have used the term "postchorus" broadly, referring to any distinct thematic or tonal instrumental section succeeding the first rotation's chorus and preceding the second rotation's verse. This follows Stroud's functional assignment, though Stroud also recognizes that prior scholarship has asserted this "formal module. . . might serve a dual function as both closing and introductory material" (2022, [2.4]). In contrast, Ramage (2023) uses the label of a second introduction for this chorus-to-verse transition, which importantly highlights the formal characteristics of the full-length song. The A rotation of compound AABA' is mapped as an intro–verse–prechorus–chorus cycle. Therefore, Ramage's labeling allows for a balanced rotation of two intro–verse–prechorus–chorus rotations (i.e., the AA in compound AABA'). This contrasts with the imbalanced rotation from the postchorus label where the first A unit contains an intro–verse–prechorus–chorus–postchorus cycle while the second A unit contains only a verse–prechorus–chorus cycle.

[5.6] One nuance that should be noted, however, is the different melodic material often encountered in the introductions of the two respective A rotations prior to the bridge. The first introduction may include material from both the chorus and "postchorus," whereas the second introduction is melodically independent.(31) With intersectional modulations, tonal areas provide some clarity between defining a postchorus versus a second introduction. As a postchorus should broadly bring closure to the chorus while a second introduction implies the beginning of the next rotation, it may be most practical to use the tonal area of the verse-to-chorus transition to dynamically assign a sectional label to this module. Songs with Type-I modulations contain a postchorus as the chorus-to-verse transition stays within the chorus's tonal area, whereas songs with a Type-III modulation contain a second introduction as the chorus-to-verse transition initiates in the verse's tonal area. Songs with Type-II modulations can be analyzed as a postchorus/introduction hybrid functional zone.

[5.7] Given these examples where the two principal thematic sections—the verse and chorus—are in two tonally distinct areas, the transitional prechorus results in a HC in the chorus key, and the postchorus provides tonal closure allowing for a return to the first tonal area (i.e., the tonal area of

the verse), the tonal-sectional structure of these examples is reminiscent of the sonata form exposition. Although sonata and verse–prechorus–chorus forms are distantly related in terms of their stylistic histories, the apparent formal similarity has been recently alluded to by several popular music scholars through use of sonata-like terminology. These terms include "transition" to describe the prechorus (Nobile 2022; and Summach 2011), "codetta" to describe types of postchoruses (Stroud 2022), "rotation" to describe the cyclical nature of compound AABA', or even the broad connection of "the presence of a contrasting middle, such as the 'B' in compound AABA or the development of a sonata" (Osborn 2023, 47–48). Tim Chenette (2017) addresses this idea most directly, where he identifies both the contrasting themes of the verse and chorus, and the "expositional" repeat of the structural A section in verse–chorus forms as mirroring the two-theme sonata exposition. Chenette highlights notable differences between these two forms as well, centered specifically around the incompatibility of tonal design.

[5.8] In the tonal design of sonata form, there are two major features which many readers will recognize from their undergraduate theory coursework: first, the specificity of key relationships between the two themes of the sonata—the tonic to dominant relationship in major or tonic to mediant relationship in minor—and second, the Sonata Principle, whereby the tonal friction between these contrasting key relationships are resolved at the recapitulation's transition via arrest of the transition's modulation. Modulating anime songs clearly reconcile this first component of the sonata tonal structure with its verse–prechorus–chorus–postchorus rotation that maps well to the P–TR–S–C rotation of the sonata. The difference is only where anime songs tend to modulate, as the specific key relations of I to ♭III or VI are not as defaulted to as the sonata's I to V in major. Even furthering the similarities in tonal plan between these distant styles, anime song sectional boundary modulations also share elements of the sonata's medial caesura (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006), namely via HCs on dominants of the emergent tonal area (at both prechorus and postchorus boundaries).(32) **Example 4** shows these features on a form graph of the verse–prechorus–chorus cycle.(33)

Harmonic Gestures of PR/RP Modulations in Broader Chromatic Contexts

[6.1] Although I have described the function of many chromatic sonorities as they relate to PR/RP modulations in the prior sections of this article, both the resolution patterns of these sonorities as well as the transformational relationship between PR/RP key centers mediate a far larger body of harmonic gestures found in anime music. Here, I will review two of these gestures: one used in modulation to distant keys, and the other used in enabling stable tonal ambiguity.

[6.2] Firstly, I'd like to summarize and present a more systematic grouping of harmonic resolution patterns from throughout the past three sections. The subtonic triad (♭VII), diatonic dominant triad (V), and major mediant triad (III)(34) are quintessential to not only PR/RP modulations, but also the primary prechorus terminal boundary sonorities in anime song styles. Biamonte (2010) maps and labels all three chords as either common tonal or modal functional dominants in popular music. Richard Bass (2007) identifies in Classical repertoire that "tonal harmonic theory recognizes three ways a diatonic seventh sonority can result in a consonant triad," referring to the authentic resolution (which comes in two flavors: major mode V^7–I and the minor V^7–i), minor mode deceptive resolution (V^7–♭VI), and major mode deceptive resolution (V^7–vi). The resolutions of these dominant sonorities in anime songs as seen in examples thus far still mostly abide by these common-practice patterns. Combining Bass and Biamonte's observations and additionally adding Lehman's (2013a) Picardy-Aeolian resolution (V–VI, a.k.a. a backdoor resolution) to this collection, these five possible resolutions of the three most common prechorus terminal boundary dominants provide a systematic way for functionally explaining most PR/RP modulations simply by how the dominant locally resolves. The table below summarizes these resolutions and their tonal implications.

Boundary dominant	Local resolution pattern	Global tonal transformation
♭VII	**Major mode authentic**	**PR (Video Ex. 2, 3)**
♭VII	Minor mode authentic	PRP into ♭iii tonal center (rar

♭VII	**Major mode deceptive**	**PR (i == vi/♭III; Video Ex. 4,**
♭VII	Minor mode deceptive	**PR sequence (Ex. 7.1)**
♭VII	Backdoor/Picardy-Aeolian	No tonal center change
V	Major mode authentic	No tonal center change
V	**Minor mode authentic**	**PR (i == vi/♭III; Video Ex. 5,**
V	Major mode deceptive	No tonal center change
V	**Minor mode deceptive**	**PR (♭VI == IV/♭III; Video Ex**
V	**Backdoor/Picardy-Aeolian**	**RP (Video Ex. 14)**
III	**Major mode authentic**	**RP (Video Ex. 10)**
III	Minor mode authentic	No tonal center change
III	**Major mode deceptive**	**RP (♯iv == vi/VI; Video Ex. 1**
III	Minor mode deceptive	No tonal center change
III	Backdoor/Picardy-Aeolian	Pump-up (partial tonic ♯IV =

[6.3] When considering the motion of the local resolution pattern, rather than the dominant sonority as it relates to a key center, a greater number of tonal areas become accessible for modulation by way of familiar chromatic gestures. In **Video Example 19**, an excerpt of an instrumental track titled "Swordland" from the popular anime *Sword Art Online* (2012), composer Yuki Kajiura leverages these patterns along with plagal progressions for modulation. Opening with an Axis progression in E, a brief plagal inflection in IV during measures 5 and 6 leads to the HC on III in measures 7 and 8. The second phrase (mm. 9–16) largely initiates in the same harmonic manner, now transformed by RP (key of C♯) via a now-aurally familiar major mode deceptive resolution of III. However, the harmonies of measures 13 and 14 now pivot into the local IV (key of F♯) with its diatonic predominants. This leads to a HC on III in the local IV, which modulates similarly by major mode deceptive resolution into the next phrase.(37) The motion across these three phrases results in a global modulation by −m2, showcasing how local coupling of these resolution patterns to other chromatic progression types may facilitate modulations beyond keys related by minor third.

[6.4] I have up to this point used the terms *transformation* and *modulation* interchangeably because every example of a transformation occurring thus far was either preparing or subverting modulation. As is the case with modal mixture though, not every chromatic mediant triad necessarily destabilizes the present tonal center, and thus, not every transformation is necessarily indicative of a modulation. I present cases here of harmonic gestures associated with chromatic mediant modulations found in anime music used within a stable tonal space.

[6.5] These harmonic gestures in certain cases can produce a tonal system I call the *chromatic double tonic complex*. In the same way that double tonic complexes reconcile the relative major/minor relationship of two possible tonic triads within a tonal area, a chromatic double tonic complex broadly reconciles the relationship between two possible chromatically distinct tonic triads. These are frequently encountered in instances where the PR-RP relationship of tonal areas overlaps in an oscillating manner. **Video Example 20**, the verse section of "Tabi no Tochū" by Natsumi Kiyoura, contains a chromatic looping chord progression: I–♭VI–♭VII–♭III–V in C♯ major, or VI–IV–V–I–III in E major. One interpretation of this progression is as a series of repeated PR-RP modulations, as each sonority is either a contextual tonic or aids in tonicizing one of the two tonal centers following the expected harmonic patterns of the PR-RP modulations.(38) In the C♯ major interpretation, ♭VI–♭VII functions as PD–D, IV/♭III–V/♭III, to set up the "PR modulation," and in the E major interpretation, III functions as V/VI to set up the "RP modulation." These are of course both remarkably familiar resolution patterns as seen in prior examples. However, the 4-cycle repetition, fast harmonic rhythm, and the intrasectional nature of this quasi-modulation all point instead to a tonally stable—albeit ambiguous—reading. In this case, I argue the C♯ and E tonal centers are better described as forming a PR-RP chromatic double tonic complex.(39)

[6.6] Another example of the PR-RP chromatic double tonic complex can be seen in the verse section of Hiroshi Kitadani's "We Are!," the well-known first opening song of the anime *One Piece* (**Video Example 21**). The antecedent phrase of the verse first establishes the two tonics, E♭ and G♭,

with PR and reciprocal RP transformations. After returning to the E♭ tonic, the song abruptly moves into a ii–V HC in G♭. This cadence then resolves via a backdoor ii–V–I into E♭ on m. 8.

[6.7] The key feature of a chromatic double tonic complex is that both tonic sonorities must oscillate between one another and be equivalently supported harmonically. Otherwise, one tonic will be subordinate to the other, and thus more succinctly explained by its relationship to the primary tonic rather than as an equal independent tonic. The specific manner by which this harmonic support is provided can vary. For instance, Video Example 20 showcases a set of repeated tonicizations mediated by the resolution of chromatic dominants (B and G♯) into their respective authentic tonics (E and C♯) while retaining a stable hybrid tonal space, whereas Video Example 21 leverages the backdoor ii–V–I to avoid modulation by resolution completely and instead supplies both key centers through direct PR and RP transformations of tonics. Another feature of chromatic double tonic complexes is that unlike their diatonic major-minor double tonic complex counterparts, these complexes are often transient and sectionally restricted as they appear in anime songs. In the case of Video Example 21, the consequent phrase within the verse section already abandons the G♭ tonic. Chromatic sonorities in this example are instead used to locally tonicize chords diatonic to E♭ (secondary dominants of vi and ii) rather than continuing the oscillating modal interchange.

[6.8] As seen from the case studies in Sections 3, 4, and 5, and the expanded modulatory utility and tonal settings of chromatic functional sonorities from this section, one may notice that many harmonic gestures here follow Nobile's framework of syntactical function in pop/rock harmony (2020a; 2016), in which the harmonic function of sonorities are derived from their role within both sectional and formal harmonic circuits. In the examples from this article, the resolution patterns of these dominant sonorities arising from their frequent placement about modulating sectional boundaries provides a level of harmonic context. Specifically, for one chord class, each of the five cataloged resolution patterns has a tonal or modal space where that pattern is diatonic, and thus, those resolutions are associated with some diatonic dominant to tonic motion. Because each set of resolutions is diatonically anchored in this sense, a given pattern can be transposed around that anchor, preserving its functional circuit regardless of any change in tonality. In this way, the *expectation* of a complete functional circuit from a normative resolution in some tonal space is fulfilled regardless of which of the five resolution routes the now syntactical dominant to tonic motion actually follows. This principle allows tonal flexibility in both modulatory function and non-modulatory expressive chromaticism. I do not suggest that these resolution patterns must necessarily occur within a particular song under multiple harmonic contexts to invite a syntactical interpretation. Rather, I argue that the widespread, genre-spanning, collection of diverse resolution patterns inherently imply contextual flexibility in hearing function. These particular diatonic and modal dominants can independently produce a set of normative resolutions, to either lead toward some local tonic function, or confirm a new tonal area.

PR/RP Modulations and Transformations in Other Popular Media

[7.1] PR/RP type modulations and transformations are also found in other styles of popular and screen music. While these transformations may lose their role in mediating musical form outside of the verse–prechorus–chorus structure, they still serve as potent harmonic drivers in fueling audiovisual buildup and climax much like the prechorus-to-chorus transition in popular songs.

[7.2] Authors have recently commented on the aesthetic link between Western cinematic scoring and Eastern screen music in anime and video games. Both draw on stylistic blending, incorporating symphonic traditions alongside electronic instruments, jazz, and world music. Merlini (2023) particularly emphasizes the eclecticism of Japanese video game music, which integrates anime influences as well as Western classical and film scoring idioms. James Mc Glynn (2023) and Richard Anatone (2023) both observe the fusion of cinematic film music idioms with extant thematic motives found in various entries of the *Final Fantasy* (1987–2025) Japanese video game series. Japanese composers such as Joe Hisaishi, known for his music in the films of Hayao Miyazaki including the academy-award winning animated film *Spirited Away* (2001), likewise has

scored video games such as the *Ni no Kuni* series (2013–2021) applying similar harmonic, instrumental, and motivic aesthetics from film scores.(40)

[7.3] In line with this, soundtracks in film and video games, in both the East and West unsurprisingly make use of these PR/RP transformations across similar audiovisual narrative tropes. Sean Atkinson's work (2019) conceptualizes the soaring topic from film and video game scores. Atkinson associates certain harmonic features, namely the Lydian II triad and raised $\hat{4}$, with the transcendence of flight, following Tom Schneller's earlier work (2013) which observes John Williams's use of modal interchange between the Lydian and Ionian modes in filmic flight scenes. In Scheller's transcriptions, Williams frequently uses a "soaring" *leitharmonie* containing what Ramage (2020) labels as a Lydian harmonic oscillation (i.e., I–II–I *etc.*)(41) until II is instead interrupted by its Ionian counterpart, ii or ii^7 (**Example 5.1–3**).(42) The Main Theme of the anime-style role-playing video game *Genshin Impact* (2020) by composer Yu-Peng Chen has a similar harmonic schema of a Lydian oscillation disrupted by an Ionian sonority. Here, instead of II progressing to ii or ii^7, the II–IV progression reprises a familiar PR transformation (**Example 5.4**). This melody is similarly troped to "soaring" as it accompanies the player on the title screen while a passageway to the terrestrial in-game world of Teyvat extends across the clouds (**Video Example 22**). Following Atkinson and Schneller, I will refer to this motion as the *soaring PR* idiom.

[7.4] The animated cutscenes of *Genshin Impact* demonstrate how the transcendental oscillating harmonic schema and the soaring PR idiom can be situated within narrative. **Video Example 23** is an excerpt from a 2022 animated cutscene that closes out the Lantern Rite Festival, an in-game event culturally inspired by the Chinese New Year Spring Festival celebration. The away-and-back I–II–I Lydian oscillation, featuring the Main Theme melody, is markedly interrupted by IV via a soaring PR, initiating a cadential Royal Road Progression that decorates a pentatonic melody. The point of Lydian departure—the arrival of IV—is precisely timed to be visually accompanied by the release of fireworks illuminating the night sky, such that the harmonic and narrative "lift off" work in tandem.

[7.5] The IV–V–♭VI–♭VII and similar harmonic schemas found around PR modulating sectional boundaries in anime songs can also be read in the Lydian mode as I–II–♭III–IV and contains the same II–IV idiom of the soaring PR. Though these two readings are modal transpositional equivalents, II–IV does not typically play a functional role in modulation. One reason for this could be because the Lydian reading contains triads oscillating between tonic (I and ♭III) and predominant (II and IV) function, whereas the major mode PR modulation reading contains triads oscillating between predominant (IV and ♭VI) and dominant (V and ♭VII) function.(43) There is greater expectation of resolution in the reading starting on IV versus the reading starting on I. **Example 6**,(44) the introduction to "Beyond" by Daft Punk, referenced by Atkinson as a popular music exemplar of the soaring topic, loops the I–II–♭III–IV progression while retaining tonal stability.(45) Compare this example with the IV–V–♭VI–♭VII progressions found in Video Examples 2 and 16, where more explicit tonal departures occur.(46) These two transposed readings, while functionally divergent, are useful when considering the value of neo-Riemannian labels. Although function is informative of which reading to use for Roman numeral analysis, I point out their similarities to highlight that PR-transformation progressions occur in various tonal contexts (Lehman 2018).(47)

[7.6] Another interpretation of the I–II–♭III–IV or IV–V–♭VI–♭VII progressions are that they are the simplest form of a minor third ascending chromatic sequence with the model and a single copy.(48) The PR sequence can then be extended with additional copies such that the chord roots outline the minor third equal division of the octave (**Example 7.1**). This particular sequence represents a conceptualization of the octatonic scale as described by Lehman (2018). This sequence can be considered as arising from transformations of a Lydian hexachord, rather than a single triad, by PR, across the minor third division of the octave. The music production duo Two Steps from Hell, known for their compositions featured in several late 2000s to early 2010s fantasy film trailers, use a full-cycle(49) PR sequence in the track "Magic of Love" from their second public album *Archangel*. Instead of a local IV, this progression starts each model and copy with a local vi, allowing for a series of minor authentic resolutions to create a +m3 PR sequence (**Video Example 24**).(50)

Additionally, two Classical chromatic progressions can also be used to achieve a PR sequence-like effect: a sequence of enharmonic resolutions of a single fully-diminished seventh chord (Hutchinson 2022) and the *Omnibus*/chromatic wedge progression (Yellin 1998, Telesco 1998) (**Example 7.2**, **7.3**).[(51)] These two chromatic progressions, similar to PR/RP sequences, both permit resolutions into any key within the minor-third division of the octave. If these chromatic progressions are interpreted as PR/RP transformations of a dominant sonority, the PR/RP soundscape could be considered a far older harmonic phenomenon dating back to the Classical era.

[7.7] In the same way that a single PR modulation can generate harmonic energy across transitions in both screen and popular music, the use of successive PR transformations via sequences can further intensify energetic buildup. During the finale of a major narrative arc in *Genshin Impact*, the God of Wisdom, Buer, implores her people to share their knowledge and aid the player character in overcoming a nearly invincible foe (**Video Example 25**). As the camera pans through the cast of supporting allies, each offering their own analyses of the battle to the protagonist, a soundtrack filled with triadic transformations drives the cutscene to its narrative climax. Over this brief excerpt, the harmonic rhythm accelerates not only through diminution, but also through increasingly rapid transformation-based tonal shifts. The opening four measures remain within a single tonal center, followed by a PL transformation which presents two measures in ♭VI (A♭ major). A PR sequence is subsequently initiated, first moving to B major in m. 7, then PR transforming the local IV into ♭VI in m. 8. A final reciprocal RP transformation halts the sequence to harmonically stabilize the B major HC[(52)] as the cutscene ends and transitions the player into the imminent boss encounter.

Conclusion

[8.1] In this article, I have identified two common types of modulations found in anime songs and interrogated their tonal-sectional function. These modulations frequently rely on non-diatonic sonorities at sectional boundaries, drawing on their utility as dominants and predominants of distant keys to prepare functional modulations. However, tonally marked chromatically modulating cadential resolutions from dominant sonorities also occasionally occur. Intersectional modulations establish tonal boundary paradigms similar to those found in common-practice styles such as sonata form. The harmonic conventions brought about by this family of modulations may aid in novel readings of chord progressions containing extensive modal interchange and can be systematically organized and linked via analytical frameworks proposed in previous studies. While employing shared aesthetics from Western popular music as well as its parent J-pop genre, anime songs lie at the eclectic intersection of multiple musical styles. This eclecticism positions anime songs within a broader network of screen music practices, in dialogue with the harmonic palettes of film and video game music.

[8.2] Although I report their prevalence in anime songs, perhaps the more important takeaway is not so much the high frequency or even the functional analysis of the PR/RP modulations over other modulation types, but rather, that (1) intersectional chromatic modulations as a whole are a staple compositional element in this style and (2) these modulations engage reciprocally to ensure proper tonal closure and transition at boundaries within a verse–prechorus–chorus rotation cycle. Through these modulations, anime songs are ultimately able to establish harmonically rich and diverse sections but retain a globally reproducible tonal trajectory.

[8.3] I offer this study as an invitation for further exploration of J-pop within popular music theory. Recent examples from the public musicology sphere demonstrate not only the global popularity of J-pop, but also the burgeoning enthusiasm for understanding the sonic components—harmony, form, meter, rhythm, and texture—that make Japanese popular music so distinctive in its sound identity. It is important now for the academic popular music theory community to engage more deeply with these repertories, further situating J-pop and anime songs within broader, culturally inclusive theoretical and analytical conversations. I hope my contribution through this article may also support the growing dialogue between public and academic analyses of global popular musics.

Appendix

Appendix: Corpus of anime opening songs from top-ranked TV anime by MyAnimeList popularity [CSV]

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Discography

“Idol” (2023), vocals: Ikura. Songwriter: Ayase. Sony Music Entertainment Japan.

“Stand Up!!!!” (2013), vocals: Asuka Nishi, Satomi Akesaka, Karin Ogino, and Ayaka Ohashi. Songwriter: Junichi Inoue. VAP inc.

“Terminal Terminal” (2017), vocals: Emiri Katō. Composer: mito and Satoru Kōsaki. Lyricist: meg rock. Aniplex.

“ODDS&ENDS” (2012), vocals: Hatsune Miku. Songwriter: ryo (supercell). Sony Music Entertainment Japan.

“Sincerely” (2018), vocals: TRUE. Composer: Shota Horie. Lantis.

“I Say Yes” (2007), vocals: ICHIKO. Composer: Go Sakabe and Riki Arai. Lyricist: Yuriko Mori and ICHIKO. Happinet Corporation.

“Believe” (2000), vocals: Folder5 (AKINA, HIKARI, MOE, ARISA, NATSU). Composer: GROOVE SURFERS. Lyricist: Chiroru Yaho, c.close. avec tune.

“This game” (2014), vocals: Konomi Suzuki. Composer: Mitsuru Wakabayashi and EZFG. Lyricist: Yu-ki Misao, EZFG. KADOKAWA CORPORATION.

“Extra Magic Hour” (2014), vocals: AKINO and bless4. Composer: Nao Tokisawa and AKASHI. Lyricist: Shoko Fujibayashi and KANASA. flying DOG.

“Connect” (2011), vocals: Clara and Alice (ClariS). Songwriter: Sho Watanabe. Sony Music Entertainment Japan.

“departure!” (2011), vocals: Masatoshi Ono. Songwriter: Hitoshi Haba. VAP inc.

"to the beginning" (2012), vocals: Wakana, Keiko, Hikaru (Kalafina). Songwriter: Yuki Kajiura. Sony Music Entertainment Japan.

"Period" (2010), vocals: Kaname Kawabata and Yoshikuni Dōchin (CHEMISTRY). Composer: Jonas Myrin, Peter Kvint, and Egami Kōtarō. Lyricist: Kaname Kawabata. Sony Music Entertainment Japan.

"No Limit" (2015), vocals: Nana Mizuki. Composer: Jun Suyama. Lyrics: Nana Mizuki. King Records.

"Fearless Hero" (2012), vocals: Nana Mizuki. Composer: Eriko Yoshiki, Yuki Nara, and Shihori. Lyricist: Nana Mizuki. King Records.

"Swordland" (2013, from *Sword Art Online Original Soundtrack Vol. 1*), composer: Yuki Kajiura. Aniplex.

"Tabi no Tochū" (2008), vocals: Natsumi Kiyoura. Composer: Tomohiko Kira. Lyricist: Koko Komine. flying DOG.

"We Are!" (1999), vocals: Hiroshi Kitadani. Composer: Kohei Tanaka. Lyricist: Shoko Fujibayashi. NIPPON COLUMBIA CO., LTD.

"Genshin Impact Main Theme" (2020, from *Genshin Impact – The Wind and the Star Traveler*), composer: Yu-Peng Chen. Performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra. HOYO-MiX.

"Myriad of Lights" (2022, from *Genshin Impact – Fleeting Colors in Flight*), composer: Yu-Peng Chen. Performed by Art of Dragon Orchestra with guest artists. HOYO-MiX.

"Beyond" (2013), vocals: Thomas Bangalter and Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo (Daft Punk). Songwriter: Thomas Bangalter, Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo, Chris Caswell, and Paul Williams. Columbia Records.

"Magic of Love" (2011), composer: Thomas Bergersen (Two Steps from Hell). Two Steps from Hell.

"Trifaria Conscientia" (2023, from *Genshin Impact - The Shimmering Voyage, Vol. 3*), composer: Qian Ding and Yu-Peng Chen. Performed by the Budapest Scoring Orchestra with guest artists. HOYO-MiX.

Footnotes

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Materials and Methods: Japanese artist names, songs, and terms follow Hepburn romanization (*rōmaji*), and names are in Western name order (given name first, followed by surname). Data visualization and analysis were performed with the matplotlib (Hunter 2007), pandas (McKinney 2011), and seaborn (Waskom 2021) libraries in Python. Examples were aurally transcribed and engraved by the author using Sibelius version 2019.5 build 1469. Video examples were edited and produced by the author using Camtasia version 2023.02. All relevant corpus data, including additional data not reported in Examples, are provided in the **Appendix**.
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1. https://www.billboard.com/music/chart-beat/yoasobi-idol-tops-billboard-global-excl-us-chart-1235346245/.
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2. https://youtu.be/ZRtdQ81jPUQ?si=-6aXtSwPhxPZRp1I.
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3. J-pop is also discussed in the Japanese academic journal *Popyurā ongaku kenkyū* ("Popular Music Studies") (Kawamoto 2019). Although other musicology-allied disciplines have also published English-language articles on J-pop, few have focused extensively on analysis. Anime song analysis has additionally been a topical subject at recent academic conferences (Nazaré, Ai, and Falotico 2025).
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4. Ramage (2023, 2–3) provides an empirical description of sectional archetypes in the J-pop verse-prechorus-chorus rotation, stating that these rotations often "start with an instrumental introduction—a short phrase or tag. This is followed by a verse, usually sixteen measures in length, divided into two eight-measure phrases. The eight-measure phrases frequently exhibit an antecedent-consequent relationship, in which the first phrase ends on an open cadence while the second phrase ends on a closed cadence. Next, the song typically moves to a prechorus, an eight-measure transition that ratchets up the musical intensity through some combination of rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic means (faster drum hits and chord changes, dominant harmony, and ascending melody, for instance). The ensuing chorus is sixteen measures long and, like the verse, usually divides neatly into two eight-measure phrases that have identical beginnings." While Ramage's commentary provides a high-resolution breakdown of the most common harmonic and phraseological patterns within the verse-prechorus-chorus rotation, with many of these patterns reprised throughout the examples in this article, some patterns are more consistent than others across songs. See Section 2.
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5. In major mode Roman numerals: $IV^{(7)}$–$V^{(7)}$–$iii^{(7)}$–vi (a.k.a. *ōdō shinkō*); see Ramage 2023 and Nazaré 2023 (29–35).
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6. A.k.a the *Bunsū-aug* ("Fractional-augmented"), *Ikisugi* ("Extravagant"), or *Blackadder* chord (Nazaré 2023, 36–44).
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7. One of the aims of this article is to introduce a Western readership to examples from modern Japanese popular music. In line with this aim, I focus my analysis and discussion more narrowly on the repertory of anime songs instead of J-pop generally due to the accessibility of anime songs. Using anime songs as a proxy for J-pop seems to be representative of its parent genre. *Oricon*, a Japanese record charts company (similar to *Billboard*) frequently feature anime songs in their ranking charts, and top J-pop artists and groups, such as YOASOBI, Aimer, and Official HIGE DANdism produce both anime and non-anime J-pop songs. Ramage consults anime songs as the largest J-pop corpus out of his four corpora in studying the Royal Road Progression, with anime songs representing 200 of his 309 songs analyzed (2023). Additionally, the anime song is both a type of popular song as well as a type of screen music. This invites insight into the audiovisual tropes established by similar harmonic conventions in other screen media such as film and video games (Merlini 2023), which are touched upon in a later section of this article.
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8. The lyrical, acoustic, sentimental, and jazz-infused style of *kayōkyoku* arose as a cultural product of the Japanese post-war urbanization effort. These songs often reflected the optimism and hope of creating a new life in a changing world during periods of mass migration and the emergence of a growing urbanized middle class (Furmanovsky 2013). J-pop features even greater eclecticism. It adopts elements from *kayōkyoku* while incorporating faster tempos, occasional English lyrics, and electronic instruments, and has been described by scholars as being stylistically reflective Japan's new social, economic, and cultural positionality on the global stage (Stevens 2012, Toth 2008, Moody 2006).
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9. In addition to the relevant academic articles briefly reviewed here, several authors have commendably devoted monographs to these elements and more in rock music; see Nobile 2020a, Temperley 2018, Doll 2017.
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10. On the topic of sectional boundary modulations in this article and terminal choruses from Lavengood's work, I will mention that full-length anime songs regularly use pump-up modulations boundary to the tonally contrasting final chorus. This is a technique that likely originates from 1970s and 1980s Anglophone pop (Ricci 2017).
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11. I would like to acknowledge the rapidly growing body of scholarship in popular music theory and analysis, notably from new issues of this journal. Due to constraints on space and the timing of revisions while preparing the manuscript, I regret that I am unable to engage with all of the valuable recent literature in the area. I extend my apologies to authors whose work is not cited here, and I encourage readers to further explore these texts.
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12. Lehman (2013a) does feature discussion on modulating chromatic mediant movements in sections [5.1–5.8]. Lee's bifocal transitions (2025) are also a sort of "modulatory" chromatic mediant within the tonal practices of the Baroque and Classical eras as tonal transitions between major-minor relative keys *should* be considered conventional modulations. For more on this topic, see endnotes 19 and 20.
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13. For instance, action anime frequently feature fast-tempo openings with use of rock instruments in the instrumental track. Slice-of-life anime may have upbeat, mid-tempo opening songs in a major key with acoustic instrumentation. Medieval fantasy/adventure anime commonly use choirs, brass, harpsichords, church bells, and other orchestral instruments, borrowing harmonies from the Dorian and Lydian modes to create fantastical soundscapes. As with many tropes, anime opening tropes have also been used to subvert viewer expectations. A particularly common instance of this is when a lighthearted opening is juxtaposed with a dark narrative setting. Examples of this include "Connect" performed by ClariS in *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* and "Deep in Abyss" performed by Miyu Tomita and Mariya Ise in *Made in Abyss*. Both songs also incidentally feature the PR-type modulations discussed extensively in this article.
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14. YOASOBI's "Idol" in *Oshi no Ko* is an example of a diegetic opening: the in-universe idol Ai Hoshino sings on-screen at the start of the chorus. Examples of semi-diegetic openings are more prevalent, such as the various opening songs by composer Satoru Kōsaki featured in the *Monogatari* series where the voice actor of the female lead of each story arc sings the opening. Other examples include "Deep in Abyss", as Tomita and Ise voice the main character duo of *Made in Abyss*, Riku and Reg, respectively. The opening to *Angel Beats* features the character Kanade Tachibana playing the piano introduction of the opening song, "My Soul, Your Beats", showing a slightly different (but common) setting of openings with semi-diegetic music.
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15. A list of openings containing this trope can be found on the TV Tropes wiki: https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/SpoilerOpening/AnimeAndManga.
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16. This follows a similar methodology to Ramage (2023). The focus here though is not on the incident rate of the Royal Road Progression, but rather, on form and modulations.
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17. Example 2.1 and 2.2: $n = 100$, significance asterisks represent adjusted p-values of pairwise comparisons from Tukey's HSD test (NS: not significant, *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$)
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18. Example 2.3: postchorus present, $n = 41$; postchorus absent, $n = 59$. Significance asterisks represent the p-value from a one-tailed t-test.
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19. It is often difficult to isolate a single tonal center/mode for many popular songs, and very few of the musical examples from this corpus contain a distinct major or minor tonal center as they would be defined in common-practice harmony. The presence of a relative "vi" alone functioning as "tonic" does not necessarily indicate a movement to the relative minor since the Aeolian and major modes tend to be frequently interchangeable and operate under similar rules of functional harmony (see Biamonte 2010). I have elected for this article to follow six-based minor proposed by Trevor de Clercq for popular music harmonic analysis (2021) as it both removes the need to analytically resolve any sort of double tonic complex (Nobile 2020b) and facilitates comparison between relative major/minor examples with otherwise similar harmonic idioms.
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20. Throughout this article, I use the term "modulation" generally to refer to any chromatic key change (i.e., not including relative major/minor key changes for reasons discussed in the previous note), whether prepared or unprepared by pivot chords.
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21. Pearson's chi-square goodness-of-fit tests indicated both modulation intervals ($p < 0.001$, $df = 10$) and sectional areas ($p < 0.001$, $df = 8$) deviated significantly from a uniform distribution. These results reject the null hypothesis and indicate specific modulation intervals and sectional areas occur at different frequencies, respectively. Standardized residuals were used to measure the effect size of specific intervals and sectional areas and are also reported in Example 3.1 and 3.2. Negative residuals measure underrepresented intervals/sectional areas, while positive residuals measure overrepresented intervals/sectional areas.
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22. The +m3/PR transformation itself is not novel to the popular music theory literature. S. Alexander Reed identifies triadic structural harmonic progressions which exhibit a PR relationship in Western popular music, in place of typical +P4 circle of fifths progressions (2022). The melodic examples from Reed often move by step into the root of the expected +P4 sonority, which is in subtonic relationship to the +m3/PR structural harmony. Reed uses the portmanteau *sub-circle motion* to describe this phenomenon. Like Reed's examples, the sonorities found in facilitating PR/RP transformations in this corpus often carry dominant harmonic function which runs counter to Guy Capuzzo's criteria of pop-rock progressions well-modeled by neo-Riemannian operations (2004, 181)—and is the reason Reed elects not to use neo-Riemannian operations in analysis. However, I argue the clear *tonal-sectional* separation in my examples warrants the use of neo-Riemannian labels alongside Roman numerals for analysis, as this combination offers the most parsimonious account of the relationship between PR/RP-related tonal areas.
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23. The predominant initiation, stepwise motion of the bass, and subsequent arrival on lowered $\hat{6}$ though are still present as common structural features.
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24. "Believe" is originally a Japanese cover of a Eurobeat song, "DREAMIN' OF YOU" by Lolita. This is the earliest example of the PR transformation of tonal centers I have identified, and Ramage also notes the history of Eurobeat's influence on 1990s-era J-pop (2023). The local V–♭III PL transformation facilitating the global PR modulation is unusual compared to other anime song examples here, yet this exact transformation is found frequently in Western popular music (Forrest 2017) in addition to Hollywood film scores (Lehman 2013a). Additionally, this transformation gesture (literally) parallels Lee's bifocal transitions in Baroque and Classical repertories (2025). Because the prechorus of Video Example 6 is in a major key, the PL motion of the sectional boundary resolution, which in Lee's examples led to an R modulation, instead leads here to a PR modulation.
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25. See examples such as “Shinzou wo Sasageyo!” by LINKED HORIZON or Yui Horie’s “chocolate insomnia” for intrasectional prechorus PR modulations. As seen from the data in Example 3, these cases are rare and not representative of the typical tonal-sectional structure. They will not be discussed further here.
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26. “Tonal distance” here is in reference to the fact that I: V can double as ♭III: V/vi, as seen in Video Example 5, whereas a diatonic V/vi (i.e., the III triad) is separated by at least 1 additional minor third division of the octave from any plausible functional harmony in ♭III.
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27. i.e., vi: V–VI. See Ramage 2023, 10: “. . . IV expresses partial tonic function in the same way as a vi chord at a deceptive cadence”.
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28. Unless otherwise noted, I will be discussing the full-length verse–prechorus–chorus anime song rather than the OP format in this section.
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29. The verse of Video Example 16 (and the earlier Video Example 14) are cases where the double tonic complex is no longer applicable as the A minor tonal setting is unambiguously clear with a lament bass-like progression. However, I apply six-based minor in analysis here to push for a broader idiomatic inventory of modulation gestures. Notably, the postchorus harmonic progression in Video Example 16 is similar to the prechorus progression at the prechorus-chorus boundary presented in Video Examples 2, 3, and 4, despite these examples occurring in different tonal settings. I thank Cecilia Oinas for noting this analytical nuance of Video Examples 14 and 16.
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30. Note however that if III was used as a terminal dominant instead of iii, this would be akin to the relative minor-type RP modulations seen in Video Examples 11 and 12.
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31. In this case, it may be practical to subdivide the labels further as done by Nazaré: splitting up the intro into additional fragmented chorus and postchorus sections. This level of detail may come with the tradeoff of compromising the analytical integrity of the global compound AABA structure even though the macrostructure remains largely unchanged.
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32. Hepokoski and Darcy (1997, 122): “In general, a modulating [transition] in a major mode [sonata] exposition will drive toward a V: HC medial caesura.” In the same vein, modulating prechoruses in anime songs will often drive toward a ♭III: HC or VI: HC, and postchoruses also often drive towards HCs reciprocal to their prechorus HC. Although lacking the same rhetorical break as the medial caesura, these transition-mediating harmonic gestures in anime songs parallels medial caesura teleology by orienting listeners toward the ensuing section.
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33. Though some sonata features are more homologous than others to the anime song structure, other features are notably more distinct between the two styles. For example, the musical texture of chorus-centric popular music which builds across the verse-prechorus-chorus cycle (Nobile 2022) is in stark contrast to the subordinacy of the secondary theme in the sonata. I thank Cecilia Oinas for her helpful comments in this section.
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34. Note that ♭VII and III are PR and RP transformations of the diatonic dominant respectively. In this instance, I prefer to use a descriptive term (“subtonic,” “diatonic dominant,” “major mediant”) instead of a functional secondary dominant label (V/♭III, V/I, V/vi or V/VI, etc.) so to focus on their common resolutions in a local rather than global tonal context.
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35. Seen in PR-like sequences, see Video Example 24 (the second "modulation").
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36. See the prechorus–chorus modulation in YOASOBI's "Idol" (2023), 0:45–0:55.
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37. As this example traverses the boundary between sharp and flat keys in the circle of fifths, RP-modulating from F♯ to D♯ is more parsimoniously notated in the key of E♭.
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38. This progression is also similar to the dual leading-tone loop concept proposed by Osborn (2024), though these dominants do not resolve to key areas of R relationship, but rather, PR/RP relationship.
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39. De Clercq (2021) develops the idea of the triple tonic complex in popular music—the double tonic complex plus the sonorities from the parallel minor. This is an apt term harmonically when considering the identical tertian palette of the C♯ minor mode to that of E major in this example: a triple tonic complex of C♯ major, A♯ minor, and C♯ minor does indeed explain the harmonic syntax here. However, I believe the triple tonic complex in Video Example 20 is unable to establish E as a reciprocal tonic but instead subordinates E as a key area to C♯ (as the key area built around $\hat{3}$ in C♯ minor). Consider also that E major, C♯ minor, and E minor—a triple tonic complex now centered around E—does not encapsulate the tonal space of this example. I elect not to use Kayano's idea of parallel multipolar tonality (2020a; 2020b) for this exact same reason. Kayano also contextualizes this tonal pairing derived from *parallel* key relationships ("[p]arallel [m]ultipolar [t]onality is a multipolar tonality found in a section containing keys that fluctuate between the keys in a parallel key relationship," 2020b, 39), which takes an analytical approach closer to modal mixture of the common-practice. However, Kayano does highlight that Japanese popular music often uses broad tonal pairing in an oscillatory and fluctuating manner. The differences in de Clercq (P/R), Kayano (P), and my (PR/RP) terminologies are largely semantic—I adopt the broadest and least descriptive vocabulary, whereas de Clercq and Kayano's respective vocabularies may remove unnecessary analytical abstraction and verbosity for certain cases.
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40. While game scores from film composers offer rich avenues for studying the pervasiveness of harmonic gestures in screen media, the ludomusicological dimensions these scores traverse should not be overlooked. For instance, Stephen Armstrong (2021) notes that many fans were disappointed by Hisaishi's music in *Ni no Kuni*. Hisaishi's battle themes lacked the normative audiovisual formal conventions of action role-playing games (an opening rupture during the instanced-battle transition, a fanfare-like cadence to signify victory, and extended repetitiveness to allow for layering and looping throughout a variable battle duration [Ayers 2024]). This absence reflects differences in scoring for interactive/dynamic gameplay as opposed to structured cinematic screenplay. Here, I draw attention to the non-interactive component of animated video game cutscenes for more appropriate comparisons to film scores.
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41. Example 5.2 (Yoda's Theme from *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* [1980]) is the best exemplar of this modal oscillation. Example 5.1 and 5.3 can be interpreted as partial or incomplete oscillations as they do not move back to tonic prior to modal departure. See Ramage 2020 for further discussion on modal oscillations.
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42. Transcriptions (5.1, 5.2, 5.3) are partially adapted from Schneller 2013 with additional annotations.
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43. All four of these PR transformations fall under the standard paradigms of Reed's "Sub-Circle Motion" (2022, [2.1.1–3.1.8]). This Lydian versus Ionian reading debate raises the question of

whether there are only two unique paradigms, each one simply shared between the Lydian and Ionian modes—perhaps a sort of syntactical "soaring" motion.
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44. Transcription adapted from Atkinson 2019 with additional annotations.
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45. This example can be analyzed as containing a PR–RP chromatic double tonic complex with Lydian tonal centers (B Lydian and D Lydian).
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46. A top comment on the "Beyond" official YouTube video notes "the beginning makes it sound like Daft Punk want to be Pokemon [*sic*] masters" (https://youtu.be/3T0NqvdUiWI?si=KcKySrtIhcSzUmrE), which may hint at a semiotic link between this harmonic progression with East Asian video game and anime media for modern listeners.
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47. The Lydian versus Ionian reading of these progressions that begin with two major triads whose roots are separated by a major second is addressed by Brett Clement (2013). Spicer (2017) argues that Clement's examples of I–II Lydian progressions should be simply read as a IV–V progression which does not properly move to tonic (i.e., an absent tonic) in the Ionian mode. In the case of the IV–V–♭VI–♭VII and I–II–♭III–IV progressions, it is no longer possible to resolve these to a single mode, but similar arguments on whether these progressions may be heard in Lydian or Ionian can be made.
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48. Using Steven Laitz's (2012) chromatic sequence notation, the PR sequence can be written as Am3 (+M2/+m2).
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49. Because PR sequence roots outline the minor diminished 7th, after a model and three copies/transformations, the fourth copy/transformation of the sequence enharmonically returns to tonic (tonic, +m3, +dim5, +dim7, tonic). A progression that features this pattern avoids modulation globally despite sets of local modulations and is what I am referring to by a "full-cycle."
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50. I use the label "+m3" instead of "PR" for the transformation in this example because neo-Riemannian labels are specific to chord quality. The harmonically ascending sequential motion is still broadly the same.
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51. Retrogressions of these sequences lead to −m3 or RP readings, highlighting once again the reciprocity of this family of transformations.
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52. I choose not to follow Atkinson's Lydian analysis of these types of PR progressions in Video Example 25 (starting from m. 5) because of the large-scale harmonic motion to a HC in B major (rather than, for instance labeling ultimate chord as II of E Lydian). However, one may note that measures 5 and 6 present a I–II–I–II soaring transcendental oscillation if read in D♭ Lydian, which is subsequently disrupted by a PR transformation. This is very much idiomatic to prior film and video game "soaring" music examples presented here.
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