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## **An Analysis of Nobuo Uematsu's Linear Structures: The Score of Final Fantasy VI's Opera**

Daniel Comeaux

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An Analysis of Nobuo Uematsu's Linear Structures:  
The Score of Final Fantasy VI's Opera

by

Daniel James Comeaux

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Graduate School,  
the College of Arts and Sciences  
and the School of Music  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Music

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## ABSTRACT

Nobuo Uematsu, the composer of the first nine entries in the *Final Fantasy* video game series, creates sophisticated music in the operatic section of *Final Fantasy VI*. This thesis will provide a linear analysis of the music, borrowing from contrapuntal techniques of important theorists such as Heinrich Schenker and Paul Hindemith. The analysis will explain how some linear progressions play guiding roles within the music while others although heard, may not be as important. Furthermore, the most important linear structures will be shown to support the tonal identity of a movement, while important end points coincide with junctures in the programming of the game.

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## DEDICATION

To my wife, Andrea, who has been with me for every step of this process. Your encouragement gave me the drive to complete the work. I couldn't have done this without you.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>FFVI</i>	<i>Final Fantasy VI</i>
H-line	Hindemith line
NES	Nintendo Entertainment System
SNES	Super Nintendo Entertainment System
S-line	Schenker line

## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Nobuo Uematsu is a world-renowned Japanese composer known for his work on the roleplaying video game (RPG) franchise *Final Fantasy*.<sup>1</sup> Beginning a long career with *Square Inc.*<sup>2</sup> lasting from 1987 - 2004, Uematsu is the sole composer of the first nine installments of the *Final Fantasy* series.<sup>3</sup> As video game soundtracks have evolved alongside the technology of video game consoles, academic research has spread, and they have become increasingly regarded as serious as art music.<sup>4</sup> Further study of the music within Uematsu's catalog of RPG soundtracks clearly shows that he has amassed a vast amount of high-quality compositions. His oeuvre has brought critical acclaim to the video game music industry, and with it, the genre's acceptance as a serious medium like that of film soundtracks and music for the concert hall.<sup>5</sup> Among Uematsu's most popular compositions is the opera, "Maria and Draco," from *Final Fantasy VI*,<sup>6</sup> or *FFVI*. Not only did Uematsu aid in popularizing video game music, he, and other composers like

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<sup>1</sup> "G4 Icons Episode 48: Nobuo Uematsu." YouTube video, 20:55. Posted by G4Icons. August 23, 2013, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_vy4eNxTIGg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vy4eNxTIGg). This documentary presented by the G4 television channel provides insight into Uematsu's life and music. A similar documentary from by James Mielke has also been cited.

<sup>2</sup> *Square Inc.* eventually merged with *Enix Corporation*, forming *Square Enix Inc.*

<sup>3</sup> Uematsu has also composed music for games such as *Chrono Trigger* and *Blue Dragon*.

<sup>4</sup> Texts such as *Ludomusicology: Approaches to Video Game Music* (Kamp, Summers, Sweeney) and *Unlimited Replays* (Gibbons) are cited below and are representative of current video game music scholarship.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Ross, *Video Game Music* (London: TJ International Ltd, 2015), 8. This book gives a brief but convincing account of Uematsu's critical acclaim.

<sup>6</sup> Square, *Final Fantasy VI, Super Nintendo Entertainment System Video Game*, directed by Yoshinori Kitasy and Hiroyuki Ito (Tokyo, Japan, 1994). Although *FFVI* has been ported to various consoles, I played and transcribed music from the original SNES version of the game.

him essentially created an entire genre of music. Discussing Koji Kondo, the composer of *Super Mario Brothers* and *The Legend of Zelda*, Andrew Schartmann points out:

As a classical pianist, composer, and theorist who deals primarily with Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, it took me some time to realize the exceptional creativity at the heart of Koji Kondo's music. But, after developing a broader understanding of the environment in which Kondo crafted his timeless tracks, I came to appreciate how, with the support of his Nintendo colleagues, he conjured an entire genre from little more than the primordial ashes of arcade sound. By bringing an artist's touch to bear on what had been a purely functional genre, the Japanese composer prompted listeners to reconsider the artistic status of video game music.<sup>7</sup>

While Schartmann is not talking of Uematsu specifically, this statement could easily apply to him as well. In his book *Video Game Music*, Ross states that Kondo and Uematsu achieved "legendary status" in the video game music industry, and where Kondo was among the first to "take steps towards video game music being accepted as seriously as film soundtracks or even classical music itself, Uematsu was the man who grabbed the baton and sprinted for the finish line."<sup>8</sup> While Uematsu's music has been easily recognizable to those who have played *Final Fantasy* games, it wasn't until 2000 that his work earned critical acclaim. His composition "Eyes on Me," (*Final Fantasy VIII*) sung by Faye Wong, earned the "Song of the Year" award at Japan's fourteenth annual *Gold Disc Awards* in 2000.<sup>9</sup> His reputation was further solidified in May 2001 by

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Schartmann, *Koji Kondo's Super Mario Bros. Soundtrack* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015), xi. Schartmann's writing is primarily about Koji Kondo, and it provides theoretical study of various themes within the *Super Mario Brothers* series of games.

<sup>8</sup> Ross 8.

<sup>9</sup> Nobuo Uematsu, "Nobuo Uematsu Official Website," DogEarRecords.com, accessed July 1, 2019, <https://www.dogearrecords.com/profile>.

*Time Magazine*'s naming of Uematsu as one of the "Time 100: The Next Wave / Innovators." In an article titled: "In Fantasy's Loop," Christopher John Farley states:

Uematsu's music imbues Final Fantasy games with grandeur and depth, much the way John Williams' score helped propel Star Wars into hyperspace. Unlike movie music, Uematsu's supple, heartfelt tunes loop endlessly – until the user moves to a new scene. To stand up to repeated scrutiny, his work is suitably complex (he uses drums, oboes, strings, and synthesizers), but the melodic core is strong (he has released solo piano versions of some songs).<sup>10</sup>

Farley continues with a revealing quote by Uematsu saying: "If I had been composing only popular music in Japan, I would not have had the opportunity to hear from fans worldwide."<sup>11</sup>

Alongside the aforementioned song of the year award and *Time Magazine* recognition of his work with the *Final Fantasy* series, Uematsu's music has been arranged and performed in various locations throughout the world as part various music projects (*Symphonic Fantasies*,<sup>12</sup> *Distant Worlds*,<sup>13</sup> and *Final Symphony*) that showcase Nobuo Uematsu's music. In fact, in 2005 a Chicagoland Pops Orchestra concert featuring Uematsu's music sold out so quickly that it headlined as a "riot at the box office."<sup>14</sup> It is

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<sup>10</sup> Farley, Christopher John. "In Fantasy's Loop." *Time Magazine*, May 28, 2001. <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,999983,00.html>. This article is part of *Time 100: The Next Wave / Innovators*.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Information about *Symphonic Fantasies* and *Final Symphony* can be found at: <https://www.gameconcerts.com>.

<sup>13</sup> "APA Interview with Nobuo Uematsu and Arnie Roth About 'Distant Worlds' (2010)." YouTube video, posted by Asia Pacific Arts July 29, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_u1zBhxE\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_u1zBhxE_U). This interview found on YouTube provides some insight into Uematsu's musical style as well as fan reactions to an orchestra arrangement of his music: *Distant Worlds*.

<sup>14</sup> Anonymous, "They Got Game," *Strings*, Fall 2005, 12.



clear that Nobuo Uematsu's music (As well as other video game composer's music) has become incredibly popular, but the question of why one should care about video game music remains. This is easily answered. Video game music is becoming more recognizable to the broader population than music of the great musicians such as Beethoven. One need only look as far as a 2012 poll by Classic FM, that ranked the top three-hundred works of music composers. In this poll, Beethoven was ranked sixth. Nobuo Uematsu was ranked third.<sup>15</sup> With Uematsu's continual rise in popularity and musical following, it is clear that his compositions are of interest to listeners. That is not to say that popularity and recognizability guarantee artistic merit, but that the two provide adequate justification for study.

Games such as those in the *Final Fantasy* series are categorized as RPGs and are distinguished from other competitors by being larger in scope than most others, each entry easily lasting thirty to forty hours. Clarifying what an RPG entails, it should be stated that these "games allow a player to personify a single character or group of characters, the group members having been charged with fulfilling an important world-spanning quests."<sup>16</sup> Within the RPG, the player takes control of one or more characters, engages in battles with non-player characters, (NPCs) performs various side quests in order to gain levels, and builds proficiency in traits such accuracy, strength, or health of the characters. RPGs will include various characters, towns, castles, and overworld locations that often will be given their own unique musical themes.

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<sup>15</sup> Ross, x – xi.

<sup>16</sup> Winifred Phillips, *A Composer's Guide to Video Game Music* (Boston: MIT Press, 2017), 87 – 88. This book provides an explanation of video game types as well as a clear guide to video game music.

By listening to the score of *FFVI*,<sup>17</sup> one can hear that Uematsu composed over sixty separate themes for the game. In fact, by constantly using unique musical themes specific to individual characters and locations, Nobuo Uematsu's melodies are often compared to those of Richard Wagner. Ross states that "much like Richard Wagner did in his epic operas of the nineteenth century, Uematsu assigned different themes to different characters in the games, which themselves were Tolkienesque in their fantastical scope and range of characters."<sup>18</sup> Summers explains that the thematic material Uematsu uses in *FFVI* are leitmotifs that "contribute to the depiction of each of the game's main characters subsequently standing as referential symbols of those characters."<sup>19</sup> He goes on to say that "a character's musical identity is introduced before it is named or described by the on-screen text, it is the music that most distinctly provides the character with an identity."<sup>20</sup> Maugein points out that if one were to compare the games of the *Final Fantasy* series (In this case, *FFVI*) to operas, Wagner's operas would be the closest.<sup>21</sup> Just as Wagner popularized leitmotifs, Nobuo Uematsu, a composer that admits he is not

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<sup>17</sup> Nobuo Uematsu, *Final Fantasy VI: Original Sound Version* (Japan: NTT Publishing, 1994, CD). The original soundtrack from *FFVI* was released in 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Ross, 8 – 9.

<sup>19</sup> Tim Summers, "From Parsifal to the PlayStation: Wagner and Video Game Music," in *Music in Video Games*, ed. K. J. Donnelly, William Gibbons, and Neil Lerner (New York: Routledge, 2014), 207. Summers discusses the use of leitmotif in video games. This is akin to his *Cambridge Opera Journal* article: "Opera Scenes in Video Games: Hitmen, Divas, and Wagner's Werewolves."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Summers has also written a text: *Understanding Video Game Music*, attempting to furthering academic scholarship of said video game music.

<sup>21</sup> Pierre, Maugein, *The Legend of Final Fantasy VI*, ed. Nicolas Courcier and Medhi El Kanafi, trans. ITC Traductions (Toulouse, France: Third Editions, 2018), chap. 7, Kindle edition. Maugein's text was originally set in French.

an expert on the Romantic composer, creates them masterfully.<sup>22</sup> In short, by creating memorable melodic lines that are specific to characters and events, Uematsu's music is so recognizable that players want to listen to his themes even after the game is completed.

### Technical Limits of Video Game Consoles

Before Nobuo Uematsu's music can be fully appreciated, it is important to understand the technical limits in which he composed throughout the years. Uematsu has written music for several video gaming platforms including the Nintendo Entertainment System, (NES) Super Nintendo Entertainment System, (SNES) and PlayStation (PS1),<sup>23</sup> all with their individual challenges. In fact, the NES and SNES can only produce three or eight sounds through their channels at a time, respectively. Susan Collins alluded to these constraints in a 2016 interview with Uematsu, stating: "Stravinsky famously said, 'The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one's self.' Do you think that it was easier to compose for older systems?"<sup>24</sup> Note Uematsu's reply:

I think just like that. Of course, when you compose, the hardware today can handle an orchestra or rock – you can do whatever you want, so it might sound very free, but if I have to choose one or the other, I thought it was more interesting making music with the three electronic sounds.<sup>25</sup>

Uematsu's response, although specifically about the NES, gives insight into his opinion about all Nintendo-era composing. Uematsu felt a greater interest in composing within

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<sup>22</sup> Maugein, chap. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Nobuo Uematsu has also written music for gaming consoles such as the Nintendo Gameboy and computers.

<sup>24</sup> Karen Collins, *The Beep Book: Documenting the History of Game Sound* (Waterloo, Canada: Ethonal Inc., 2016), chap. 87, Kindle edition. This enlightening book is accompanied by the video documentary: *Beep: A Documentary History of Game Sound*. Collins has interviewed ninety-six video game composers as part of this project.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

the technical limitations of the NES and SNES (the consoles used for the first six installments of *Final Fantasy*) than for the freer and less-restrictive medium that came with the evolution of video game consoles. As stated previously, the SNES, the console on which *FFVI*<sup>26</sup> was originally created, allows composers to have eight sounds at one time through just as many sound channels. Composers were able to import synthesized sound files, giving them the ability to approximate real instruments. However, as Belinkie points out, “eight voices disappear quickly when they must be shared with sound effects and drum tracks.”<sup>27</sup> Despite any constraints with composing, Ervin states that the “limitations of those early 8-bit and 16-bit technologies (NES and SNES) prompted the creation of a musical vernacular that cannot be repeated.”<sup>28</sup> This can be said about Uematsu’s music in the *Final Fantasy* series. Not only did Uematsu produce hundreds of themes throughout his early works, but his melodic compositional style was closely matched to the constraints of the NES and SNES systems, as well as the *Final Fantasy* series.

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<sup>26</sup> *FFVI* has now been ported to other gaming platforms such as the *Game Boy Advanced*, *Super Nintendo Classic*, *Steam*, *Android*, and *iOS*.

<sup>27</sup> Matthew Belinkie, “Video Game Music: Not Just Kid Stuff,” *VGMusic.com*, accessed July 1, 2019, <https://www.vgmusic.com/information/vgpaper.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Ervin, *Bit by Bit: How Video Games TRANSFORMED Our World* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 100. Ervin’s text studies the changes in daily life ushered in by video games, and studies their popularity.

Uematsu's compositions within the *Final Fantasy* series, specifically the score of *FFVI*,<sup>29</sup> display the composer's aptitude for creating compelling leitmotifs via melody and combining various instrumental timbres, all while being constrained by technology. This along with Uematsu's popularity with listeners, warrants a study of his music.

### Range of Study

Nobuo Uematsu's work has been studied by others, some of whom have focused on *FFVI*, and even the entire operatic section. This is evident in the works of William Cheng, Pierre Maugein, and Ryan Thompson. Maugein's book: *The Legend of Final Fantasy VI* provides a study of the video game as a whole, with a chapter devoted to its music. Focusing primarily on the game's opera, *Thompson's* study, "Operatic Conventions and Expectations in Final Fantasy VI," argues that "the opera sequence is not merely a novelty, but rather that the entire game is organized around notions of theatrical – and especially – operatic – production."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Nobuo Uematsu, *Final Fantasy VI: Original Sound Version* (Japan: NTT Publishing, 1994, CD). The original soundtrack from *FFVI* was released in 1994.

<sup>30</sup> Ryan Thompson, Operatic Conventions in *Final Fantasy VI* in *Music in the Role-Playing Game: Heroes and Harmony*, ed. William Gibbons and Steven Reale (New York: Routledge, 2020), 117 - 128.

Likewise, William Cheng's book: *Sound Play*, sports an entire chapter devoted to the "craft, reception, and expressive possibilities of early game audio through cases of synthesized voices—specifically, the sights and sounds of an opera performance in *Final Fantasy VI*."<sup>31</sup> It should also be mentioned that other iterations of the *Final Fantasy* series have been studied by Julianne Grasso,<sup>32</sup> Jessica Kizzire,<sup>33</sup> and Gregory Rossetti<sup>34</sup>.

While others have written about Nobuo Uematsu's music and have even focused on the operatic section of *FFVI*, the research of this thesis will provide a linear analysis of the operatic section within the game, a method which has not been presented to this point. To be more clear, contrapuntal analysis techniques of important theorists such as Heinrich Schenker and Paul Hindemith will be performed. These analyses will allow an explanation with regards to how some linear progressions play guiding roles within the music while others although heard, may not be as important. Furthermore, the most important linear structures will be shown to support the tonal identity of a movement, while important end points coincide with junctures in the programming of the game. To develop this premise, this thesis will study the aforementioned operatic section of *FFVI*.

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<sup>31</sup> William Cheng, *Sound Play: Video Games and the Musical Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 57 – 92.

<sup>32</sup> Julianne Grasso, "Music in the Time of Video Games: Spelunking *Final Fantasy IV*" in *Music in the Role-Playing Game: Heroes and Harmony*, ed. William Gibbons and Steven Reale (New York: Routledge, 2020), 97 – 116. Grasso's text was first presented at the Society for Music Theory's annual conference in 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Jessica Kizzire, "The Place I'll Return to Someday: Music Nostalgia in *Final Fantasy IX*" in *Music in Video Games*, ed. K. J. Donnelly, William Gibbons and Neil Lerner (New York: Routledge, 2014), 183 – 198. Kizzire's text studies nostalgia and *Final Fantasy IX*'s return to its roots.

<sup>34</sup> Gregory Rossetti, "Overworlds, Towns, and Battles: How Music Develops the Worlds of Role-playing Video Games," PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2020. Rossetti's dissertation discusses themes from *FFIV* and *FFVI*, as well as other games.

The opera, entitled *Maria and Draco*,<sup>35</sup> acts as the driving force connecting four separate movements, “Overture,” “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere,” “Wedding Waltz,” and “Grand Finale?.” Before an analysis of Uematsu’s melodic lines and voice leading in the movements can occur, the dramatic context of the opera within *FFVI* must be reviewed.

#### Narrative of *FFVI*

The operatic section of *FFVI* begins with the protagonists searching for an airship in order to traverse the world and defeat the antagonists of the game. When they discover that Setzer,<sup>36</sup> a man who has just pledged to abduct the soprano lead from the opera: *Maria and Draco*, also owns an airship, they must find a way to procure the ship with or without his approval. Ironically, one of the main characters, Celes, bears a striking resemblance to the singer who has been threatened with abduction. In order to gain access to the airship, a plot is hatched to have Celes perform the role of Maria with the hope that she will be kidnapped. The two women switch places, and the player becomes an active participant in the opera. This sets off a twenty-five-minute sequence in which the player is introduced to the opera: “Maria and Draco.”

The first piece, “Overture,” begins with an orchestral introduction, depicting Draco, the hero, fighting in the war against the army from the opposing eastern country. Draco is immediately attacked by the opposing force, and as he recovers, the hero sings about his love, Maria. It is at this point that the player takes direct control of a main protagonist, Locke. Locke is tasked with checking on Celes before she goes on stage as

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<sup>35</sup> The opera has become so popular that a fully voiced live version was released as part of various music concerts. An example of which can be found at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laEwdeZSK5g&ab\\_channel=dekodomo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laEwdeZSK5g&ab_channel=dekodomo).

<sup>36</sup> Setzer is a future playable character within *FFVI*.

Maria. Upon finding Celes, a short conversation between the characters occurs, the first piece ends, and the second piece, “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere,” begins. It is clear that the aria begins after the war has been won by the eastern country, and Maria, played by Celes, has been taken as a bride by the winning country’s leader Ralse. In similar fashion to the first piece, Maria sings about Draco, who is presumed to be deceased. At the end of the solo, Maria is told that Ralse has requested that she come to their wedding ball. As she complies, the third piece, “Wedding Waltz,” begins. The piece begins as the characters are seen dancing, and are subsequently interrupted by non-other than Draco, who has come to rescue his love, Maria. Maria and Draco declare their love for each other, and the Ralse challenges Draco to a duel. Simultaneously, the game shifts back to Locke. While the “Wedding Waltz” is heard, the player finds a note in Celes’ dressing room stating that Ultros,<sup>37</sup> an ancillary character who has been encountered before as a comedic villain, is going to ruin the opera by dropping a four-ton weight onto the stage. Comically, the piece ends with Ultros, the antagonist, and Locke falling to the stage from the rafters, disrupting the opera. After some confusion, the final piece, “Grand Finale?” begins, the characters act as if the interruption is part of the opera, and a battle between Ultros and the protagonists begin. Upon defeating Ultros, Setzer kidnaps Celes, and takes her to his airship as planned. It is at this point that the opera concludes, the audience is asked to come back to see the resolution to the new twist, and the game continues with the next plot point in the storyline.

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<sup>37</sup> Ultros is a squid-like enemy that is found throughout *FFVI*.



## S-lines and H-lines

Throughout the operatic section, Nobuo Uematsu's musicality is displayed. The musician tends to compose using diatonic scales along with tertian harmonies, often fitting the language of common practice tonality. This is not to say that Uematsu's use of chromaticism is lacking, but rather that diatonicism and tertian chordal structures are prominent throughout his work. More importantly, Uematsu's use of melody is put on full display within the operatic section of *FFVI*.

What truly distinguishes Nobuo Uematsu's music is the sophisticated treatment of voice leading through his attention to melody by way of ascending or descending linear patterns that will be notated in this thesis as Schenker linear progressions or Hindemith step progressions. Classification of these lines draws heavily from Daniel Harrison's book: *Pieces of Tradition*. In the text, Harrison describes Hindemith lines, coined as H-lines, as step progressions that have a "directional vector,"<sup>38</sup> or having a beginning and end point. Likewise, Harrison describes Schenker lines, (Nearly identical to Schenkerian linear progressions.) or S-lines, as H-lines that are "disciplined by harmonic anchors."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Daniel Harrison, *Pieces of Tradition: An Analysis of Contemporary Tonal Music* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2016), 83.

<sup>39</sup> Harrison, 83.

The referenced “harmonic anchors” refer to the method in which they “horizontalize an underlying tonality frame, with the beginning and end points of the line belonging to hierarchically important pitches in the local overtone hierarchy (or, in a smaller scale, to notes of a local chord).<sup>40</sup> It is with Harrison’s explanations in mind, that H-lines and S-lines can be explained further below.

A Schenker line, or S-line is classified by and adheres to specific constraints, most of which are identical to Schenkerian linear progressions. In Cadwallader and Gagné’s: *Analysis of Tonal Music*, the first designation of a Schenkerian linear progression, or *Auskomponierungszug*, is described as having a definite beginning and end, and most importantly proceeding by step.<sup>41</sup> Oswald Jonas adds to the description, stating that each progression must have a “compositional unfolding of a specific interval.”<sup>42</sup> He goes on to explain that a Schenkerian linear progression is named “after the respective intervals that they traverse. The linear progression can either descend or ascend.<sup>43</sup> Further clarifying the requirements, Cadwallader and Gagné lay out a more clear definition of a linear progression stating that the line is a scalar motion that unfolds the interval or intervals of an underlying chord, most often moving within the triadic intervals of a third, fourth, fifth, sixth or octave.<sup>44</sup> In addition to this, Schenker’s use of

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>41</sup> Allen Cadwallader and David Gagné, *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007), 69. This text applies a Schenkerian approach to musical of composers from Bach to Brahms

<sup>42</sup> Oswald Jonas, *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker*, ed. and trans. John Rothgeb (New York: Schirmer Books, 1982), 62.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>44</sup> Cadwallader and Gagné, 73.

the German word *Zug*, (*Auskomponierungszug*) or the idea of ‘pulling,’ suggests a motion toward a goal,<sup>45</sup> further conveying the intent of linear progressions as lines that aid the underlying chords, having a clear ending. Considering the criteria above, to be classified as a Schenkerian linear progression a melodic line must have a clear beginning that moves toward a goal note and must move in stepwise motion of at least an interval of a third. At this point, a distinction between Schenkerian linear progressions and S-lines must be made. While the primary goal of both Schenkerian linear progressions and S-lines is chordal prolongation, each pitch within a Schenkerian linear progression must be supported by its own chordal structure; this is not always the case with S-lines.<sup>46</sup> Recalling Harrison’s statement regarding an S-line, note that an S-line will have “harmonic anchors” that will horizontalize an underlying chord via its beginning and end points. To put these assertions more clearly, a Schenkerian linear progression will have support for each pitch in the line, and whereas an S-line may have the same support, it is only required to have harmonic support for its beginning and end points. But what of types of linear progressions that do not fit into this mold? How can these be classified?

Paul Hindemith formed his own theory surrounding harmony and melody, similar to Heinrich Schenker. With regards to linear progressions, his belief is that “every melody consists of prominent tones and subordinate ones,<sup>47</sup> and a line that connects a high point, or low point to the next, without considering less important parts of the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Harrison, 83 – 84.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition Book 1*, trans. Arthur Mendel (New York: Associated Music Publishers., 1945), 193.

melody between the two points, is known as a step progression.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, melodic step progressions that cannot be classified as S-lines, but do adhere to the rules of Hindemith lines, or H-lines will be labeled as such. H-lines are somewhat similar to S-lines, in that they are stepwise lines, however they differ because they can contain non-chord-tones and do not need the support by an underlying harmony. In fact, David Neumeyer explains H-lines, clearly in his book: *The Music of Paul Hindemith*, stating that an H-line is formed by step-progressions moving one direction, that do not require harmonic support, can make use chord tones and non-chord-tones, and do not outline a specific interval, contain a set amount of pitches, or require diatonic movement.<sup>49</sup> Take note that this statement echoes Daniel Harrison's logic that H-lines are step progressions with a directional vector. To further clarify, notice the comparison of S-lines and H-lines, seen below, and the criteria for classification of both types of lines to be used while studying Uematsu's music.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> David Neumeyer, *The Music of Paul Hindemith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 67.

### S-Line Criteria

- Stepwise motion. (Vertically or Horizontal)
- Allow for Register Transfer.
- Diatonic or Chromatic Motion.
- Minimum Interval of a Third.
- May cross Instruments.
- Supported by Underlying Harmony Anchors.
- Prolongs Underlying Harmony.
- Head Note Needs To Be Supported By Goal Harmony.
- Does Not Allow for Embellishing Pitches.
- Each Pitch May Only be in One Line at a Time.

### H-Line Criteria

- Stepwise motion. (Vertically or Horizontal).
- Allow for Register Transfer.
- Diatonic or Chromatic Motion.
- No Set Interval Length.
- May Cross Instruments.
- Does Not Need Harmonic Support.
- Does Not Prolong the Underlying Harmony.
- Head Note Does Not Need To Be Supported By Goal Harmony.
- Allows for Embellishing Pitches.
- Any Pitch May Belong to Various Lines at Once.

Figure 1. S-line and H-line Criteria.<sup>50</sup>

Stated once more, Nobuo Uematsu uses the Super Nintendo Entertainment System to create a diatonic musical language that is contrapuntal, and has sophisticated voice leading via melodic motions. Analysis techniques will reveal S-lines and H-lines that function as guiding roles within the music while, the most important linear structures will be shown to support the tonal identity of a movement. It is with this assertion that the opera from *FFVI* will be studied. Through this exploration, it will be shown that not only is Uematsu's music worthy of note, but his treatment of the music is worthy of study and appreciation.<sup>51</sup>

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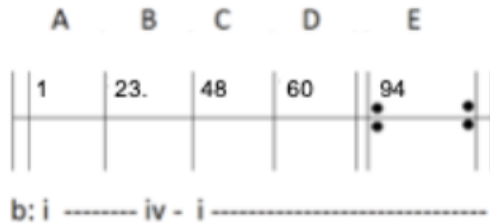
<sup>50</sup> This figure not only describes the criteria for S-lines and H-lines, but their similarities.

<sup>51</sup> Nobuo Uematsu, *Final Fantasy VI: Original Sound Version Piano Sheet Music*, arranged for piano by Asako Niwa. (Tokyo, Japan: Doremi Music Publishing Company, 1994). As I studied and transcribed Uematsu's music, I also used the piano sheet music as a guide to determine some musical parts.

## CHAPTER II – OVERTURE

### *Overture* Form

Nobuo Uematsu displays his ability to compose diatonic harmonic structures and melodic linear progressions in the first piece of *FFVI*'s operatic section: "Overture." Also, of note is Uematsu's choice of texture throughout the piece. Instruments used include horn, percussion, acoustic guitar, as well as string sounds that create a quartet.<sup>52</sup> In fact, the use of a string quartet, a staple of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, can be seen as a means in which to make the opera sound more "classical."<sup>53</sup> "Overture" is through-composed and has an overarching tonal center of B Minor. The piece is comprised of five distinct sections, seen below, sporting a variety of sophisticated musical devices. Throughout the composition, Nobuo Uematsu employs techniques such as half cadences and secondary dominants to create musical tension, aided by tonal implications via ascending and descending S-lines and H-lines, that reflects the on-screen action.



*Figure 2. FFVI "Overture" Form.*

Note. Overture is comprised of five sections. Section D and Section E can be skipped if the player completes tasks fast enough.

<sup>52</sup> Whereas the NES only had three limited channels, the SNES has eight channels that can be assigned a midi sound that should imitate an instrument.

<sup>53</sup> Cheng, 64.

## Overture Section A

Section A of “Overture” is heard from mm. 1 – 22 and acts as a hook to engage the listener. In fact, throughout the first measures of the piece, there is no onscreen dialog, and the music bears the sole responsibility of garnering the interest of the player. It is by using the aforementioned S-line and H-line table,<sup>54</sup> that multiple S-lines and H-lines can be observed in mm. 1 -4.

The image shows a musical score for measures 1 through 4 of the 'Overture' section. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music consists of a series of chords and melodic lines. Annotations include 'H-Line' and 'S-Line' labels with brackets indicating specific lines of music. Below the score, the harmonic progression is noted as: b: i, vii°, III, V/III.

Musical Example 1 *FFVI* “Overture”: mm 1 – 4, S-line and H-line graph.

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It should also be noted that Uematsu notates a i – vii – III – V/III progression in mm. 1 – 4, seen above. As the harmonic progression is heard, Uematsu notates two H-lines and one S-line. Notice that the inner S-line ascends in parallel motion with another line that provides harmonic color a third higher. Both the S-line and its parallel begin on D4 and F#4, respectively, while the H-lines move in contrary motion beginning with B2 and B4, respectively. Whereas S-lines are normally recognized as stronger sounding lines given their clear direction and harmonic support, the H-lines are heard more clearly in the top and bottom layers of the music, as opposed to the inner S-line. More importantly, the

<sup>54</sup> Table 1 can be referenced.

upper and lower H-lines aid in the establishment of B Minor. This is achieved by ascending and descending from the tonic to the dominant. The soprano voiced H-line ascends diatonically from B4 to F#5, while bass voiced H-line descends chromatically from B2 to F#2. Similar to the previously discussed half cadences within “Overture,” the melodic motion from tonic to dominant is heard in mm. 1 – 4, and throughout the A Section of the piece, denying the listener of the desired structural arrival to tonic via an authentic cadence. Despite the lack of resolution, it is clear that while the H-lines move from the tonic of B Minor to the dominant, they imply the key.

As the A-Section comes to a close, four more linear progressions are found in mm. 11-22 moving toward yet another half cadence. Notice the reduction below depicting the lines beginning on C#5, A#3, and C#3 respectively, as Uematsu ends the section.



The image displays a musical score for the first system of the 'Overture' from the film *Fred Vint* (FFVI), covering measures 11 through 22. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff (top) and a bass clef staff (bottom). The treble staff contains a melodic line with various intervals and rests, while the bass staff contains a bass line with a steady eighth-note pulse. Two types of lines are overlaid on the notes: 'S-Lines' (Smooth Lines) and 'H-Lines' (Horizontal Lines). The S-Lines are solid lines that connect notes across measures, following the contour of the melody. The H-Lines are horizontal lines that connect notes within a measure, indicating a level of pitch stability. A dashed line labeled 'RT' (Right Turn) is shown in the bass staff, connecting the notes in measures 17 and 18. The measures are numbered 11 through 22 at the top of the page.

Musical Example 2 *FFVI* "Overture": mm. 11 – 22, S-line and H-line graph.

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Of the linear progressions Uematsu notates, the inner-voiced H-line and S-line are heard in parallel motion, both beginning on A#3, with the upper line ascending from A#3 to D4, and the lower ascending from A#3 to E4. Whereas the H-line demonstrates a directional vector by climbing to D4, the S-line is of higher importance due to its ascension to E4, functioning as the seventh in the F#<sup>7</sup> chord, prolonging the original chord. The outer S-lines are clearly more important via the push toward the final half cadence of the section and the ascension to the dominant of B Minor, F#. By studying the section at the structural level, it is clear that Uematsu is moving toward the dominant via a harmonic progression V – i – V/III – III – V<sub>7</sub> omitting the fifth, and by observing the melodic content, it is clear that Uematsu uses the S-lines and H-line to push toward the dominant, further solidifying the cadential pattern, and dominant of the key, forming a half cadence. However, as with all half cadences in section A, an arrival to the tonic, continues to elude the listener until the following section.

#### *Overture Section B*

The B Section of “Overture,” heard in mm. 23 – 47, provides a resolution to the previous half cadence. It is at this point within the music that the narrator of the opera provides story material via onscreen dialog while Uematsu simultaneously notates a repeating 8-bar phrase in mm. 23 – 38. The first four measures of the phrase are heard from mm. 23 – 26, forming a looping i - ii<sup>o</sup> motive, and is followed by the final four measures which form a VI – VII – VI – ii<sup>o</sup> progression, ending the phrase, which is then repeated. A key point of interest within mm. 23 – 38, is the method in which Uematsu creates the melody.

As mentioned previously, within the architecture of the SNES, eight instrumental sounds can be heard at any given time. Nobuo Uematsu once again chooses to use the string instruments from mm. 23 – 38 to create a simple yet beautiful melody, as seen below. The melody is formed via an exchange between the string parts, alternating from D – C# to B – A – B – C#. The melody along with the underlying accompaniment, forms a repeating i – ii – VI – VII progression, alternating between the mediant and tonic pitches, reinforcing the notion that B Minor is the tonal center of the piece.



Musical Example 3 *FFVI* “Overture”: mm. 23 – 30, melodic line graph.

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Despite the reinforcement of B Minor up to m. 38, Uematsu tonicizes the key of E Minor in mm. 39 – 45. This is achieved by using the pivot chord, G Major in m. 38 to modulate. Whereas the chord acts as the submediant in B Minor, it also functions as the mediant in E Minor. It should be noted that E Minor is heard in mm. 39 – 45, when the opera’s antagonists, the members of the eastern kingdom, are viewed on screen. In this instance, the opposing force attacks Draco, the western kingdom’s military leader, and departs assuming that they have killed him. Interestingly, as soon as the antagonists exit the stage Draco recovers, and the brief tonicization of E Minor gives way to B Minor via the dominant seven chord in E Minor functioning as a pivot chord in m. 45.

The final two measures in the B Section, mm. 46 – 47, form a  $i_7 - vii^{o7}$  motion that resolves to the tonic of B Minor. The tonicization of B Minor is perfectly synced with the introduction of Draco, who is heard singing a solo about his love Maria, as the C section begins in m. 47.

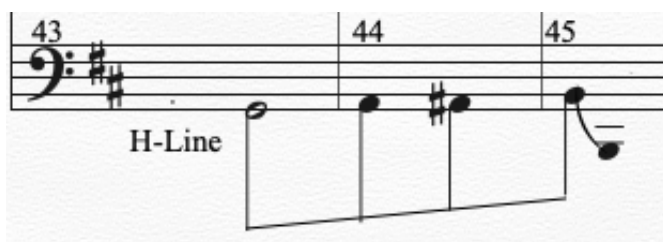
The use of E Minor in “Overture,” although brief, is significant to the piece for two reasons. First, is the introduction of the antagonist’s tonal center; this will be addressed when the third piece in the opera, “Wedding Waltz.” Second, and more importantly to Nobuo Uematsu’s compositional style, is the incorporation of two H-lines that are heard from mm. 39 – 45. Within the span of six measures, the composer uses the lines first to solidify the tonicization of E minor and then later to return to B minor. The first of the two H-lines is heard in mm. 39 – 41 performing a register transfer and ascending the E Melodic Minor Scale from a starting pitch of E2.



Musical Example 4 *FFVI* “Overture”: mm. 39 – 41, H-line graph.

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Along with a  $i - iv - V$  half cadential pattern in E Minor, heard in mm. 43 – 45, E Minor is established as the new tonal center. However, this is short-lived, as the B Minor chord in m. 45 acts as a pivot chord for the return to B Minor. Unsurprisingly, the modulation back to B Minor is supported by Uematsu’s use of another H-line in mm. 43 – 45.



Musical Example 5 *FFVI* “Overture”: mm. 43 – 45, H-line graph.

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In fact, while the E Minor half cadential pattern occurs in the harmony, the second H-line, seen above, ascends from G2 to B2 in the bass part. As the line ascends, the penultimate notes move in a stepwise manner from A#2 to B2, creating a leading tone – tonic motion. The line is then followed by a  $B^{o7} - A\#^{o7} - b$  ( $ii^{o7}/vii^{o7} - vii^{o7} - i$ ) progression in B Minor, firmly placing the piece in B Minor once again, beginning the C Section.

### *Overture* Section C

It is in the C Section of “Overture” that the protagonist, Draco, is finally heard singing to his love Maria, the heroine. In typical Nobuo Uematsu fashion, the notation is generally diatonic, aided by S-lines and H-lines that imply the tonal center. Noticing mm. 48 – 59 in the example below, it can also be observed that B Minor is once again the tonicized key, and with the exception of Uematsu’s use of an F# Minor chord in mm. 53, the harmonic progression is diatonic in its construction. In fact, for the first time in the piece, Uematsu’s progression ( $i - VI - i - VI - III - v - VI - iv - ii^{\circ} - bVII - vii^{\circ} - i$ ) forms an authentic cadence, once again providing the listener with a sense of arrival to B Minor.

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Tenor, Violin 1, Violin 2, Violin 3, and Contrabass, covering measures 48 to 59. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The Tenor part features a melodic line with various rhythmic values and accidentals. The string parts (Violin 1, Violin 2, Violin 3, and Contrabass) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and some rhythmic patterns. Below the staves, a harmonic graph indicates the chords for each measure.

Harmonic graph:

48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
b: i	VI7	i	VI7	III	v	VI	iv	ii°	♭VII	vii°	i

Musical Example 6 *FFVI* “Overture”: mm. 48 – 59, harmonic graph.

© Square Enix

Nobuo Uematsu notates five linear progressions within the C Section, four S-lines, and one H-line. Studying the H-line first, found in the top string part, it is clear that the tonal center, B Minor is implied. Ascending from mm. 48 – 54, the H-line ranges from F#4 to B4 and creates a dominant to tonic motion in the B Minor Natural scale, leading to an authentic cadence. The remaining four linear progressions found in mm. 48 – 59 are all S-lines. That is to say that they all move in stepwise motion and prolong the harmony. By studying the S-lines in the string section, it can be seen that the first inner voiced S-line, heard from mm. 48 – 58 ascends from the mediant, D4, to the dominant, F#4, prolonging the tonic chord. The remaining inner voiced S-line is heard in mm. 54 – 58, ascending from the tonic, B3 to the mediant, D4. Once again, the S-line prolongs the harmony, and while it is noteworthy, the bottom string part bears more weight than the others thus far, being heard more easily. In fact, the S-line, heard mm. 48 – 56, begins on B3 descends to C2, and then performs a register skip to B3. The line moves through the B Natural Minor scale and is yet another example of Uematsu's use of B Minor prolongation as well a very clear implication that B Minor is the intended key. The final and most prominent S-line, mm. 48 – 59, lends more credence to this idea. While some repetition of notes occurs throughout the line, the solo voice clearly descends a perfect fifth from the dominant of B Minor, F#4, to the tonic, B3. Notice the chromatic movement outlining a dominant to tonic motion, F# - E# - D - C# - B. As the section concludes all three S-lines end in m. 58, forming the B Minor chord while they prolong the tonic, and the harmonic progression forms an authentic cadence.

The image displays a musical score for measures 48 through 59, divided into two parts: Bass Solo and Strings. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Above the staves, a series of numbers (48-59) indicates the measure numbers. The Bass Solo staff (bottom) features a melodic line with various note values and rests, including a triplet of eighth notes in measure 56. The Strings staff (top) provides harmonic support with chords and some melodic fragments. Two graphs are overlaid on the score: an S-Line graph, which traces the primary melodic contour across both staves, and an H-Line graph, which groups notes into harmonic units. Specific annotations include '3rd Motive' pointing to a triplet in measure 56 of the Bass Solo and another triplet in measure 50 of the Strings. A 'RT' (ritardando) marking is present in measure 58 of the Bass Solo.

Musical Example 7 *FFVI* “Overture”: mm. 48 – 59, S-line and H-Line graph.

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### *Overture* Section D

With the solo, and plot now exposed, Section D, mm. 60 – 93, and Section E, mm. 93 – 105, act as a backdrop to the narrative, as the player once again has control of the game. The player is given the task to check on Celes, who is preparing to sing the second song in the opera, “Aria Di Mezzo Caraterre.” Interestingly, if the player acts fast enough in finding Celes, the final sections of “Overture” will be skipped<sup>55</sup>, and the second movement of the piece, “Aria Di Mezzo Caraterre” will immediately begin. Assuming that the process of leaving the concert hall and finding Celes in her dressing room takes the player a normal amount of time to complete, Section D and Section E will be heard, functioning as background music. While the harmony of Section D forms a tonic – dominant – tonic progression via a movement from the tonic, mm. 60 – 73, to a V-i-V/III-III-V/V-V secondary dominant progression, mm. 74 - 77, and a return to tonic, mm. 78 – 93, Uematsu thickens the musical texture. This is achieved by adding two horns, and a trumpet to the string quartet, most likely symbolizing the war between the two kingdoms described in the opera. As trumpets and horns are commonly featured in military music and fanfares, and the scene previously depicted is about the war between the eastern and western kingdoms, it would not be a stretch to say that the thickened texture alludes to the war and eventual resolution of conflict.

Section D sports a fascinating S-line that ascends throughout the movement via an exchange between the string and trumpet parts, ranging from mm. 60 – 89. While the harmonic structure forms a I – V – I progression beginning at m. 60, the S-line begins with the head note, B3, in the string part. The tonic chord is heard from mm. 60 – 73,

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<sup>55</sup> The player can also end *Overture* at any point through Section D and Section E.

until a clear voice crossing to the trumpet occurs in m. 74. Noticing the example below, it is clear that the Trumpet continues to ascend the B Minor Melodic Scale by sounding a C# – D – E – F# - G# - A# until m. 77. It is at m. 78, that the harmonic progression returns to the tonic once more, and Uematsu crosses instruments yet again, ending the section in m. 89, seen below.



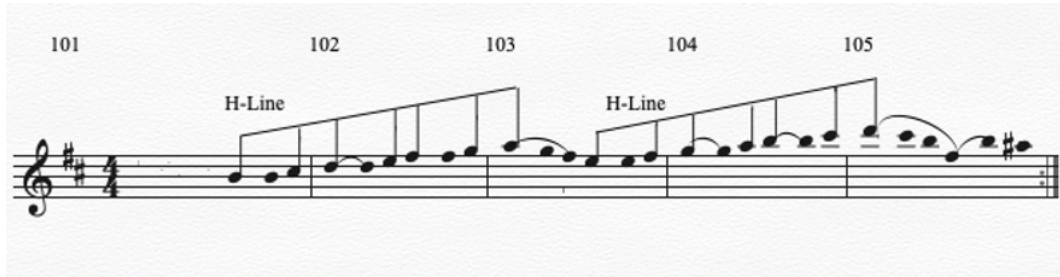
Musical Example 8 *FFVI* “Overture”: mm. 60 – 89, S-line graph.

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### *Overture Section E*

Section E begins with a completely different texture ranging from mm. 93 – 105. Instead of using traditional strings, horns, timpani, and trumpets, Uematsu notates a flute solo accompanied by acoustic guitar parts, creating a unique timbre. Similar to the previous section, Section E tonicizes B Minor and takes the role of background music. In fact, this section is written in such a way that it can continually loop until the player finally interacts with Celes, pushing toward the next scene in the opera.

The harmonic progression in mm. 93 – 105, reintroduces the listener to Uematsu's preference for notating the secondary dominant of the mediant followed by the mediant. Uematsu notates the  $V_7/III - III - V_7$  motive once again, referencing the previous iterations throughout the piece. It is also clear that the final measures of "Overture," mm. 101 – 105, contain the final H-lines. In fact, Uematsu briefly reminds the listener of the protagonist and antagonist by notating ascending H-lines that imply both B Natural Minor and E Natural Minor. With both H-lines ascending from the tonic of their respective keys, B4 and E5, to the seventh scale degree, A5 and D6, B Natural Minor and E Natural Minor are heard. However, instead of allowing either line to truly tonicize the key via a full octave motion, Uematsu notates a descent in the flute following the completion of both H-lines. Whereas the descent from the B Minor H-line leads to the beginning of the E Minor H-line, the descent at the end of the second H-line propels the flute solo to F#5, and a half cadence is formed yet again.



Musical Example 9 *FFVI* “Overture”: mm. 101 – 105, H-line graph.

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It is at this point that the section repeats, and the flute solo is heard once again. If the player does not progress the story, they will be treated to an infinite amount of half cadences in B Minor via the repetition of Section E. Once the objective is complete the movement ends, and the opera continues.

#### Conclusion

Before moving on to the next piece in the opera, “Aria Di Mezzo Caratterre,” Uematsu’s intent for “Overture” needs to be clarified. As stated previously, the composer begins the piece with a very clear tonicization of B Minor, but only half cadential patterns heard. This creates a feeling of tension and a lack of finality, that is further implied via H-lines and S-lines with dominant – tonic motions. There is a brief instance of E Minor, however it is merely a way of identifying the antagonists of the opera, in a similar fashion that B Minor identifies the protagonist, Draco. Eventually Draco sings a solo, ending with an authentic cadence and a sense of arrival to the tonal center.

## CHAPTER III – ARIA DI MEZZO CARATTERE

### Aria Di Mezzo Carattere Form, Introduction, and 1<sup>st</sup> Stanza

Much like “Overture,” Nobuo Uematsu’s “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere,” displays the composer’s use of diatonic structures, chromaticism, tonal tension, cadential patterns, and linear structures in order to create music that culminates with a compelling tonal resolution of D Major. One need only study mm. 1-16 to hear this in action. The movement begins a tonicization of D Major, heard in mm. 1 – 9, via the use of tonic and C Major chords, creating a I – bVII progression.

The image shows a musical score for Harp in 4/4 time, measures 1 through 9. The key signature is D Major (two sharps). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, while the bass staff contains a harmonic line with quarter and half notes. Below the bass staff, the harmonic progression is indicated as follows: Measure 1: D: I; Measure 2: I; Measure 3: bVII; Measure 4: I; Measure 5: I; Measure 6: I; Measure 7: bVII; Measure 8: I; Measure 9: I.

Musical Example 10 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 1 – 9, harmonic graph.

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In fact, the I – bVII progression creates a tonic - dominant motion due to the bVII chord functioning as a dominant replacement. This along with a key signature that reflects D Major, an initial D Major chord, and an apex of D5 within the first nine measures, firmly sets the piece in D Major, the relative major of “Overture’s” tonal center, B Minor.

Although D Major is supported within the first measures, it becomes clear in mm. 8 – 16, that Uematsu is emphasizing a new key, F# Minor. This opens a debate as to whether the piece’s tonal center will be D Major or F# Minor. Notice the harmonic analysis in the following example, depicting the soprano and harp.

Musical Example 11 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 8 – 16, harmonic graph.

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While the passage could be analyzed as having moments that lean toward D Major, a clear move towards F# Minor as the tonal center has occurred. This is further proven by the following assertions: the melody begins in m.8 as the soprano solo enters on an F#4, F# Minor chords are frequently repeated throughout the passage, a V<sub>7</sub>-i cadential pattern in F# Minor is heard via the VI-i-VI-vii-VI-V<sub>7</sub>-i harmonic progression in the minor key. Notice that Uematsu once again uses mode mixture via the minor vii, the supertonic from D Major, clearly cadencing in F# Minor via an authentic cadence. However, while it should be observed that the piece is tonicizing F# Minor in mm. 8 – 16, take note that Uematsu continues to insert elements of D Major. This is made clear through the placement of D Major chords throughout the music and a melodic register transfer from D4 to an apex at D5. This implies that while Uematsu intends F# Minor to be heard, D Major is to be continuously hinted at in the background.

As discussed previously, Nobuo Uematsu often uses linear structures to imply his intended tonal center. In fact, while Uematsu intentionally begins the piece with a harmonic structure implying D Major from mm. 1-8, and F# Minor in mm. 8 – 16, his use of S-lines and H-lines aid in revealing the tonal center of “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere.” By revisiting mm. 8-16 an overarching tonal goal begins to be revealed through three S-lines simultaneously. All three lines, detailed below, promote D Major while the harmonic progression tonicizes F# Minor. This causes tonal tension in the music, due to the horizontal melodies suggesting D Major, while the vertical harmony tonicizes F# Minor.

The image shows a musical score for measures 8 through 16. The top staff is for Soprano and the bottom staff is for Strings. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 3/4. A dashed line labeled 'RT' (Register Transfer) spans from measure 10 to 11. A 'Solo S-Line' is marked in the Soprano part, starting at measure 11 and descending from D5 to F#4. Two other 'S-Line' annotations are shown in the Strings part, one starting at measure 11 and another starting at measure 12, both descending from D5 and D4 respectively towards the dominant A4 and A3.

Musical Example 12 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 8 – 16, S-line graph.

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To be clear, the solo S-line, descends from D5 to F#4 following a register transfer from D4 to D5. The line descends diatonically an interval of a sixth. While the line seemingly implied D Major, it ends on F#, the mediant of the implied key, and the tonic of the harmonized tonality. Thus, the line implies D Major, while at the same time, aids the harmonic progression in tonicizing F# Minor. Uematsu also creates two S-lines, descending from D5 and D4 respectively, and ending on the dominant of D Major, A4 and A3. As Each of the notes in the line are supported by the underlying harmony, Uematsu once again implies D Major via descending S-lines moving in a tonic - dominant motion. With the harmonic progression and S-lines observed, it is evident that



Uematsu is implying D Major through horizontal lines, while at the same time tonicizing F# Minor. Also, of note is the means by which the composer travels toward F# Minor. As stated previously, D Major is briefly tonicized in mm. 1 – 8 through use of the bVII – I progression. However, as quickly as D Major is introduced, Uematsu moves to F# Minor in a somewhat unique fashion. While Uematsu promotes D Major in the aforementioned S-lines, he simultaneously notates a linear intervallic progression of seven – six suspensions from mm. 12 - 15 between the lower S-line and the soprano solo S-line. Whereas the lower line descends from D4 to G#3, the solo line descends from D5 to E#4, finally resolving to F#4 in m. 16 via a leading tone – tonic motion. This creates a sequential movement into the key of F# Minor. Notice in the example below, as Uematsu notates parallel motion between the two lines until the solo voice resolves to the final F#4.

The image shows a musical score for Soprano and Strings, measures 8 through 16. The Soprano part is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It features a 'Solo S-Line' starting at measure 11, with a 'RT' (Leading Tone) indicated above it. The Strings part is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It features an 'S-Line' with a '7-6' suspension pattern. The score shows parallel motion between the two lines until measure 15, where the Soprano line resolves to F#4.

Musical Example 13 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 11 – 16, voice leading.

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Following the move to F# Minor, “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere” continues with four more stanzas in ternary form. Cheng states that the piece resembles a modified strophic composition with an introduction, interlude, coda, and a repetitive A-theme that is heard in all five stanzas.<sup>56</sup>

	A			B	A'		
Introduction	a	a	a'	b	a	a'	Coda
	Stanza 1	S2	S3	Interlude	S4	S5	
8 bars	8	8	8 + 2 (cadential extension)	14	8	8	8 + 2 (c. ext.)
0:00 (minutes)	0:26	0:55	1:21	1:50	2:35	3:00	3:23—3:55

Figure 3. *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere” Form.<sup>57</sup>

It must be clarified however, that while the melodic phrases are nearly identical, the piece changes in texture several times. The introduction is comprised of two instruments, the first stanza is formed by three instruments, and the remainder of the stanzas contain eight instruments, utilizing all of the available music channels in the Super Nintendo Entertainment System. The interlude and coda contain five to seven instruments. While the stanzas within the A-Section are very similar, the texture of second and third stanzas, found in mm. 17 – 33, grow to eight instruments, and sport more melodic lines than that of the first stanza.

<sup>56</sup> William Cheng, 71. Cheng’s book has an entire chapter focused on the operatic section of *FFVI* and the introduction of voices into video games.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* This example was created by Cheng in his book: *Sound Play: Video Games and Musical Imagination*.

### Aria Di Mezzo Carattere 2<sup>nd</sup> Stanza

As Uematsu continues with “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere,” it is clear that the second stanza has a nearly identical harmonic progression to that of the first. Having established F# minor via the harmonic progression, Uematsu continues with several linear progressions, alongside the addition of new instrumental parts. Take notice of the harmonic progression and expanded use of instruments in the example below. Whereas the soprano and harp were heard previously, strings and horns have now been added to the texture. As with the introduction and first stanza, Uematsu borrows chords from D Major. In fact, Uematsu substitutes the supertonic chord for G Major, the subdominant in D Major, thus creating a bII chord that sports a subdominant function. Likewise, he borrows the supertonic from D Major which functions as the subtonic in F# Minor.

The image shows a musical score for measures 17 to 25. The score includes parts for Soprano, Strings (three staves), Contrabass, Harp (two staves), and Horn. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Soprano part features a melodic line with various intervals and rests. The strings and contrabass provide harmonic support with sustained notes and moving lines. The harp plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The horn part is shown at the bottom with a harmonic graph below it.

Harmonic graph for the Horn part:

Measure	Chord
17	F# VI
18	i
19	bII
20	i
21	vii
22	VI
23	V7
24	
25	i

Musical Example 14 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 17 – 25, harmonic graph.

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With the key of F# minor having been established via the harmony, the second stanza should be studied once again to verify if linear progressions are present, and if so, to determine if they continue to imply D Major. Interestingly mm. 20-24 contains one distinct S-line and four H-lines. Also of note is the soprano H-line which has been doubled by an upper string H-line beginning at D6. (The string doubling is not shown.) Notice the parallel movement for the upper H-lines, along with the bottom S-line. Generally speaking, S-lines and H-lines moving in parallel motion may be regarded as one line given extra color, however as the three lines do not descend in identical fashion, they will be regarded separately. With a descent from B5, D5, and G2, each linear progression descends a seventh, sixth, and a fifth respectively.

The image shows a musical score for strings, measures 20-25. The score is in 4/4 time and F# minor. It features four staves. The top two staves are labeled 'H-Line' and the bottom two are labeled 'S-Line'. The top H-Line starts on B6 and descends to C#5. The middle H-Line starts on D5 and descends to F#4. The bottom H-Line starts on G2 and descends to D1. The S-Line starts on B5 and descends to D1. The score is annotated with 'H-Line' and 'S-Line' labels and arrows indicating the linear progressions.

Musical Example 15 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 20 – 25, voice leading.

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In fact, the top H-line descends from B6 to C#5, implying the B Natural Minor Scale via a diatonic descent of the key, despite the lack of resolution to the tonic. The soprano solo H-line ranges from mm. 20 – 24, descending diatonically from D5 to F#4, once again recalling D Major. While the top B Natural Minor H-line could be a reference to the tonal center associated with Draco, the hero and focus of the movement, the more important linear progression is heard via the soprano solo H-line’s implication of D Major. The H-

line surely reminds the listener of the originating key of “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere.” To complicate the musical landscape even further, Uematsu includes two more H-lines.

These H-lines, heard in the bass part, occur in both mm. 20 – 21 via an ascent from G3 – C#4, and in mm. 22 – 25 with a descent from E4 to A3, outlining a movement of a fifth.



Musical Example 16 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 20 -25, H-line graph.

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Thus far, the most obvious implication of a tonality via S-lines and H-lines in “Aria di Mezzo Carattere” have been heard via a tonic – dominant motion. However, it is in mm. 20 – 25 that Uematsu varies this method by creating H-lines that have a dominant – tonic motion. While the first H-Line seen above outlines a tritone by ascending from G3 to C#4, the second implies A Major by descending from E4 to A3. It should be stated once again that while Uematsu is tonicizing F# Minor via the vertical chord structure, a clear promotion of various keys through his H-Lines and S-Lines can be heard.

The listener is meant to think that D Major is crucial to the piece from the very onset of “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere,” but there has not been an authentic cadence in D Major nor a scalar descent to D as a tonic pitch since m. 9. As the end of the second stanza is reached, the overarching tonal center is still unconfirmed. Despite the initial evocation of D Major, Uematsu constantly denies the listener the strong sense of D Major.

Even as he continues to tonicize F# Minor, it has been shown that various tonalities are implied by S-lines and H-lines. It is safe to say that Uematsu has effectively accomplished the task of producing a level of uncertainty in his music.

### Aria Di Mezzo Carattere 3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza

As Uematsu continues to the third stanza in mm. 28-33, the previous H-lines repeat, but with variations. Importantly, instances of S-lines descending through the entire key of D Major are heard, finally giving the listener a sense of D Major, the overarching tonal center.

Musical Example 17 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 27 -33, voice leading.

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While the complete tonicization of D Major heard in the doubled S-line above gives the listener a feeling of stability that has been sought throughout the movement, it is also important to recognize the reoccurrence of the previous section’s H-lines via the Horn parts in m. 27 and m. 30. As with the previous H-lines, a tritone is outlined with the G3 to C#4 motion, however the second H-line now descends from E4 to B3, promoting E

Minor. Also of note, is that while Nobuo Uematsu finally creates S-lines that descend the D Major scale diatonically and end the A-Section, the bottom string S-line implies the B Natural Minor scale once again. This movement along with the use of F# Minor's mediant in m. 32, seen in Example 24, acts as a pivot to modulate to B Natural Minor. This allows Uematsu to rob the listener of D Major once again, continuing the feeling of dissatisfaction and need for resolution.

#### *Aria Di Mezzo Carattere Interlude*

A key point of interest regarding the pivot modulation is that Uematsu repeats the progression used in the first two stanzas until m. 32. A repeat of the progression would have resulted in a VI-i-bII-i-vii-VI-i motion in F# Minor, but instead he deviates by closing the progression with a bVII-i cadence in B Natural Minor. This cadential pattern, seen in the harmonic analysis of the interlude, or B Section below, is frequently used by Uematsu, and is also heard at the introduction of the piece in D Major. Furthermore, it is seen in an expanded form of VI-bVII-i in mm. 37 – 38 and mm. 41 – 43 as the B Section ends in B Natural Minor.



32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43

Soprano

Strings

Strings

Strings

Strings

Contrabass

Harp

Harp

Horn

b: bVII i ----- ii III VI b VII i iv V7 i VI bVII i

Musical Example 18 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 32 – 43, harmonic graph.

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## Aria Di Mezzo Carattere 4<sup>th</sup> Stanza

Uematsu progresses toward the A' Section by finally giving the listener what they have been longing for throughout the piece. He modulates from B Minor to D Major in m. 45, ending the B Section in the new key at m. 48. Uematsu does this by once again using the submediant of B Minor as a pivot chord, functioning as the subdominant of D Major. Having returned to D major, he then makes use of the subdominant as part of the standard authentic cadential figure, IV– ii7 – V – I in the new key. With the key of D Major finally established, the A' Section begins in m.48.

The musical score shows measures 43 through 48. The Soprano part is silent. The strings play a sustained harmonic accompaniment. The harp plays a rhythmic pattern. The horn part is also silent. The harmonic graph at the bottom indicates the following chord progression:

- Measures 43-44:  $b: i$
- Measure 45:  $D: IV$
- Measure 46:  $ii_7$
- Measure 47:  $V_7$
- Measure 48:  $I$

Musical Example 19 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 43 – 48, harmonic graph.

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The A' Section, containing the fourth stanza, is essentially a repeat of the second stanza. Once again, a myriad of keys, discussed previously, are implied in individual H-lines, and F# Minor becomes the tonicized key. However, at the conclusion of the fourth stanza, the final and most crucial stanza is heard, starting in m. 56.

Aria Di Mezzo Carattere 5<sup>th</sup> Stanza

It is with the fifth stanza along with the coda, mm. 57 – 72, that the listener finally hears the shift to D Major clearly. While it is true that Uematsu used the third stanza to employ a D Major S-line, the shift to B Minor all but diminished that action. However, following the ending of the fourth stanza, heard in F# Minor, Uematsu begins the final stanza with a repetition of the harmonic progression that has been observed throughout the piece. It is in m. 62 that D Major's return is solidified via Uematsu's final use of a pivot modulation. Whereas the pivot chord would normally function as the submediant in F# Minor, it is used as the tonic in D Major. An analysis of the final chord progression of the piece, mm. 62 – 72 is seen below, clearly depicting a D Major harmonic progression.

**Nobuo Uematsu: Aria Di Mezzo Carattere**

<b>D:</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>f#</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>
	<b>I</b>	<b>iii</b>	<b>vi</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>vi</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>ii</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>m.</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>72</b>

*Figure 4. FFVI "Aria Di Mezzo Carattere": Harmonic Progression mm. 62 -72.*

Also of note are the multiple H-lines found in mm. 57 – 75 that now support the key of D Major. This marks the first time in the piece that the linear progressions and the harmonic progression are unified in their tonal implications. The S-line found on the soprano solo line from mm. 57 - 64, for example, acts in a similar manner to the previous iterations, but now descends the D Major Scale from D5 to D4. This is mirrored by the upper S-line

in the Strings, also descending the D Major scale. Also of note are the remaining H-lines seen below. The most recognizable H-line, mm. 59 – 66, is heard descending from B5 to A4, the dominant of D Major. The final three H-lines are heard in the lower String H-lines beginning on F#3, G3, and E4, respectively, and completing on C#3, C#4, and A3. Lastly, it should be pointed out that the final notes of the string S-lines and H-lines form the tonic chord of D Major, notice m. 71. This shows Nobuo Uematsu's clear intent to have D Major heard at the conclusion of "Aria Di Mezzo Carattere."

The image displays a musical score for three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs) from measures 57 to 72. The score is annotated with various analytical lines and labels:

- Staff 1 (Treble Clef):** Labeled "Solo S-Line" at the beginning. It features a melodic line with a "Solo S-Line" annotation and a "RT" (Rhythmic Tension) label.
- Staff 2 (Alto Clef):** Contains a complex melodic line with multiple "RT" labels and "S-Line" annotations. A large horizontal line spans across measures 66-72.
- Staff 3 (Bass Clef):** Features a bass line with "S-Line" and "H-Line" annotations. It includes several "3rd Motive" and "4th Motive" labels, indicating specific rhythmic or melodic patterns. A "RT" label is also present.

The score is set in 4/4 time and includes a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Musical Example 20 *FFVI* “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere”: mm. 57 – 72, voice leading.

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## Aria Di Mezzo Carattere Tonal Center Revealed

With an analysis of “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere” complete, the tonal center of the piece is clarified as D Major. Looking at the opera’s narrative gives reasoning for Uematsu’s withholding of D Major throughout the piece. It is at this point in the opera, that the main female protagonist, Maria, is singing of her lost lover, Draco, who has gone to war, and is presumed dead never to return. Just as one may feel a wide range of emotions due to the uncertainty of a loved one’s demise, the music Nobuo Uematsu has written subtly promotes the struggle between hope and despair by not allowing the listener to hear a firm tonal resolution through the majority of the piece. As heard in the music, Uematsu moves through other keys via harmonic modulations, while implying other keys via the S-lines and H-lines. It is clear that the music, just as the character of the game, is on a journey towards stability and hope. By beginning in D Major, moving to F# Minor, then to B Natural Minor, and finally back to D Major, the draw of hope and sadness one would feel in such a tragic time is played out through music. As Maria sings, the listener is reminded of Draco via the familiar key of B Minor, the piece ends, and Maria begins to move on with her life by accepting her fate as the key finally resolves to D Major.

## CHAPTER IV – WEDDING WALTZ

### Wedding Waltz Form

Nobuo Uematsu begins “Wedding Waltz” in the exact manner that the name suggests, with a waltz. Following the conclusion of the aria, Maria is requested by Ralse to attend the wedding ball. This leads to the opening scene where Maria, Ralse, and the rest of his court are seen dancing to a victorious waltz. The beginning of waltz is firmly set in E Major, and as mentioned when discussing “Overture,” the only time that E Major or its parallel minor, E Minor, is heard, is when the antagonist, or the eastern kingdom is portrayed in the opera.

It should also be noted that the form of the piece is made up of an introductory section that reminds the listener of the titular waltz, followed by a ternary section and coda in the remaining measures of the piece. That is to say that the piece has an Intro with a subsequent A section, B section, and a repetitious A’ section. Notice the depiction of the piece’s transition from E Major to E Minor, as well as a broad harmonic progression displaying Uematsu’s continual shift from tonic to the dominant at cadential points, in the example below.

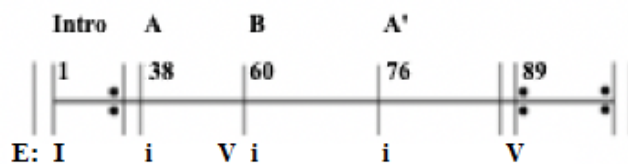


Figure 5. FFVI “Wedding Waltz” Form.

## Wedding Waltz Introduction

Ranging from mm. 1 – 37, the introduction is comprised of mostly diatonic writing that continually repeats until the player has completed a task. This occurs when a note from Ultros, a minor villain of the game, is found in Celes’ dressing room following the previous piece stating that he is going to disrupt the opera. It is at this point that the player must inform the rest of the party of the situation. After doing so, the section, and the waltz ends.

Studying the Introduction reveals Uematsu’s repetition of various harmonic patterns from the harmonic progression. This is primarily observed via the I-iii-vi<sup>7</sup>-iii pattern found in mm. 1 – 4, mm. 5 – 8, and mm. 21 – 24.

The image displays a musical score for the first four measures of the Wedding Waltz Introduction. The score is written for Violin I, Violin II, Violin III, and Contrabass. The key signature is E major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The music consists of a repeating harmonic pattern: I (E), iii (G), vi<sup>7</sup> (D), and iii (G). The Violin I part plays a simple melody, while the other instruments provide harmonic support. The harmonic progression is explicitly labeled at the bottom of the score as E: I iii vi<sup>7</sup> iii.

Musical Example 21 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 1 – 4, harmonic graph.

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By analyzing the overall progression of the introduction, it is clear that Uematsu uses this pattern three separate times, with each occurrence resolving to the tonic, thus prolonging the harmony. The repetitive use of harmonic patterns is not only heard in the aforementioned measures, but at the end of the section as well. In fact, Uematsu repeatedly notates a V – vii/V – vii – I harmonic pattern in mm. 34 – 35 and mm. 36 – 37, forming a dominant to tonic motion. With these occurrences in mind, notice the harmonic progression from mm. 1 - 36, in the example below.

Violin I  
Violin I  
Violin II  
Contrabass

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

E: I iii vi<sub>7</sub> iii I iii vi<sub>7</sub> iii I I ii ii<sub>7</sub> ii ii<sub>7</sub> ii V<sub>7</sub> V<sub>7</sub> V<sub>7</sub>

I ----- ii ----- V -----

T ----- PD ----- D -----

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

I V IV V I iii vi iii I I IV IV<sub>7</sub> ii IV vii<sup>o7</sup> IV V V IV vii<sup>o</sup> I V IV<sub>7</sub> vii<sup>o</sup> I

I V ----- I ----- IV ----- V ----- I V ----- I

T D ----- I ----- PD ----- D ----- T D ----- T

Musical Example 22 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 1 – 36, harmonic graph.

As seen in the example above, Uematsu forms a repeating tonic – predominant – dominant harmonic progression in mm. 1 – 37. While Uematsu uses these measures to create a standard progression, he also creates two H-lines via the flute solo, in mm. 9 – 11 and mm. 17-19. The first two H-lines are easily heard as the Flute ascends. Both lines begin on B4, following a similar ascending throughout each line. The first H-line, m. 9, ascends to the fourth scale degree of E Major, A5, and the second, m. 17, ascends to the mediant of the key, G#5. As per his usual method, Uematsu notates both lines diatonically, with the exception of a moment of chromaticism, via the G5 to G#5 motion in second H-line, seen below.



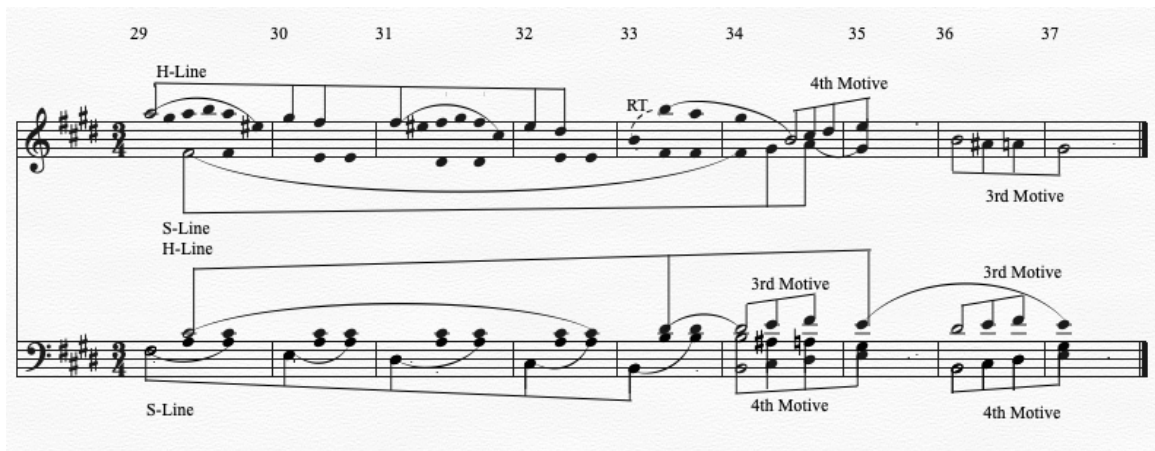
Musical Example 23 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 9 – 18, H-line graph.

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The final measures of introduction, mm. 29 – 37, sport two more S-lines and two more H-lines, as well as a variety of smaller motives. Whereas the Flute H-lines were heard separately, the following happens simultaneously.

“Wedding Waltz” continues to display Uematsu’s ability to create sophisticated musical lines for the SNES. Studying the reduction below, the upper H-line found in the treble clef descends from A5 to D5, forming a dominant – tonic relationship. The lower treble H-line ascends from F#4 to A4, forming a minor third. The bass H-line ascends from C#4 to E4, while the bass S-line descends from F#3 – B2, creating another dominant – tonic relationship. In fact, the ending notes of three linear structures would

seem to be a subtle reference to the previous pieces and foreshadowing of all three characters interacting. For example, the treble H-line promotes D Major, and Maria’s “Aria Di Mezzo Caratare” has a tonal center of D Major. Looking at the bass H-line, the C# - D# - E motion is indicative of E Major, Ralse’s key. The bass S -line indicates B Major instead of B Minor, Draco’s tonal center, but as Uematsu constantly uses minor keys to promote sadness and major keys to promote happiness, it is not too far of a stretch to associate B Major and B Minor with “Overture” and the return of Draco just as E Major and E Minor are associated with Ralse and the eastern kingdom.



Musical Example 24 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 29 – 37, voice leading graph.

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The waltz section ends as soon as the player completes the task of informing the rest of the party that Ultros is planning to interrupt the opera. Simultaneously to this “real-world” problem, the opera’s story continues as the survivors of the western kingdom, later revealed to be led by a very much alive Draco, attack the wedding ball. It is at this point that the ternary portion of the piece begins, and the three main characters of the opera, Maria, Ralse, and soon after Draco, take the stage. Interestingly, as the opera’s story moves toward a climax, the players find themselves moving toward a

climatic fight between Ultros as well. Uematsu capitalizes on this, by using the A Section and A' Section to build suspense in both situations. The A Section occurs while the opera depicts the fight between the soldiers of the eastern and western kingdoms, and the A' Section is heard as the player attempts to stop Ultros from disrupting the opera. In both cases, Nobuo Uematsu uses repetitive harmonic patterns once again, along with various ascending H-lines in order create a sense of urgency, and suspense.

### Wedding Waltz A Section

Studying the A Section, mm. 38 – 59, reveals a change in the tonal center of the piece to E Minor once again. While the eastern kingdom is shown as being victorious, E Major is heard, however when the fighting resumes between the two kingdoms at the wedding ball, E Minor returns, reflecting the original scene of the war in “Overture.” As the suspense builds, Uematsu uses repeating patterns via two separate motives within the harmonic progression of the A Section.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Violin III, and Contrabass. The score covers measures 49 to 52. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The harmonic graph below the score indicates the following chord progressions:

Measure	Harmonic Progression
49	e: i IV V
50	i IV V
51	vii <sup>o7</sup> i ii <sup>o</sup>
52	vii <sup>o7</sup> i ii <sup>o</sup>

Musical Example 25 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 49 – 52, harmonic graph.

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As depicted in the example above, mm. 49 – 50, and mm. 51-52 have distinct repeating harmonic patterns. The first pattern, mm. 49-50, consists of a i-IV (borrowed)-V harmonic progression, followed closely by the second, mm. 51 – 52, which is comprised of a  $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}$  - i -  $\text{ii}^{\circ}$  harmonic progression. These repetitions form a i – IV – V -  $\text{vii}^{\circ}$  - i -  $\text{ii}^{\circ}$  harmonic progression that pushes the music forward to the dominant, sounding from mm. 53 – 59, ending the section on a half cadence.

Alongside the repetitive motion in the A Section, Uematsu creates several H-lines that give the listener a sense of urgency. As the on-screen fight plays out, four H-lines are heard in mm. 43-52. All of the lines ascend, with the three upper H-lines ranging an interval of a fourth, and the lower H-line ranging an interval of a sixth. The outer treble H-lines lines are notated an octave apart beginning on G5 and G4, ascending an interval of an augmented fourth at different points in the music to C#5 and C#4(through a register transfer.), respectively.

43                      44                      45                      46                      47                      48                      49                      50                      51                      52

The image displays a musical score for the voice leading of the 'Wedding Waltz' (mm. 43-52) from *FFVI*. The score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff (top) and a bass clef staff (bottom). The treble staff contains three parts: an upper voice line (labeled 'H-Line'), a middle voice line (labeled 'H-Line'), and a lower voice line (labeled 'H-Line'). The bass staff contains one part labeled 'H-Line'. The score is annotated with '4th Motive' in measures 43-46 and '3rd Motive' in measures 47-52. Dashed lines labeled 'RT' (Right Triad) indicate the movement of the triads between measures. The music features a mix of chords and moving lines, with some notes tied across measures.

Musical Example 26 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 43 – 52, voice leading.

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The inner treble H-Line begins on C#5 spanning a perfect fourth, concluding on F#4. The bass H-line, which is heard more prominently than the H-lines, ranges from A#2 to F#3 can be heard in mm. 43- 51. With the H-Lines ascending, along with many short motivic step progressions, the music and the on-screen fighting continue to feel as if they are moving toward a conclusion and climatic point in the opera.

The most important development in the section is heard from mm. 53 – 56, as the section ends with a half cadence in E Minor. It is at this time that Draco reappears, attacking Ralse. As the strings arpeggiate a B Major chord via the quarter notes seen in the example below, the listener is exposed to a clear repetitive climb from three short S-lines in mm. 53 – 54, which are then repeated in mm. 55 – 57. It should be noted that the top and bottom S-lines are an octave apart, and the middle S-line is an interval of a major third higher than the bottom line, essentially functioning as additional harmony, and therefore the one true S-line, begins on B3 and ends on G4. The repetition of the S-line provides the listener with a sense of continuous ascension, thereby causing the feeling of suspense. It should also be noted that the harmonic progression formed in these measures, I – V – I -V, tonicizes B Major and reinforces the belief that Draco will be victorious. It is with this feeling of success that the A Section ends, and the B Section begins.



The image shows a musical score for five measures, numbered 53 to 57. The music is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some notes beamed together. Below the staff, there are two 'S-Line' graphs. Each graph is a trapezoidal shape that starts wide on the left and tapers to the right, indicating a crescendo or a change in dynamics. The first S-Line is positioned under measures 53 and 54, and the second is under measures 55 and 56. The final measure (57) ends with a double bar line.

Musical Example 27 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 53 – 56, S-line graph.

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Uematsu uses the B Section, heard from mm. 60 - 75, to continue to the climax of the opera where Draco, Maria, and Ralse all exchange words with each other, resulting in a duel between the men. It is in this section that Uematsu once again shows his exceptional ability to create compelling music via interesting mix of compositional techniques and harmonic progressions, seen below.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Wedding Waltz" from the film *Forrest Gump*, covering measures 60 to 75. The score includes parts for three trumpets (B♭ 1, 2, and 3), Soprano, Tenor, Bass, Violin I, Violin II, Violin III, and Contrabass. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score features various musical notations such as rests, notes, and triplets. Below the score, a harmonic graph provides a chord progression for the piece.

Harmonic Graph:

E: I iii iv ---- tvii iv V tvii V<sup>7</sup> I I I bII I tvii I bII I V I ----- iv tvii V<sup>7</sup> I V IV III bII Cluster

Musical Example 28 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 60 – 75, harmonic graph.

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Within the fifteen measures that comprise the B section, Uematsu once again tonicizes E Major while each of the three main characters have solo moments. Despite beginning the section with E Major, as well as notating an authentic cadence in mm. 63 – 64, it is also clear that Uematsu continues to borrow chords from the minor key. This is made evident via the I – iii - iv – vii – iv – V7 – I harmonic progression in mm. 60 – 65. Not only does Uematsu use the minor predominant chord instead of a major predominant, he also uses the subtonic chord from E Natural Minor. Uematsu notates several Neapolitan Chords, two of which are heard in another motivic repetition in mm. 66 – 69. It is in these measures that Uematsu notates a chromatic progression of bII7 – I – vii – I, moving from an F Major chord to an E Major chord, then to a D Minor chord, and back to the E Major chord.

Violin I

Violin I

Violin II

Contrabass

E: I I bII I vii I bII I vii I

Musical Example 29 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 66 – 69, harmonic graph.

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Uematsu finally ends the climatic B Section in mm. 73 - 75 with a I – iv – III – bII progression followed by a point of imitation that results in a cluster chord formed by C5, D5, and E5.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the 'Wedding Waltz' from *FFVI*, measures 62 through 72. The first system (measures 62-67) features a Soprano line and a Tenor line. The Soprano line is labeled 'Soprano H-Line' and contains a '2nd Motive' in measure 63 and a '3rd Motive' in measure 67. The Tenor line is labeled 'Tenor' and contains '3rd Motive' markings in measures 66 and 67. The second system (measures 68-72) features a Bass line and a Soprano line. The Bass line is labeled 'Bass S-Line' and contains '3rd Motive' markings in measures 68, 69, 70, and 71. The Soprano line in this system also contains '3rd Motive' markings in measures 68, 69, 70, and 71. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs, along with specific line labels like 'H-Line' and 'S-Line'.

Musical Example 30 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 62 – 72, voice leading.

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It should also be noted that Uematsu notates two S-lines and several H-lines, seen above, from mm. 60 - 72. In fact, the melodic structures in the treble staff aid in the overall motion surrounding E with several third motives. This is heard as m. 68 decorates F, m. 70 decorates E, and m. 71 decorates D followed by a motion that concludes on a static E, m. 72. This F-E-D-E motion implies the  $bII - I - bVII - I$  chord progression noted in a previous paragraph.

Studying the bass line, notice two H-lines in mm. 62 – 63, beginning on C4 and D3, respectively. The first H-line is notated in the upper bass line, descends a minor third from C4 to A3. The second H-line, found in the lower bass line, descends from D3, to A2. The final H-line is heard via the soprano solo in m.62 – 64, descending a tritone from

F5 to B4. Interestingly enough, the tenor solo does not feature an H-line, possibly indicating that protagonists will achieve success at the end of the opera. Lastly, Uematsu notates two S-lines heard from mm. 69 – 72. The bottom S-line is heard in the bass part ascending from E2 chromatically to E3, prolonging E Major, whereas the upper S-line is heard in mm. 69 – 71, ascending from D3 to F3. As Uematsu ends the B Section, he notates two final S-lines via the trumpet section, while at the same time notating the closing cluster chord.



Musical Example 31 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 73 – 75, S-line graph.

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Notice the two final S-lines, seen in the reduction above, forming simultaneously in mm. 73 – 75. The first creates a motion from A4 to E5 via a descent to F4, and subsequent register transfer to E5. The second descends from E5 to C5. As Section B ends, Ralse declares a duel between Draco and himself, and the listener hears consecutive motives of a perfect fifth. The perfect fifth motives are comprised of Ralse’s declaration ranging from E3 – B3, followed by a trio of trumpets that imitate the pattern via A4 – E5, G4 – D5, and F4- C5 motives. As the final notes E5, D5, and C4 converge Uematsu creates the aforementioned cluster chord, using it as a declarative sound stating the climactic moment of the piece has arrived.

### Wedding Waltz A' Section

Following the cluster chord, the A' Section is heard from mm. 76 – 110, seen below. The first half of the section, mm. 76 – 93, is identical to the original A section, however the remaining measures of the piece, mm. 94 – 110, are new. In fact, mm. 89 – 110 repeats until the player progresses the story again, confronting the villain Ultros.

Musical score for measures 96-110 of "Wedding Waltz". The score is in 3/4 time and features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Violin III, and Contrabass. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The harmonic analysis below the staves is as follows:

i      iv   III   V<sub>7</sub>      i   VI   iv<sub>7</sub>   ii<sup>o</sup>   V      i      V<sub>7</sub> / III   III      V<sub>7</sub> / V      v      V<sub>7</sub> / VII   VII      V<sub>9</sub> / V v   vii<sup>o</sup>   V<sub>7</sub>

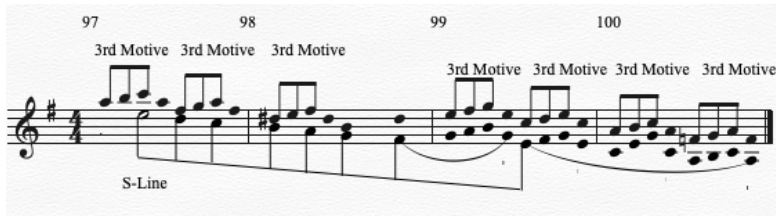
Musical score for measures 76-95 of "Wedding Waltz". The score is in 3/4 time and features five staves: Bass, Violin I, Violin II, Violin III, and Contrabass. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The harmonic analysis below the staves is as follows:

e: i   vii<sup>o7</sup>   i      -----      vii/V   V      vii<sup>o7</sup>   i      V<sub>7</sub>      -----      i   IV   V   i   IV   V      vii<sup>o7</sup>   i   ii   vii<sup>o7</sup>   i   ii      V<sub>7</sub>      i   V<sub>7</sub>      -----      -----      i      -----      -----

Musical Example 32 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 76 – 110, harmonic graph.

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Throughout mm. 76 – 93 the previously discussed S-lines and H-lines are heard via repetitions however, it is in mm. 88-110 that Uematsu notates the final, and most important S-lines and H-lines of the movement. The first of which is an S-line from mm. 97 – 98, that descends an octave from E5 – E4.





Musical Example 34 *FFVI* “Wedding Waltz”: mm. 101–110, 89–90, voice leading.

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The S-line seen in the treble staff, mm. 101 - 108, ascends from D#4 to F#5. As the S-line rises to G4, the lower treble staff S-line begins in m. 104 on B3, a sixth lower. A similar pattern occurs when the bass S-line, heard from mm. 105 – 110, begins an octave lower than the upper H-line’s current pitch C#5.

The bass S-line begins on C#3, prolongs the underlying F# Major Chord (The secondary dominant of E Minor's dominant) and ends on E4. It is through the top S-line's initial rise, followed by a somewhat parallel movement of the other S-lines that a feeling of urgency matching the on-screen events is created as the player tries to stop the villain Ultros.

The parallel stepwise motion in all of the S-lines is nearly synced, and all three lines tend to ascend in stepwise motion at the same time. This can be heard as the treble S-lines continue ascending a sixth apart to E4 and C#5 respectively, followed by the bass S-line that begins two octaves lower on C#3. While the treble lines always move at the same time the bass S-line begins in a syncopated fashion, but as it starts to ascend in m. 109, it is in sync with the top treble S-line. As the top S-line and bass S-line reach a conclusion, it becomes apparent that the true driving force of the suspense and urgency is the lower treble S-line.

The lower treble S-line, m. 101, is the most crucial linear progression in the entire piece. The lower treble S-line starts on B3 and moves in stepwise motion until it reaches m 110, ending the piece. However, until the player reaches the villain Ultros, mm. 89 – 110 will continuously repeat. In fact, upon repeating mm. 89 – 110, Uematsu creates a sense of continuous ascension via the lower treble S-line, seen above.

Notice that a register transfer takes place between C#5, m. 110, and D#4, m. 89. Although the D# is nearly an octave lower than the C#, the S-line makes the jump, and continues ascending from D#4 to B4 in m. 90. The music continues from mm. 91 – 101, with what is essentially a prolongation of E Minor's dominant chord, B Major, followed by a repeat of the last measures and the ascending lines. This repetition is heard until the

player finally reaches Ultros, and the Opera is indeed disrupted when the player and the enemy accidentally fall on to the stage. This leads to the final piece of the opera: “The Grand Finale?.”

## CHAPTER V – GRAND FINALE?

### Introduction

Following the surprise ending of “Wedding Waltz,” Nobuo Uematsu ends the *Final Fantasy VI* opera with “Grand Finale?.” As the opera is thrown into chaos by the sudden appearance, and fall of the player and Ultros, the opera’s audience is fooled into believing that the disruption is actually part of the opera. “Grand Finale?” bears surprisingly sophisticated voice leading, and as with the previously studied movements of the opera, continues to highlight Uematsu’s skill not only with diatonic harmonic structure, but with melody structured by S-lines and H-lines. To that point, a harmonic analysis will be applied to the music, revealing the piece’s form, tonal structure, and common progressions. Following the analysis, key areas of interest will be studied displaying Uematsu’s continued use linear structures. The disparagement between the melodic and harmonic underpinnings will also be addressed, continuing to shed light on Nobuo Uematsu’s compositional techniques throughout the piece.

### Grand Finale? Analysis

By analyzing the beginning of “Grand Finale?,” seen transcribed below, the tonal center appears to be Gb major. Despite the V/V – V – V/V motion observed in the introduction from mm. 1-2, the harmony settles into an ostinato pattern of Gb – Db until m. 9, forming a Gb Major chord with a missing third.

1 2 3 4

Horn in F 1

Horn in F 2

Trumpet in B $\flat$

Timpani

Snare Drum

Hi-Hat Cymbal

Violin I

Violin II

Contrabass

Gb: V $\flat$ /V V V $\flat$ /V I -----

Musical Example 35 *FFVI* “Grand Finale?”: mm. 1 – 4, harmonic graph.

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As the piece reaches m. 9, the listener hears a movement from the tonic, G $\flat$ , to a flattened submediant, D(E $\flat$ ), forming a I – bVI harmonic progression that is then heard throughout the introduction of the piece. The tonic can be heard in mm. 3 -8, followed by the D Major chord in mm. 9 - 10, which is an enharmonically spelled flattened submediant, E $\flat$  Major.<sup>58</sup> The tonic - flattened submediant pattern is then repeated from mm. 11 – 18, seen in the example below.

<sup>58</sup> This could be a subtle reference to significant D – F $\sharp$  key areas heard in “Aria Di Mezzo Caraterre” If interpreted as D and F $\sharp$  instead of E $\flat$  and G $\flat$ .

1 2 3 9 11 17

V7/V V V7/V I bVI I bVI

Musical Example 36 *FFVI* “Grand Finale?”: mm. 1 – 18, harmonic graph.

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“Grand Finale?” is fairly diatonic throughout mm. 1- 18, despite the flattening of the submediant. It is in m. 19 that the piece abandons the I – bVI motive in Gb Major in favor of an ascending harmonic line that gives the listener a feeling of Db Major. Despite not moving in a traditional harmonic pattern, Uematsu tonicizes Db Major by ascending from Db Major in m. 18 to Ab Major m. 28. At this point, a repeat of mm. 1 – 28 takes place, and the previously mentioned I – bVI harmonic pattern is heard once again, but interestingly, the listener does not hear Gb Major as the tonal center any longer.

However, before explaining the shift in tonality the melodic content must be addressed.

As seen in the example below, the primary melody, first heard starting in m. 3, implies Db major instead of Gb major; notice the C functioning as the leading tone resolving to the Db, as well as the Eb, or subtonic followed by Db. Giving more credence to the melodic implication of Db Major via instances of the leading tone – tonic and subtonic – tonic motions, are two instances of chromaticism heard via the upper neighbor tone, A. In fact, there is a simple reason for Uematsu’s use of the A. He continuously alternates between upper and lower neighbor tones a semitone apart within the melody, and for the final upper neighbor to align to this pattern, a non-diatonic embellishing A natural had to be employed. However, this raises the question as to how the assertion falls in line with the previous stance that mm. 1 – 17 of “Grand Finale?” are fairly diatonic.



Musical Example 37 *FFVI* “Grand Finale?”: mm. 3 – 10, melodic line example.

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The answer to this question provides an insight to the genius of Nobuo Uematsu’s notation. It should first be noted that the composer draws attention to the melodic content of “Grand Finale?,” while notating the harmonic underpinning a perfect fifth below. This allows the tonal center to function in Gb major through first iteration of mm. 1 – 17, while the melodic line which implies Db major is heard functioning as the fifth of the chord. By studying the melody once more, it becomes clear that not only is Uematsu implying Db Major, but also prolonging the tonic note, Db, via several register transfers. Uematsu’s notation creates a strong case for a harmony of Gb Major. As the harmony moves to a bVI chord enharmonically spelled as D Major, it should also be noted that the A4 and Gb4 (F#4) of the melody act as the fifth and third of the chord, respectively.

Despite the assertion that the melody and harmony can effectively be analyzed as tonicizing Gb Major, the simultaneous sounding of a strong melody implying a separate key from that of the repeating harmonic structure, produces an unsettling dichotomy. Thus, it can be said that while melody and harmony of the introduction produce a confused sound, which is appropriate for the on-screen narrative of an opera that has just been thrown into chaos, mm. 1 – 18 are indeed fairly diatonic.

Returning to the Ab Major chord in m. 28, it is clear that the chord functions as the dominant of Db Major. As the music repeats, and mm. 1 – 18 are heard once again, the listener no longer hears Gb Major, but instead Db Major. Uematsu accomplishes this via the Ab Major chord sounding in m. 28 followed by the sounding of the melody in

mm. 3 – 18. As the melody which begins on Db4 is repeated, the listener hears a dominant – tonic relationship that continues to keep the tonal center in Db Major. The music continues through the repeat, and as m. 28 is reached once again, the ascending harmonic line continues until m. 40, where a C Major chord is heard. It is at this point that piece repeats once again, and the ascending harmonic line is heard progressing from the C Major chord, whose root is the leading tone of Db Major, to the Db melody. With the second repeat forming leading tone - tonic relationship instead of the dominant – tonic relationship heard previously, it is clear that the piece tonicizes Db Major throughout the piece, with the exception of the first iteration of mm. 1 – 18.

#### Grand Finale? Form

Now that the piece has been analyzed, the form of the piece can also be shown. In fact, it is clear that “Grand Finale?” is in binary form, as depicted in the example below. Whereas traditional music in binary form would move to the dominant and back to the tonic, notice that Uematsu begins the piece in Gb Major and moves to Db Major for the remainder of the piece, providing the listener with a similar motion.







line, seen below, begins on Db3, moves through a register transfer, ascends to Ab2, and repeats at m. 28, forming a dominant – tonic relationship with the repeated melody in m. 3. Upon repeating, the A Section is reached again, and the S-line starts over. Starting on Db3, the H-line ascends continuously, with some register transfers, to C3 in m. 38. Note that as the line eventually reaches Cb3, or B2 spelled enharmonically, an ascending Db – D – E – F – Gb – Ab – B(Cb) – C – Db passage is formed.

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

H-Line

RT

1. 2.

30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 3

RT

D4 Melody

Musical Example 41 *FFVI* “Grand Finale?”: mm. 19 – 41, m. 3, voice leading.

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It is with the S-line that Uematsu produces a sense of urgency in the piece. Much like the music of “Wedding Waltz,” the music will continue to repeat, cycling through the aforementioned measures of “Grand Finale?” several times. The result of the music repetition is a constant feeling of Db Major via the melody in the introduction followed by the S-line in the B Section that forms a tonic – dominant – leading tone - tonic movement. As with the previous piece, the constant ascension creates a feeling of urgency only abated when the player defeats Ultros, ending the *Final Fantasy VI* opera.

## CHAPTER VI – CONCLUSION

It has been shown that “Maria and Draco,” the opera from *Final Fantasy VI*, displays Nobuo Uematsu’s sophisticated compositional writing for the Super Nintendo Entertainment system. As “Overture,” “Aria Di Mezzo Carattere,” “Wedding Waltz,” and “Grand Finale?” have been studied, it is clear that Uematsu is able to compose music that, while relying on the traditions of Western tonality, is a clear and expressive musical language well-suited for the technologies of the video game genre. Nobuo Uematsu does this by using diatonic notation, tertian harmonies, and a variety of techniques in moments containing secondary dominants, cluster chords, and harmonic substitutions. Most importantly, Uematsu’s refined treatment of intricately structured melodies has been studied, revealing Schenker lines and Hindemith lines. Through examination of a multitude of S-lines and H-lines within the opera, it is clear that Uematsu has an affinity for developing the melody through the use of ascending or descending step progressions and voice-leading. To reiterate the original statement regarding Uematsu’s music, the treatment of melody and the methods observed throughout this study not only show that the music of *FFVI* has merit, but that Nobuo Uematsu should be viewed as a serious composer worthy of study.

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